
EXTENSION OF FUNDING TO AGE 21 FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

2. The report details the legal framework that requiring Local Authorities to provide Staying Put Arrangements and the number of current Staying Put Arrangements. The report also includes the most recent costs 1 September 2015 – 30 September 2016 together with projected expenditure for the period 1 October 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Recommendations

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

Reasons

4. To give Scrutiny Members oversight and knowledge of the Staying Put Arrangements in Darlington.

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Background Reports:

Good Practice Guide 2014
Children and Families Act 2014
Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Regulations and Guidance 2010

S17 Crime and Disorder	Provision of Staying Put placements gives support to care leavers until such time as they are able to live independently.
Health and Well Being	Provision of Staying Put placements gives support to care leavers until such time as they are able to live independently.
Carbon Impact	Not applicable
Diversity	Staying Put Arrangements provide placements for young people with a diverse range of needs.
Wards Affected	All depending upon location of Staying Put provider.
Groups Affected	Young people and carers.
Budget and Policy Framework	Provision of Staying Put services is within a Regulatory Framework and resources provided by grants, housing benefits and some social care contribution.
Key Decision	Provision of Staying Put services are within a Regulatory Framework.
Urgent Decision	Not applicable.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Care Leavers provision across the DBC area and within local authorities outside of the Borough depending upon the location of the foster carer.
Efficiency	

MAIN REPORT

Legal Requirements

5. 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.
6. The duty requires local authorities to facilitate, monitor and support Staying Put arrangements for fostered young people until they reach the age of 21, where this is what they and their foster carers want, unless the authority consider that the staying put arrangement is not consistent with the welfare of the young person.
7. The Department for Education (DfE) has updated statutory guidance and a Good Practice Guide to support local authorities in the implementation of Staying Put Arrangements.
8. In Darlington a policy and procedure has been written and actions implemented in order to provide the Staying Put Arrangements, in accordance with change in legislation and DfE guidance.

Implementing Staying Put Arrangements in Darlington

9. A Staying Put Arrangement is not the same as a foster placement. The young person staying put must be a former relevant child, is no longer a looked after children but a young adult and a care leaver. The young person is entitled to support as a care leaver and has an allocated Personal Advisor.
10. The key aims are to:
 - (a) Enable young people to build on and nurture their attachments to their carers 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.
11. Implementing Staying Put Arrangements requires that foster carers caring for children in Darlington are aware of the expectation and will continue to offer to provide placements beyond the young person reaching the age of 18.
12. All prospective foster carers are provided with training regarding Staying Put Arrangements as part of their initial Skills to Foster Training Programme.
13. The Tees Valley Commissioning Framework which used to be identification of suitable foster placements from Independent Fostering Agencies has also included in the Specification the 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

14. Discussions before the young person reaches the age of 16 start as early as possible with the young person and foster carer regarding the option of Staying Put Arrangement. The discussion includes what changes there will be and explains these within the Staying Put Arrangement.
15. Support and encouragement is given to the young person to progress in their education or employment but not being in either 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, and young people who commence basic training with the armed services to return to their carers during breaks. This reflects the ongoing support that is available to young people living in supportive families.
17. The Staying Put Arrangements are supported by the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator, a post provided by the local authority. Supervision sessions take place between the foster carer/s and the Co-ordinator and the frequency and

format of the sessions are mutually agreed. There is flexibility within this to increase supervision sessions when needed. Support meetings are held with the foster carer, social worker/personal advisor, young person and the Co-ordinator, during which the young person's plan is the focus and the plan is changed to ensure that it remains appropriate and relevant.

18. The young person is expected to make a financial contribution towards the arrangement and to begin to use their living allowance for hobbies/toiletries and clothing. This is part of their preparation to independence and 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, 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.

Darlington Staying Put Arrangement Figures

20. As of 30 September 2016 - eight young people were in Staying Put Arrangements. Of these 7 remained with their Darlington Borough Council approved foster carers and 1 young person with their previous IFA foster carers.
21. Cost of Internal Provision ranges from £130.00 - £162.32 dependent upon age and individual circumstances.
22. The cost of Independent Fostering Agency provision agreed as part of the Tees Valley Framework is £340 per week.
23. Within the past 12 months 10 young people have moved on from their Staying Put placements into a variety of alternative provision.
 - (a) 30% – Moved to live with family/University
 - (b) 40% – Moved to their own tenancy/semi-independent provision
 - (c) 30% – Remain with their foster carers post Staying Put arrangement
24. In the 12 month period up until 30 September 2017 there are eight young people currently placed with DBC and IFA foster carers who may remain in Staying Put arrangements with their current fosters. At the present time four young people have confirmed this arrangement and plans will be put in place to draw up agreements to convert the fostering placement to a Staying Put arrangement. The remaining four young people will be supported by their social worker and personal adviser to consider Staying Put arrangements post their 18th birthday.
25. 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 2016/2017 is £47,335.00 this is paid in four quarterly instalments and is held within the Leaving Care budget. The grant has in the past been calculated on the

number of Looked After Children and has been different each year since 2014. There has been no confirmation that further DfE grant funding beyond 31 March 2017 will be made available to local authorities in respect of further support for Staying Put Arrangements.

26. Projected costs for the year ending 31 March 2017 for Staying Put Arrangements including both DBC and IFA placements together with the salary and mileage costs for the Staying Put Co-ordinator is £85,568.81. These costs are approximately 50% less than the predicted costs for the year ending March 2017 of £189,650.60. This estimate was calculated giving the maximum number of young people who had the option to remain in a Staying Put Arrangement. Of these, with a high yearly cost attached were 3 young people for whom Staying Put Arrangements were considered to be an option with their Independent Fostering agency carers. However, once approaching their 18th birthday they had a change of plan and chose an alternative leaving care arrangement. In addition to these particular young people a number of young people have chosen to move into semi-independent living provision earlier than anticipated or have returned home/university thereby reducing the estimated costs of Staying Put provision over this period.

Monitoring and Evaluation

27. Prior to a young person reaching the age of 18 years their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will oversee the Pathway Plan and will be involved in ensuring where appropriate that Staying Put Arrangements are considered. Following the young person reaching the age of 18 years and the Staying Put Arrangement having commenced monitoring of the Staying Put Arrangement will be via regular support meetings.
28. The support meeting which includes the young person, Staying Put carers, Personal Advisor and the carers supporting worker 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.
29. The regular monitoring is particularly focused upon the preparation of young people for living independently. This works particularly well, when the young person is supported with their plan for living independently by their previous foster carer and personal advisor. 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.
30. The increase over the year 2014/2015 of those young people for whom it is appropriate to remain with their previous foster carers beyond 18 years and up to 21 years required additional Co-ordinator time. The Co-ordinator post within Family Placement Service was increased in October 2015 from 18.5 to 22 hours weekly to provide additional support to foster carers providing staying put arrangements. This increase has also given some flexibility to support during the planning stages of both internal and external staying put arrangements.

Benefits and Risks

31. Foster carers offering Staying Put placements will mean a reduction in the number of foster placements with regard to both internal and external provision, as the expectation for them to provide care longer to a young person than 18 years is required. 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 Staying Put arrangement or maintaining a carer's fostering registration for the duration of Staying Put with a reduced placement capacity. The fostering service anticipate the impact of Staying Put to their capacity and growth targets and are currently focused upon the recruitment of foster carers to provide placements for children and young people aged between 5 – 17 years.
32. 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 being placed on the in-house foster carer resource, which could lead potentially to a need for agency placements.
33. Where external foster placements are commissioned via the Tees Valley Framework there is also the issue with the continuation of placements for young people beyond the age of 18 years and up to 21 years of age that over time this may adversely affect availability of placements from the Independent Fostering Agencies. This issue is discussed as part of the ongoing monitoring of the Tees Valley Framework and operational managers and representatives from the Independent Fostering Agencies monitor and highlight trends in placement needs as part of their quarterly meetings.
34. Priorities for the coming six months:
 - (a) To work with young people to design new Agreement and Independent Living Skills paperwork for both Staying Put and Supported Lodgings Arrangements.
 - (b) Where Staying Put Arrangements are not the preferred option for young people Supported Lodgings is often a useful alternative. A Recruitment Campaign in January 2017 including articles and open evenings is planned to increase the number of Supported Lodgings providers.
 - (c) The Co-ordinator for Staying Put and Supported Lodgings to be part of the local marketing forum in Darlington to ensure all opportunities to share information and to have access to other organisation that can provide advice and support.