

5 September 2023		ITEM: 9
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Report on ‘Staying Put’ Policy and Provision in Thurrock		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Dan Jones, Strategic Lead CLA		
Accountable Assistant Director: Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Early Help		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Director of Children’s Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

When children who are looked after turn 18, they cease to be ‘looked after’ legally as they are adults. Some young people in agreement with their foster care may decide that they wish to stay living in the placement under a Staying Put arrangement. It is important to note that on turning 18 this becomes an arrangement rather than a placement facilitated by the local authority.

The intention of Staying Put arrangements is to ensure that young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.

Thurrock’s Staying Put Policy sets out what the local authority will do and what support it will provide to young people and their foster carer in a Staying Put arrangement. The updated policy is attached as an appendix to the report. for Members comments and review.

The report further sets out the current operation of the Policy and the impact it has for young people leaving care.

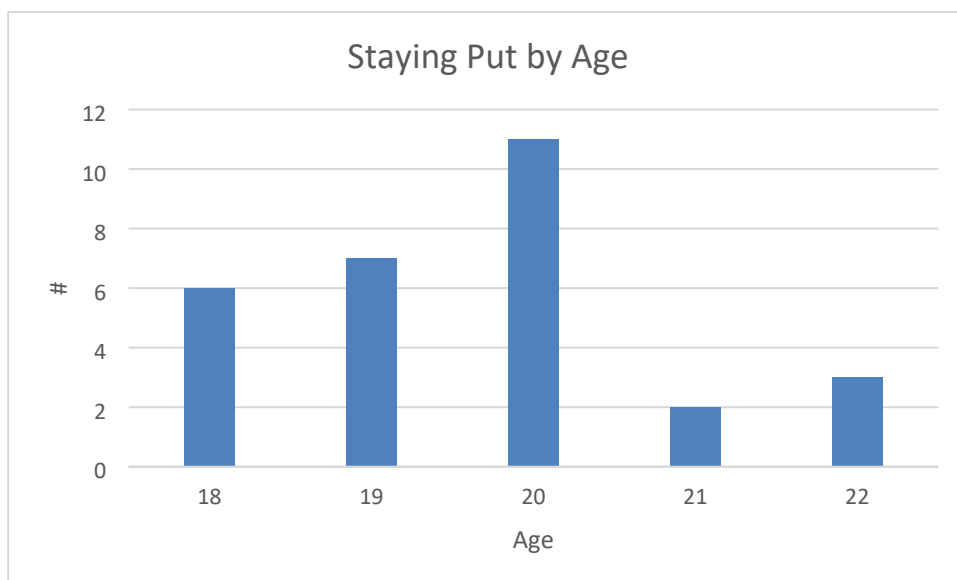
- 1. Recommendation(s)**
 - 1.1 Members are informed on the updated Staying Put Policy.**
 - 1.2 Members review and comment on the policy and note the Council’s responsibility as a Corporate Parent.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Since 2014, young people leaving care at age 18 have been able to remain with their former foster carer. This is termed Staying Put arrangement and requires the following:
- Both the Young Person and the Foster Carer agree to the arrangement post 18
 - The young person must be a 'former relevant child'
 - The young person should have lived with the foster carer prior to age 18 although there is no minimum period required
- 2.2 Thurrock Council has a detailed Staying Put Policy in line with national guidance. This sets out how the service should support young people and Foster Carers to plan for and live together under a Staying Put arrangement.
- 2.3 Discussion should start with the young person and foster carer regarding the option of staying Put as early as possible, ideally before the young person reaches the age of 16. The option of Staying Put should be identified within the young person's first Care Plan / Pathway Plan completed after their 16th birthday.
- 2.4 The policy sets out the expectations for each of the specific roles involved. The policy also sets out the financial offer to foster carers and young people. It is important to note that Foster Carers do not have the same duties towards young adults they do to children and are not providing care. The policy has some specific protections and provisions to ensure young people are supported:
- For those who turn 18 and are in full time education, the carers' pre-18 payment is protected until the end of the academic year
 - For those in further education or enrolled in the military, carers receive a retainer payment whilst the young person is away so they can come home when needed (full rate is paid whilst at home)
 - Depending on their income and circumstances, young people contribute to their Staying Put arrangement, through a weekly contribution to their 'keep' and, if applicable, housing benefits
- 2.5 The Policy sets out a living together agreement that ensures everyone involved is in agreement with the terms of the Staying Put provision. Young people are supported by personal advisors who oversee the arrangement post 18.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Staying Put is commonly used for young people who need it in Thurrock Council. As of 31 July, there are 29 young people being supported in staying put arrangements. The age profile of these arrangements is as follows:-



- 3.2 Staying Put is mostly used by those aged 18-20 and this reflects the journey of our young adults to independence. Many young people move on from staying put arrangements. We have found the early planning is critical to successful staying put placements, the policy outlines the stages of planning. We find the young people and carers can be uncertain about plans post-18 as next steps may depend on other events (e.g successfully achieving grades, starting a job etc). So planning continues up to the 18th Birthday for some young people.
- 3.3 'Staying Put' only applies to former foster placements and does not apply to semi-independent accommodation or children's homes. There are currently 80 children aged 16 and 17 looked after by Thurrock Council. Of those, 24 are in fostering arrangements where staying put is a possibility. For those in other placements different schemes are available (Shared Lives, Head Start, Adults Services etc).
- 3.4 Staying put provides a useful bridge into adulthood and reflects family life. The updated policy clarifies the roles and expectations on all involved.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The report and attached policy sets out Thurrock Council's staying put offer and practice guidance.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 None

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 Looked After Children and Care Leavers

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

The attached policy sets out Thurrock's financial commitments to a Staying Put Arrangement. This is budgeted for within the planned spend for internal placements.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Petrena Sharpe**
Safeguarding Lawyer (Team Leader)

Section 23CZA – arrangements for certain former relevant children to continue to live with former foster parents was inserted into the Children Act 1989 by The Children and Families Act 2014. This introduced a new duty on Local Authorities in England to advise, assist and support fostered young people to stay with their foster families when they reach 18, if both parties agree.

Under the *Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010; Planning Transition into Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance*, the Local Authority must provide information about extending placements post 18.

Under Section 19BA of the Children Act 1989 Local Authorities have a specific duty to consider the possibility of staying put when undertaking the assessment of the young person's needs within 3 months of their 16th birthday.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

The Service is committed to practice, which promotes inclusion and diversity, and will carry out its duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and related Codes of Practice and Anti-discriminatory policy. The service recognises that a range of communities and groups of people may have experienced obstruction or the impact of prejudice when accessing services including Social Care.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

- None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Staying Put Policy

Report Author:

Dan Jones – Strategic Lead CLA