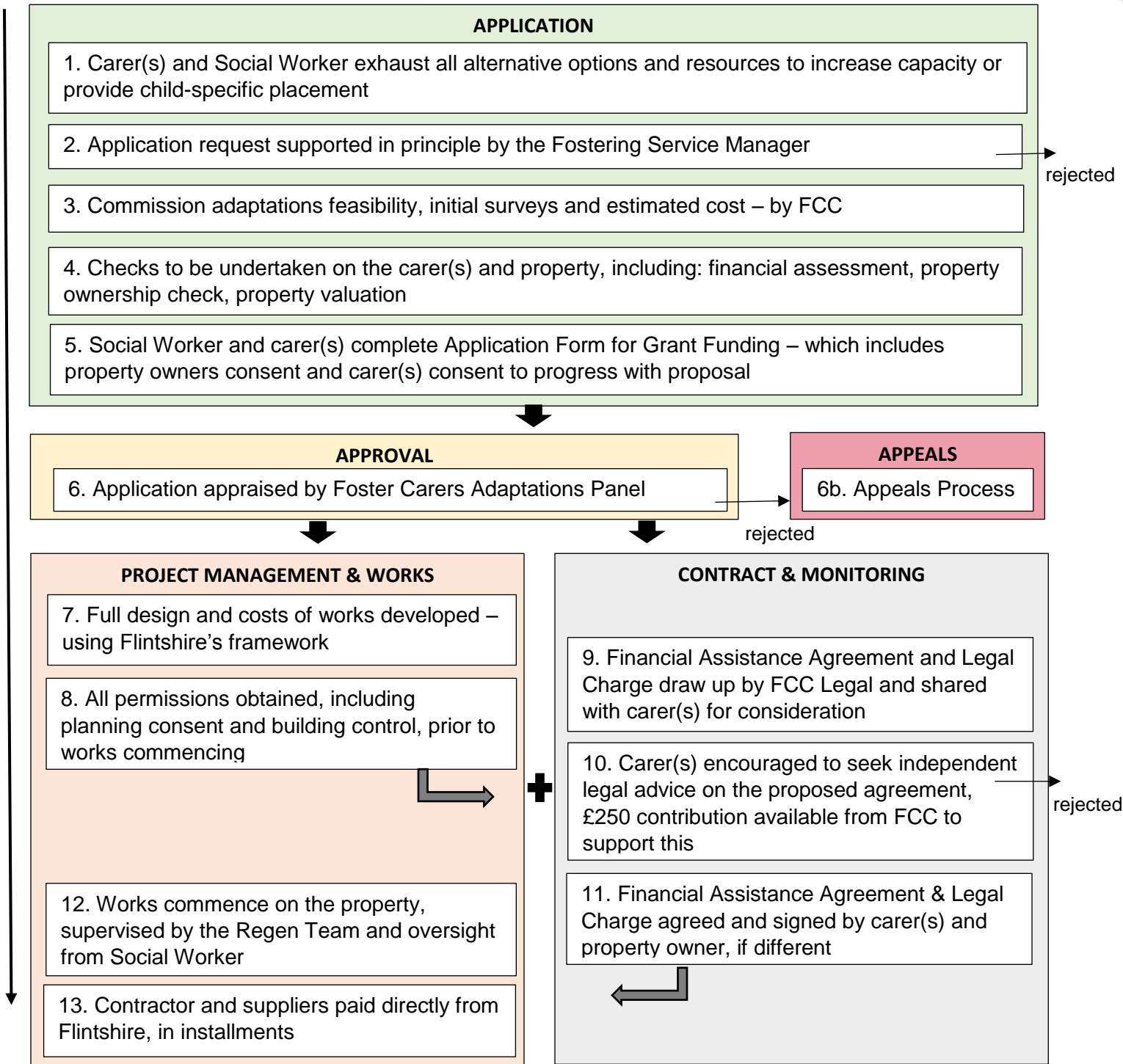


GRANT FUNDING APPLICATION PROCESS

GRANT FUNDING FOR ADAPTATIONS TO FOSTER CARERS' HOMES

General Application Process



General Application Process

1. Carer(s) and Social Worker exhaust all alternative options and resources to increase capacity or provide child-specific placement

Carers interested in making an application for funding should discuss their plans with the local authority's fostering service initially.

A Social Worker will be allocated and they will meet with the carer(s) to discuss the housing accommodation and needs. Together, you will need to demonstrate that alternative options or resources have been explored and why they are not viable.

2. Application request supported in principle by the Fostering Service Manager

The Social Worker will discuss the request for grant funding with the Fostering Service Manager, who may or may not support your application in principle.

If the Fostering Service Manager is in support of the proposal, this will be given in writing to the Social Worker, who will then notify the carer(s). The application can then be developed further and investigative works will commence on the proposed adaptation or purchase of an alternative property.

If the Fostering Service Manager is not in support of the request, they may require further information or signpost carers to alternative options for support, for example Disabilities Facilities Grant.

3. Commission adaptations feasibility, initial surveys and estimated cost – by Regen Team, FCC

The local authority will undertake investigative works regarding the proposal prior to its consideration at the Foster Carer Adaptations Panel to determine viability from the outset.

The Council will undertake a feasibility report and surveys on the proposed works or purchase of a property to determine whether the adaptation is possible.

A Building Surveyor from the Regeneration Team will visit the property, along with the allocated Social Worker, to discuss the proposed works and reasons for adaptation or relocation to a more suitable property. They will survey the property, take measurements, photographs and commission any further surveys that they deem necessary, for example asbestos survey. The Regeneration Team will then develop initial plans for the proposal and issue any advisories or risks associated with the works/ purchase.

At this stage it may also be beneficial to complete a preliminary planning application to see the Local Planning Authority's views on the proposal, if the works are deemed complex or substantial by the Surveyor.

This stage of the process is estimated to take approximately 1 month.

4. Checks to be undertaken on the carer(s) and property, including: financial assessment, property ownership check, property valuation

In addition, the local authority will commission further checks associated with the application, including (but not exhaustive of) legal property ownership and plan, a property valuation and financial checks on the carer(s) and/or property owner to determine affordability/ equity available within the property. These will be completed internally by Flintshire County Council teams, such as Property Valuation and Legal.

It is fundamental that the property owner gives full consent (as mortgagor) to the application and conditions of the grant at this stage, together with the mortgagee (lender).

5. Social Worker and carer(s) complete Application Form for Grant Funding – which includes property owners consent and carer(s) consent to progress with proposal

The 'Grant Funding for Adaptations Application Form' must be completed fully, with support from the Social Worker, which is to be accompanied by any other information that the Council considers necessary to be able to consider the application fully, refer to 'Part 5 Checklist for Application' on the Application Form.

Incomplete application forms will not be considered by the Panel until all information is available.

6. Application appraised by Foster Carers Adaptations Panel

The application will be considered by the 'Foster Carers Adaptations Panel', which consists of local authority officers from Social Services, Fostering Service, Finance, Housing and Assets and Regeneration.

The application will be appraised in line with the available funding and the criteria as outlined within the Policy, within 28 working days.

The local authority will undertake a cost benefit analysis to ensure that any proposed works, or the purchase of a more suitable property or equipment provides the authority with the best value for money, always considering the child/ children's best interest.

The local authority will advise whether the application for funding has been approved or refused in writing, together with the value of funding that has been approved, within a reasonable timeframe. Where the application has been refused, the local authority will provide a written statement of the reasons for refusal and details of the appeals procedure.

Any grant funding approved will be available for a 12 month period from the date of approval and is subject to the remaining parts of the grant process being complied with. Extensions to this timeframe will be required by the Foster Carers Adaptations Panel.

6b. Appeals Process

All applications for grant funding will be considered against the criteria as outlined within the Policy. If the application does not meet the criteria, the local authority will inform the carer(s) in writing of the reasons for refusal.

Where the carer(s) is refused funding and they wish to appeal against the decision, they should appeal to the Council in writing within 15 working days of the date of refusal and state the grounds for appeal. The grounds for appeal are as follows:

- Procedural failing
- Additional information available to support the application
- Change in circumstances

All appeals will be considered by the Chief Officer of Social Services and the decision by the Chief Officer will be final in respect of that individual case and will not be binding upon any future applications made by that or any other applicant.

7. Full design and costs of works developed – using Flintshire’s Framework

Once approval for the works is granted by the Foster Carers Adaptations Panel, the Regeneration Team will be commissioned to act as the project managers for the proposed adaptation or property move. These project management costs will form part of the total project cost and will be included within the Financial Assistance Agreement.

Using the agreed Framework to select contractors and suppliers the Team will instruct more detailed designs and costings for the works or property purchase.

Once this is completed, the Team will then seek quotes using the agreed Framework, and a contractor/ supplier will be chosen.

If there is a variance in the approved grant funding to the chosen contractor’s quote, it will be required to be signed off by the Foster Carers Adaptations Panel again.

8. All permissions obtained, including planning consent and building control, prior to works commencing

The Regeneration Team will take the lead in obtaining all the necessary consents associated with the proposed adaptation, such as planning consent and building control. The carer(s) and/ or property owner will need to work closely with the Team providing information where necessary.

The planning permission consent from the Local Planning Authority can take between 8 – 12 weeks.

9. Financial Assistance Agreement and Legal Charge drawn up by FCC Legal and shared with carer(s) for consideration

Once approval for the works is granted by the Foster Carers Adaptations Panel, the Social Worker will notify Flintshire’s Legal department of your approval for grant funding.

The Legal Team will draft a Financial Assistance Agreement and Legal Charge or Local Land Charge (as appropriate), using the published terms and conditions, for your consideration. The Agreement and Legal Charge or Local Land Charge (as appropriate) must be signed by the owners of the property and the carer(s), if different, prior to any works commencing or any monies being spent.

The total cost of the works and all associated costs (including but not limited to management costs, surveys and permissions) will be included in the final grant funding awarded and the figure subject to the Legal Charge and clawback, however the final cost may not be known until after the works have commenced.

10. Carer(s) encouraged to seek independent legal advice on the proposed agreement, £250 contribution from FCC to available to support this

Carers will be given information on the grant funding terms and conditions from the start of the process by the Social Worker and will also be included in the Application Form and the draft Financial Assistance Agreement.

Due to the potential large sums of money that may be approved for grant funding and the requirement for a Legal Charge to safeguard public funding, carers/ property owners are encouraged to seek independent legal advice. The local authority will support carers/ property owners to do this by means of a financial contribution, to a maximum of £250, per application.

11. Financial Assistance Agreement & Legal Charge agreed and signed by carer(s)/ property owner

The Financial Assistance Agreement and Legal Charge or Local Land Charge (as appropriate) must be signed by the carers/ property owner prior to any works commencing and funding being spent by the local authority.

The Legal Charge or Local Land Charge (as appropriate) will be completed and registered by the Flintshire's Legal Team at H.M Land Registry. Any mortgage consent would be required, prior to completing these legal documents; this may involve the property owner contacting the mortgagee (mortgage lending company) to obtain such consent.

12. Works commence on the property, supervised by the Regeneration Team and oversight from Social Worker

Once all the necessary permissions have been obtained, the contractor has been chosen and the legal paperwork has been signed, the Regeneration Team will instruct the chosen contractor to commence works with an agreed schedule.

The Regeneration Team will ensure that a reasonable start date is agreed, the contract between the carers/ property owners and contractor is in place and a programme of works is available.

The Regeneration Team, along with the Social Worker, will supervise the works to ensure a satisfactory standard is achieved within the agreed timeframe.

13. Contractor paid directly from Flintshire

The local authority will pay all contractors and associated costs with the proposed adaptation, as outlined within the process.

The total costs of the works and all associated costs (including but not limited to management costs, surveys and permissions) will be the final grant funding awarded and the figure subject to the Legal Charge and clawback, however the final cost may not be known until after the works have commenced.