

Subject / Title		Staying Put Policy	
Team	Department	Directorate	
Fostering	Cared for Children's	Children's	
Start Date		Completion Date	
07.03.2022		December 2022	
Project Lead Officer		Tony Decrop	
Contract / Commissioning Manager		N/a	
Assistant Director/ Director		Tony Decrop	
EIA Group (lead contact first)	Job title		Service
Lynda Clifford	Fostering Service Manager		Childrens
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Emily Drake	Head of Payments, Systems and Registrars		Governance
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PART 1 – INITIAL SCREENING

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for all formal decisions that involve changes to service delivery and/or provision. Note: all other changes – whether a formal decision or not – require consideration for an EIA.

The Initial screening is a quick and easy process which aims to identify:

- *those projects, proposals and service or contract changes which require a full EIA by looking at the potential impact on, or relevance to, any of the equality groups*
- *prioritise if and when a full EIA should be completed*
- *explain and record the reasons why it is deemed a full EIA is not required*

A full EIA should always be undertaken if the project, proposal and service / contract change is likely to have an impact upon, or relevance to, people with a protected characteristic. This should be undertaken irrespective of whether the impact or relevancy is major or minor, or on a large or small group of people. If the initial screening concludes a full EIA is not required, please fully explain the reasons for this at 1e and ensure this form is signed off by the relevant Contract / Commissioning Manager and the Assistant Director / Director.

<p>1a.</p>	<p>What is the project, proposal or service / contract change?</p>	<p>To introduce a formalised Staying Put Policy to set out the roles and responsibilities of Tameside MBC employees and external providers in helping young people to decide whether to form a staying put agreement with their former foster carer.</p> <p>Staying Put is about care leavers continuing to live with their former foster carers when they reach the age of 18. Specifically, it is defined by the Children Act 1989 and refers to an arrangement whereby a young person, who when they became 18 was in law an 'eligible child' placed with a foster carer, who continues to live with that person.</p> <p>The purpose of reviewing this policy is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that there is a clear and consistent process for forming staying put arrangements, - Strengthen our early planning (16+) through Cared for Reviews and Pathway Plans, - Ensure that our staying put document provides the information required to enable a smooth transition from foster care to staying put arrangements, - Increase the take up of staying put arrangements, - Provide ongoing assistance to former foster carers wishing to continue support young people, - Support our young people to develop the skills they need to flourish in adulthood, - Provide a model staying put license agreement between the young person and former foster carer to set out clear expectations for both parties.
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1b.	<p>What are the main aims of the project, proposal or service / contract change?</p>	<p>The financial package for the Staying Put carer will total £231.74. This amount will increase from time to time by the % increase to the foster care allowance for 16-18year olds as recommended by DfE and the rent costs. The amount will be made up of funding from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent costs which will be based on the Local Housing Allowance rate for the area the property is situated in. This cost will usually be met by the Universal Credit Housing Element (UCHE) where applicable, paid directly to the former foster carer. It is acknowledged that UCHE will vary dependant on the area the young person / former foster carer lives (the total final package to the Staying Put Carer will be unchanged at £231.74). Where a young person is in employment and not entitled to UCHE they will be required to cover rent costs through their income. • A minimum contribution of £20 from the young person, from income or entitlement to grants, allowances or benefits paid directly to the carer. This is in addition to their rent. This will be discussed at their Pathway Planning meetings. • Tameside Children’s Services Contribution. <p>Young people commencing higher education courses at any age are not eligible to claim means tested benefits and therefore will be expected to meet any rent costs through employment or their student loan.</p>
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1c. Will the project, proposal or service / contract change have either a direct or indirect impact on, or relevance to, any groups of people with protected equality characteristics? Where there is a direct or indirect impact on, or relevance to, a group of people with protected equality characteristics as a result of the project, proposal or service / contract change please explain why and how that group of people will be affected.

Protected Characteristic	Direct Impact / Relevance	Indirect Impact / Relevance	Little / No Impact / Relevance	Explanation
Age	<u>Direct</u>			The Staying Put Policy will directly affect children in foster care from age 15 ¾ onwards, 18-21 year olds care leavers and 18-21 year olds currently in staying put arrangements. If in education, the policy may also affect young people leaving foster care up to age 25. It will give more cared for young people the opportunity to consider a Staying Put arrangement in a clear and more informed way. As of 7th November 2022 in Tameside there were 25 young people in Local Authority staying put arrangements. As of October 2022 there were 34 care leavers aged between 17-25 living with their former foster carers. As of 1st November 2022 there were 425 care leavers aged between 17-25.
Disability		<u>indirect</u>		Some young people eligible for a staying put arrangement may have a disability. However, where disability restricts the young person’s ability to care for themselves it may not

				<p>be in their best interests to remain in the former foster carer's home. In these cases a shared lives arrangement may be more appropriate. 6% of Tameside's Care Leavers aged 17-25 had a disability.</p>
Ethnicity		<u>Indirect</u>		<p>The policy does not differentiate on grounds of ethnicity or race.</p> <p>Young people eligible for Staying Put Arrangements come from a range of ethnic backgrounds.</p> <p>Ethnicity of Care Leavers aged 17-25 01.11.22:</p> <p>White – 83%</p> <p>Mixed – 2%</p> <p>Asian or Asian British – 4%</p> <p>Black or Black British – 5%</p> <p>Other Ethnicity – 5%</p> <p>Young people seeking asylum will have the protected characteristics of race (ethnicity). However, it is acknowledged that where young people are awaiting status determination or where they have not been granted leave to remain, this will affect access to benefits and state support.</p> <p>There are 10 unaccompanied children seeking asylum who are over 16 in Tameside Currently there are 3 unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Staying Put Arrangements.</p>
Sex			<u>No Impact</u>	<p>The policy does not differentiate on grounds of gender. There is an even proportion of gender/sex of female and male young people aged 16-17 in long-term placements within Tameside, this is the cohort who may be more likely to progress into staying put arrangements. Considering care leavers, 55% (233) are male and 45% (192) are female, care leavers are disproportionately men.</p> <p>There is no anticipation that the development or implementation of this policy will impact directly or indirectly on sex in a significant sense.</p>
Religion or Belief			<u>No Impact</u>	<p>The policy does not impact on religion or belief as it does not differentiate based on this, all young people are equally entitled to access staying put arrangements.</p>
Sexual Orientation			<u>Unknown Impact/Relevance</u>	<p>The policy does not differentiate based on a carer or young person's sexual orientation. This data is not recorded for young people.</p>
Gender Reassignment			<u>Unknown Impact</u>	<p>The policy does not impact upon a young person on the basis of gender reassignment. Where young people identify as transgender or have been through gender reassignment, they are equally entitled to support through the policy. Data on this is not recorded.</p>

Pregnancy & Maternity			<u>No impact</u>	The policy does not adversely or disproportionately impact upon pregnant young people or those experiencing maternity. If the young person was pregnant the authority would offer appropriate support to ensure they are not disadvantaged. Data on this was requested but was not received.
Marriage & Civil Partnership			<u>No relevance</u>	There is no anticipation that the development or implementation of this policy will impact directly or indirectly on Marriage & Civil Partnership in any significant sense

Other protected groups determined locally by Tameside and Glossop Strategic Commission?

Group (please state)	Direct Impact/ Relevance	Indirect Impact/ Relevance	Little / No Impact/ Relevance	Explanation
Mental Health			<u>Indirect</u>	If the young person has complex care needs the policy may impact them as it may not be in their best interest to remain with the former foster carer if their needs can be met more effectively from another place e.g. through a shared lives arrangement.
Carers	<u>Direct</u>			A staying put arrangement may impact the carer's finances as they may receive less under the staying put arrangement than under the foster care placement. A staying put arrangement would also limit another foster care placement depending on space available. The change in the payment structure may affect the carer's entitlement to benefits. People aged 40-64 are over-represented in Tameside's foster carer population, accounting for 73.84% of foster carers but just 26.64% of Tameside's population as a whole.
Military Veterans			<u>Little / No Impact/ Relevance</u>	There is no anticipation that the development or implementation of this policy will impact directly or indirectly on military veterans in a significant way.
Breast Feeding			<u>Little / No Impact/ Relevance</u>	There is no anticipation that the development or implementation of this policy will impact directly or indirectly on people who breast feed in a significant way.

Are there any other groups who you feel may be impacted by the project, proposal or service/contract change or which it may have relevance to? (e.g. vulnerable residents, isolated residents, those who are homeless)

Group (please state)	Direct Impact/ Relevance	Indirect Impact/ Relevance	Little / No Impact/ Relevance	Explanation
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Low or no income groups	Direct			The increased cost of living and decrease in payment from fostering payment to staying put arrangement will have a negative impact on income for the carer. There is a risk that the former foster carers entitlement to benefits and to council tax discounts e.g. the 25% single person's discount will be affected by the payment under the staying put arrangement.

"Low or no income groups" should be included as a key consideration when assessing the impact of your project, proposal, policy or service/contract change.

Wherever a direct or indirect impact or relevance has been identified you should consider undertaking a full EIA or be able to adequately explain your reasoning for not doing so. Where little / no impact or relevance is anticipated, this can be explored in more detail when undertaking a full EIA.

1d.	Does the project, proposal or service / contract change require a full EIA?	Yes	No
		X	
1e.	What are your reasons for the decision made at 1d?	Based on the above analysis and the impacts of the new policy changes on the basis of age, disability, mental health, carer status and low income status, a decision has been made to carry out a full EIA.	

If a full EIA is required please progress to Part 2.

PART 2 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

2a. Summary

The Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to ensure the proposed Staying Put Policy promotes fairness and equality of opportunities for young people.

The main proposals under the policy are:

- The standard weekly Staying Put allowance is increased from £177.67 to £231.74 per week. This is based on the *average* currently weekly allowance currently paid to Staying Put carers and provides a more comparable rate with neighbouring local authorities.
- The financial package for the Staying Put carer will total £231.74. This amount will increase from time to time by the % increase to the foster care allowance for 16-18year olds (it will be uplifted at the same time and by the same % amount) as recommended by DfE and the rent costs. The amount will be made up of funding from:
- **Rent costs** which will be based on the Local Housing Allowance rate for the area the property is situated in. This cost will usually be met by the Universal Credit Housing Element (UCHE) where applicable, paid directly to the former foster carer. It is acknowledged that UCHE will vary dependant on the area the young person / former foster carer lives (the total final package to the Staying Put Carer will be unchanged at £231.74). Where a young person is in employment and not entitled to UCHE they will be required to cover rent costs through their income.
- **A minimum contribution of £20 from the young person**, from income or entitlement to grants,

allowances or benefits paid directly to the carer. This is in addition to their rent. This will be discussed at their Pathway Planning meetings.

- **Tameside Children's Services Contribution**
- Young people commencing higher education courses at any age are not eligible to claim means tested benefits and therefore will be expected to meet rent costs through employment or their student loan.
- Depending on the circumstances of the Staying Put carer all young people are expected to claim Universal Credit Housing Element from their 18th birthday and is used to cover the rent element of the Staying Put arrangement.
- Allowances for birthday and festivals would continue to be paid as part of the local Care Leaver offer. Holiday payments would not be paid in line as per current practice.
- Targeted assistance for benefits advice for both carer and young person will be provided by Welfare Rights.
- Discretion may be used in exceptional circumstances to vary financial payments. Any such variations must be considered by the Local Authority Resources Panel to ratify any financial decisions.
- The policy also sets out a model Staying Put License Agreement between the young person and former foster carer, helping to clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities. .

EIA Findings:

- The main findings of the EIA are that the policy will have a direct impact on the protected characteristic of age. The policy will also have a direct impact on low income groups and carers.
- The policy will have an indirect impact on grounds of ethnicity, disability and mental health.
- There are no anticipated impacts upon military veterans as a result of the policy changes. There are also no anticipated affects upon people who are breastfeeding as a result of the policy changes. There is no anticipated impacts on grounds of religion/belief, pregnancy/maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. However, there is insufficient data to identify the effects of the policy upon young people on grounds of religion/belief, pregnancy/maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment as full data on these characteristics for young people aged 17-25 in foster care, in staying put arrangements or who are care leavers was not available.

Mitigations:

- To understand and mitigate the impact of the terms of the staying put arrangement upon the carer's entitlement to benefits and council tax reductions/discounts, they will be offered an appointment arranged with the Council's Welfare Rights Service. With regards the loss of the 25% single person reduction in Council Tax the Council will consider meeting this loss to the carer as corporate parents.
- Responding to the risk that the new policy could disproportionately affect carers and low income groups due to the staying put allowance being lower than the rate previously received through fostering allowances, this was also the case under the previous policy. Additionally, under the new policy as the staying put allowance has increased from 177.67/week to £231.74/week, reducing the disparity and positively impacting low income groups and carers. Through planning for care leavers which begins at 15¾, carers and young people will have two years to prepare

for the change.

- Responding to the risk that carers could be negatively directly impacted by facilitating a staying put arrangement as it could limit their capacity to take on any further foster placements, this has been mitigated by Children's Services committing to pay for the enhanced disclosure for the young person over 18 from the Disclosure Barring Service. Where space for both the young person under the staying put arrangement and another foster placement at the same time is not available within the former foster carer's home, this will be a choice to be made by the former foster carer.
- As per the current arrangements, where the young person eligible for a staying put arrangement has a disability and complex needs that would be more effectively managed outside of a staying put arrangement, the child's reviewing officer would assess whether a referral should be made for a shared lives arrangement.
- Responding to the risk that the policy may disproportionately negatively affect unaccompanied asylum seeking young people who have no recourse to public funds/ who are awaiting status determination will be unable to claim benefits or work in order to contribute financially towards the staying put arrangement, these cases will be considered by Resources Panel as a matter of priority to ensure the right outcome for the young person and carer.
- As per the previous policy, where the young person eligible for a staying put arrangement have mental health needs that would be more effectively managed outside of a staying put arrangement, the child's reviewing officer would assess whether a referral should be made for a shared lives arrangement.
- As comprehensive data relating to sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and religion/beliefs was unavailable for young people leaving care aged 17-25, to monitor the effects on particular groups, these characteristics should be included as part of reporting within Children's Services.

The success of these mitigations will be measured by:

- Quarterly reviews of staying put cohort numbers to monitor the effectiveness of the new policy in increasing the opportunity for young people and former foster carers to form staying put arrangements. Update reports will be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board which meets six times per year and will also be reported into the annual Fostering Service Report as well as statistical returns to the DFE and OFSTED

Summary of Consultation:

Consultation was originally undertaken for 6 weeks from 3 October 2022 to 15 November 2022 as follows:

- Foster carer workgroups (2 virtual 1 face to face) – 17 households attended
- Children in Care Council – 3 young people in person and 2 virtual attended
- Care Leaver forum (face to face) – 3 young people attended
- Big Conversation questionnaire – open to the wider public and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). There were 14 total respondents to the online questionnaire consultation. Due to anonymity, we cannot identify the proportion of IFA staying put carers and local authority staying put carers who answered the survey.

To increase the voice of young people in the gathered responses, consultation via the online questionnaire was extended up to 25 November 2022. Targeted emails were sent to all foster carers (Tameside and IFAs) encouraging young people to complete the online survey. A further 2 responses were obtained.

2b. Issues to Consider

- Carers / Low Income Groups – Benefits and Council tax discounts entitlement of former foster carers being affected by the staying put allowance. This was also highlighted within the consultation responses,
- Carers / Low Income Groups- Former Foster Carers and IFA’s receiving less than they would have previously received prior to young person turning 18. This was also highlighted within the consultation responses.
- Carers - Facilitating a staying put arrangement could limit the carer’s capacity to take on any further foster care placements. This was also highlighted within the consultation responses.
- Disability –It may not be in the best interests of some young people to remain with their former foster carer and to form a staying put arrangement where they have complex needs that will be managed more effectively through a shared lives arrangement.
- Ethnicity – Some young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers may be awaiting status determination, restricting their ability to work or claim benefits.
- Mental Health - It may not be in the best interests of some young people to remain with their former foster carer and to form a staying put arrangement where they have complex needs that will be managed more effectively through a different arrangement such as a shared lives arrangement.
- Sexual Orientation – Data on the sexual orientation of young people aged between 17-25 in foster care, staying put arrangements or who are care leavers is not gathered
- Gender Reassignment – Data on gender reassignment for young people aged between 17-25 in foster care, staying put arrangements or who are care leavers is not gathered
- Religion/Belief – Full data on the religion/beliefs of young people aged between 17-25 in foster care, staying put arrangements or who are care leavers was not available.
- Pregnancy/Maternity – Data on the number of young people aged between 17-25 in foster care, staying put arrangements or who are care leavers and have experienced pregnancy or maternity was not available.
- Low income / Age – Issue regarding young people becoming 18 during final academic year and the removal of the fostering allowance and a staying put allowance instead being received. This was highlighted through responses to the consultation.

Table: Consultation findings

Q1. The Staying Put Policy states there will be a financial package for staying put carers for young people over the age of 18. Please give us your feedback on the financial package being offered to you as a Staying Put Carer Do you think the offer based on the current financial climate is:						
Excellent	Good	Neither good nor bad	Poor	Very Poor	Total	Skipped
1 (7.69%)	3 (23.08%)	3 (23.08%)	4 (30.77%)	2 (15.38.%)	13	3
Q2. As a carer, what do you think of the financial contribution being offered to you by the young person being cared for? Do you think the contribution is...						
A fair amount		Neither good nor bad	Poor	Total	Skipped	
4 (40%)		5 (50%)	1 (10%)	10	6	
Q3. As the young person being cared for do you think the financial contribution you are being asked to make to your Staying Put carer is...						
A fair amount		Neither good nor bad	Poor	Total	Skipped	
2(40%)		3 (60%)	0	5	11	
Q4. The offer of a welfare rights appointment and advice is part of each staying put arrangement, do you think this is something you would find useful?						
Yes		No	Total			Skipped

11 (91.67%)	1 (8.33%)	12	4	
Q5. Is there anything else that you think may benefit you in terms of advice and support that is not currently on offer that you would like to see in the future?				
Please see below comments		Total: 8	Skipped: 8	
Q6. Do you think there is enough information provided to you about roles and responsibilities of each key person involved once the child being cared for has reached 18 - e.g. the council Independent Reviewing Officer, Social Worker, Personal Assistant, Young Person, and the Staying Put carer?				
Yes, I do think enough	No, I think I would like more	Total	Skipped	
6 (54.55%)	5 (45.45 %)	11	5	
Q7. Regarding the expectations of Staying Put Carers to support the young person into independence, do you think there are any additional or specific support that would be helpful to either the Staying Put Carer or the Young Person?				
Yes	No	Total	Skipped	
6 (60%)	4(40%)	10	6	
Q8. In general, please tell in your own words your opinion on the Staying Put agreement, e.g the formal agreement at the end of the policy. Do you think the agreement is:				
Excellent and covers everything	Neither good nor bad	Poor	Total	Skipped
3(30%)	6 (60%)	1 (10%)	10	6

Comments from Online consultation:

Summary of Online consultation:

There were 16 total respondents to the Survey Monkey consultation from 03/10/2022 – 25/11/22. Due to anonymity, we cannot identify the proportion of IFA staying put carers and local authority staying put carers who answered the survey.

Eight questions were asked, covering a variety of aspects of the policy, including staying put payments, advice and support under the arrangement and current awareness of roles and responsibilities under staying put arrangements with some questions being directed at carers and some directed at young people.

Almost half of respondents (6, 46.15%) to the first question expressed that the financial package being offered was unsuitable, with most respondents describing it as 'poor' or 'very poor'. 30% of respondents (4) felt the package was 'excellent' or 'good', meanwhile 23% (3) felt the financial package was 'neither good nor bad'.

Half of respondents said the amount proposed to be contributed by the young person to their carer under the new policy was found to be neither good nor bad. Carers expressed a variety of views in the comments ranging from the view that the payment amount is fair, to concerns around ensuring the contribution is proportionate and does not cause the young person hardship, to concerns that the stipulated payment does not reflect the true costs of living. Comments from young people also overwhelmingly expressed that the contribution amount was 'neither good nor bad' (60%, 3).

The majority of respondents (91.67%) expressed that they would find the offer of a welfare rights appointment as part of the staying put arrangement useful. When asked if there was any other help or support they would like to see in the future, there were 8 responses along the following themes: providing opportunities for young people to develop life skills (2), providing useful information and advice on benefits and tax (2), providing direct financial support whilst young person is at university (1), no further support requested (1) and specific situation enquiries (2).

Most respondents thought they receive enough information about the roles and responsibilities of each key person involved once the child being cared for has reached 18 (54.55%). Of those who felt they did not, problems highlighted included conflicting advice, late planning and/or issues with the way information was communicated between the carer, young person and key professionals. Considering whether there was any other additional or specific support that would be helpful to the staying put carer or young person, most respondents agreed they would find extra support helpful (60%, 6).

Most respondents thought that the overall staying put agreement was 'neither good nor bad' (60%), but feedback through the comments section highlighted: concerns around the payment, uncertainty around the new policy and concern around the level of support for young people.

All Comments raised:

Q1 Comments:

- Due to the cost of inflation it was £214 in 2014
- The offer is fair based on the current financial climate
- most of the young people on staying put still require a lot more input from the carers and support so as carers we will still be working, advising and supporting the young
- It appears a fair arrangement
- We are foster parents who wish to continue fostering long term and we have 1 room available for a foster child. Fostering is our career and only source of income which currently amounts to approximately Â£550 per week reflecting our level of experience and training. The financial package being offered makes a Staying Put agreement unworkable.
- There's no incentive
- I am unsure what the current offer is but I do believe that carers should not be worse off
- Costs for 18+'s will only increase and so this could place considerable financial burden on carers who wish to continue looking after placements after 18
- We all know that young people who have been in care need to continue to be supported past their 18th birthday and to continue to offer support to them the finances need to reflect this. With inflation and other issues raising prices at unprecedented rate the finances needs to be looked at to enable foster carers to continue to offer support to young people. Unfortunately foster carers rely on the payments to be able to afford to offer this support and a home to young people. If this was a family that wasn't fostered then parents finances don't change and they could afford to carry on with their child living with them but foster carers wage/money relies on the use of bedrooms (sorry that cold), so to keep a young person home there needs to be support.
- Not financially viable today. Carers are having to choose between keeping a vulnerable person for a very low fee compared to taking a new placement at a higher rate. It's not fair when your heart wants your young person to stay but you can't personally finance the placement

Q2 Comments:

- Young person's have to learn that they have responsibility to contribute in preparation for adult life
- It does not help them to realise the true cost of living. this could lead to financial difficulties when having their own place
- Nothing to add
- They don't really have much to give
- Seems reasonable
- Depending on what the young person is doing for money they can only offer the amount that is proportionate.

Q3 Comments:

- not sure
- seems okay
- A young person on universal credit only gets a small amount of money so they can't pay a lot

Q4 Comments:

- Not everyone is aware of how the benefits system works and what you may be entitled to or may
- I have put yes, but we need to be encouraging the young not to use benefits unless they need to.

Q5 Comments:

- No
- We have a responsibility to see all our young person's are given the best possible start as they move into independent living. In my experience this has not always been available to them
- life skills. Budgeting, how to use appliances, who to get in touch with for household emergencies ie washing machine broken etc. Filling forms in ie electoral register. etc.
- We have been told no Personal Advisor for our young person can be provided due to lack of resources.
- Tax benefits

- How does this work if in SGO?
- A payment while a young person is at university/studying away from home ,depending on the young persons needs. A family home is available to all children who live with birth family so that should be an option for fostered children who wish to go home for weekends etc.
- More clarity on entitlements and practical help for the yp

Q6 Comments:

- How you may update my document
- Social Worker and Personal Assistant tend to work directly with the child and not be involved with the Carer as much. this can lead to a breakdown of communication between all parties.
- There is so much conflicting information given to young people and their foster carers. It depends on SW or PA what information/support they get.
- Not enough time is allowed prior to the yp turning 18 .It's always a rush and often the carers and yp are spoken to separately and the advice is not always the same

Q7 Comments:

- Young person's should have holiday grant available to them, to enable to take annual holiday with their peers, etc . Also clear criteria should be given regarding leaving care grant
- communication with all involved at regular meetings so everyone is up to date in providing the best assistance for the young person.
- Some kind of booklet listing things they need to know
- It should be part of the path way plan what the foster carer will do and what how they will be supported in doing that by the department.
- More support for yp on how to claim their benefits and going with them in person for support

Q8 Comments:

- Are we giving the best start to independent living?... I'm not confident that we do!
- will need to read this a few times before i can make a honest comment on it.
- It appears a foster carer with only 1 room available for fostering or staying put is expected to accept significant financial loss by entering into a Staying Put agreement.
- There still questions to answer
- I think the policy is a good step forward but the financial package could be reviewed
- I have not seen one, even though I have supported young people with staying put.
- Not sure

Focus Groups:

The focus groups took place on the 13th October, 19th October and the 20th October.

Three focus group sessions took place over Zoom and all Tameside Council foster carers were invited to attend. The sessions took place on the following dates:

- Focus Group 1 took place on 13/10/2022 with 10 households in attendance 2 single carers
- Focus Group 2 took place on 19/10/2022 with 3 households in attendance
- Focus Group 3 took place on 20/10/2022 with 4 households in attendance 3 single carers.

A meeting was also held with both the Children in Care council and the Care Leavers Forum. Both of these meetings were in person.

04/10/2022 Children in care council 3 young people in person and 2 virtual attended.

06/10/2022 Care Leavers Forum 3 young people attended.

A consultation survey was available on 'The Big Conversation' for those who couldn't make the meetings and for independent carers. An email was sent out to Children's Social Workers requesting they advise any IFA carers of the survey.

At the start of the focus groups the Staying Put proposal was discussed so everyone had an awareness, the policy was also available on line but very few carers had read it prior to attending the groups.

The focus groups were not as well attended as anticipated and only 10% of Households including both mainstream and kinship attended.

- The groups allowed for a discussion following a short presentation of the policy. The carers were

then asked 6 questions.

1. The staying put policy states that there will be a financial package for Staying Put carers for children over the age of 18. Please give your feedback on the financial package being offered to you as a staying put carer.

- Carers were concerned about the cost of living crisis and how the reduction in their 'payment' would affect this.
- Carers were concerned about the impact of the allowance on single carers especially if they were on benefits or only had the one room.
- A carer asked if 'SP allowance was classed the same as foster carer money for the tax because if you hit the tax you will be on a real loser.'
- 'Taking a hit of £200 is a lot for many people.'
- A carer was concerned that as a single carer they get a 25% reduction on the Council Tax. However when the YP turns 18 the discount was then removed.

2. As a carer what do you think of the financial contribution being offered to you by the young person being cared for.

- Some felt it was unreasonable to expect the young person to buy their own sanitary products and toiletries themselves.
- Some thought this was a good idea to support them in the future.
- Some carers were already in Staying Put and were saving the money for the YP for when they moved on rather than use it towards the household bills.
- Carers felt they would be a lot worse off when the YP had their own money to live on.
- Some felt the role as a Staying Put provider did not differ much to a foster carer and therefore they shouldn't have a decrease in allowance.
- Some who were SP providers now felt the money currently was reasonable but an increase would be brilliant.
- Carers were concerned if YP had to provide for themselves they would become isolated as they wouldn't be able to afford to go out.
- Some carers were very proactive ensuring YP had opportunities to work either full time or part time to ensure they were in a good financial position.
- One carer stated "I think it's a good package and can manage. I've put my own children through college and university and I supported them, not taking any money from them. I think this is a good package".
- Another carer stated "people care and love the children however they can become upset if the cannot financially maintain to keep them.
- One household stated ' a good idea as it helps them to understand they need to contribute.' This was agreed by another household that ' it helps them to appreciate value of money and budget'.
- A number of carers agreed it was good for the YP to learn and appreciate how much things cost.
- A carers stated that her YP (on SP) was not in a position to work and received £58 per week he pays £20 per week to the carer which leaves him £38 which isn't enough to live on and buy clothes etc.
- A carer commented that some YP were behind their peers and expected to make massive decisions at 18.

3. The offer of a welfare rights appointment and advice is part of each staying put arrangement do you think this is something you would find useful.

- All carers agreed this would be helpful.

4. Do you think there is enough information provided to you about roles and responsibilities of each key person involved once the child being cared for has reached 18, eg the role of the council independent reviewing officer, social worker and personal advisor, young

person and the role of the staying put carer?

- A lot of the carers felt that there should be planning earlier for the YP re staying put. They were all aware this should come through the CLA reviews chaired by the IRO.
- A number of carers were confused regarding the role of the PA.

5. Any other points?

- There was confusion regarding the Leaving Care grant and where this fits in with Staying Put.
- A number of carers were concerned if the YP decides at 18 for a SP arrangement then returns to their birth family so the SP arrangement ends. If the placement with birth family broke down where they would be able to get emotional and practical support from.
- They wanted to know if there were any courses to teach YP how to change light bulbs etc as single female carers may not know some of the practical things to teach them.
- Carers stated that if SP was better for YP then the LA needed to make it better for foster carers otherwise it wouldn't happen.
- Some carers thought it was positive that everyone would be getting the same and that a really good job has been done on the policy.
- One carer repeated again that it is good but needs to start earlier to stop the YP becoming stressed.
- a number of carers wanted clarity that if a YP is 18 mid their last year at school then the SP policy shouldn't kick in until they finish their formal education as this was a disparity and would place undue pressure on the YP.
- A few carers commented that it was a good thing and they liked the policy that it was clear and easy to understand.
- Carers wanted to know if they only have 1 YP and they moved to SP would they need to apply again to become a foster carer.
- If the SP ended and they only had one bedroom would they need to apply again.
- A carer felt they needed more clarity and support from the LA regarding the agreement plan and rights so they know where they stand.

Care Leaver's forum

Only 4 young people attended and only one of those had experience of foster care in an IFA.

Comments;

- "what if the young person wanted to stay? But the carers didn't want them too?"
- Feel they haven't been prepared for life, how bills work, and general life skills: use of washer etc.
- Young people are still awaiting a meeting for the local offer – feel there is no "proper anything" and that Tameside has the worst local offer.
- Feel conversations need to be had earlier on with social workers as they feel abandoned and lonely as they can't get through to them when they need them.
- Planning should start around 15 years of age, as some leave the care system at 16 and this is a drastic change.
- Agreed the staying put policy is good as the support is there for longer and enables you to build on skills. Feels the remaining few months should be used to help become more independent so it is "more fresh" in their mind.
- Xx wants to see the actual policy so he can take time to read through it.

CICC:

Two young people attended virtually and asked the most questions. Three young people attended in person.

The questions related to Special Guardianship Orders and if they could remain under a Staying Put arrangement post 18 years.

Conclusion:

The attendance was disappointing however all carers contributed to the discussion which was positive. It is unknown if people attended the focus groups and participated in the online survey. Due to the

anonymity it is unknown how many IFA carers contributed to the online survey. Carers who currently are in Staying Put under the old rate think the financial package is fair and better. All carers were pleased that there was going to be a policy that was clear to all and involved the young person. A large number of carers were considerate of those carers who are claiming benefits and only have one room. The financial drop would severely impact on them and they would have to choose the emotional ties to the young person once they became 18 or using the room for fostering which would bring them more money. All carers agreed that early planning was essential and needed. Carers were clear that their role would continue and therefore this should be financially recognised. A number of carers asked the question if a young person turned 18 years old during their last academic year whether the fostering payments would continue until the end of the summer term. A number of carers felt the young people shouldn't be paying rent and that they should continue to have financial support.

Summing up:

- Some carers want young people to continue under fostering if they turn 18 years old during their last term at school/ college.
- Some Carers feel fostering rates should continue – especially those IFA carers.
- Carers think the policy is welcome and clear.
- Some carers don't think young people should contribute to their rent. Single carers with only one room will be financially impacted.

Equality Issues identified through the consultation process:

1. Impacts on Low Income Groups and Carers - Concerns about financial package:

Almost half of respondents (6, 46.15% online survey) to the first question expressed that the financial package being offered was unsuitable, with most respondents describing it as 'poor' or 'very poor'. 30% of respondents (4) felt the package was 'excellent' or 'good', meanwhile 23% (3) felt the financial package was 'neither good nor bad'.

Mitigation:

The staying put payment amount of £231.74 under the new proposed policy is higher than the previous amount received by staying put carers of £177.67

Staying put payments across Greater Manchester were benchmarked. The rate is comparable to that of a number of Greater Manchester Authorities. It is also higher than the fostering allowance rate for 16-17 year olds (£207 per week). Although this is less than the combination of a fostering allowance and skills payment, the young person as an adult will be responsible for paying for clothing, holidays and recreation through employment or benefits, previously paid for by their foster carer.

2. Impact on Low income groups / Carers – Removal of the 25% Single Person's Discount for single foster carers where the young person remains with the former single foster carer.Mitigation:

With regards the loss of the 25% single person reduction in Council Tax the Council will consider meeting this loss to the carer as corporate parents.

3. Impact due to the protected characteristic of age: If a young person turns 18 years old during their last academic year whether the fostering payments would continue until the end of the summer term.Mitigation:

Contact was made with the Council's Welfare Rights service and it was confirmed that in such a scenario, a young person who was being fostered but then turns 18 and is 'Staying Put' will be entitled to

claim Universal Credit on the basis that they are studying full time and:

- They are under 21
- They are on a full-time non-advanced course of education (up to A Level and equivalent)
- They are not being looked after by the LA and are without parental support.

On that basis the Staying Put policy and associated financial package would apply from the young person's 18th birthday rather than fostering allowances.

4. Impact due to low income status – Where a young person receives UC and is unable to work, the required contribution of £20 a week may impact their finances.

Mitigation:

Universal Credit is a payment which is expected to help towards the young person's living costs

2c. Impact/Relevance

Age:

There will be a disproportionate impact on young people aged between 15 ¾ - 21 as the preparation for a staying put arrangement will begin at 15 ¾ but the staying put arrangements will be formed directly between young people aged 18-21 and their former foster carers, the policy could affect young people up to age 25 where they are in education. The introduction of a formalised staying put policy could positively impact cared for young people aged between 16-21 by providing clarity and consistency and giving them the opportunity to consider a staying put arrangement. As of 7th November 2022 there were 25 young people in Local Authority staying put arrangements. As of October 2022 there were 34 care leavers aged between 17-25 living with their former foster carers. As of 1st November 2022 there were 425 care leavers aged between 17-25.

Disability:

There will be an indirect impact on care leavers with disabilities. In some cases, where a young person has complex needs or a disability which restricts or undermines their ability to care for themselves, it may not be in their best interests to remain in the former foster carer's home. Under the cared for reviews (CLA review) the child's reviewing officer would assess whether the remit was met for staying put arrangements or whether a referral should be put in for a shared lives arrangement.

Where the young person has minor disabilities or lower level care needs, the policy may have a low level positive impact by providing improved guidance. As of 1st November 2022 there were 25 (6%) of Care Leavers aged between 17-25 who have a disability.

Ethnicity/Race:

The policy does not directly differentiate on grounds of race or ethnicity. There will be an indirect impact on young people seeking asylum who are awaiting status determination. This is because where they have not been granted leave to remain, this will affect their ability to claim benefits and access state support. As Universal Credit Housing Element from the young person is expected to be paid by the young person to the former foster carer as part of the Staying Put Arrangement if the young person is not in education, this could negatively impact the arrangement. There are 10 unaccompanied children seeking asylum who are over 16 in Tameside. There are 3 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are currently within staying put arrangements.

Considering the potential impacts upon unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, the policy has been amended to propose that where the young person is awaiting status determination, their individual case will be considered by Resources Panel as a matter of priority to ensure the right outcome for the young person and their carer.

Ethnicity of Care Leavers 01.11.22:

White – 83%
Mixed – 2%
Asian or Asian British – 4%
Black or Black British – 5%
Other Ethnicity – 5%

Gender:

The policy does not disproportionately impact on the grounds of gender or sex. As of 1st Nov 2022, 55% (233) of care leavers are male and 45% (192) are female.

The latest available data (2020 ONS) shows that in Tameside males account for 49.317% of the population and females account for 50.6%. Therefore, it appears that males are slightly over-represented in the care leaver cohort and may be disproportionately affected by the proposed policy. However, not all care leavers will be eligible for staying put arrangements. Considering young people aged between 16-17 who are currently in foster care, out of the 44 people, half are female and half are male. Due to this, there is no anticipation that the proposed policy will disproportionately affect young people on the basis of sex or gender.

Religion or Belief:

It is not anticipated that the policy will disproportionately affect people based on their religion or belief, all eligible young people regardless of faith or belief are equally entitled to access staying put arrangements. The data on religious beliefs for young people leaving care aged 17-25 is incomplete.

Of the 44 16-17 year olds in foster placements:

8 no religion responded to
6 Not recorded
4 Christian
1 No religion
25 no response recorded
Sexual Orientation:

It is not anticipated that the policy will disproportionately impact people as a result of their sexual orientation. The policy does not differentiate on this basis. Data on the sexual orientation of care leavers, people in foster care or staying put arrangements was not available.

Gender Reassignment:

The policy does not impact upon a young person on the basis of gender reassignment. Where young people identify as transgender or have been through gender reassignment, they are equally entitled to support through the policy. Data on the number of care leavers, people in foster care or staying put arrangements aged 17-25 who are transgender or who have gone through gender reassignment was not available.

Pregnancy or maternity:

The policy does not adversely or disproportionately impact upon pregnant young people or those experiencing maternity. If the young person was pregnant the authority would offer appropriate support to ensure they are not disadvantaged. Data on the number of care leavers aged 17-25 who have experienced pregnancy or maternity was not available. Data on the number of young people in staying put arrangements experiencing pregnancy or maternity was not available.

Mental Health:

If the young person has complex care needs the policy may impact them as it may not be in their best interest to remain with the former foster carer if their needs can be met more effectively from another place e.g. through a shared lives arrangement.

Carers:

The staying put arrangement may directly impact the carer's finances as they may receive less under the staying put arrangement than under the foster care placement. A staying put arrangement would also limit another foster care placement depending on space available.

Where payments towards the staying put arrangement come from sources other than the Local Authority under s.23C of the Children Act 1989, this may affect the carer's entitlement to benefits.

Where the staying put payment to the carer also includes an amount from the young person's UC housing element, any benefit delays experienced by the young person may affect the young person's ability to contribute towards household costs, affecting their carer's income.

People aged 40-64 are over-represented in Tameside's foster carer population, accounting for 73.84% of foster carers but just 26.64% of Tameside's population as a whole.

Low income/no income groups:

There may be a direct impact. National data from the Fostering Network 2021 indicated that 61% of foster carers who responded do not combine fostering with other work.

The increased cost of living and decrease in payment from fostering payment to staying put arrangement will have a negative impact on the income of the carer.

However, the introduction of a formalised staying put policy and consistent rate of payment may have a positive impact on the finances of low income carers, enabling them to consider a staying put arrangement.

Additionally, the proposed weekly rate of £231.74 under the new policy is higher than the 2021 standard weekly Staying Put Allowance which was £177.67¹ positively impacting former foster carers who choose to form a staying put arrangement.

Staying put payments across Greater Manchester were benchmarked. The rate is comparable to that of a number of Greater Manchester Authorities. It is also higher than the fostering allowance rate for 16-17 year olds (£207 per week). Although this is less than the combination of a fostering allowance and skills payment, the young person as an adult will be responsible for paying for clothing, holidays and recreation through employment or benefits, previously paid for by their foster carer.

There is a risk that the former foster carers entitlement to benefits and to council tax discounts may be affected by the continuing presence of the young person and the payment under the staying put arrangement. This has been mitigated by the offer of a welfare rights appointment prior to the formation of the staying put arrangement.

Summary of data recording issues identified:

- No data on gender reassignment or sexual orientation for young people aged 17-25 who are in foster care, staying put arrangements or who are care leavers. Data collection for care leavers and young people in staying put arrangements needs to be improved so that effects of policy on this cohort can be monitored
- Incomplete data on religion of young people in staying put arrangements and care leavers.
- Incomplete data on pregnancy and maternity for young people in staying put arrangements and care leavers.

¹ Tameside MBC FOI Response [Response all information to be supplied.pdf \(whatdotheyknow.com\)](#)

2d. Mitigations (Where you have identified an impact/relevance, what can be done to reduce or mitigate it?)	
<i>Carers / Low Income Groups – Benefits and Council tax discounts entitlement of former foster carers being affected by the staying put allowance</i>	<p>In preparation for a Staying Put arrangement carers will be offered an appointment arranged with the Council’s Welfare Rights Service to talk through any considerations needed regarding benefits and Council Tax</p> <p>With regards the loss of the 25% single person reduction in Council Tax the Council will consider meeting this loss to the carer as corporate parents.</p>
<i>Carers / Low Income Groups- Former Foster Carers and IFA’s receiving less than they would have previously received prior to young person turning 18.</i>	<p>The reduction in income was also present under the previous policy. Planning for care leavers begins at 15 ¾, giving young people and their carers two years notice that income will reduce so that they can plan ahead. Additionally, the disparity between the income received per week by foster carers and the staying put payment has been reduced under the proposed policy as the amount received by carer has been increased to £231.74 per week from £177.67. This issue was also identified within the consultation.</p>
<i>Carers - Facilitating a staying put arrangement could limit the carer’s capacity to take on any further foster care placements</i>	<p>The carer would still be able to take on additional foster placements subject to all adults including the young person obtaining an enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service.</p> <p>Children’s Services would pay for the enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service.</p> <p>Where the former foster carer only has enough space in their home to facilitate the young person under the staying put arrangement or another foster placement instead this will be a decision that the former carer will have to make.</p>
<i>Disability / Mental Health – It will not be in the best interests of some young people to remain with their former foster carer within a staying put arrangement where they have complex needs that will be managed more effectively through a different arrangement e.g. a shared lives arrangement</i>	<p>Under the cared for reviews (CLA review) the child’s reviewing officer would assess whether the remit was met for staying put arrangements or whether a referral should be put in for a shared lives arrangement. All Shared Lives Carers are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and complete an assessment and approval process, and are required to undertake regular mandatory training.</p>
<i>Ethnicity – Some young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers may face procedural delays in status determination or may not be granted leave to remain.</i>	<p>If the young person is a UASC it may be that the young person’s immigration status is pending and as such employment and benefit claims are not possible. In these situations it is proposed that the individual case is considered at Resources Panel as a matter of priority to ensure the right outcome for the young person and carer. This will be updated in the Staying Put policy.</p>
<i>Incomplete Data: Data on the sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity is not gathered</i>	<p>Include this information on foster carer recruitment forms Include reporting on this regarding young people in care</p>
<i>Full data on religion / beliefs of care leavers not available.</i>	<p>Include this information on foster carer recruitment forms Include reporting on this regarding young people in care</p>


2d. Mitigations (Where you have identified an impact/relevance, what can be done to reduce or mitigate it?)

<p>. Impact due to the protected characteristic of age: If a young person turns 18 years old during their last academic year whether the fostering payments would continue until the end of the summer term</p>	<p>Contact was made with the Council’s Welfare Rights service and it was confirmed that in such a scenario, a young person who was being fostered but then turns 18 and is ‘Staying Put’ will entitled to claim Universal Credit on the basis that they are studying full time and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are under 21 • They are on a full-time non-advanced course of education (up to A Level and equivalent) • They are not being looked after by the LA and are without parental support. <p>On that basis the Staying Put policy and associated financial package would apply from the young person’s 18th birthday rather than fostering allowances.</p>
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2e. Evidence Sources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State of the Nation 2021 Thematic Report 1 Foster Carer Status.pdf (thefosteringnetwork.org.uk) - Children’s services Analysis Tool (ChAT) 1.11.22 (Care Leaver data) - Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk) <p>Tameside MBC FOI Response Response all information to be supplied.pdf (whatdotheyknow.com)</p>

2f. Monitoring progress

Issue / Action	Lead officer	Timescale
Annual Review	Required	Required
Benchmarking		
Lived Experience Consultation		
Signature of Contract / Commissioning Manager		Date
N/a		
Signature of Assistant Director / Director		Date
		25.11.22