

**Report for:** Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

**Item number:** 5

**Title:** Staying put arrangements

**Report**

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**Ward(s) affected:** ALL

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

1.1 To provide CPAC with an update on Staying Put for care leavers

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 Members to note

**3. Reasons for decision**

N/A

**4. Background information**

4.1 When young people living in foster care turn aged 18 they are no longer legally in 'Care' and therefore fostering arrangements no longer apply. Staying Put is an arrangement that enables a young person over the age of 18 to remain living with their carer if this is what the young person and the carer both want to happen.

4.2 A young person who continues to live with their carer post 18 effectively becomes a lodger in the Staying Put carers home. The Staying Put carer under these arrangements is in effect the landlord for the young person. Despite the legal basis changing the treatment of such young people should be no different to a fostered child.

4.3 The benefits for a young person of Staying Put is that it promotes the gradual transition from care to independent living. It recognises that many young people may be in the middle of completing their current education or requiring an immediate but time limited bridging placement prior to university or a planned move to permanent accommodation. It also recognises that some young people in care display delayed maturity and additional vulnerabilities which mean they need continued support and stability. Staying put for those young people and carers who want to follow this route minimises disruption to young people's living arrangements during a critical phase of their transition.

4.4 Research and practice show that care leavers have the best chance of success if they are supported to have the same level of care and support that their peers would expect from a reasonable parent and that they are provided with the opportunities and chances needed to help them move successfully to adulthood. Staying put provides the opportunity.

## 5. Preparing for Staying Put

5.1 Discussions about post 18 planning commence with young people before they turn 16 and are documented in pathway plans from the age of 15 ½ onwards, being reviewed and updated at least every 6 months. One element of preparing to live independently is considering where a young person would like to live post 18. Options for young people in foster care are staying put or a move to lesser supported shared accommodation prior to then moving to hold their own tenancy and full independent living.

5.2 The conversation with the young person and the foster carer about what staying put means for both parties is held. This includes exploring financial support for the staying put carer and the young person's responsibilities to the arrangement. Alternative accommodation options are explored. The aim being that the young person can make an informed choice about their post 18 accommodation.

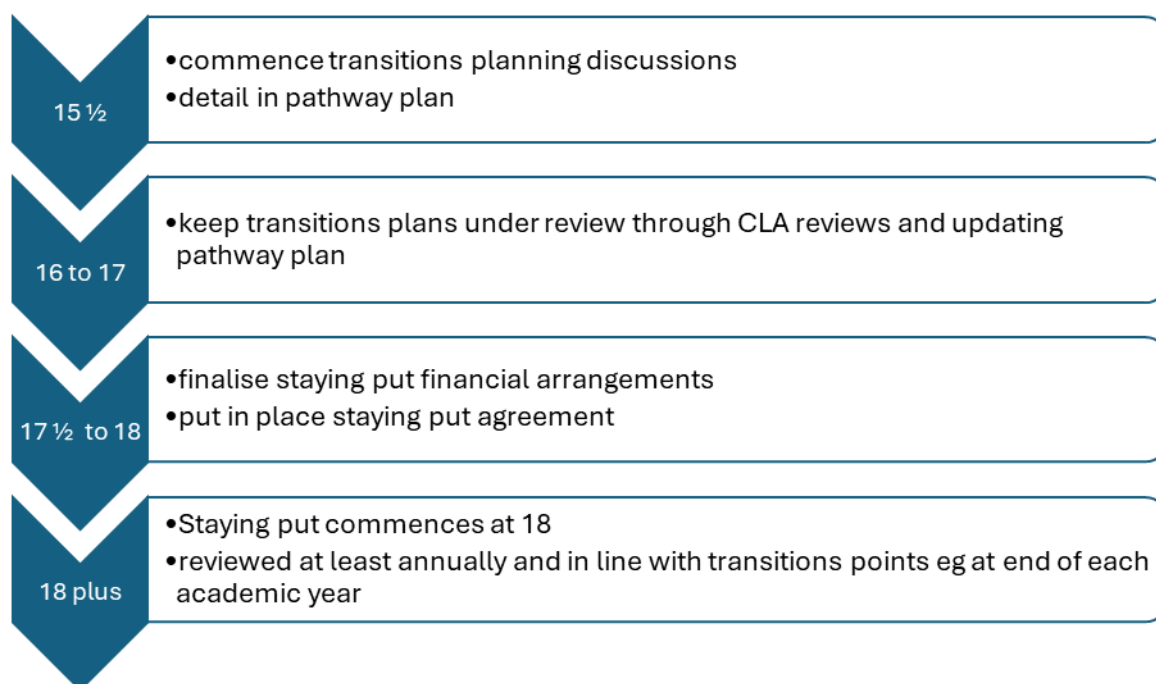
5.3 The viability of the 'staying put' arrangement should be considered at the young person's looked after review around their 17th birthday and should set out the actions required to ensure any final arrangements are in place by the young person's 18th birthday. Both the fostering service and the allocated social worker are responsible for ensuring the carer and young person are clear on the criteria and financial framework for converting the foster placement to a 'staying put' arrangement and have been fully informed of the National Insurance, Income Tax and welfare benefits issues for the foster carer(s) and welfare benefit issues for the young person.

5.4 The allocated worker and supervising social worker assist the carer and young person to complete Staying Put Agreement. Within the agreement the carer will be expected to provide oversight of the young person and continue to support the young person to gain the skills for independent living, and report any concerns to the allocated personal advisor. The carer will also be expected to keep the room in good condition and report any concerns to the fostering service.

5.5 The staying put agreement covers matters such as:

- The financial arrangements
- Preparation for independence tasks and support
- The welfare benefit claims
- Visitors and overnight stays
- Staying away overnight and informing carer of movements
- Education, training or employment (ETE) activities
- Any arrangements related to health needs
- Move on arrangements

## Summary flow chart:



Staying put arrangements are kept under review at the YAS accommodation panel to ensure that moving on plans are being progressed. The aim is that by the age of 21 staying put arrangements will have come to an end and young people will have transitioned fully to independent living.

## 6. Financial arrangements

- 6.1 The staying put carer can receive from the Young Adults Service £205 per week to support the staying put arrangement. The young person is entitled and supported to claim universal credit as they turn 18. If the staying put carer is in agreement, the young person can also claim the housing element of universal credit and this is paid to the staying put carer. This can only be claimed where the carer is not already in receipt of means tested state benefits otherwise this impacts on the income for the staying put carer. Where housing element of universal credit is claimed this amount paid to the carer by the Young Adults Service is reduced and payment made is to top up to the total of £205. Carers must be made aware of the income tax and national insurance regulations relating to post eighteen placements. In certain circumstances payments for post eighteen placements may require the completion of a relevant tax declaration. Specialist financial, benefit and tax advice should be sought in all circumstances to ensure that carers are fully aware of the implications of providing a placement to a young person over the age of eighteen. As tax and NI arrangements can change each year it is important that carers seek guidance from the HMRC annually.
- 6.2 A young persons income can be supplemented with 16 -19 education bursary, training allowances and earned income. The young person will be expected to be responsible for the bulk of their grocery costs, all of their clothing and toiletry requirements, travel etc. A contribution of £10 will be expected to be provided by the young person to their carer to cover any miscellaneous costs associated

with living in the family household, this is also in place to enhance the young person's life skills for future independent living.

## **7. Young People at University**

- 7.1 Young people who have left their placement to attend university may wish to return to their former foster carers during vacation periods with their carers agreement. In such circumstances care leavers at university receive £100 (maximum of 3 weeks at Easter, 3 weeks at Christmas and 14 weeks during the summer) contribution towards their rent during vacation periods and can use this to provide for their room. Further contributions can be arranged privately between the carer and young person for additional expenses incurred. The additional contributions from the young person will need to be made from the young person's university bursaries and grants. The payment of £205 to the care is ceased.
- 7.2 If the young person wishes to stay with the former foster carer whilst at University then the 'Staying Put' arrangement continues at the rate of £100 a week for support paid by Local Authority and the young person pays their Housing Element of Universal Credit to the Staying Put carer at a rate of £105 per week made up of rent, utilities and internet access which is to be funded out of the young person's loans, bursaries and grants. During the holidays the LA will pay directly to the former foster carer £205.

## **8. Support for carers**

- 8.1 Fostering regulations no longer apply after the young person has reached the age of 18 however the following standards continue to apply to Staying Put arrangements:
- A return to fostering panel when there is change of circumstances.
  - New Disclosure and Barring Service check every three years on all adult members of the household, regular visitors, and children of the carers aged sixteen and older.
  - Health and safety checks.
  - Attending required training and optional support groups.
  - Regular oversight and support from the supervising social worker. This will be 2 x a year unless other arrangements agreed.
  - Young people post 18 will require a valid police check in households where foster children are living and will be the responsibility of the supervising social worker to ensure completion of the task and ongoing monitoring of the young person as part of the fostering processes and procedures in relation to the fostered children under the age of 18.

## **9. Current staying put arrangements:**

- 9.1 We currently have 31 staying put arrangements in place for care leavers, 14 of which has been created within the last 12 months. The annual cost of these placements to the local authority is £324.4k. The average weekly cost is £201.26 per week.

9.2 A grant is received from the DfE to support the making of staying put placements. This is awarded annually. The grant received for 23/24 will be £238.6k A shortfall of £85.8k.

9.3 As the average costs of supported accommodation for young people over the age of 18 is currently in the region of £550 to £600 per week, staying put remains a financially preferable option for young people whilst also providing young people with the opportunity to have the same level of care and support that their peers would expect from a reasonable parent to help them move successfully to adulthood. For these reasons staying put is very much promoted as a favourable post 18 options.

## **10. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

10.1 It links to the corporate priorities.

## **11. Use of Appendices**

N/A

## **12. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

N/A