



Adoption and Fostering Housing Allocation Policy

1. Introduction

An agreement is in place between Birmingham City Council's Housing Department and the Trust's Adoption and Fostering Service relating to the allocation of accommodation to support the adoption and fostering process.

Due to the regulatory frameworks in which both services operate it has been agreed that the Adoption and Fostering Service has a departmental framework which addresses the relevant legislative standards.

It is Birmingham Children's Trust's Fostering Policy that:

- Babies require their own rooms.
- Different sex children cannot share bedrooms.
- Young children cannot share bedrooms as this is dependent on their personal history of abuse.
- Non related same sex children cannot share bedrooms.
- Birth children cannot share rooms with foster children.

The relevant regulations from adoption and fostering are outlined in the Fostering the National Minimum Standards 2015 which are outlined in the following sections.

2. Fostering National Minimum Standards

STANDARD 10: Providing a Suitable Physical Environment for the Foster Child

Section 26 – Assessment of Prospective Foster Parents

Schedule 3 – Information as to prospective foster parent and other members of their household and family.

Outcomes:

Children live in foster homes which provide adequate space, to a suitable standard. The child enjoys access to a range of activities which promote his or her development.

10.1) The foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there including, where appropriate, any suitable aids and adaptations provided and fitted by suitably trained staff when caring for a disabled child.

10.2) The foster home is warm, adequately furnished and decorated, is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene and is in good order throughout. Outdoor spaces which are part of the premises are safe, secure and well maintained.

10.3) Foster carers are trained in health and safety issues and have guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a family home.

10.4) Foster carers understand the service's policy concerning safety for children in the foster home and in vehicles used to transport foster children. The service's policy is regularly reviewed in line with the most recent guidance from relevant bodies.

10.5) The foster home is inspected annually, without appointment, by the fostering service to make sure that it continues to meet the needs of foster children.

10.6) In the foster home, each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child's responsible authority and each child has their own area within the bedroom. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom, the fostering service provider takes into account any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour, the wishes of the children concerned and all other pertinent facts. The decision making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed.

3. Adoption National Minimum Standards

STANDARD 9 – Providing a Suitable Physical Environment for the Child

This standard applies to:

- Adoption Agencies
- Adoption Support Agencies

Underpinning Legislation

Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005
Regulation 24 Requirement to Provide Counselling, Information and Preparation for Adoption
Regulation 30 Prospective Adopter's Report
Regulation 31 Proposed Placement
Regulation 36 Reviews

Further Guidance

Statutory guidance Adoption July 2014 - Chapters 3 and 5.

9.1) The adoption agency ensures during the assessment of the prospective adopters' suitability to adopt, that the prospective adopters' home can comfortably accommodate all who live there. It is warm, adequately furnished and decorated, free of avoidable hazards, is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene and is in good order throughout. Outdoor spaces, which are part of the premises are safe, secure and well maintained.

4. Housing Allocations Policy

Birmingham City Council's Housing Allocations policy states that:-

- The award of additional preferences will be given following a referral from the Children's Trust to those foster carers and adopters who are at a stage in the assessment process where the responsible adoption/fostering service team manager is able to provide an in principle recommendation or where they have been formally approved and whose housing prevents them from being able to start or continue to provide foster care to a Children's Trust looked after or former looked after child.
- The award will also be given to special guardians, holders of a Child Arrangement Order (Residence) and connected persons who are at a stage in the assessment process where the responsible adoption/fostering team manager is able to provide an in principle recommendation or where they have been formally approved to provide long term care of children because the parents are unable to provide care and there is a potential for the children to become Looked after by Birmingham Children's Trust and there is a need to move to larger accommodation in order to accommodate the children. The award will be given following a referral from the Children's Service.

The New joint Birmingham policy requires that the Adoption and Fostering Service:-

1. Undertake the Initial Visit and Stage 1 Process and agree that there is sufficient potential in the application to move towards approval, apart from the housing situation.
2. The application will be progressed to Stage 2.
3. The applicants will make an application for rehousing – ticking the box on the application form which refers to a need for a move as fostering and adoption and that they are not barred from applying due to unacceptable behaviour or issues relating to previous tenancies.
4. The Housing Department will email the Adoption and Fostering Team to confirm that the applicants are progressing and that Adoption and Fostering Team supports the application for re-housing.
5. The applicants will need to be proactive in bidding for appropriate properties and will not be presented to the Panel until that application has been successful. Adoption and Fostering will record on their system the fact that housing is a delay in the timescales not being achieved.
6. If the application is not approved or the carers resign or withdraw a notification will be sent to the Housing Department.

Note: It should be acknowledged that legal advice and support regarding this issue needs to be sought and that the service is prioritising long term fostering and permanent placements.