



Centre for Professional Practice

## STAYING PUT POLICY

In England, the Children and Families Act 2014 placed a new duty on local authorities to provide advice, assistance and support to facilitate arrangements for young people in foster care to remain living with their former foster carers ('staying put arrangements'). This duty, which came into effect on 13 May 2014, enables a young person to stay with their former foster carer up to the age of 21 years, or to a maximum of 25 years if they remain in full-time education.

The Staying Put Policy is designed to ensure that vulnerable young people leaving the care system do not experience a sudden disruption to their living arrangements and that all young people can make a gradual transition from care to independence or to an Adult Service.

The primary aim of this policy is to promote a gradual transition from care to adulthood and independent living that recognises that many young people in care experience delayed maturity and that their 18th birthday may be an arbitrary and inappropriate point to leave foster care. The intention is to ensure that young people are able to continue living with their former foster carers in a supported family environment until they are prepared for adulthood in a manner akin to their peers outside the care system. This will reduce the risk that care leavers will experience in terms of disruption to their progress in education and training, social exclusion and tenancy breakdown.

### **When a Foster Care Placement Becomes a Staying Put Arrangement**

On their 18th birthday, young people cease to be "in care" or "looked after" - all legislation relating to fostering no longer applies to them and all fostering payments and allowances cease. When a young person remains with their former foster carer(s) after their 18th birthday, this should be regarded as a Staying Put Arrangement. The term 'arrangement' should be used rather than placement, as 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 18 and legal adulthood, the local authority is no longer making a placement, but facilitating a Staying Put arrangement for the young person.

After the young person's 18th birthday, the legal basis on which they live with the former foster carer changes: the former foster carer becomes the young person's Staying Put Provider, and the young person becomes an adult lodger in the Staying Put Provider's home. These changes must be carefully and sensitively planned to ensure that both the young person and the former foster carer understand the nature of the new arrangements and that both receive adequate support in adjusting to the change.

Foster carers are under no obligation to enter into a Staying Put Arrangement nor are young people required to agree to one. The possibility, and the implications, of such an arrangement should be discussed with both parties as part of care planning for a young person in care.

During the Staying Put period (following the young person's 18th birthday), Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council will pay the Staying Put Provider a weekly payment. All other fostering related fees and allowances (carer fees, birthday allowances, holiday allowances, clothing allowances etc.) will cease to be paid.

When a young person leaves a Staying Put Arrangement to attend full time education or training the Staying Put Provider will be paid a pro-rata payment of the full weekly payment for each 24 hour period that the young person resides at their home plus a termly retainer fee.

### **Ending a Staying Put Arrangement**

A Staying Put Arrangement under this policy will be terminated at a time that is consistent with the young person's wishes and needs. Where it is deemed appropriate they may extend to the young person's 21st birthday, and longer if the young person remains in, or returns to, full time education.

While a Staying Put Arrangement is in place the Staying Put Provider may ask the young person to leave by giving "reasonable notice". Ideally this is at least 28 days, but in extreme circumstances it may be considered reasonable for the Staying Put Provider to give very short notice and require the young person to leave on the same day.