

Oldham Fostering Service

Staying Put – A Guide for Young People

This guide is designed to help you understand the staying put scheme in Oldham. Staying put is the name given to arrangements where young people remain living with their foster carers once they reach 18.

Why stay put?

Oldham Children's Services is committed to supporting all care leavers to achieve their full potential. We will help you make the transition to independence and adulthood at a pace that suits you. For example, if you stay with your foster carers past your 18th birthday, you can benefit by:-

- being able to stay with carers who can provide support, guidance and care;
- being able to stay to complete education and training courses and whilst studying at university;
- living with carers can help young people to continue to develop and improve independence skills;
- staying with your carers and moving to independent living at a time when you feel ready to manage your own place.

Setting up a staying put arrangement

In order to get all of the arrangements ready for your 18th birthday, planning for staying put starts when your Permanence Plan is created, or around your 16th birthday.

Around your 16th birthday your after care social worker, foster carer and your foster carers supervising social worker will talk to you about staying put. You can then tell us what you think you would want when you reach the age of 18 and where you think you would want to live.

If everyone agrees that a staying put arrangement would be a good idea, then planning for staying put will start.

All young people can stay put with their carers when they reach the age of 18. The main requirement is that you want to stay, that both you and your foster carer feel it is a good idea and that your social worker supports the plan.

If you are not sure what you want to do when you reach the age of 16 that is ok. You do not have to make a final decision about staying put until around the age of 17 ½.

If you will be staying put, there are a number of issues that need to be organised as you get near your 18th birthday.

Staying put - at age 18

From age 18, and to help you prepare for moving to independence, your foster carer will stop making savings for you, giving you pocket money, a clothing allowance and a personal allowance. You can replace these payments from your pay if you are working, or by claiming a benefit if you are in college, on a training course or looking for work. We will help you claim any benefits you are entitled to. Your earnings and benefits will at least be the same, or possibly more than you were given in pocket money, a clothing allowance, savings and a personal allowance.

We will also ask you to pay rent for your staying put arrangement, and will help you to claim housing benefit to do this if you are not working or earning a low wage.

Living Together Agreements

As you will not be 'in-care' from your 18th birthday, there are also a number of practical issues that will need to be organised. For example, before your 18th birthday you need to have a Placement Plan that sets out all of the day to day arrangements for you and your foster care household.

From the age of 18 your Placement Plan will change into a 'Living Together Agreement'. This will set out any new or changed arrangements for your foster care household, for example what time you are expected home in the evening and what to do if they may be late, what areas and skills your foster carer will help you with, the arrangements for friends and visitors. Most of these issues will already have been organised as part of your Placement Plan so shouldn't be a major change.

Disclosure and Barring Checks

Because you will still be living in a foster care household, there are a number of legal requirements that have to be followed, particularly if there are young children still living in your home. You will be required to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS). This is generally a formality and something that all adults living in a foster home need.

You can stay put until you are ready to move-on, if this is before you reach the age of 21, or until your 21st birthday, or until the education or training course you are undertaking on your 21st birthday is completed. The actual timescale will depend on your needs and will be decided by you the staying put carer, your after care social worker / leaving care personal adviser, and the staying put carers supervising social worker in discussion with you.

Frequently asked questions

These questions have been asked by other young people and may help you understand staying put better.

1. Why does planning for staying put start when I reach the age of 16?

Setting up a staying put arrangement can be quite complex as there are a number of tasks that need to be completed to support you and your carer. To ensure everything is in place by your 18th birthday, planning starts when you are 16. Some of these tasks are related to making sure you and your carer have all the information to decide if staying put will work for you both.

2. What sort of information will be put in my living together agreement?

The information in your living together agreement should be based on the house rules and expectations already set out in our Placement Plan. The living together agreement will set out the day to day arrangements within the household, i.e. what time you are likely to be home in the evening, what to do if you will be late, for example.

3. What happens if I want a friend, or girlfriend/boyfriend to stay when I reach the age of 18?

Most of these issues will already have been planned and organised before you reach 18. Many of these decisions will be planned with you and your carer and will depend on who else is living in your foster /staying put home. Part of the decision about having friends staying over will depend on how well your carer/s knows them. The detailed planning for stay over's will be organised within your living together agreement.

4. What support do I get and what support does my staying put carer get when I reach the age of 18?

As a care leaver you will have an after care social worker / leaving care personal advisor who will support you and help you plan your next steps, this will include any support with education, training or employment which may include financial support. Your staying put carer will also have a supervising social worker or a support worker from the fostering team.

5. Why do I need a DBS check?

All adults living in a foster carer household require a DBS check and therefore it is a key requirement.

6. Do I have to stay put until I reach the age of 21? What happens if I decide I'm ready to leave when I reach the age of 19?

No, if you feel you are ready for independent living, want to move to college or for a job you can leave at any point, however, we would want to plan your move in advance and therefore ask for at least 28 days notice. This is particularly important as it may take time to organise your next accommodation.

7. What are the rules about smoking and drinking in a staying put arrangement?

The arrangements for smoking and drinking in the staying put household will depend on what was agreed before you were 18, on what is 'reasonable', on who else lives in the house, on respecting each person in the house and as agreed with your staying put carer/s. The rules will be set out in your living together agreement.