

Staying put - A guide for foster carers

Why is staying put different to foster care?

When the fostered young person becomes 18, they are no longer a foster child. If they “Stay Put” with their foster carers then they have become an adult living as a member of their foster family. You should discuss this with your supervising social worker as early as possible.

How will this change affect my care of the young person?

A Staying Put arrangement is not intended to change the way that you care for your young person, although, of course they are now no longer a child but an adult. The young person will already have a Pathway Plan and this will continue, and you will continue to help the young person to get ready for adult life.

However, the young person’s stay with you is now covered by a Licence Agreement, which is the same sort of agreement that is used by someone who wishes to let a room to a lodger. Some families may also decide to make a Living Together Agreement which covers your own house-rules.

You will no longer be expected to give any pocket money to the young person, as they will now have an income of their own from either work or apprenticeship wages or from benefits, 16-19 Bursary, and allowances direct from Independent Futures if they are in Further Education. If they are not working or in education for a period the young person remains entitled to benefits, although their income will be reduced.

Now that they have an income of their own, we recommend that the young person should make a contribution of £18 per week towards food and utilities. All food arrangements in families are slightly different and should be right for you and the young person, to be agreed in the Living Together Agreement. Usually, young people claim housing benefit of £150 for the rent which will be payable to you.

How will I keep young people safe?

As a Staying Put carer you will still want to help young people make safe choices, so they are not exploited or bullied, and to see that vulnerable young people get the help they need. Young People will still need and appreciate your guidance. The Personal Advisor from Independent Futures will continue work closely with you and the young person. If your young person has a disability the Transitions team may also be involved in supporting the arrangement to continue living with you after the age of 18. For some young people with disabilities an Adult Disability team will take over the responsibility for paying for your support and care of the young person. These arrangements are called “Shared Lives” arrangements.

How will my income change?

Your income from a Staying Put arrangement will come from three sources:

- a payment for support and care from Islington Children’s Services,
- the £18 per week contribution to food and utilities from the young person themselves,
- rent, usually in the form of Housing Benefit payable to you on behalf of the young person.

Professional fee paid carers will receive £317 per week. Part of this will be paid directly to you by your fostering team and the rest will be rent in the form of housing benefit paid to you on behalf of your young person

Non-Fee Paid Carers will receive £216 per week. Part of this will be paid directly to you by your fostering team and the rest will be rent in the form of housing benefit paid to you on behalf of your young person

These amounts are paid for the first 12 months of a Staying Put arrangement, up until the young person's 19th birthday. After the first 12 months the payments for support and care and rent are reduced to £216 per week. This called the 19+Staying Put rate. The young person will continue to contribute to household costs and be responsible for paying their rent with the support of Housing Benefit.

How will Staying Put affect my fostering approval?

We prefer you remain approved as a foster carer, but it is not essential. Before a Staying Put arrangement begins you should have a Foster Carer Review to ensure you fully understand the change in the arrangement and to discuss the match of the staying put young person with any new placement. The Islington Fostering Service will continue to offer carers supervision, support, groups and training, public liability insurance, legal protection insurance and membership of Fostering Network. If you will foster other children, the Staying Put young person will need a DBS, which we will arrange.

How will this affect my own tax situation?

If the young person was fostered by you before the age of 18, you are still entitled to foster care tax relief of £10,000 per year, plus £250 per week for the young person, in addition to your own tax free allowance.

How will this affect my benefits?

If you are receiving Housing Benefit yourself you will probably be unable to accept rent from housing benefit on behalf of the young person. Also, if you are a friends and family foster carer, and therefore related to the young person, Housing Benefit is not payable.

What if I cannot offer Staying Put on these terms?

Please tell your supervising social worker if this would be difficult for you. The matter will be considered at the Placements Commissioning Panel . However, it is your choice if you can offer Staying Put or not.

What is the best way to make this work?

Planning early will make Staying Put work best for young people and for foster carers, so everyone is clear what the arrangement will be. It is not fair to anyone if arrangements are not clear well before the young person reaches their 18th birthday. If you cannot offer Staying Put, please let your supervising social worker know as soon as possible so other plans can be made.

Complaints

If you have a concern about the Staying Put arrangement, please speak first to the fostering manager so the matter can be resolved. However, you have the right to make a children's services complaint on behalf of the young person, or a complaint to the council.