



Services for Children, Young People and Families

CHILDREN IN CARE

Post-18 Care Options for Children and Young People in Foster Care

‘Staying Put’

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Permanence and Continuity for Foster Children up to the age of 18 and beyond

1. Aims and purposes

1.1 The purpose of this guidance is to act as guidance to staff, foster carers and most importantly to young people as to what options are available to young people in foster care as they approach their 18th Birthday.

1.2 It is intended that this document will provide guidance to practitioners and others involved in ensuring that young people are well supported and cared for during this important time of transition.

2. Supporting Transitions

2.1 In all cases primary consideration will be given to the needs of children placed with them. This means that there should be no barriers, financial or otherwise, that prevent foster carers becoming supported lodgings providers or carers under the adult placement scheme to enable former foster children aged 18+ to remain with them and continue to be supported.

2.2 This needs to be held in contention with the need for the local authority to manage its resources effectively.

2.3 It is anticipated that while a young person is being prepared for the transition to leaving care status, their case holder will continue to be their Social Worker. However, it is essential that all professionals and carers seek to work in as open and as flexible manner as possible to ensure that young people approaching 18 receive the best care and support through a period of great importance for them.

3. Legal context

3.1 The terms of who is covered by this legislation is dealt with in the guidance relating to referrals for a Personal Advisor with the Permanence and Transitions Team and the Pathway Planning process.

3.2 The Leaving Care Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989 are the two most important pieces of legislation covering the transition from care to leaving care for young people.

3.3 Children can only be fostered to the age of 18. This has implications for foster carers' payments and their tax allowances.

3.4 The need to promote continuity of accommodation and support for children leaving care is set out in *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care* and has been developing since 2003.

4. The Pathway Plan

4.1 The provision of a pathway plan is established in the Leaving care Act 2004, and is covered by the procedure 'Pathway Planning'.

4.2 The Pathway plan allows for an assessment to be conducted when a young person is 16, which looks at what the long term arrangements will be for a young person up to and after their 18th Birthday. This includes where they will live.

4.3 In the pathway planning assessment of a young person in foster care, it is assumed that the best place for a young person to live after their 18th Birthday will be with their current carers. The starting point should be, "what needs to be done to ensure that this can be facilitated."

4.4 During the assessment prior to a pathway planning meeting, the assessing Personal advisor and the supervising social worker of the young person's foster carer should meet with the foster carers to look at the feasibility of the placement being continued after the young person's 18th birthday.

4.5 This should consider;

- The level of support required by the young person
- What skills they have and what they need to acquire in order to promote their independence.
- The training required by the foster carer (if any) to meet the needs of the young person post 18
- Their involvement in education or employment
- The financial implications for the foster carer of the proposed plan, including advice on Tax, benefits and where this can be sourced from.
- The views of the young person

Where a young person plans to go to further education, consideration should be given as to whether a young person will be able to stay with their foster carer during holiday times.

4.6 If the assessed needs of a young person change at a later date, the pathway plan can be amended and the process as outlined in this guidance should still be followed

5. The pathway plan

By the time the pathway planning meeting is held, all of the relevant parties should have been consulted and the plans already enacted as to where the young person's placement will be post 18. Essentially this will mean that 1 of the following 3 options will have to be decided upon;

- a) Conversion of the Foster placement to an independent living arrangement. (It is assumed that this will usually be the preferred option.) (See 6.)
- b) Conversion of the Foster placement to a supported lodgings placement. (See 7.)
- c) The young person will move to live elsewhere. (See 8.)

6. Independent Living arrangements

6.1 Where it is decided that a young persons' needs post 18 can be met with a greater degree of independence and with the carers' and the young person's agreement, the young person will remain living with their former foster carer under an Independent Living Arrangement.

6.2 Where this has been decided, the Child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker will arrange to undertake a financial assessment of the foster carer; this should include what benefits the young person will also be entitled to.

6.3 Agreement should also be reached with the young person as to what contribution they should make to the placement from the money they will receive.

6.4 An agreement should also be reached as to what the expectations will of the carers and of the young person once this new agreement begins.

6.5 Consideration and support can be given to the carer and young person to draw up a written agreement between them if this is required. Such an agreement however remains a private one between the carer and young person.

6.6 Once the financial assessment and any agreements have been completed, the plan should be discussed at the child's Independent Review.

7. Supported Lodgings Placements

7.1 Where it is felt that a young person would benefit from the greater support a needs assessment will be conducted by the young person's social worker. The conversion of a foster care placement to a supported lodgings placement will only be considered if one of the following conditions is met;

- The young person will not be ready for independent living 2 years after their 18th birthday.

- The confidence and competence of the foster carer are such that they will be able to meet the requirements of the supported lodgings scheme.
- The assessment of needs (see 4.2) identifies that they will benefit from a semi-independent structure.
- The young person will need support in accessing and continuing in education or employment.
- Their level of risk taking is such that greater supervision is required.
- There is a strong possibility of the placement breaking down without the support of the CYPS.
- There is a need to support the carer in promoting boundaries.
- There is a need to bring in the support of other agencies (i.e. Connexions, Talkshop).
- Other issues are identified which are assessed as requiring the support of the Support Lodgings Scheme.

7.2 Where conversion to a Supported Lodgings placement is identified as the most appropriate way to meet the needs of a young person a member of the Supported Lodgings team will visit the carer with the carer's Supervising Social Worker to outline the process of approval by the Supported lodgings team.

7.3 During this visit the carer's will also be provided with advice about how their tax allowance and benefits entitlement will be impacted by any conversion to a supported lodgings placement.

7.4 Once the carer has agreed to pursue the conversion to a supported lodgings placement and this has been endorsed by the Independent Reviewing Officer, the young person's social worker will complete a 'request of conversion' form which will be submitted to the Head of Service (Children in Care).

7.5 Requests for conversion should be submitted no later than 6 months prior to a young persons 18th birthday.

7.6 An assessment of the carer under the procedures for assessing supported lodgings placements will be completed and presented to the supported lodgings panel for approval.

7.7 Once approved the placement will be finalised under the Independent Reviewing Process.

8. Moving Out

8.1 Where young people have indicated that they wish to leave their foster placement post 18, this must be clearly documented on the child's file, along with the support and information that has been given to seek to maintain the young person in their current placement.

8.2 This decision should be clearly documented and alternative accommodation sought appropriately.

8.3 It is expected that in these circumstances, all of those involved, including foster carers, will continue to provide support to a young person even once they have moved on from their current placement. Consideration must be given to what support is required in order for this to be possible.

Related Procedures

Assessing supported lodgings placements

Pathway Planning

Referrals for aftercare service

Request for conversion