Sandwell Children's Trust

STAYING PUT POLICY



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1. Purpose

This policy sets out Sandwell Children's Trust's approach to Staying Put arrangements, enabling care-experienced young people to remain living with their former foster carers beyond the age of 18 in a safe, stable, and supportive family-based environment.

The policy aims to:

- Support a planned and gradual transition into adulthood
- Promote stability in accommodation, relationships, and education or employment
- Reduce the risk of homelessness, social exclusion, and tenancy breakdown
- Enable young people to develop the skills, resilience, and confidence needed for
- independent living

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All eligible care leavers aged 18–25 supported by Sandwell Children's Trust
- Foster carers (internal and independent) acting as Staying Put Providers
- All professionals involved in pathway planning and Care Experienced services, including Social Workers, Personal Advisers, and managers

This policy covers:

- Transition from foster care to Staying Put arrangements
- The operation, funding, and review of arrangements
- Roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all parties

3. Legislative Framework

This policy is underpinned by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Staying Put: Arrangements for Care Leavers Aged 18+ (DfE/DWP)
- Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations – Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood
- HMRC Staying Put guidance

Sandwell Children's Trust will ensure all Staying Put arrangements are delivered in line with statutory expectations and promote:

- Safeguarding and welfare of young people
- Continuity of care and stable relationships
- Positive long-term outcomes

4. Definitions

Staying Put Arrangement
An arrangement where a young person aged 18 or over remains living with their former foster carer in a supported environment.

Staying Put Provider
A former foster carer who agrees to provide accommodation and support to a young person under a Staying Put arrangement.

Young Person
A care leaver aged 18–25 who is eligible for support under this policy.

Pathway Plan
A statutory plan setting out the young person's transition to adulthood, including accommodation, education, employment, and support needs.

5. Principles

Sandwell Children's Trust will ensure that:

- Young people are not expected to leave care abruptly at 18 unless this is planned and appropriate
- All decisions are person-centred, reflecting individual needs, strengths, and aspirations
- Young people are supported to engage in education, employment, or training (EET)
- Stability is prioritised to avoid unnecessary disruption to accommodation or relationships
- Independence is developed progressively and realistically
- Young people are recognised as adult members of the household, while continuing to receive appropriate support
- Providers are supported to maintain safe, consistent, and nurturing environments

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Sandwell Children's Trust

Will:

- Provide funding and oversight of Staying Put arrangements
- Ensure arrangements are clearly detailed within the Pathway Plan
- Support young people to access benefits, housing, and financial guidance
- Monitor arrangements through regular visits and allocated Accommodation Officer
- Respond promptly where there are concerns or risks of arrangement breakdown

6.2 Staying Put Providers

Will:

- Provide a safe, secure, and stable home environment
- Support the young person to develop independent living skills
- Maintain appropriate boundaries, expectations, and routines
- Communicate effectively with Sandwell Children's Trust
- Participate in planning, reviews, and decision-making processes

6.3 Young People

Will:

- Engage proactively in their Pathway Plan and support services
- Contribute to household expectations, including financial contributions where appropriate
- Treat the provider, household members, and property with respect
- Work towards independence, including education, training, or employment goals

7. Financial Arrangements

Sandwell Children's Trust will:

- Pay a Staying Put allowance to providers in line with agreed local rates
- If young person is in a form of education on their 18th birthday, and the birthday falls within the academic year, the Staying Put Provider will continue to receive their fostering fee (minus festival allowances, clothing allowance etc.) until the end of the academic year
- Where a foster carer is with a fostering agency, the arrangement will be supported and overseen by Sandwell Children's Trust and payments will be made directly to foster carer

Young people are expected to:

- Claim means-tested benefits, including Universal Credit where eligible
- Contribute towards:

    1. Rent
    2. Utilities
    3. Household costs

Where a young person is not eligible for benefits (e.g. no recourse to public funds):

- Sandwell Children's Trust may provide an equivalent financial contribution to the young person

Housing costs will:

- Be based on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates
- Be clearly agreed and recorded within the arrangement

7.1 Financial Arrangements when young person attends University

Where a young person attends university whilst Staying Put

- Staying Put allowance will be paid to provider during term time only
- The arrangement becomes a pro rata arrangement
- During term time, a £30 per week retainer fee will be paid to Staying Put Provider
- The Young Person will be responsible for their term time housing costs in line with the local offer
- Staying Put will cease at the end of the academic year of the final year of study

8. Duration

Staying Put arrangements will normally continue until:

- The young person reaches 21 years of age

Extensions may be agreed where:

- The young person is engaged in education or training

In such cases, arrangements may continue:

- Until the end of the academic year after their 21st birthday
- Or up to the young person's 25th birthday if completing the same education course that they were attending on their 21st birthday, where appropriate

9. Ending Arrangements

Staying Put arrangements should end in a planned and supported way.

- A minimum of 28 days' notice should be provided by either party wherever possible.
- Payments will cease at the end of the notice period or when they leave the Staying Put arrangement if before the end of the notice period
- Immediate termination may occur where:
    1. There are safeguarding concerns
    2. There is a risk to the safety of any household member
    3. The arrangement has broken down

Sandwell Children's Trust must:

- Be informed immediately
- Provide support to secure alternative accommodation and ongoing assistance

10. Equality and Diversity

Sandwell Children's Trust is committed to ensuring that Staying Put arrangements:

- Are accessible to all eligible young people
- Promote equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Respect individual identity, culture, and needs
- Are free from discrimination on any protected grounds

All arrangements will be delivered in a way that promotes fairness and respect.

11. Monitoring and Review

Sandwell Children's Trust will:

- Monitor Staying Put arrangements through:
    1. Pathway Plan reviews
    2. Regular contact with young people and providers
    3. Ensure compliance with statutory requirements and local standards

- Review this policy every two years, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation or practice