**STAYING PUT GUIDANCE**

Introduction

This Guidance has been drafted to help young people, Foster Carers and professionals understand the principles and process of Staying Put.

This Guidance sits alongside the Staying Put Policy (revised September 2020).

Within this Guidance is information for young people, Foster Carers and Professionals.

It is anticipated that the Information sheets can be used individually at different stages of care planning for the young person or collectively in terms of providing an overview of the process and policy which underpins Staying Put.

The primary aim of Staying Put is to promote a gradual transition for young people from being Looked After to adulthood and independent living. This guidance alongside the Staying Put policy focuses on how best to extend this transition by enabling and supporting young people to;

* Live within a supportive family where relationships continue to strengthen
* Experience the transition to adulthood in a gradual way similar to other young people their age
* Feel ready and prepared for greater levels of independence based on their ability, confidence and skills
* Maximise their opportunities for education, employment or training
* Reduce the risk of homelessness
* Develop emotional resilience and practical skills to live independently
* Reduce the risk of social exclusion and isolation

This guidance highlights the core responsibilities of the corporate parent, and how in South Gloucestershire we work in a relationship based manner to enable young people to achieve autonomy and positive outcomes within their lives. This reflects the findings of the 2013 Care Inquiry that referred to the ‘Golden Threads’ which enables foster carers to treat young people as part of their family and part of their life beyond childhood and into adulthood.

This guidance includes;

* Staying Put Information for Young People
* Staying Put Information for Foster Carer
* Staying Put Initial Planning Meeting
* Staying Put Living Together Agreement
* Staying Put Financial information
* Staying Put Roles and Responsibilities
* Staying Put Process flow chart
* Additional Information

 **STAYING PUT - INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

What is Staying Put?

Staying Put is an arrangement between 2 adults, you and your Foster Carer where an agreement is made that you can continue to stay with your Foster Carer up to the age of 21.

What is the difference between Staying Put and being Fostered?

It is not a regulated arrangement and therefore does not involve a Social Worker or Looked after Reviews. The arrangement is based on a Living Together Agreement which is completed by you, your Foster Carer and Social Worker/Personal Advisor.

Am I allowed to Stay Put?

If you and your carer agree this is the right thing for you then yes you can stay with your existing carers. You will need to negotiate and agree on a Living Together Arrangement, your Personal Advisor can help you with this. They technically will no longer then be referred to as your Foster Carer but we will continue to call them that in this guidance.

What type of thing goes into a Living Together Agreement?

An agreement might cover house rules such as;

* *Will the carer go into my room?*
* *Will I have a key?*
* *Can I stay out overnight? Do I need to let my carer now?*
* *What household jobs will I be responsible for? For example cooking, cleaning, laundry.*
* *Can I stay in the house if the carer goes away overnight?*
* *If I want to leave or if my former foster carer wants me to move out, how will this be managed?*

These are just a few ideas, this is your agreement and so you and your carer include what is right for both of you.

What happens if things don’t work out?

The Staying Put Arrangement will be formally reviewed after 3 months. The Staying Put Arrangement will then be looked at again in line with reviews and updates to your Pathway Plan. Your Personal Advisor will help to mediate any difficulties between you and your carer. If a resolution between you and your carer is not possible we will support you to identify new accommodation.

What will I do about money?

 You will be responsible for your rent and living expenses therefore you will either need to find/look for employment or apply for benefits. Your Personal Advisor and carer can help you with this.

I’m interested in Staying Put, what happens next?

If you are interested in Staying Put we can start to plan for this when you are **15 ½**. This will mean everyone knows what needs to happen when you are 18. We can ensure both you and your Foster Carer are supported and prepared for the future. The aim is to provide you with continuity, care, support and a sense of belonging. It is never too early to think about your future so talk to your Foster Carer and Social Worker if this is something you wish to explore.



 **STAYING PUT - INFORMATION FOR FOSTER CARERS**

This document has been put together to set out the key features and answer common questions that Foster Carers may have in relation to Staying Put Arrangements.

Staying Put is a scheme that provides young people with the opportunity to remain with their Foster Carer up to the age of **21**. Legally the arrangement is not the same as a foster placement as once the young person turns 18 they are an adult and a Care Leaver, therefore the care and support that is offered by the Foster Carer needs to be carefully and sensitively planned in order that clarity around expectations of the arrangement are clear to both the young person and the Foster Carer. The Foster Carer will then be known as a Staying Put Provider.

What are the benefits of Staying Put?

What is Staying Put?

Staying Put Arrangements provide security and continuity to young people. Often Young People have been with their Foster Carer for a while and are not ready to go into independent living at 18. Staying Put gives them the chance to be better prepared to move on successfully when ready to do so.

Staying Put enables young people to maintain their sense of connection to their foster family. It provides them with a clear message that they still belong and are very much part of the family, whilst recognising that their status as a young person in care has changed to that as an adult.

The young person will be an adult and therefore any statutory rules associated with foster care will no longer apply. Care orders will end and a new set of arrangements will need to be negotiated and agreed upon. This is called a Staying Put Agreement.

What are the differences between Staying Put and being Looked After?

Financial responsibilities will change based on individual need and each Staying Put Arrangements. – (refer to the Staying Put Finance Document.)

What are the financial arrangements for Staying Put?

Staying Put Arrangements are funded in a different way to that of fostering arrangements.

Allowances for pocket money, clothing, travel and leisure will no longer be provided as an expense. It is expected that that the young person will be engaged in education, training or employment and therefore be in receipt of either benefits, education grant or wages to cover these costs. As a result £58.90 will be deducted from the Fostering Allowance.

Additional allowances will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Questions relating to specific financial matters are set out in the Staying Put Policy

Will there be a written agreement in place?

A Living Together Agreement will be made with you and the young person. This agreement will set out;

* *The rules*
* *Financial responsibilities and expectations*
* *Routines*
* *Level of support to the young person and to you as the Staying Put Provider*
* *Details around process for review and resolution of any difficulties, including arrangements for ending a Staying Put arrangement.*

Can I continue to foster?

The Staying Put Arrangement is not classed as a Fostering or Looked After arrangement, and therefore fostering is able to continue provided you maintain the ability to meet the National Minimum Standards for fostering.

Part of the fostering requirements will include the young person on a Staying Put Arrangement being subject to a DBS check and risk assessment in light of the fact they are now an adult within a fostering household. Any changes to the fostering household including moving to a Staying Put Arrangement will be noted in the next Fostering annual review as a change of circumstance.

Who will support the Staying Put Arrangement?

You are no longer the Foster Carer for the young person and therefore the key tasks are different and will need to be defined within the young person’s Pathway Plan and Living Together Agreement.

Support from the Fostering Team will cease due to the fact that this is not a fostering arrangement subject to the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards. If however you wish to continue to foster alongside the Staying Put Arrangement then ongoing fostering support is available.

Staying Put providers will have access to all South Gloucestershire’s training.

The Personal Advisor will provide advice and support to the young person. They are responsible for drawing up the Pathway Plan and ensuring it addresses current and future needs. The Staying Put Arrangement will be integrated into the Pathway Plan and will be reviewed every 6 months. (The roles and responsibilities document sets this out in more detail)

What happens if the Staying Put Arrangement is not working?

Each Staying Put Arrangement should be reviewed after 3 months and thereafter every 6 months. The young person’s Personal Advisor will do this with you. It is hoped that any worries can be addressed at these review points with the aim to collaboratively identify resolutions to worries.

If however the arrangement is not tenable due to a breakdown in the relationship then the carer will need to provide in writing the agreed period of notice as specified within the agreement document. If an immediate move is needed for specific reasons such as risk to self and or others then support will be provided to the carer by the Personal Advisor and/or the Transitions to Independence Team.

I’m interested, so what next?

Please talk to the young person, their Social Worker and Personal Advisor in order that planning and support can commence as soon as possible.



**STAYING PUT – INITIAL PLANNING MEETING**

South Gloucestershire’s Staying Put policy states that permanence planning for young people should commence **prior to their 16th** **birthday.** The Child Care Social Worker is responsible for coordinating an Initial Staying Put meeting.

The Staying Put meeting should include the Foster Carer, Supervising Social Worker, Child Care Social Worker/Personal Advisor if this is known, the views of the Independent Reviewing Officer should also be sought at this stage.

The Initial Staying Put meeting will explore the viability of a Staying Put Arrangement and what tasks are required to enable this to take place when the young person is 18. At this initial stage the young person is **not** involved in the viability/initial planning meeting, as there is much to be done prior to confirming this is a viable option for them. Discussions around Staying Put must not cause disruption to any current living arrangements.

The initial planning meeting will explore;

* *Purpose and aims of a Staying Put Arrangement*
* *The views of all present (as listed above)*
* *What if any changes there will be to the fostering status*
* *What will any changes to the financial arrangements look like*
* *Whether there will be any potential impact on the fostering household*
* *What a Staying Put Agreement might look like*
* *What support or training might the Foster Carer require in order to meet the young person’s needs post 18*
* *What support the young person might need in discussing/exploring Staying Put*
* *Can any next steps be agreed upon in terms of exploring or progressing a Staying Put Arrangement?*

If there is a potential opportunity for Staying Put, a follow up meeting must take place before the Young Person is 16 ½ . This meeting will discuss with the young person their view on a potential arrangement and whether this can be pursued or not. A contingency plan **must** accompany any Staying Put Arrangement.

South Gloucestershire’s Staying Put Policy states that the outcome of this initial planning meeting should be presented to the Corporate Parenting Service Manager/ADM as a means of providing an alert to a potential Staying Put Arrangement.

The Child Care Social Worker is responsible for the Outcome Meeting Notes and circulating these to the attendees and the Corporate Parenting Service Manager.

**STAYING PUT – LIVING TOGETHER AGREEMENTS**

Living Together Agreements are simply a written agreement that sets out the arrangements between the Foster Carer/Staying Put Provider and the young person. Early conversations and honesty are essential to the success of this process.



The South Gloucestershire Staying Put policy states ***-***

*“Young people, ‘Staying Put’ carer(s), leaving care personal advisers and supervising social workers should meet to convert the placement plan into a ‘Living Together Agreement’ prior to a young person’s 18th birthday. The agreement should set out the expectation of all parties and clarify roles and responsibilities. The agreement should be incorporated into the young person’s pathway plan.”*

The Living Together Agreement should cover:

* *Preparation for independence tasks*
* *Finance, including young people having credit cards, loan agreement and mobile phone contracts registered at the address*
* *Income and Benefit claims*
* *Friends and partners visiting and staying*
* *Staying away for night/weekends and informing carers of movements*
* *Education, training and employment activities*
* *Health arrangements*
* *Move-on arrangements*
* *Issues related to younger foster children in the placement, safeguarding, role modelling and time keeping*
* *Specific issues to do with the needs of the young person*

In addition to this it is recommended that the Living Together Agreement sets out the expectations in relation to house rules and how the young person will be supported in the transition to moving into independence.

Additional factors to consider –

* *Issues regarding privacy, for example when it is acceptable to enter the young person’s**bedroom, which parts of the house are private, shared etc.*
* *The expectations around the young person keeping their room clean, doing their own laundry, shopping, cooking etc*
* *What time is the young person expected to return in the evening, what are the arrangements if the young person is going to be late, or wants to stay out overnight etc?*
* *What are the arrangements for ascertaining the young person’s whereabouts if they do
not return on time?*
* *What are the arrangements for reporting the young person missing if they cannot be
located, how long would you continue to try to contact them before reporting them
missing?*
* *What are the arrangements if the young person smokes, what are the rules on
consuming alcohol and using drugs?*

Young people state that they want former foster carers to be a bit flexible about the rules and make compromises. They want to be allowed to take responsibilities and risks and to learn from mistakes without it being the end of the world!

This highlights how each agreement needs to be unique to the Staying Put household and the needs of the young person. Being explicit helps to avoid confusion and frustration so it is better to be honest about the worries and seek to find a way forward prior to it becoming an issue.

**STAYING PUT – FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Changes to financial arrangements can be daunting and at times complex, therefore we have put together this guide to help inform decision making and planning for young people and their carers who are considering Staying Put arrangements.

South Gloucestershire recognises that some young people will require a higher level of care, resource and support to facilitate their transition to independence and in some circumstances the Corporate Parenting Service manager/ADM can agree to a discretionary fostering fee. The initial planning meeting needs to clarify and set out what, if any, financial tasks need to be undertaken if the Staying Put arrangement is to be successful.

Staying Put is based on an arrangement between two adults, therefore fostering allowances and fees will change to reflect the young person’s status as an adult.

* Christmas and birthday and holiday allowances will cease
* Holiday entitlements will continue
* Fostering age related allowances awarded prior to the young person’s 18th birthday will remain in place
* The rate of the Living Allowance £58.90 will be deducted from the fostering maintenance allowance

The young person is expected to fund their own living costs through benefits or wages. In the cases where young people are NEET (Not in education, employment or training), targeted support must be provided to enable them to access some form of EET (education, employment or training) within 6 months of the Staying Put arrangement being activated. South Gloucestershire will ensure there are no hardships to the carer or young person pending these applications being made.

All young people are expected to claim Housing Benefit and pay rent for their Staying Put arrangement. It would be stipulated within the living together agreement how this will be paid, i.e. by cash or bank transfer. Non-payment of rent by the young person could result in a breach of their Staying Put agreement which could affect the continuation of the arrangement.

In situations where a young person is not eligible to claim Housing Benefit, South Gloucestershire council will pay the costs as part of the Staying Put arrangement.

If there are any queries relating to payments, (including over payments or under payments) these will need to be looked at on a case by case basis with the finance team directly.

For further details around finance please see section 9 (financial implications) of the Staying Put Policy (revised September 2020).

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES RELATING TO STAYING PUT.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ROLE** | **RESPONSIBILITY** |
| CHILD CARE SOCIAL WORKER | It is the child care social workers responsibility to ensure that the young person has a robust care plan that reflects their needs now and into adulthood.Discussions about Staying Put should start prior to the young person’s 16th birthday, as this enables a year of planning and preparation prior to confirming any plan at the age of 17.The Child Care Social Worker is responsible for co-ordinating an initial staying put planning meeting to explore the viability of a staying put arrangement.The Child Care Social Worker will co-ordinate a review of the initial planning meeting prior to the young person’s 17th birthday.Minutes of meetings will be circulated by the Child Care Social Worker.They will also support the creation of the Living Together Agreement. |
| FOSTERING SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKER | The Supervising Social Worker should explain and discuss the Staying Put policy and Guidance with all Foster Carers at the earliest date in order that all Foster Carers understand the framework for Staying Put. The Supervising Social Worker should discuss the finances of any specific arrangement if there is any question of a young person remaining after 18, so that the carer can make an informed decision about caring for a young person and consider the impact on their own finances The Supervising Social Worker is responsible for ensuring that any training or support needs of the Foster Carer progressing to a Staying Put provider are available.They will support the creation of the Living Together Agreement.They will also assist in completing finance forms regarding a change of circumstance from Fostering to Staying Put.If the Staying Put provider is continuing as a foster carer, the supervising social worker will remain responsible for the DBS check for the carers. |
| PERSONAL ADVISOR WHEN YOUNG PERSON IS 17 | They will support the creation of the Living Together Agreement, provide advice and support to the young person, ensuring they have access to the advocacy and complaints service and keep in touch with the Staying Put carer and provide advice and support as required.They will ensure that the Pathway Plan is regularly reviewed, and that the Living Together agreement and House rules are reviewed as part of the Pathway Plan.They will co-ordinate the provision of services to support the young person, advise and assist the young person with a housing benefit claim, and advise and assist the young person with any other benefit claims.They will also advise and assist the young person with applications for move-on accommodation.If the Staying Put provider is not continuing as a foster carer, the personal adviser will become responsible for the three-yearly DBS check for them |
| FOSTER CARER/ STAYING PUT PROVIDER | Former Foster Carers are expected to maintain the quality care they provided to young people prior to becoming a Staying Put Provider.They will ensure the young person has access to heating, hot water, laundry facilities, lighting, food, and Wi-Fi.They will support the continuation of independence and assist the young person to develop the emotional capacity and self-confidence to manage through to adulthood.They will attend and support Pathway Reviews if agreed with the young person. They will seek to resolve any difficulties with the young person as they arise, and will liaise with the Personal Advisor as necessary regarding any worries or unresolved matters, and alert them if the arrangement is at risk of disruption. They will notify the designated person or agency (as per the Living Together Agreement) should the young person be missing. |
| INDEPENDENT REVIEWEING OFFICER | The Independent Reviewing Officer will review the Pathway plan and ensure that actions taken by the supervising social worker, young person’s Personal advisor and Social Worker are in the young person’s best interests and Staying Put guidance adhered to.  |
| YOUNG PERSON | The young person has an active role in developing the Staying Put Agreement and as a result has a direct responsibility for;* Payment of rent
* Maintaining the Living Together Agreement
* Working with the Personal Advisor and former Foster Carer in developing skills for adulthood
* Applying for benefits as necessary
* Attending all meetings relating to benefits
* Engaging with their Pathway Plan and working towards a positive future
 |

**STAYING PUT – PROCESS FLOW CHART**

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| --- | --- |
| **AGE OF YOUNG PERSON** | **STAGE OF PROCESS** |
| * age 15 ½
 | * Pathway Planning commences with the young person. Part of this process is to explore the options available to the young person including their views around Staying Put.
 |
| * Age 16
 | * Child Care Social Worker organises an Initial Staying Put Planning Meeting - the purpose being to explore the viability of a Staying Put Arrangement
* If the Foster Carer expresses an interest in Staying Put, the Fostering Supervising Social Worker needs to ensure that the Foster Carer has access to appropriate support and training, and information in relation to any financial changes in order to assist them in making an informed decision
* The Child Care Social Worker is responsible for writing and distributing the Planning Meeting notes
 |
| * 16 to 16 ½
 | * The Child Care Social Worker/Personal Advisor will explore wishes and feelings with the young person
 |
| * 16 ½
 | * The Child Care Social Worker organises a Review Staying Put meeting to confirm the Staying Put proposal and support plan and the views of the young person
* Contingency planning will take place alongside the Staying Put Plan
 |
| * 17
 | * Fostering Supervising Social Worker prepares a report for the Corporate Parenting Service Manager setting out the proposed plan to transfer the placement from Fostering to Staying Put – the report will set out a clear timeframe with details of what actions need to take place in order for the Staying Put Arrangement to progress. This should be jointly with the young person’s social worker, because they can state why this arrangement will benefit this young person.
 |
| * 17 ½
 | * Looked After Review confirms the Staying Put arrangement as the care plan for the young person.
* The young person’s views are integrated into the future care plan
* Independent Reviewing Officer to ratify change of care plan
* Looked After Review minutes sent to Corporate Parenting Service Manager to confirm proposed changes to the young person’s care plan
 |
| * 18 ¼
 | * Staying Put Arrangement is reviewed by the Personal Advisor, the young person and carer
 |
| * 18 plus
 | * Staying Put agreement is reviewed in line with Pathway plan reviews
 |

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Staying put – Good Practice guide Children’s Partnership - <http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_113930-2.pdf>

Fostering network – <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/practice-information/staying-put>

Care Inquiry 2013 - <https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/for-professionals/resources/the-care-inquiry-2013/>

Staying Put. Government Guidance . - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-put-arrangements-for-care-leavers-aged-18-years-and-above>

Article - <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2019/10/23/government-finds-extra-10m-staying-put-following-repeated-funding-calls-fostering-sector/>

NCB How much do we know about the views and experiences of children in care ? - <https://www.ncb.org.uk/news-opinion/news-highlights/how-much-do-we-know-about-views-and-experiences-children-care>