Staying Put Policy (Inc. Flowchart)

Foster Carer Policies and Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/staying-put-policy-inc-flowchart/

(Last reviewed 19/05/2025)

Background

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008, the statutory Guidance & Regulations 2010, and the Staying Put Guidance 2013 all highlight the need for a gradual, well-planned transition to adulthood. The average age at which young people leave home is increasing, and the path to adulthood is becoming more complex and extended. The Staying Put initiative aims to give young people the option to stay with their former foster carers until they feel ready for adulthood, experience a transition similar to their peers, and avoid social exclusion or later housing and tenancy difficulties.

Principles of legislation

Access to Staying Put Arrangements – Any young person who has lived continuously with a foster carer for at least 13 weeks immediately before their 18th birthday can receive ongoing support from those carers through Staying Put arrangements, when this meets their needs.

Planning Staying Put Arrangements – Planning must start early, beginning at least one year—and no later than six months—before the young person’s 18th birthday. Planning for Staying Put will happen during the CLA Reviews before the young person turns 18. Pathway Planning meetings must share feedback from providers, IROs, and everyone involved.

Staying Put Agreement – Each Staying Put Agreement is between the local authority, the young person, the foster carer, and the agency. All four parties are involved in every part of care planning and review, with each holding specific responsibilities under the agreement. In many cases the agency will not provide direct support, as the arrangement is a contract between the carer, young person, and local authority.

The Agency’s Staying Put Principles

The agency sees every child and young person as an individual. We believe no one under 18 should have to leave care before they feel ready, and we will keep advocating so their views are heard and their needs met. When a young person moves on to greater independence, it is often helpful for their foster carer to stay in touch and offer the right support, helping the young person feel valued and less isolated.

For young people in a stable foster home, remaining in that home under a Staying Put arrangement can offer a transition closer to that experienced by most of their peers. The agency will champion this option for every eligible young person.

Decision-making about Staying Put starts in the young person's Pathway Plan, which is developed before they turn 16. The Pathway Plan, which sits alongside or sometimes replaces the Care Plan, is an agreement between the local authority and the young person about the future. It sets out how the authority will support the young person's education, training, or employment; career goals; arrangements for Staying Put; dates for leaving care; and where they will live afterward.

The agency values these arrangements and believes that Staying Put can:

1. Allow young people to experience the transition to adulthood in a way similar to others their age.
2. Make sure young people do not leave their former foster family until they feel ready for more independence.
3. Help young people make the most of opportunities for education, employment, or training.
4. Lower the risk of homelessness.
5. Support young people to build the emotional and practical skills needed to live independently.
6. Lessen the chances of social exclusion.

What is the Difference Between Foster Care and Staying Put?

Although the personal relationships stay the same, several changes take place once the child becomes an adult. The young person is no longer a foster child; they are an adult member of the household, which can affect any state benefits the foster carer receives.

The 'placement' becomes an 'arrangement' between the foster carer, the young person, and—depending on the case—the agency and the local authority.

The agreement that the young person will continue to have a room in the home is set out in writing between the foster carer, the young person, the agency, and the local authority.

The carer does not have to stay approved as a foster carer while providing a Staying Put arrangement, though the agency hopes carers will remain approved. A foster care review will happen before a Staying Put arrangement starts so the carer fully understands the change and any implications for matching and safeguarding future placements. Foster carers should continue to receive supervision, attend training, have annual reviews and unannounced visits, and keep developing their skills if they stay approved or if the Staying Put arrangement includes agency support.

Who is Eligible for Staying Put?

Any young person who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since turning 14 and remains in a foster family until their 18th birthday is eligible for a Staying Put arrangement after 18.

The agency will work to make Staying Put possible for every eligible young person when it is in their best interests and when the foster carer is willing and able.

Staying Put can continue until the young person turns 21 or finishes full-time education, whichever comes first, but can end earlier if the young person chooses to move out.

Leaving Care & Pathway Planning

Agency foster carers are supported to play an active role in each child’s Care Plan alongside the child and social worker.

When the young person turns 16, foster carers help develop the Pathway Plan, working with the young person and their social worker or personal adviser to put it into action.

Foster carers actively support the young person to take part in this process. They also help the personal adviser identify ways to offer practical, financial, and emotional support as the young person becomes independent. The supervising social worker (SSW) will guide carers during supervision and visits when the agency is contracted to support the Staying Put arrangement.

The young person’s Pathway Plan must set out all practical details for staying in the arrangement as an adult. Many expectations will be extensions of what was in place while they were a foster child. These details include:

1. Preparation for adulthood and independence tasks.
2. Finances, such as credit cards, loans, and mobile phone contracts registered at the address.
3. Income and benefits claims.
4. Friends and partners visiting or staying overnight.
5. Staying away overnight or at weekends and letting carers know where they are.
6. Education, training, and employment activities.
7. Plans for moving on.
8. Matters related to younger foster children in the home, for example safeguarding, being a positive role model, and time-keeping.

Local Authority Roles & Responsibilities

The local authority must ensure each young person has an allocated worker and an up-to-date Pathway Plan, with copies for the agency and carers. The plan must clearly set out the Staying Put arrangement, the steps toward greater independence, and the timescales.

The local authority leads the planning for Staying Put, agrees any extra support needed, and puts in place a written agreement or contract covering all costs, additional support, and the review schedule at the start of the arrangement.

The allocated worker must coordinate an annual review (or sooner if needed), invite everyone involved, and share the outcomes afterward.

The Agency’s Roles & Responsibilities

The agency must help the foster carer understand the costs, financial package, and tax implications of a Staying Put arrangement so they can make an informed choice during planning.

The agency provides carers with information about Staying Put so they understand their evolving role.

When agreed, the agency continues to support carers through a supervising social worker and offers appropriate supervision.

We enable young people to join suitable peer groups and organised activities.

When agreed, the agency continues to offer carers relevant training.

When agreed, we keep carrying out health and safety checks, unannounced visits, and supervisory home visits at the agreed frequency.

Because the young person is no longer looked after, they count as another adult in the household. If the carer continues fostering, the agency is responsible for a DBS check on the young person.

Foster carers must understand the impact of taking on a Staying Put arrangement on their capacity to foster, matching considerations, and any breaches of the agreement by either party. Carers do not need to complete recordings for young people in Staying Put.

Financial Arrangements

Staying Put financial matters must be discussed with the agency first, not directly with foster carers. The local authority commissioning team or social worker should discuss them with the Positive Aspirations LA Partnership Lead/Placement Manager, not the supervising social worker. Financial arrangements are agreed case by case and, when relevant, follow any contractual framework.

1. **Young Person's Contribution** – If a young person has income from benefits or employment, they may need to contribute to the cost of the arrangement. The amount depends on their earnings or benefits and is agreed individually and reviewed when their circumstances change. Contributions are paid to the carer or agency as set out in the agreement and reimbursed to the local authority at agreed times.
2. **Access to Benefits** – Foster carers support the young person to make any benefit claim at least seven weeks before their 18th birthday, working with the allocated worker to ensure this happens.
3. **Payment of Housing Benefit** – When a young person is entitled to Housing Benefit, it is paid in full to the carer and may be deducted from the local authority payment if that is the agreed arrangement.
4. **FOSTER CARERS SHOULD TAKE INDEPENDENT ADVICE TO MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND HOW A STAYING PUT ARRANGEMENT MAY AFFECT ANY BENEFITS OR UNIVERSAL CREDIT THEY RECEIVE. THE AGENCY CANNOT GIVE THIS ADVICE.**
5. Foster carers must have information about liability insurance for situations where a Staying Put young person or a foster child makes an allegation. Most foster carers have public liability insurance through their membership in Fostering Network or the British Association for Adoption and Fostering. During planning, the supervising social worker helps carers check they have adequate cover.

Staying Put Flowchart

(Last reviewed 19/05/2025)

