**Why Stay Put?**

The aim of a Staying Put arrangement is to enable young people to remain with their former foster carer until they are more prepared for adulthood, In Havering we will help you to move to independence and adulthood at a pace that suits you. For example, if it may be better for you to stay with your foster carers past your 18th birthday, for you to:

* be able to stay with carers who can provide on-going support, guidance and care;
* be able to stay with your carers to complete education and training courses and whilst studying at university;
* live with carers where you can develop and improve your independence skills;
* Stay with your carers and move to independent living at a time when you feel ready to manage your own place.

Every young person will have different reasons for staying with their foster carers after they reach 18. What would your main reason be?

**Setting Up a Staying Put Arrangement**

In order to get all of the arrangements ready by your 18th birthday, planning for Staying Put starts when your ‘Permanence Plan’ is created, or around your 16th birthday.

By your 16th birthday your social worker, your independent reviewing officer (IRO), your foster carer/s and your foster carer’s supervising social worker will start talking to you about Staying Put.

You can then tell us what you would want to happen when you reach the age of 18 and where you think you would like to live.

If everyone agrees that a Staying Put arrangement would be a good idea, then planning will start and discussions will happen with your social worker, IRO and foster carer/s.

We want all young people to be able to stay put with their carers when they reach the age of 18 if that is the right plan. 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 agrees that it is the right plan for you. You may not be sure what you want to do about staying put when you reach the age of 16, which is ok. You do not have to make a final decision until you are aged over 17½ years old, so we can get all agreements in place as you get near your 18th birthday.

**Staying Put for over 18-year-olds**

Young people remaining with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 will be described as living in a Staying Put arrangement rather than living in a fostering placement. This is because once the young person is 18-years-old and legally an adult the Local Authority is no longer making a placement for a child in care but facilitating an arrangement for the young adult.

 From the age 18, and to help you prepare for moving to independence, your foster carer will bring to an end giving you a pocket money and a clothing allowance.

The savings they make for you will end too. 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 be at least the same, or possibly more than you were given in pocket money, clothing and savings.

We will also help you to claim housing benefit, to partially cover the cost of your Staying Put arrangement. We will also continue to give you birthday and Christmas /Eid allowances as agreed in our Local Offer.

**Staying Put Agreements**

As you will not be a ‘child in-care’ from your 18th birthday, there are also a number of practical issues that will need to be organised. A ‘Staying Put Agreement’ 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 you may be late, what areas and skills your carer will help you with, the arrangements for friends and visitors. Most of these issues will already have been discussed and organised as part of your child in care 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 living in your home. You will be required to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS). This is something that all adults living in a foster home need. You can Stay Put until you are ready to move-on, or until your 21st birthday (or until the education or training course you are undertaking on your 21st birthday is completed).