

Staying Put Policy

1. Definition of Staying Put

1.1. From the age of eighteen young people are no longer legally 'in care' or 'looked after' and therefore fostering arrangements and legislation relating to children placed with foster carers no longer applies. In circumstances where a young person remains with their former foster carer/s after their eighteenth birthday, the arrangement should therefore be deemed an 'age eighteen and older or "Staying Put" arrangement. The term 'arrangement' should be used rather than placement; the term 'placement' denotes a situation where the local authority arranged and placed the child with a foster carer. Once the child reaches the age of eighteen and legal adulthood, the local authority is no longer making a placement, but facilitating a "Staying Put" arrangement for the young person.

1.2. Staying Put arrangements should replicate as far as possible normal family life. Foster Carers are required to care for any child with them as if they were a member of their family and this expectation should carry through into Staying Put arrangements. Families all have different rules, expectations and ways of doing things and Staying Put arrangements should take account of this and be sufficiently flexible to be tailored to individual circumstances.'

1.3. Young people who are in foster care should be able to benefit from Staying Put arrangements regardless of whether they are in education, employment or training before turning 18 years old. Where both the young person and foster carer agree to a Staying Put arrangement, and where such an arrangement is assessed as being appropriate, then all young people and foster carers will be supported to ensure that the Staying Put arrangement is pursued. Staying Put arrangements represent an extremely positive post care option for care leavers and the importance of Staying Put arrangements for care leavers will be embedded into training, assessment and supervision processes of all long term foster carers.

1.4. With the average age of leaving home in the UK rising, the primary aim of a Staying Put Policy is to promote a family setting where there is a gradual transition for young people from a stable foster placement into adulthood and independent living.

1.5. Staying Put's intention is to:

- Extend the transition to adulthood within a supportive family environment;
- Ensure young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood;

- Experience a transition similar to their peers;
- Avoid social exclusion;
- Ensure future stable housing and tenancy sustainment;
- And ensure that the gap in the quality of life between those in the care of a local authority and those raised in supportive families is significantly reduced.

2. Planning for Staying Put Placements

2.1. Social workers should start discussions with the young person and foster carers regarding the option of Staying Put as early as possible. Where a Staying Put arrangement is agreed as the plan for the child then this should be:

- Integrated into the child or young person's Pathway Plan
- Ratified by an Independent Review and the reviewing process should be used as a method of tracking the progress of this plan

3. The Young Person's Pathway Plan

3.1. The Pathway Plan will describe the details of the Staying Put arrangement and will identify how the arrangement will support the young person to develop independence skills, relationship skills, financial and budgeting skills, self-care skills, engagement skills relating to training and employment. For example;

- Preparation for adulthood and independence
- Finance, including young people's bank accounts
- Income and benefit claims
- Ground rules for friends and partners visiting and staying at the address
- Ground rules for staying away for a night weekend and informing carers of movements
- Education training and employment activities
- Health arrangements
- Move on arrangements
- Issues related to younger foster care children in the placement i.e. safeguarding,

3.2. The Pathway Plan will also reference how young people can access their leaving care grant. Although it is recognised that in most circumstances the bulk of the grant will not be made available until the young person moves on to live independently. However, some items can be purchased using the leaving care grant whilst the young person is in a staying put arrangement. These items can be taken with the young person once they move from the Staying Put residence.

4. Eligibility and Duration of the Staying Put Arrangement

- 4.1. In order to be eligible for a Staying Put arrangement the young person will need to be a former relevant child and the arrangement will need to be consistent with the young person's welfare. There is no minimum length of time that a young person needs to be placed with their foster carers before they are 18 in order to be eligible for a Staying Put arrangement.
- 4.2. The arrangement can continue up until at least 21 years old but may continue up to age 25 or 26, depending on the circumstance or needs of young person.
- 4.3. An allowance is paid to Staying Put carers to facilitate the arrangement. Young people will be expected to contribute to their upkeep and towards their rent and this contribution will be deducted from the final payment made to stay input providers.

5. Fostering and "Staying Put" Regulatory Frameworks

5.1. Where foster children are living in the "Staying Put" arrangement:

- If there are foster children living in the household along with the Staying Put young person, the checks and requirements associated with fostering legislation will continue to apply.
- The Staying Put foster carer must remain an approved foster carer and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations and Guidance 2011 will apply.
- Additionally, where foster children are in placement, the foster carers will need to be returned to the fostering panel due to a change in circumstances as the young person "Staying Put" will have reached adulthood and become an adult member of the fostering household.

5.2. Where no foster children are living in the "Staying Put" arrangement:

- If there are no other foster children in the same placement as the Staying Put young person, statutory requirements relating to fostering will not apply. However, good practice should continue to govern the expectations of the "Staying Put" arrangement when a young person reaches the age of eighteen.
- This should include:
 - Reviewing and approving the "Staying Put" arrangement and carer/s through the young person's Pathway Plan process to ensure the arrangement complies with the local Authority's expectations. The young person's Personal Advisor/Social Worker will make contact with both the young person and the Staying Put Carer within 4 weeks of the Staying Put arrangement commencing to make sure that the arrangement is working well. In line with requirements, Personal

Advisors must review the Pathway Plan six monthly to ensure that the young person's needs are being met. A written record must be kept of the outcome of the review.

- Ensuring DBS checks have been completed on household members (including the young person) and in certain circumstances regular visitors.
- Health and safety requirements (as a minimum this should comply with landlord and licensee/tenant requirements); for more information go to https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9429/322463.pdf
- Regular supervision and support for carers from their fostering Supervising Social Worker (SSW). The SSW will visit the Staying Put Carer every three months and provide support as needed.
- In circumstances where it is clear that the Staying Put Carer will not be fostering any further children, it may be deemed appropriate to terminate their approval as a foster carer. In situations where it is possible that they may foster again in the future, it would be inappropriate to terminate their approval, given the length of time that re-approval would take.
- Where a foster carer's approval is terminated the local authority will need to ensure the Staying Put arrangement continues to meet appropriate standards and continues to meet the young person's needs.

6. Status of the placement

- 6.1.1. In practical terms the intention of the change of status is that it is an extension of the foster placement . In most cases the relationship between the young person and foster carer/s will continue just as it would in any other family. However legally, the arrangement is not the same as a foster placement. The young person can no longer be a child in care once they turn 18, as they are a young adult and a care leaver.
- 6.1.2. The associated change from foster child to adult member of the household, and for the carer from foster carer to Staying Put carer, (technically the young person's landlord) should be carefully and sensitively planned. This is in order to ensure that both young people and the carer/s understand the nature of the arrangement, and that the positive aspects of being in foster care are not diminished by the new legal and financial arrangements and terminology.

- 6.1.3. The spirit behind the Staying Put arrangements is that there is an assumption from the very start of the foster placement that the young person will remain with their foster carer beyond 18.

6.2. Young people with disabilities

- 6.2.1. A young person with a disability, who meets the Fair Access to Care criteria, will at the age of 18 convert (pending assessment) to an Adult Social Care Service placement, at which point case and financial responsibility transfers to the Adult Social Care Service. Foster carers can transfer to offer a Shared Lives placement for a disabled child they have cared for, to ensure they continue to be supported and the young person has consistency in care provision. (Shared Lives is provided through the Adult Social Care Service).

It is important to emphasise that Staying Put arrangements for Children with Special Needs living outside the borough may be difficult to arrange due to differing jurisdictions. Lewisham's Adults Social Care Shared Lives arrangements are not available to Lewisham children placed in other Authorities. However, the objective, where possible, is that - where young people have an on-going cognitive disability and meet the adult services – Fair Access to Care Services criteria (Putting People First), we will encourage foster carers to convert their placements to Adult Placements/Shared Lives Arrangements when the young person reaches their eighteenth birthday.

It is important to ensure that both the young adult and the foster carer who will now become an adult placement carer have a formal regulatory and safeguarding framework that addresses their respective needs. All carers converted to Shared Lives schemes will be required to have a valid enhance DBS check and may need to undergo an assessment by Lewisham's Adult Social Care team.

7. Practical application of the process - The next stage of the young person's journey to adulthood

First stage of 'The Process'

A Pre-16 Staying Put meeting will take place 3 months prior to a young person's 16th birthday or by the second review if coming into care after 16th birthday. The Staying Put meeting should include the young person, the foster carers, the fostering social worker and the young person's social worker to discuss viability, appropriateness, key tasks, financial impact of Staying Put, expectations and process.

Second Stage At 17 ½ years Staying Put Planning Meeting

The social worker will arrange a meeting between, the young person, the foster carers, the social worker, the fostering social worker and any other relevant worker.

Third Stage of 'The Process'

The Staying Put arrangement is agreed at the next review and included in the young person's Pathway Plan including some contingency planning in case the placement does not go ahead. The Pathway Plan should consider all 8 domains and how the Staying Put arrangement will meet the young person's needs. Preparation should be made by the allocated social worker and the fostering social worker who will continue to support the young person and foster carers until the staying put arrangement starts.

8. Confirmation of Financial Arrangements

8.1. Clear information on the funding for the Staying Put arrangement must be provided to the foster carers at this stage. Information about the expectations of young people claiming housing benefit and Income Support must also be provided and discussed with the Young Person. At this stage there should also be a complete accommodation placement agreement, bank details and license agreement. All financial arrangements should be clear and transparent – see Staying Put Arrangements – A guide for Foster Carers

8.2. Payments

8.2.1. The combined 'Staying Put' payment covers all accommodation, support, utilities, food and associated placement costs; it does not cover pocket money and clothing as this will be replaced by the young person's personal benefit allowance or earnings. Travel costs other than in the event of an emergency or pre-agreed by the personal adviser will not be paid. Young people, in all circumstances, must claim all benefits they are entitled to and should be supported to do this, by their personal adviser. The local authority will fund their placement in

full, if there is any delay in benefits being received, this will then be claimed back, once the young person is in receipt of full benefits. Young people will claim Income Support from their 18th birthday.

- 8.2.2. Young people will be expected to make a contribution for their meals, utility bills and laundry costs and this contribution will be deducted from the final payment made to staying put providers. This will be £20.00 per week if the young person is claiming benefits and will be up to a maximum of £50 if the young person is working (the amount may be dependent on whether the Staying Put Carer(s) will be providing any level of transport or whether the young person will receive meals for college / work from the Staying Put Carers). The contribution that the young person will be expected to make will be assessed, negotiated and recorded in the young person's pathway plan and the staying put agreement when this is being negotiated. The young person will be supported to manage their income by the Staying Put Carer and their Personal Adviser if this is an identified need in their Pathway Plan. However, it is expected that work will have been undertaken with the young person around money management and budgeting as part of Pathway Planning prior to the age of 18.

Details of how carers are paid are in full in see [Staying Put Arrangements – A guide for Foster Carers](#)

8.3. Expectations of the arrangement

A Staying Put Placement Agreement Meeting should take place before the young person's 18th birthday so that they and the carer can identify their expectations of each other and the differences between the former foster placement and this new arrangement. This agreement should cover:

- Preparation for independence;
- Level of support to be provided by the carer;
- Young person's contributions;
- Income and benefit claims;
- Education, training and employment activities;
- Health arrangements;
- Friends and partners staying over and time spent staying away;
- Issues related to younger foster children in placement including safeguarding;
- Move-on plans.

8.4. What young people can expect of the carer

Guidance from the carer should be available to the young person, as it is in most families – this can include.;

- **Relationships**, getting on with neighbours and understanding acceptable behaviour, when and how to communicate with relevant professionals
- **Emotional Resilience**, managing isolation and where to go for support.
- **Finance and budgeting**, opening a bank account, safe borrowing, managing debt, understanding basic financial products, benefits and welfare reform; budgeting for priority bills, household appliances.
- **Cooking**, cooking healthily and shopping on a budget, understanding nutrition and its impact on overall health.
- **Managing a home**, washing and ironing, cleaning, basic DIY, operating appliances and what is allowed within the tenancy agreement;
- **Applying for jobs**, understanding strengths and areas for personal development, building self-esteem and developing job skills, understanding job/volunteering pathways and support available;
- **Understanding bursaries and other financial support**; where to go for advice; understanding the impact of work on benefits, amount they will be expected to contribute to the placement.

1.1. Living together as adults

- 1.1.1. Carers are not required to undertake an additional assessment or approval process to become 'Staying Put' carers, because it is an arrangement made between adults and is not regulated. It is important that foster carers and young people understand the difference regarding the arrangement and the expectations of supporting an adult in comparison to looking after a child.

1.2. The Living Together Agreement

- 1.2.1. Where carers and the young person have been living together for a long time, and have agreed issues such as coming in on time, having friends over, staying away overnight etc the agreement will just need updating.
- 1.2.2. Young people can make their own decisions so it's important that you have your own agreement that you can discuss together and include all boundaries and expectations. The 'living together agreement' should be based on a respect for each other. This should set out the rules and expectations of the 'Staying Put' arrangement. This is different from a placement plan, as it is an agreement between adults, but this will help both the carer and the young person be clear on the "rules of living together". In other cases, there may be real concerns about the safety of young people if they do not come back at night, so there needs to be agreement about the number of nights they can spend away from home

and whether the police are notified if they don't return etc. The Pathway Plan should record any problems or difficulties that have emerged, what is working well in the arrangement and continue to plan for the future. A review can be arranged earlier if needed by agreement between the young person, their carers and personal adviser.

2. Role of the PA

2.1.1. The Personal Advisor for young people aged 18-21 years will provide advice and support, draw up the pathway plan ensuring it addresses any changing needs. The 'Staying Put' arrangements should be reviewed as part of the Pathway Plan Review every six months and ensure any targets are being met. The young person must be involved in the preparation and review of this assessment. The Pathway Plan Review will ensure that the young person is developing and acquiring independent living skills. Keep in touch with the young person, every 6-8 weeks. Co-ordinating services, linking in with other agencies i.e. Housing, Police, Probation, Home Office, YOS, Health, Mental Health, adult services, other SCS, Drug and alcohol agencies, voluntary and private sector organisations and Education.

3. Health and Safety

3.1.1. The same health and safety principles that applied under the foster placement will continue.

4. Young people attending university returning at holiday periods

4.1.1. Living away from the foster carer's home for temporary periods of time, such as attending higher education courses, should not preclude young people from remaining in a Staying Put arrangement. It is recognised that supporting 'Staying Put' arrangements enable the continuation of familial relationships which gives the young person the security and stability they require whilst they are focusing on their education.

5. Young people attending university whilst remaining in placement

5.1.1. Some young people may wish to attend a local university and therefore remain in their 'Staying Put' placement. In these cases, the 'Staying Put' support element will be paid all year. The local authority will pay the rent element during holiday times and all other allowances paid to higher education students supported by the 18+ Service.

6. Ending the Staying Put Arrangement

6.1.1. The 'Staying Put' arrangement can be ended at any time before the young person reaches their 21st birthday, by either the young person or the carer by giving 28 days' notice. However, where there is a risk of a placement ending in an unplanned way e.g., in crisis, a Planning Meeting should be convened which will be chaired by the Team Manager of Leaving Care Service to prepare for the transition to new accommodation. If the young person wishes to remain with the carer post 21 then it will become a private arrangement, and no longer funded by the local authority. There will be circumstances whereby a planned ending to a 'Staying Put' arrangement does not work and a return to the Staying Put is in the young person's best interest.

6.1.2. Agreement would need to be made by the Head of corporate parenting for this.