

# Family Based Care

## Brokerage Guidelines



## Terminology

The Family Based Care Investment Specification references service users as:

- Children and young people aged under 18 years requiring kinship care and/or enhanced family connections (U2261)
- Prospective Kinship Carer Household (U6000)
- Approved Kinship Carer Household (U6001)
- Prospective Foster Carer Household (U6002)
- Approved Foster Carer Household (U6003)

For the purposes of this Brokerage Guideline document, the generic terms of:

- ❖ “carer” is used to refer to prospective and approved kinship or foster carers;
- ❖ “children and young people” identifies children and young people aged under 18 years subject to the custody or guardianship of Chief Executives under the *Child Protection Act 1999*.
- ❖ “service user/s” is used in relation to children and young people, carers, other household members or a combination of all.

## Background

Brokerage funds are provided to organisations as a component of investment in Family Based Care (FBC) service delivery. The primary aim of brokerage is to improve access to or assist carer households to provide or maintain care arrangements for children or young people within their care.

## Purpose of Funding

Brokerage can be defined as the purchase of goods or service that will support the service to achieve outputs and intended outcomes. These may be further identified within the:

- Child or young person’s case plan
- Placement agreement
- FBC agency support plan

Brokerage can also be used to respond to emergent needs identified by the FBC service before they are able to be recorded by departments regular reviews of case plans and placement agreements.

Brokerage funds are allocated on the premise that their timely expenditure will target service user needs and address those needs that may otherwise destabilise an existing care arrangement or prevent a care arrangement from being provided in the first place.

## Scope

These guidelines relate to brokerage funding provided to the service types within FBC Investment Specifications listed below: -

- Connecting Kin (T210)
- Equipping Kin (T211)
- Supporting Kin (T212)
- Foster Care Recruitment (T213)
- Supporting Foster Care (T214)



## Principles

The use of brokerage for FBC services is guided by the following principles:

- ❖ **Flexibility** - the use of brokerage funds is driven by choice and flexibility in services and may be applied at any point during the service user's engagement with the service
- ❖ **Focused** - brokerage support is responsive to and driven by the expressed need of the service user and is respectful of their rights, dignity and confidentiality; and
- ❖ **Case Management** - brokerage funds are used within a case management context to enable service users to access a range of goods, resources and services they may need to achieve the outcomes outlined in the child or young person's case plan, placement agreement, foster care agreement or FBC agency support plan. This is particularly important for carer households with multiple needs as it improves access to specialist support and services. Interventions purchased with brokerage funds are assessed and negotiated in collaboration with the service user. Responses are tailored to the specific needs of the service user. A level of assessment and planning should be put in place prior to, or concurrently with, the use of brokerage funds.

## Value for Money and Expenditure Aspects to Consider

Goods or services purchased with brokerage funds are to be as cost effective as possible. When deciding to commit brokerage funds, consideration is given to whether the intended expenditure is the best use of resources to meet the identified goals within the child or young person's case plan, placement agreement, foster care agreement or FBC agency support plan.

Prior to using brokerage funds to purchase support services or resources, available local, state, or federal secondary or universal services should be explored.

Brokerage funds should purchase timely supports, services and resources on a short term or episodic basis in response to an immediate need.


If the purchase of smoke alarms is being considered please refer to the department's site [Smoke alarm installation project](#). Brokerage may be used to install smoke alarms if the carer is not approved but adherence to the details in the Smoke alarm installation project such as using a certified electrician must be followed.

Longer term financial supports to a child or young person or carer may be provided by application of additional care allowances (High Support Needs or Complex Support Needs Allowances), an Individualised Placement and Support Package or supports through other schemes managed outside the department, for example the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The decision about the application of other supports is to be discussed at a carer's placement agreement meeting and outcomes recorded in any updated placement agreement.

## Meeting emergent need but avoiding duplication of service provision

Brokerage funds are used to purchase goods, services or activities only when existing services, supports or resources cannot meet the identified needs of the service user or are not readily accessible.

When emergent needs are identified, either because services users are new and a full assessment of their needs is not yet completed or documented, such as in a carer's placement agreement, brokerage funds should be used to immediately meet the identified need.



When the need is ongoing, FBC services will support the identification of these needs through regular communication at planned placement agreement meetings and as required between planned meetings. Services will contribute information on how any support can or has been met through available brokerage funding.

Communication and participation at placement agreement meetings by FBC services will support approved foster carers or kinship carers understand processes for consideration and applying for:

- Reimbursement through [Child Related Costs \(CRC\)](#)
- Additional Carer Allowances such as:
  - Establishment Allowance
  - Start-up Allowance
  - High Support Needs Allowance (HSNA)
  - Complex Support Needs Allowance (CSNA)
- Additional Individualised Placement and Support (IPS) packages

The immediate application of brokerage funds to meet an emergent need between routine placement agreement meetings can serve as evidence for consideration of other financial supports required by the carer.

Brokerage can be used by FBC agencies to assist service users to:

- purchase goods or services
- access specialist support, where it is not possible to arrange timely access to an existing free service
- meet a service user's immediate needs where no other options are directly available.

As a general rule, any items or assets purchased with brokerage funds for the direct use by a child/young person should remain the property of the child/young person and be 'portable'. The term 'portable' means that if the child/young person should change care arrangement or be reunified with their parent/s, then the item/asset will go with the child/young person. Such goods purchased for children or young people should also be documented within the Placement Agreement.

#### **Examples of short-term support options funded through brokerage within a case management context:**

- provision of financial assistance to obtain identification documents, e.g. Birth Certificate
- purchase of goods and services to ensure a residence is safe and meets relevant standards of care requirements (*If the property is owned by Qld Government the service must seek the permission of the Qld Government before commencing any repairs or upgrades to the premises*).
- provision of services to assist with in-home support, e.g. house cleaning and yard maintenance
- access to transportation assistance (including purchase of Australian/New Zealand standard [AS/NZS1754] approved car capsules and seats)
- purchase of material aid such as white goods or additional food (for establishment of a new care arrangement)
- purchase specialist services that are not offered by the agency or are unavailable from other free service providers due to lack of immediate vacancy or long waitlists. Specialist services may include but are not limited to:

- healing services
- counselling/ therapeutic services
- specific carer development opportunities
- respectful family relationship support
- mental health and wellbeing support

### Limits on Brokerage Expenditure

It is expected that FBC services will utilise brokerage funds to directly pay for goods and services on behalf of service users.

Brokerage funds are not to be used:

- to duplicate the provision of one-off financial assistance or any other form of Emergency Relief
- to reimburse a worker already employed within the FBC service
- for direct cash payments or any other form of reimbursement to service users
- where it has already been approved to be met by CRC or included in the assessment of an additional care allowance (HSNA/ CSNA).

### Accountability

Brokerage funding for service users is calculated by the department according to service type and services can expend funds with flexibility based on carer or children and young people’s needs.


The annual brokerage amount for a service outlet is delineated by table rows within section 5 FUNDING DETAILS of the Funding Schedule.

Any unspent brokerage funding may be recovered by the department for application to priorities consistent with existing investment or strategic goals.

The FBC service is responsible for:

- quarantining brokerage funds from administration and organisational expenses
- covering the outlay of managing brokerage funds within the general administrative costs of the service
- developing policy and procedure for managing demand for brokerage funding, including eligibility requirements and assessment processes
- reporting brokerage expenditure and outcomes via the identified performance measures within section 7.1 *Performance measures* of the Funding Schedule and in alignment with the [Queensland Care Services Outcomes Framework](#). Noting that reporting measures for brokerage spending will vary across the different service types and domains of the Queensland Care Services Framework as reflected below:

| Service Type   | Measure   |
|----------------|---|
| Connecting Kin | Value of brokerage expenditure to assist Service Users within the <b>Connected</b> domain         |
| Equipping Kin  | Value of brokerage expenditure to assist Service Users within the <b>Safe and Nurtured</b> domain |



|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Supporting Kin          | Value of brokerage expenditure to assist children and young people across <b>all five</b> domains (Safe and Nurtured, Connected, Achieving, Healthy and Resilient) |
| Foster Care Recruitment | Value of brokerage expenditure to assist Service Users within the <b>Safe and Nurtured</b> domain  |
| Supporting Foster Care  | Value of brokerage expenditure to assist children and young people across <b>all five</b> domains (Safe and Nurtured, Connected, Achieving, Healthy and Resilient) |

- confirming that funds have been expended for their intended purpose and develop processes to identify, manage and account separately for expenditure via the financial reporting format specified within section 7.2. *Data, statement and reports You are to submit*, of the Funding Schedule and
- ensuring that brokerage funds provided by the department are used in accordance with these guidelines.