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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 previous foster care placements.

**Summary**

2. The report details the legal framework requiring Local Authorities to provide Staying Put arrangements and the number of current Staying Put arrangements. The report also includes the cost from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, together interim figures, and projected expenditure for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

**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  
HM Government "Staying Put" DfE, DWP and HMRC Guidance 2013

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	Not applicable
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Provides the opportunity for young people who reside in foster placements to “stay put” and receive ongoing support and encouragement to reach their potential in life. Impact of Staying Put is positive

## 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 considers 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 provided a Good Practice Guide to support local authorities in the implementation of Staying Put arrangements.

8. In Darlington a policy and procedure is available in order to clarify Staying Put arrangements, in accordance with 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, and is no longer a looked after child 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 from the Looked After and Through Care Team.
10. The key aims of “Staying Put” 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 young people are aware of the expectations and will continue 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. Further advice is available from the Fostering Supervising Social Worker and the Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Co-ordinator.
13. Darlington Borough Council is part of the Tees Valley Commissioning Framework which is used to identify suitable foster placements from Independent Fostering Agencies when in house fostering provision cannot meet need. The Commissioning Specification contains the requirement that foster carers are trained and understand the need to continue to offer placements beyond a young person’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Planning for Staying Put Arrangements**

14. Discussions when the young person reaches the age of 16 take place with the young person and foster carer regarding the option of a Staying Put arrangement. The discussion includes what support will be available within the Staying Put arrangements. These early discussions ensure that the young person and foster carer have time to consider the option and determine what is in the best interests of the young person.
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 foster 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, based within the Family Placement Service. Supervision sessions take place between the Staying Put 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. In addition, 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 dependent upon their income.
19. Staying Put in Darlington reflects the Government's commitment 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 Arrangements Data**

20. As of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018, there are 7 young people in Staying Put arrangements. Of these, 6 remained with their Darlington Borough Council approved foster carers and 1 with their IFA foster carers.
21. The cost of internal DBC 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. Between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018, 5 young people have moved on from their Staying Put placements into a variety of alternative provision.
  - 40% moved to live with extended family member
  - 20% moved to independent living with a partner
  - 20% secured their own tenancy
  - 20% continued to live as a private arrangement with their previous Staying Put carer
24. From 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018 up until 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 there are 7 young people who meet the criteria for Staying Put arrangements with their current foster carers.

At the current time 6 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. There is one young person whose plan is not yet confirmed, who will be supported by their social worker and personal adviser to consider Staying Put arrangements post their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

25. To support Local Authorities in the implementation of Staying Put arrangements a grant has been provided based upon numbers of looked after children within the authority. The grant paid to DBC for the period 2017-2018 is £48,721.00. The grant has in the past been calculated on the number of Looked After Children and is likely to be made available from 2018-19.
26. Projected costs for the year ending 31 March 2018 for Staying Put arrangements including both DBC and IFA placements, together with the salary and mileage costs for the Staying Put Co-ordinator is £106,954.69. These costs are approximately 1.47% less than the actual costs for the year ending March 2017 of £108,551.41. This evidences a very stable position, with a similar number of young people Staying Put each year.

### **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 as detailed in 17 above
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 to help them prepare for independence. A planned move with ongoing support from the former foster carer replicates the gradual move for the young person leaving home when the time is right for them.

### **Benefits of “Staying Put” for Young People and for the Service**

29. Staying Put is giving young people consistency and continuity of care and support at a key time in their lives. Of the 7 young people currently subject to Staying Put:
  - 2 young people are at University
  - 2 young people are in full time paid employment
  - 2 young person are in full time college placements
  - 1 young person has completed their college education and is working on a voluntary basis to gain work experience

All of the young people are achieving to their full potential, and the ongoing support they receive from the professional team and their Staying Put carers, contributes to their achievements.

30. In 2014-15 it was anticipated that the Staying Put scheme could result in a net loss of available foster carers and foster placements. Evidence since that time indicates that foster carers offering Staying Put placements have continued to be registered as foster carers, and we have not experienced foster carers de-registering as a result of offering Staying Put placements. There is a reduction in the number of foster placements the carer can offer when they are providing Staying Put, however at the end of the Staying Put arrangement, they are once again available for placements.
31. Darlington Borough Council took the decision at the inception of the Staying Put scheme to continue to pay a professional fee to foster carers who were offering Staying Put. The evidence indicates that this has had positive results, because we have maintained foster carers, and we have been able to offer the best possible level of support to our looked after young people
32. There is a Marketing and Recruitment Strategy 2017-20 which focuses on how we can market the fostering service to achieve increased recruitment of foster carers who are able to offer a range of foster placements to Looked after Children in Darlington. If we are able to recruit additional in house foster carers, over time more children should be able to benefit from Staying Put with DBC carers. The cost of such placements is lower than using external Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) placements. An increase in the number of in house foster placements will also provide increased resilience if the number of young people Staying Put increases in the future.
33. There is no evidence that Staying Put has reduced the availability of IFA foster placements. Staying Put placements are discussed as part of the ongoing monitoring of the Tees Valley Commissioning Framework and operational managers and representatives from the Independent Fostering Agencies monitor and highlight trends in placement needs as part of their quarterly meetings.

### **Priorities for Staying Put 2018-2019**

- a. We need to continue to give a clear message to all Darlington Borough Council foster carers about the importance of Staying Put, and our expectation that foster carers will provide Staying Put placements to young people when they reach the age of 18.
- b. There is currently a review of the DBC foster carer offer, and we need to ensure that Staying Put carers are part of any future developments.
- c. We need to continue to ensure that Social Work Teams are aware of Staying Put
- d. We need to continue to liaise with Independent Fostering Agencies to ensure that they promote the importance of Staying Put.