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**EXTENSION OF FUNDING TO AGE 21 FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide information regarding the cost of funding to age 21 for young people in foster care placements.

**Summary**

2. This report describes the legal framework that requires Local Authorities to provide Staying Put arrangements and provides details of the number of current Staying Put arrangements with the most recent costs (1 April – 30 September 2015) together with projected expenditure for the period 1 October 2015 to 31 March 2016. Additionally, an estimate of costs based upon possible arrangements for young people leaving care from foster placements between 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 is provided.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

**Alison Murphy**  
**Interim Director of Children's Services**

**Background Papers**

- (i) Good Practice Guide 2014
- (ii) Children and Families Act 2014
- (iii) Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Regulations and Guidance 2010

David Mason : Extension 5884

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Well Being	Supporting young people in their transition into adulthood.
Carbon Impact	There are no implications arising from this report.
Diversity	Supporting all young people and to enable them to reach their full potential.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected.
Groups Affected	Young people up to the age of 21 years who are in foster placements.
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	No.
Urgent Decision	No.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Ensure support for young people making the transition from care to independence meets the outcome of children with the best start in life.
Efficiency	That young people leaving care are supported in that transition.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

#### Legal Requirements

4. The duty on Local Authorities in England regarding Staying Put came into force on 13 May 2014, in part 5 Welfare of Children (98) of the Children and Families Act 2014.
5. The duty requires Local Authorities to facilitate, monitor and support staying put arrangements for young people who are in foster care until they reach the age of 21, where this is what they and their foster carers want, unless the authority considers that the staying put arrangement is not consistent with the welfare of the young person.
6. The Department for Education has updated statutory guidance and a Good Practice Guide to support local authorities in the implementation of Staying Put arrangements.
7. Darlington has developed a policy and procedures to support Staying Put arrangements in accordance with legislation and national guidance.

## **Implementing Staying Put arrangements in Darlington**

8. A staying Put arrangement is not the same as a foster placement. The young person Staying Put must be a 'former relevant' young person (refer to definitions in Appendix 1). The young person is entitled to support as a care leaver and has an allocated Personal Advisor.
9. The key aims are to:
  - (a) Enable young people to build on and nurture their attachments to their carers, so 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 other young people who can rely on their families for this support
  - (b) Provide the stability and support necessary for young people to reach their potential in education, training and employment
  - (c) Enable young people's views about the timing of moves to further independence to be taken into account
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 is used to for the identification of suitable foster placements from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) requires foster carers to understand the need to continue to offer placements beyond a young person's 18th birthday.
13. To support local authorities in the implementation and supporting of Staying Put arrangements a grant has been provided based upon numbers of Looked After children within the authority. The grant paid to Darlington Borough Council for the period 2015/2016 is £31,557.00. The government has recently announced additional funding for 2016/17 for local authorities support their young people to continue living with their foster families beyond age 18 to age 21. Actual amounts have yet to be announced.

## **Planning for Staying Put Arrangements**

14. 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.
15. Support and encouragement is given to the young person to progress in their education or employment. Not being in education, training or employment should not preclude a young person from benefiting from a Staying Put arrangement.

16. In Darlington we provide a framework to allow care leavers at university to return to their former carers during vacation time. In addition young people who commence basic training with the armed services can to return to their carers during breaks.
17. 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 with the frequency and format of the sessions mutually agreed. Support meetings are held with the foster carer, social worker/personal advisor, young person and the coordinator. The focus of these meetings is to ensure the young person's plan remains appropriate and relevant.
18. As part of their preparation for independence the young person is expected to make a financial contribution towards the Staying Put arrangement. This comes from their living allowance for hobbies/toiletries and clothing. The contribution by the young person is £20.00.
19. Staying Put in Darlington reflects the Government's determination to improve the experiences of children in care, challenge the poor outcomes historically experienced by young people in care and help 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 Arrangement figures**

20. 30 September 2015: 11 young people were in Staying Put Arrangements.
21. Of these 9 remained with their Darlington Borough Council approved foster carers and 2 with foster carers from Durham County Council and North Yorkshire. In addition during this period 1 young person has spent some time post 18 years with an Independent Fostering Agency which accounts for the IFA spend in the first 6 months of this year.
22. Cost of Internal Provision ranges from £130.00 - £162.32 dependent upon age and individual circumstances.
23. The cost of Independent Fostering Agency provision agreed as part of the Tees Valley Framework is £340 per week.
24. During the coming six months the number of young people who are expected to remain in their foster placements is 12. 11 with DBC and 1 with an IFA.

### **Current Costs**

25. Staying Put - Costs

IFA	2,288.60
Internal	37,056.52
Co-ordinator Salary	9,555.06
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48,900.18</b>

## Future costs

26. These costs include the 11 young people currently in placement for the full 6 month period together with young people who will be 18 years old and remain with their currently foster carer for varying time periods during the 26 week period.

### Staying Put (predicted costs)

From 1 October 2015 – 31 March 2016

IFA	2,040.00
Internal Provision	47,455.54
Staffing	10,805.64
<b>Totals</b>	<b>60,301.18</b>

## Future demand (1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017)

27. There are 8 young people who will be leaving care from foster placements in the year 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 where a Staying Put arrangement is a possible option. Of these 8 young people five may remain with internal foster carers and 3 with IFA foster carers.
28. The young people calculated for in the tables above will still be in placement at the same time the cohort of 8 young people detailed above. The estimate costs for Staying Put arrangements during 1 March 2016 – 31 March 2017 are detailed below.

## Staying Put (predicted costs 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017)

IFA	44,882.00
Internal	123,157.32
Co-ordinator Salary	21,611.28
<b>Totals</b>	<b>189,650.60</b>

## Monitoring

29. 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 additional support.
30. The regular monitoring is particularly focused upon the preparation of young people for living independently. A planned move with ongoing support from the foster carer replicates the gradual move for the young person leaving home when the time is right for them.
31. The increase over the past 12 months of those young people for whom it is appropriate to remain with their previous foster carers beyond 18 years and up to 21 years has required additional coordinator time. The co-ordinator post within Family Placement Service was increased from 18.5 to 22 hours weekly to provide

this additional support both in the Staying Put arrangements and in the planning stages.

## Benefits and Risks

32. The impact of foster carers offering Staying Put placements means a reduction in the number of foster placements with regard to both internal and external provision. There will potentially be a cost to the fostering service of reassessing carers who have ceased fostering due to Staying Put and then wish to resume at the end of the arrangement or maintaining a carer's fostering registration for the duration of Staying Put with a reduced placement capacity. To address the impact on the capacity of the fostering service due to Staying Put there has been a focus on the recruitment of foster carers who will provide placements for children and young people aged between 5 – 17 years.
33. There has been success over recent years in the recruitment of internal foster carers. However the availability of in-house foster carers does not fully meet demand. There is a risk that the Staying Put policy will lead to further pressure on the in-house foster carer resource which may lead to a need to utilise additional agency placements.
34. Similar issues arise for the Independent Fostering Agencies commissioned via the Tees Valley Framework in terms for availability of placements. This is discussed as part of the on-going quarterly monitoring of the Tees Valley Framework by Local Authorities and representatives from the Independent Fostering Agencies.
35. Impact of Staying Put arrangements on young people

Currently young people who are or have recently been in Staying Put arrangements have been able, with the support of their carers and Personal Advisors, to access college, training and employment opportunities as well as working towards moving into fully independent living. The following examples are typical of the journey of Darlington's young people:

- (a) Employed and in the process of purchasing their own property with their partner
- (b) Attending college and will have a period in a 'taster flat' in the New Year
- (c) Attending college and now living independently in their own flat
- (d) Employed, attending college and will have a period in the 'taster flat' in the New Year

36. The benefits of maintaining a stable home environment with various levels of support assist with the difficult transition to adulthood that many young people in the care system have previously not been afforded.

### **Priorities for the coming six months**

37. Training for prospective foster carers regarding Staying Put to be developed using 'experts by experience' which includes both foster carers who have provided placements and young people who have remained in Staying Put arrangements.
38. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of Staying Put arrangements using the current placement start base line information and placement outcomes.

## **Definitions**

The Local Authority has a duty towards eligible and relevant and former relevant children:

### **Eligible**

are those Young People still in care aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14.

### **Relevant**

are Young People aged 16 or 17 who have already left care, and who were looked after for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14, and have been looked after at some time while 16 or 17.

### **Former Relevant**

are Young People aged 18-21 who have been eligible and/or relevant Children In Care - Young People who are looked after by a Local Authority either through a compulsory Care Order or remanded or accommodated by voluntary agreement including accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act.