

**Update regarding “Staying Put” arrangements for young people previously in foster carer placements**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide updated 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 that requires 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 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, together with projected expenditure for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

**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. The impact of Staying Put is positive, enabling young people to receive similar opportunities to their peers.

## 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) provides statutory guidance and a Good Practice Guide to support Local Authorities in the implementation of Staying Put arrangements. 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**

8. 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.
9. The key aims of “Staying Put” are to:
  - 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
  - Provide the stability and support necessary for young people to achieve in education, training and employment
  - Give weight to young people’s views about the timing of moves to greater independence from their final care placement
10. 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.
11. 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. The staying put provider can access any relevant training which the service provides.
12. 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**

13. 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. The timing of the discussion centres on the individual needs of the young person and foster carer.
14. 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.
15. 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.

16. The Staying Put arrangements are supported by the Staying Put/Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator, who is based within the Fostering and Supported Lodgings Team. 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.
17. 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.
18. 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 and cost to the Local Authority**

19. As of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019, there are 10 Staying Put arrangements. Of these, 8 young people remained with their Darlington Borough Council approved foster carers and 2 young people with their previous IFA foster carers.
20. Cost of Internal Darlington Borough Council Provision ranges from £160.00 - £350.00 per week dependent upon age and individual circumstances. The most expensive placement is £350 per week, this arrangement includes the basic staying put fee, plus an additional payment which was made to the carer because of the additional needs of the young person, which was agreed prior to the staying put arrangement coming into force.
21. The cost of Independent Fostering Agency provision agreed as part of the Tees Valley Framework is £340 per week. The individual fostering agencies pay a proportion of this fee to the staying put carer. This varies depending on the individual agency.
22. Between 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018 to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019, 4 young people have moved on from their Staying Put placements into a variety of alternative provision.
  - (a) 50% remained with the former foster carer post 21 years
  - (b) 25% moved onto independent living via a "taster flat"
  - (c) 25% moved into independence, securing a tenancy with their long term partner

23. From 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019 up until 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 of the 10 young people currently placed with DBC and IFA foster carers there are 9 young people who may remain in Staying Put arrangements with their current staying put carers
24. During the time frame 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 there are 8 young people who will reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and will be eligible to become Staying Put. One young person will not be staying put, however it is likely that 7 young people in the cohort will remain with their foster carer in a staying put arrangement. Adding the current cohort to the future cohort, during the identified time period, there could be up to 16 young people in Staying Put arrangements
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 Darlington Borough Council for the period 2018-2019 is £49,680. This is paid in four quarterly instalments and is held within the Leaving Care budget. The grant is expected to be made available for 2019-20.
26. Actual costs for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017-31 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 £103,709.58.
27. The cost of Staying Put arrangements for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 was £56,454.08 for in house carers, and £14,377.14 for IFA carers, a total of £70,831.22
28. The projected cost for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 for Staying Put, including in house and IFA arrangements, together with the salary and mileage costs for the Staying Put Co-ordinator is £151,525.47. This is an increase of 46.10% which reflects the increase in the number of young people who are in staying put arrangements, and the additional cost of paying a professional fee to those foster carers who were no longer offering a foster placement, but were offering staying put only.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

29. 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
30. The support meeting which includes the young person, Staying Put carers, personal advisor and the carer's 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**

31. Staying Put is giving young people consistency and continuity of care and support at a key time in their lives. Of the 10 young people currently subject to Staying Put:

- 2 young people are at University
- 2 young people are in full time apprenticeships
- 6 young people are in full time college placements

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.

32. 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 to provide foster placements. In the time period 2016-18 there are two staying put carers who have been de-registered, they were connected foster carers providing a placement to a named child only. One carer transferred to an IFA agency.

33. 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 not lost foster carers, and we have been able to offer the best possible level of support to our looked after young people

34. 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.

35. 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 2019-2020**

- 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. Following an improved offer to foster carers, work is underway to review the offer to Staying Put carers, to ensure it is competitive and accurately reflects the work that is done to support young people in reaching their potential. Scoping work undertaken to date evidences that most Local Authorities pay a “staying put fee”. At the present time, Darlington Borough Council pay a staying put allowance and a professional fee when applicable. In order to have a more equitable and streamlined approach, it is likely we will be recommending one “staying put fee” regardless of the foster carers circumstances. This fee will be competitive with the fee paid by neighbouring authorities, and will assist in the strengthening of our offer to foster carers.
  
- c. We need to continue to liaise with Independent Fostering Agencies to ensure that they promote the importance of Staying Put.