
EXTENSION OF FUNDING TO 21 FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide information on the requirements to enable Looked After Children to remain with their foster carers up until age 21 in 'Staying Put'.

Summary

2. Section 98 of the Children & Families Act 2014 addresses the arrangements for care leavers living with former foster parents after reaching adulthood.
3. This places a duty on the Local Authority, a duty to provide 'Staying Put' arrangements for a former Looked After Child to continue to live together with their former foster carer.
4. The local authority will monitor the 'Staying Put' arrangement and will provide advice, assistance and support to the young person and the former foster carer with a view to maintaining the 'Staying Put' arrangement. This support includes financial support and should be available until the young person is 21. All arrangements will be made in the best interests of the young person and with consent by all parties.
5. The benefit of a 'Staying Put' arrangement for a young person is primarily about extending a familiar relationship in which young people continue to experience security and stability.
6. The key aims are to:-
 - (a) Enable young people to build on and nurture their attachments to their carer's, so that they can move to independence at their own pace and be supported to make the transition to adulthood in a more gradual way just like the other young people who can rely on their families for this support.
 - (b) Provide the stability and support necessary for young people to achieve in education, training and employment.
 - (c) Give weight to young people's views about the timing of moves to greater independence from their final care placement.

7. In July 2014 the Government published the 'Staying Put' – good practice guide with the purpose of promoting good practice so as to ensure that care leavers are provided with the maximum possible opportunity to thrive as adults. The guide builds upon the statutory guidance on 'Staying Put' which is contained in the May 2014 revision of the Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 3: Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers.
8. 'Staying Put' also fits within the Public Service Agreement 2 National Indicators 147 and 148, which identify whether:-
 - (a) The young person is living in suitable accommodation;
 - (b) The young person is in Education, Training or Employment.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) The contents of the report are noted by Scrutiny;
 - (b) The statutory requirements to extend the funding are noted as budgetary pressures.

Jenni Cooke
Service Director

Background Papers

'Staying Put' Arrangements for Care Leavers aged 18 and above to stay on with their former foster carers, DfE, DWP & HMRC

Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 3: Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers, revision January 2015

Children & Families Act 2014

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Continued residence in a family environment has a positive impact on behaviour
Health and Well Being	Continued residence in a family environment has a positive impact on behaviour
Carbon Impact	Continued residence in a family environment has a positive impact on behaviour
Diversity	Impact across all communities and groups
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	Care leavers
Budget and Policy Framework	
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	'Best Start in Life'.
Efficiency	No

MAIN REPORT

Implementing 'Staying Put' arrangements in Darlington

10. Implementing 'Staying Put' arrangements requires that from the start all foster carers are aware of the expectation that foster carers caring for children in Darlington will continue to offer to provide placements beyond the young person reaching the age of 18.
11. All prospective foster carers are provided with training regarding 'Staying Put' arrangements as part of their initial Skills to Foster training programme.
12. The Tees Valley Commissioning Framework which identifies suitable foster placements from Independent Fostering Agencies has also included the specific requirement that foster carers are trained and understand the need to continue to offer placements beyond a young person's 18th birthday.

Planning for 'Staying Put' arrangements

13. Discussions start as early as possible with the young person and foster carer regarding the option of 'Staying Put', ideally before the young person reaches the age of 16. The conversation should include what changes there will be and what to expect.
14. Support and encouragement is given to the young person to progress in their education or employment but not being in education, training or employment should not preclude a young person from benefiting from a 'Staying Put' arrangement.
15. In Darlington we provide a framework to allow care leavers at university to return to their former carers during vacation time, and young people who commence basic

training with the armed services to return to their carers during breaks. This reflects the ongoing support which would be available to young people living in supportive families.

16. The 'Staying Put' arrangements are supported by the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator. Supervision sessions take place between the foster carer/s and the coordinator. Support meetings are held with the foster carer, social worker/personal advisor, young person and the coordinator.
17. The support meeting monitors how the arrangement is progressing, what independent living skills the young person is achieving and identifies areas where the young person needs extra support.
18. The young person is expected to make a financial contribution towards the arrangement and start to use their living allowance for hobbies/toiletries and clothing. This is part of their preparation to independence. This is currently £20 per week.
19. 'Staying Put' in Darlington reflects the Government's determination to improve the experiences of children in care, to challenge the poor outcomes historically experienced by young people in care, and to reduce the gap between the quality of life of young people in the care of the local authority and those raised in supportive families.

Current 'Staying Put' Arrangements in Darlington

20. There are currently five internal 'Staying Put' arrangements in Darlington. The internal placements are for those young people who have been placed prior to their 18th birthday with Darlington Borough Council approved foster carers. The foster carers are supported by the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator.
21. At the present time two young people are in external 'Staying Put' arrangements with foster carers provided by an Independent Fostering Agency. The foster placement was initially commissioned through the Tees Valley Framework. In this arrangement the foster carers receive support from their fostering agencies, however the Darlington 'Staying Put'/Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator will offer advice and support when needed.

Future 'Staying Put' Arrangements in Foster Placements

22. There is ongoing careful monitoring of the young people who require 'Staying Put' arrangements in the future so that resources are made available and plans put in place to the young person with the transition.

Future Plans for 'Staying Put' arrangements in Children's Homes

23. The government has consulted on extending 'Staying Put' arrangements for young people who live in Children's Homes and a number of options are being considered.

Costs to the Local Authority

24. The costs to local authorities will depend on the number of young people who choose to stay put, how long they stay for and the level of financial support offered to the carer.
25. Unlike foster care, there are no national standards about the minimum allowance that carers should receive.
26. The current arrangements are as follows:-
- (a) Independent Fostering Agency: £340 per week;
 - (b) Internal: Dependent upon whether or not a professional fee paid. Basic payment is approximately £160 per placement, or with £75 or £100 or £150 added if no other children in placement.

Costs 2014/15 based on the current numbers

	Expenditure to date	Average per month	Projected expenditure (based on average spend)	Total Expenditure
Staying Put: IFA	25,994	2,599	6,720	32,714
Staying Put: Internal	29,333	2,933	9,696	39,030
Total				71,744

27. If a young person is at university and the 'Staying Put' arrangement is in place there is a £50 retainers agreed with internal carers. At the present time there is one arrangement with an independent foster carer and the cost is £220.
28. It is likely that in 2015/16 there will be four additional internal 'Staying Put' arrangements and two IFA 'Staying Put' arrangements. There are also likely to be two 'Staying Put' retainer arrangements, one internal and one IFA.
29. The indicative additional costs will be in the region of £50,400.

Conclusion

30. 'Staying Put' offers young people a more natural transition to adulthood and independence. It provides the kind of support that any reasonable parent would provide for their children. In terms of opportunity and outcomes for care leavers it is envisaged that 'Staying Put' arrangements will lead to increased stability, higher engagement in further and higher education and lower teenage pregnancy rates for young people.

