

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

December 2014

A report produced by a collaboration between the National Children's Bureau, The Who Cares? Trust, Action for Children, Barnardo's, Together Trust and the Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University.

Special thanks to

Young people and adult care leavers who took part in the consultation

Stakeholder workshop participants

Our workshop facilitator

Executive Summary

This report explores options for providing an equivalent of staying put for young people in residential care and the potential challenges and costs that will need to be taken into account for effective implementation. The work was undertaken by a collaboration between the National Children's Bureau, The Who Cares? Trust, Action for Children, Barnardo's, Together Trust and Loughborough University, supported by seed funding from the Department for Education's Innovation Programme.

Scoping of four options

A stakeholder workshop¹ identified four different options for residential care staying put arrangements which formed the basis of consultation with young people and the costings work. Below are the brief descriptions used in the consultation with young people. More detail is included in the full report.

Option One: Care leavers live in the same children's home that they were living in when they were in care. They can stay there until they are 21.

Option Two: Care leavers live in a separate building but in the same grounds as the children's home that they were living in when they were in care. They can stay there until they are 21.

Option Three: This option is like supported lodgings. Care leavers live in a **different** house to where they were living when they were in their children's home. Young people have to be 16-years-old or older to live here and will have to move from where they are living if they want to stay put until they are 21. Not everyone who lives there might be from care.

Option Four: Care leavers 'stay close'. They live independently in their own flat. It's down the road, or very close to the children's home they were living in when they left care. They have a key worker from their children's home who they know really well to help them with support. They can visit their children's home if they want – for example visiting for tea.

Feedback from young people and adult care leavers

Children in care and young and adult care leavers were consulted over a four week period about their views on staying put in residential care and the four suggested options. There was a general consensus that staying put should, in some form, be extended to children who are living in children's homes

The consultation also highlighted the importance of each young person having a choice about what happens to them when they turn 18, with young people consistently talking about no one option being right for everyone, and the importance of being allowed to make a choice.

They also gave suggestions as to the type of support that care leavers would need, and how it should be provided. For instance, young people were very clear that there should be support available at all times, not just during working hours.

Other key themes emerged in the analysis of the consultation,

- support and care,

¹ The facilitated workshop held in October 2014 was attended by 18 stakeholders and sector experts including local authority representatives; residential care home provider representatives and representatives from the voluntary sector.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

- relationships and stability,
- responsibility and independence,
- the age of those living in the children's home (either children in care with care leavers or 16 and 17 year olds)
- loneliness.

Recommendation: young people leaving residential care are offered consistent support towards independence, in a setting that best meets their needs and preferences based on meaningful consultation with the young person.

Costings

Four hypothetical, illustrative case studies have been created to show the pathway of a young person accessing each of the four different options. The services, support and associated costs that are estimated are based on an optimum level of service for this vulnerable cohort of young people. A fifth hypothetical case study has also been included in this paper to illustrate an alternative journey for a young person between the ages of 18 and 21, depicting a probable journey for a young person moving on from residential care at age 18 without any of the proposed Staying Put options.

A preliminary exercise has been carried out to tentatively explore the national cost implications of extending Staying Put to young people in residential provision, with a proportion of the residential care population taking up each of the four options. These should be treated with caution for the numerous reasons outlined in the full report.

Proportion of young people (%)	Frequency	Cost per young person (for three years)	Total cost per Option
Option 1 (25%)	288	£493,296	£141,995,994
Option 2 (13%)	150	£323,535	£48,427,618
Option 3 (17%)	196	£141,908	£27,776,933
Option 4 (25%)	288	£33,828	£9,737,441
Totals (3 years)	921		£227,937,985
Totals (1 year)	921		£75,979,328

Recommendation: the costings in this paper are used only as an indication of how much investment may be needed and that further detailed work is undertaken to inform potential allocations to local authorities.

Practical and regulatory barriers

To secure a consistent offer for young people there would need to be a new duty placed on local authorities. The duty must be sufficiently strong to ensure that all local authorities are in no doubt of their responsibility to commission the requisite accommodation and support, and sufficiently broad to support the offer of a range of options, in line with those set out in this report. It must reflect the fact this will not necessarily be based on an arrangement between a young person and the existing provider of care and accommodation (as in foster care staying put arrangements). It must offer parity to care leavers.

Recommendation: the Department for Education develops plans for a new overarching duty of continuing wide ranging support up to the age of 21 for all young people leaving care, and in doing so draws on the learning of the Scottish reforms.

Stakeholders raised the question of what would happen to a children's home's registration and the process of inspections with Ofsted in the event that they were providing staying put provision, and what would happen in this regard to a children's home if at any one time it was providing more staying put provision (for over 18s) than it was provision for children.

Foster carers providing only staying put provision are able to maintain their approval for fostering. A similar arrangement may be needed for children's homes whereby they can maintain Ofsted registration throughout the period when they may not reach the 'wholly or mainly' threshold.

Recommendation: Ofsted work with stakeholders to clarify:

- **Children's homes ability to maintain registration when they routinely cater for young people over 18 years old**
- **How children's homes provision of accommodation and support for young people over 18 years old will impact on inspections processes.**

To stay within the current regulatory provision, Options 1 or 2 would likely need to be regulated via Ofsted, as they would house children under 18 as well as care leavers over 18. Options 3 and 4 involve separate accommodation for 18+ care leavers that would likely not fall within current requirements for regulation by Ofsted.

Despite the current regulatory framework, extending regulation and standards may be necessary to secure the consistent quality of staying put provision envisaged in each of the options. It was a majority view of stakeholders at the workshop that this should be explored, and some young people were concerned about ensuring an adequate level and consistency of support was provided, particularly in options 3 and 4.

Recommendation: Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government review the options for extending regulation to a wider range of supported accommodation options for young people.

A potential challenge identified by stakeholders is the effective safeguarding of children and young people across a broader age range. This is not a unique challenge but may be magnified by the vulnerabilities of this group of young people and the number of children and young people potentially living in the same space. Young people also discussed the interactions of different ages within the various settings, and while some identified that there could be benefits, potential challenges were also identified. As those working with the young people will best placed to understand individual behaviours and risks, and as such can be seen as a practical issue to be addressed by good day-to-day care planning and supervision. Stakeholders also identified that different skills would be needed to work with older young people.

Recommendation: In developing plans for providing the equivalent of staying put support for children in residential care that consideration is given by the Department for Education to the development and rollout of appropriate training and guidance on safeguarding young people.

Part 1: Introduction

This report, produced by a collaboration between the National Children's Bureau, The Who Cares? Trust, Action for Children, Barnardo's, Together Trust and Loughborough University, supported by seed funding from the Department for Education's Innovation Programme, explores options for providing an equivalent of staying put for young people in residential care and the potential challenges and costs that will need to be taken into account for effective implementation.

The report sets out four models or 'options':

- Residential home up to 21
- Staying put in a separate building (attached to the children's home)
- "move-on" or group home up to 21
- Care leavers 'stay close' (support in independent living)

It is informed by three information gathering and consultation exercises

- A stakeholder workshop² to identify different models for residential care staying put arrangements and what barriers (regulatory, practical or financial) might exist and the practical pros and cons of each model.
- A consultation conducted with children in care and young and adult care leavers, consisting of an online survey and a series of focus groups (see 'young people's views', below and Appendix A).
- An analysis of the potential costs of implementing each option (indicative and benchmarking costs) and the potential future cost savings (see Part 3)

The report sets out each of the four models and the views of young people on each of the models. It includes a separate section setting out potential costs for each option and the potential national costs of applying staying put to residential care. It also highlights a range of implementation issues and examines how the legal framework could be reformed.

What is 'staying put'

Staying put is defined as an arrangement whereby a young person, who when they became 18 was in law an 'eligible child' placed with a foster carer, continues to live with that person. Whenever a young person continues to live with their former foster carer in these circumstances, it is referred to as a staying put arrangement. Staying put arrangements continue until the young person becomes 21, or stops living in the household before then.

The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 so that local authorities now have a statutory duty to 'monitor and support' staying put arrangements.

In general staying put arrangements are designed to:

² The facilitated workshop held in October 2014 was attended by 18 stakeholders and sector experts including local authority representatives; residential care home provider representatives and representatives from the voluntary sector.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

- Ensure that young people can experience a transition to adulthood similar to that of their peers, within a supportive family environment;
- Ensure that young people are not obliged to leave their former foster family before they feel ready to move into greater independence;
- Help care leavers to maximise opportunities for education, employment or training;
- Reduce the likelihood of periods of homelessness;
- Ensure that care leavers develop the necessary emotional and practical skills before they are required to live independently;
- Reduce the likelihood of social exclusion

To this end the staying put carer:

- Provides a home for the young person.
- Provides day to day support and guidance.
- Ensures that the young person acquires the skills necessary for independent living, and knows where to go for help when necessary.
- Assists the young person to develop the emotional capacity and self-confidence to manage through adulthood.

There are no eligibility criteria for entering into a staying put arrangement, other than the young person being an 'eligible child' for care leaver support. If on the day before their 18th birthday the young person was a looked after child placed with a foster carer, and had been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, then by continuing to live with their former foster carer this constitutes a staying put arrangement.

Extending 'staying put' to residential care would mean the provision of the same level of support and continuity to those looked after children who happen to be in children's home when they turn 18, underpinned by duties on the local authority to support this provision. Because of their existing setting this would not be in a 'family environment' or be based on an agreement between two individuals as is the case in foster care staying put arrangements. There may be other differences in the ways support is provided, in response to the varied needs of the residential care population, but the overall aims and level of support provided would be the same.

The residential care population

Currently there are 1,760 children's homes in England and 5,220 children and young people living in them.³

Children's homes fulfil a number of purposes and cater for a range of children's needs, from older adolescents with challenging behaviour who may quickly return to their family, to young people at risk of child sexual exploitation, children and teenagers with complex mental health problems, and disabled children requiring respite provision.

³DfE (2014), *Children's Homes Data Pack*, December 2014

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

It is important to note that overall children and young people who live in children's homes have high levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Research shows that:

- 38% of children living in homes had a statement of special educational needs
- 62% had clinically significant mental health difficulties as defined by a 'clinically significant score on the strengths and difficulties questionnaire'
- 74% were reported to have been violent or aggressive in the past six months.⁴

While children's homes cater for children of all ages, in practice most young people are aged over 12, with the average age between 14 and 15 years⁵. Significantly, over three quarters are aged between 14 and 17 years old. Boys are also more likely than girls to be placed in a children's home, even after allowing for the larger number of boys being looked after (as just under two thirds of the population are male).

Many young people arrive in residential care having experienced a number of different placements. The most recent data shows that nearly a third (31%) of children in children's homes have had six or more placements. This is almost three times higher than the equivalent number of children in foster care and demonstrates how residential care is often used as a last resort option.

It is also important to note that children and young people tend to stay in a children's home for relatively short periods of time as only 19% of placements last longer than a year. In foster placements nearly a third (31%) of young people stay for more than a year. The most recent data also indicates that short terms placements in children's homes are becoming more common as there were a larger percentage of placements of under 30 days duration in 2013 than there were in 2011.

Finally, outcomes for children in residential care are generally poorer than for other children in care. They are more likely to have been absent from school or excluded from school and more likely to have been involved in criminal activity and to have substance misuse problem.⁶ The most recent data shows that there is emerging evidence that children who spend longer in a residential home will have better outcomes than those who have had only a short time in residential care. The largest effect of this stability appears to be on criminal activity and substance misuse with both showing a reduction by duration.⁷

Young people's views

Children in care and young and adult care leavers were consulted over a four week period about their views on the four suggested models set out in Part 2 of the report for extending staying put to children leaving care from children's homes. A full write up of this consultation can be found in Appendix A.

All care experienced children, young people and adults could participate and could do so through an online survey, a focus group or a participation worker running a participation

⁴ Living in Children's Residential Homes, 2012: Berridge, D., Biehal, N. and Henry, L., Research Report, DFE-RR201

⁵DfE (2014) *Children's Homes Data Pack*, December 2014

⁶ ibid

⁷ ibid

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

session. There were 98 responses to the online survey. Nearly half (48%) stated that they were either currently living in a children's home or had left care from a children's home; 13% said that they were currently in or had left care from semi-independent accommodation. In addition, three focus groups were held with 23 young people in total. 43% of these young people said that they were either currently living in a children's home, or had left care from a children's home.

Not all respondents to the survey responded to the qualitative questions. It is important to note that when referring to 'young people', we are referring to a majority - we don't necessarily mean that everyone who responded agreed, or that there was not one or two dissenting voices. Where we refer to 'some young people', we mean more than one young person. When we refer to 'many young people', we mean that there is a trend suggesting a significant degree of agreement. The words in bold are the words of children and young people.

As well as feedback on the specific models, the consultation with young people carried out for this report also revealed key overarching messages about their views on staying put and residential care.

- There was a general consensus that staying put should, in some form, be extended to children who are living in children's homes. 47% of children and young people who responded to the survey said that they themselves would like (or would have wanted) to stay put in some form when they leave care. 17% said that they didn't want to while 19% weren't sure.

"I think that looked after children should be treated the same as birth children as you wouldn't tell your birth children to leave home at 18 years old."

(Young person)

- The consultation also highlighted the importance of each young person having a choice about what happens to them when they turn 18. Many of the children and young people talked about choice; it was a clear theme in focus groups and survey responses. They consistently talked about no one option being right for every young person, and the importance of allowing the young person to make a choice to meet their needs and do what is right for them. They said things like 'it's ok for people who would like to do this', 'depends on individual choices' and 'up to them'.
- Some key themes emerged in the analysis of the consultation, in particular, young people talked about support and care, relationships and stability, responsibility and independence, the age of those living in the children's home (either children in care with care leavers or 16 and 17 year olds) and loneliness. They also gave suggestions as to the type of support that care leavers would need, and how it should be provided. For instance, young people were very clear that there should be support available at all times, not just during working hours.

Overall, young people were clear that more support was a benefit of all the options set out in Part 2 of the report. This shows a clear need for more support for care leavers, particularly those leaving a children's home.

Part 2: The four options

This section sets out the four options for staying put support for children in residential care which were developed as part of the stakeholder workshop. It also highlights potential challenges and questions identified by stakeholders and summarises the views of children and young people on these options collected through the online survey and focus groups.

Option 1: Residential home up to 21

This option would see care leavers living in the **same children's home** that they were living in when they were in care.

It is envisaged that this should aspire to provide the following for young people:

- An emphasis on being outcome focused, safe, nurturing and empowering.
- A sense of belonging, with sustained relationships.
- Security and continuity alongside more choice in their lives and a clear pathway to independence.

The accommodation should feel like a single home with a range of ages in one place. Capacity planning should accommodate the potential for a young person's departure from the home and further support if needed including keeping a bed open for them, welcoming them back for weekends, during or after university or for special occasions.

Care leavers would be supported by the same staff post-18 as pre-18, including a transitions worker embedded within the staff. The staff would be trained and supported, with the knowledge and skills to work with young people rather than just looked after children. They would encourage young people towards more independent living and support education, training and skills outcomes. The relationship between staff and the young person would evolve in line with their maturity, for example by agreeing ground rules (regarding alcohol and guests etc) together, and in the approach to delegated authority.

Potential challenges and questions

Financial

The workshop identified that, should they receive less payment for a post 18 placement than a regular placement, this could provide a disincentive to providers to offer young people the option of staying on (as opposed to taking on a new child or young person under 18). With many children's homes having only four beds, offering this provision to just one or two young people would have significant financial implications for a provider that may affect their viability. Possible solutions included:

- Hypothetical allocation of a proportion of beds for over 18s built into commissioning and costing of all placements, so that some subsidy is provided should the provision be required.
- The development of more sophisticated funding mechanisms to reward providers for keeping on young people that would benefit from this support, through outcomes

based payments. Developing such mechanisms would require significant further investigation that is not within scope of this paper.

Regulation

The workshop identified that lack of clarity around regulation could be a potential barrier. This stems from the fact that children's homes are regulated by Ofsted but Ofsted's remit is to inspect and regulate services for children, with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulating residential social care for adults. Workshop attendees felt that in order for this model to be secured with consistent quality (and the reassurance that this should provide to young people) the provision would ideally need to be regulated. It was suggested that:

- Regulation of provision under this model might be by a combination of Ofsted and CQC
- The legal definition of a children's home as catering for wholly or mainly children may have to change
- Provision could alternatively be regulated for those up to 18 only (and unregulated for those over 18)
- Another option would be for Ofsted to be given a specific role in regulating this provision for young people aged 18-21.

This issue is considered further in Part 4 of the report.

Other implications

- Should a young person remain in such a placement until they are 21, this could create a cliff edge of lost support. This underlines the need to continue to plan towards independence at an individual level, and at a strategic level to assume that young people may need to be supported into a different type of placement as they approach 21.
- With wide age group of children and young people this would potentially increase scope for safeguarding challenges, ensuring relationships between young people and children are appropriate and that children are not encouraged into risky behaviours by older young people.

Young people's views

Young people talked a lot about the benefit of this model being the support that they would be able to get to become independent, as well as a continuity of care and feeling safe. They also talked about having more time to make decisions and about the pressure that moving at 17 or 18 can create, in addition to other pressures. They talked about being able to continue relationships, as well as being able to live with people that you trust. Some young people felt that this option might promote a lack of independent living skills, resulting in a dependency and limiting young people's independence. They also felt that there could be a conflict between on the one hand the rules of children's homes and the fact that there are children in the home, and on the other, the things that care

leavers would want to do as adults, like staying out late, smoking, drinking alcohol and having partners and friends to stay.

Some young people thought that care leavers living with children would enable care leavers to be role models for the children living in the home, although the majority also felt that it raised safeguarding concerns. Young people were particularly concerned about 11 year old girls potentially living with 21 year old boys, for example. There was no particular age group that raised these concerns, but it was a significant concern for one focus group. We also asked children in care if they'd like to share their children's home with care leavers. 65% said no, or that they weren't sure.

One focus group thought that the often isolated location of children's homes would make young people less independent and thought it could affect their ability to carry on in education or have a job

Option 2: Staying put in a separate building

This option would see care leavers live in a **separate building but in the same grounds** as the children's home that they were living in when they were in care.

It is envisaged that it would offer similar benefits to option 1 but with an added degree of independence for the young people and a more adult living environment with partial segregation from younger children. They would be given more (but not complete) freedom to set their own rules for their own space. The same staff would offer the same support as in option 1.

Similar implications would arise for the implementation for this model as for option 1. However there may be further challenges for providers in sourcing the appropriate premises that can satisfy the requirements of the relative size and proximity of the children's home and staying put provision. It may be easier to ensure that younger children in the home are safeguarded with the segregation of living quarters that this option offers.

Young people's views

Young people talked about how the staff could support them to live independently, although they were divided in how the support should be provided. They were clear that there did need to be support at all times. One young person felt that having staff that had looked after him or her close by would make him or her feel secure.

When considering this model, young people talked about independence in a different way to staying put. They talked about independence from rules as well as independent living skills and generally thought that this was a positive thing, as it gave a taste of 'freedom' and was a small step.

Young people felt that this model with care leavers and children in care living separately was a good idea. There wasn't a consensus about children visiting the care leavers, but some young people felt that it gave care leavers the opportunity to be role models, while also giving more space and privacy to the care leavers. Safeguarding appeared to be less of a concern.

Young people were slightly concerned about sharing and not getting along with the people that they were sharing with, although this was less of a concern than with other models and others thought that it was a good way to be social. Some young people mentioned loneliness, although they felt that care leavers would be lonely only if the care leaver was living alone and therefore felt that more than one person should be living there.

Option 3: "move-on" or group home up to 21

This option is similar to supported accommodation. Care leavers live in a **different** house to where they were living when they were in their children's home.

It is envisaged that this should aspire to provide the following for young people:

- A focus on transition and preparation for independent living
- An expectation of change and progression for all young people whilst recognising that young people of the same age may be at different stages of development
- Safety and security
- An empowering and inclusive environment e.g. young people would come together to make decisions about the home including who they live with (potential for 'speed dating' style selections)
- A "Therapeutic Community" through shared respect and ownership and supporting each other

The young people would reside in supported accommodation akin to student-style accommodation. This could be provided within the same grounds as a children's home or on a different site.

This type of provision could be offered to young people 16-years-old or older, who would have to move from where they are living to the group home if they want to stay put until they are 21. Places could be offered to young people who have not been in care to rent to provide a more inclusive environment.

The accommodation would be arranged as a 'shared community' where each resident has their own bedroom and bathroom but also shared ownership over communal spaces. As well as space for usual residents, there could be a night shelter-style room attached to the accommodation to give a young person somewhere to stay if they needed temporary accommodation when facing a housing crisis.

Safety and security of the accommodation would be overseen by an individual with a role similar to that of a concierge in large complexes with multiple flats. This would be available 24 hours a day. The placement would be provided in a way that facilitates easy, independent access to other services such as health and adult social care - so it would be geographically located within easy reach and information would be provided to the young people as a group about accessing services- encouraging them to support each other through the process.

Potential challenges and questions

The effectiveness of peer support within this model would be very dependent on the dynamics of the group being accommodated. The workshop participants were therefore keen to see the potential for peer support to be seen as an added benefit of this provision, rather than a replacement for formally provided support. Providers and personal advisors may encounter dilemmas about when to intervene in the case of the shared environment not providing the right support for the young person and the risk of a crisis being recognised. More work may be needed to define the required skills and role of the concierge, particularly regarding how they might be able to provide a link to further support when it might be needed.

Young people's views

Young people talked about a benefit of this model being additional support, but were less explicit about the support that they would like. Young people also raised concerns including that it would be different from being supported by carers that know them, and also that it relied on staff being around and interested in providing support. Young people also felt that without significant support, there was a risk that things would go wrong.

Many young people saw this as an unstable option, full of uncertainties, for example starting in a new place, with new people. Some young people thought that living with non-care leavers was a bad idea, with them not understanding the care leavers' situations, while others thought it was a good thing and a way for care leavers to feel more integrated into the community.

Some young people thought that this model would be ok as long as young people had the skills to be independent and to cope. Some young people were very concerned about the possibility of living with people who didn't stick to the rules and keep the communal areas clean and tidy and who stole and took drugs. Some young people were very clear that they wouldn't want to share any living areas.

In focus groups, young people discussed how many young people should be housed together in this type of accommodation. Two focus groups felt that no more than four young people should live there, while another group felt that four to six young people should be housed there. Young people in the focus groups were concerned about theft and privacy and some felt that shared areas should have places where you can store your own belongings privately and securely. One suggestion was that contents insurance for all young people would need to be provided.

Young people felt that in most cases letting 16 year olds live in this model wasn't a good idea. They were also concerned that it might cause loneliness; by moving to a new place it might put friendships at risk; also through being separated from a carer and not knowing anyone and having to make new friends.

Option 4: Care leavers 'stay close'

In this option the care leaver would live independently in their own flat, but would be **very close or down the road** to the children's home they were living in when they left care and would be supported by a key worker.

It is envisaged that this should aspire to provide the following for young people:

- Staying connected with their existing community
- Transitioning to a less formalised support network
- A positive first experience of independent living
- Support to finish honing independent living skills

The young person would be accommodated in independent living, with the option of either single occupancy or living with others. Suitable accommodation in close proximity to the residential home would be made available for young people who want to stay close. Whatever the accommodation it would be maintained to a high standard.

Each care leaver would have a key worker that they build up a relationship with before they leave their residential home, and would provide occasional support once they move into independent living, and supports their interaction with other services, leisure activities, and the community.

While this role has some similarities to what a more proactive personal advisor may do, it is intended to be separate to help introduce the young person to seeking support from less formal sources. It might be seen as closer to the peer support that young people provide each other with in option 2. This worker would be equivalent in skills and qualification to a residential care worker, and should have access to peer support and supervision.

The key worker would have connections with other local services to provide referrals / wrap around support. The young person would be supported to stay connected with their previous placement if they wish – for example through visiting the residential home or hosting staff/young people from the home for tea. They would also be encouraged and supported to build social networks within the local community.

The care leaver would also have access to practical advice and support when it is needed, such as being able to phone someone that they know, at evenings and weekends, either for over the phone support and advice, or for support to come out to the young person.

Potential challenges and questions

Securing accommodation that is well maintained would involve recruiting suitable landlords, such as through an extension of the accredited landlord schemes, with clear standards that are transparent to providers and young people. There may need to be a nationally accepted mechanism to secure this to ensure that young people can have clear expectations.

If using residential care workers, they would need protection against pressures in the children's home interfering with outreach support work, either through separate

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

contracting of individuals or having workers move with the young person out of care i.e. their job changing as the young person they support makes the transition.

The personal advisor would have to be active throughout the transition into this placement:

- Exactly what the outreach support would help the young person to achieve and learn would be agreed with the young person in a transparent way in advance of the transition.
- There would be a high frequency for opportunities for the young person to review their support in the first few months.

Young people's views

Young people felt that more support was a positive of this model, although some felt that having the support would be very reliant on staff at their children's home continuing to be able and interested to offer support under the model. One group did feel that if this worked, then it would not feel like the home was turning their back on the care leaver.

Some young people in the focus groups felt that combining this option with staying in a separate part of the children's home, with young people moving out to stay close when they were a bit older might be a good idea. Some young people in one group also felt that this was ideal for those ready for more independence.

Young people referred to the support of the key worker being important and knowing that you have somewhere to go if there's a problem like the washing machine breaking. Some young people talked about still needing support, including tenancy workshops, decorating a home, budgeting, going to the doctor's.

Young people were divided between whether they thought that the proximity to the home was a good thing or not. Some felt that it could encourage unexpected visits from the home, while others felt that it was a really good thing, and this was integral to the model working.

Young people were very concerned about loneliness and a large number of comments about this model, compared with the previous three options, were about loneliness.

Part 3: Potential Costs

This chapter has been produced by the Centre for Child and Family Research (CCFR) at Loughborough University to explore the potential costs associated with providing staying put options to children and young people placed in residential children's homes and to outline the key data items and evidence base that would be required to carry out a comprehensive costing exercise to inform discussions about the national cost implications of extending staying put to young people placed in residential children's homes.

Background

Since 2000 CCFR has been carrying out a series of research studies and evaluations to explore the relationship between needs, costs and outcomes of support and services provided to vulnerable children and their families.⁸

The research programme utilises a 'bottom-up' unit costing approach.^{9 10} All costs are built up from an individual child or family level, based on all the support and services that an individual or family receives. The approach identifies the personnel associated with each support activity (for example, the child's social worker and foster carers' supervising social worker) and estimates the time they spend on it. The amounts of time spent are costed using appropriate hourly rates. The method links amounts of time spent to data concerning salaries, administrative and management overheads and other expenditure. The costs of management and capital overheads are based on those outlined in an annual compendium of Health and Social Care unit costs.¹¹

The methodology facilitates the development of a detailed and transparent picture of the costs of providing a service, and of the elements that are necessary to support service delivery. One of the key outputs from this work has been the development of a software tool: the Cost Calculator for Children's Services (CCfCS). The tool provides analyses to compare the costs of different care journeys and placement types, it also accounts for variations in costs according to the needs of children, placement type, decision making processes and approaches to service delivery.

The research team at CCFR have previously made use of hypothetical and actual illustrative case studies to examine the drivers associated with costs and changes in costs overtime and link these with the needs of children and the outcomes achieved.¹² Scenarios based on actual cases and existing research evidence are developed to show

⁸ A full list of references from the research programme is available at <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/ccfr/research/exploring/>

⁹ Beecham, J. (2000), *Unit costs – not exactly child's play: A guide to estimating unit costs for children's social care*, University of Kent: Department of Health, Dartington Social Research Unit and the Personal Social Services Research Unit.

¹⁰ Wade, J. and Dixon, J. (2006) Making a home, finding a job: investigating early housing and employment outcomes for young people leaving care, *Child and Family Social Work*, 11(3), 199-208.

¹¹ Curtis, L. (ed) (2013) *Unit costs of health and social care 2013*, Kent: Personal Social Services Research Unit, University of Kent.

¹² For example: Holmes, L. and McDermid, S. (2012) *Understanding costs and outcomes in child welfare services*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers; Department for Education (2013) *Improving stability of care placements for looked after children data pack: Annex E*.

the key events, or 'processes' and services which children and young people experience. The costs of these processes and services are applied to build up a cost over time and to develop hypothetical care journeys and associated cost trajectories.

Costing residential Staying Put: Cost case studies

Four hypothetical, illustrative case studies have been created to show the four different options outlined in Part 2 of the report. A brief overview of each of the cases are provided, the care journey is then depicted on a timeline to show the key events and processes. A table outlining the estimated costs for each of the options is also presented. The services, support and associated costs that are estimated for each of the options are based on an optimum level of service to ensure the best possible transition for this vulnerable cohort of young people. It is acknowledged that the level of support and services within each of the options will need to be specifically tailored for the individual needs of the young people. Furthermore, although the costs shown below cover a three year period up to age 21, some young people are likely to require support for a shorter timeframe, or may move between different options between the ages of 18 and 21.

For all four options a 24/7 support service has been included, this support was considered to be a key element by the young people that participated in the consultation. It is envisaged that the 24/7 support would be provided by practitioners known to the young people rather than a generic telephone support service. For Options 1,2 and 3 the costs associated with providing this support have been included as part of the ongoing 'placement' cost. The costs of providing 24/7 support as part of Option 4 have been included as an additional service cost.

Use has been made of the findings from the evaluation of the Staying Put:18 Plus Family Placement Programme with regards to the level and frequency of Personal Advisor support.¹³ Costs for ongoing support, monitoring and review by the Personal Advisor have been included for all four Options, however different levels of activity, and therefore costs have been assumed. The lowest level of Personal Advisor input has been included for Options 1 and 2 (based on four hours of activity per month) where the young person will receive higher levels of ongoing support as an integral part of their placement. A slightly higher level of input has been included for Option 3 (eight hours per month) and the highest level of Personal Advisor input has been included for Option 4 (12 hours per month). These activity figures include both direct work with the young people and all case recording and administrative activities carried out by the Personal Advisor. Reviews have also been costed based on the findings from the Staying Put evaluation, as such reviews are assumed to be carried out at six monthly intervals, as per the review arrangements for Looked after Children, although the Independent Reviewing Officer is no longer involved. Although the costs associated with support from a Personal Advisor have been included in Options 1-4 these are not additional costs to the local authority and it is possible that the level of support that would be required would be reduced if the young people were being supported as per one of the four Options.

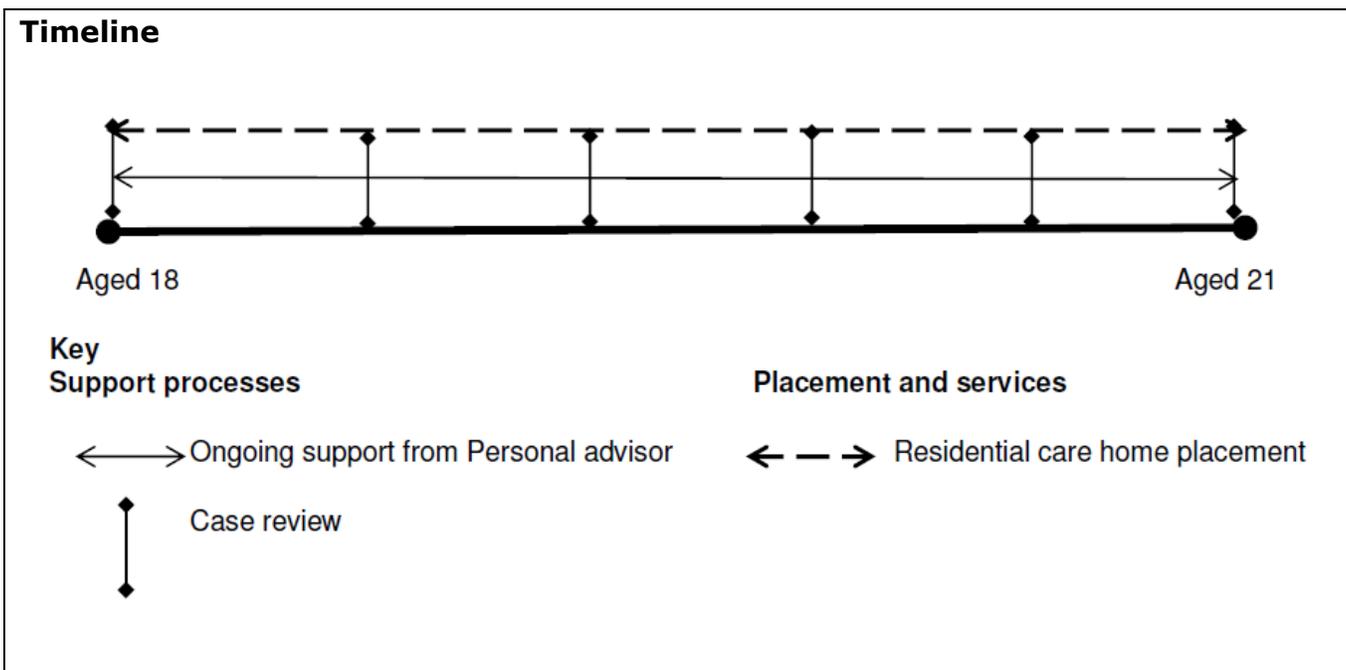
¹³ Munro, E.R., Lushey C., National Care Advisory Service (NCAS), Ward, H., with Holmes, L. (2012) *Evaluation of Staying Put (18+) Family Placement Programme: Final report to the Department for Education*, London: Department for Education.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

A fifth hypothetical case study has also been included to illustrate an alternative journey for a young person between the ages of 18 and 21. This alternative case study depicts a probable journey for a young person moving on from residential care at age 18 without any of the proposed staying put options. This young person would only be eligible for support from a personal advisor. The experiences and input from different agencies shown on this alternative timeline are based on existing evidence about the difficult transitions and poor outcomes experienced by care leavers without adequate support to meet their needs.

Hypothetical Case study 1 (Young person A)

Young person A was placed in a residential children's home from the age of sixteen, after a series of previous placements. Following discussion with his social worker and personal advisor it was agreed that he would remain in the same placement beyond the age of 18, possibly up to the age of 21, with ongoing monitoring and review of his progress and readiness for independence. During the first year of the time period shown on the timeline below Young person A attended a further education college and then spent the following two years in part time employment in a trainee role.



Unit cost estimations

Support processes

Support¹⁴	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
PA (ongoing)	36 months	30	4,680
Case review	6 times	238	1,428

Total process unit costs **£6,108**

Placement and services

Service¹⁵	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
Residential home	36 months	3,123	487,188

Total cost of other services **£487,188**

Total estimated cost for 36 months **£493,296**

Hypothetical Case study 2 (Young person B)

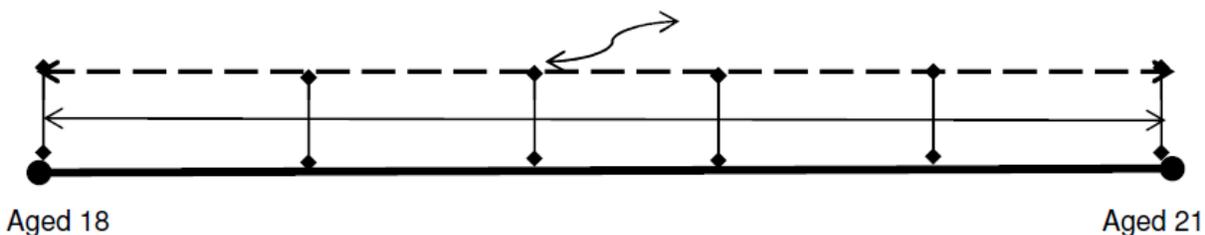
Young person B was placed in a residential children's home from the sixteen and a half, following a placement breakdown with foster carers. Following discussion with her social worker and personal advisor it was agreed that she would move into the unit within the grounds of her current placement beyond the age of 18, possibly up to the age of 21, with ongoing monitoring and review of her progress and readiness for independence. During the first year of the time period Young person B attended a further education college and then following a brief time NEET she changed to a different further education college.

¹⁴ The activity times for these processes are based on the findings from the evaluation of Staying Put in foster care (Munro et al., 2012), these have been multiplied by the unit cost per hour (taken from Curtis, 2013) for the relevant personnel involved in the process

¹⁵ The unit cost for the residential home has been taken from Curtis (2013) using a mid-point between the weekly unit cost for a local authority provided placement and a placement provided by the private and voluntary sector (Schemas 6.2 and 6.3)

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

Timeline



Key

Support processes

↔ Ongoing support from Personal advisor

◆
|
◆
Case review

Placement and services

↔ Placement in facility within ground

↪ NEET

Unit cost estimations

Support processes

Support ¹⁶	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
PA (ongoing)	36 months	30	4,680
Case review	6 times	238	1,428

Total process unit costs

£6,108

Placement, services and other costs

Service ¹⁷	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
Unit within grounds	36 months	2,030	316,672
NEET	2 months	4,528	755

Total cost of other services

£317,427

Total estimated cost for 36 months

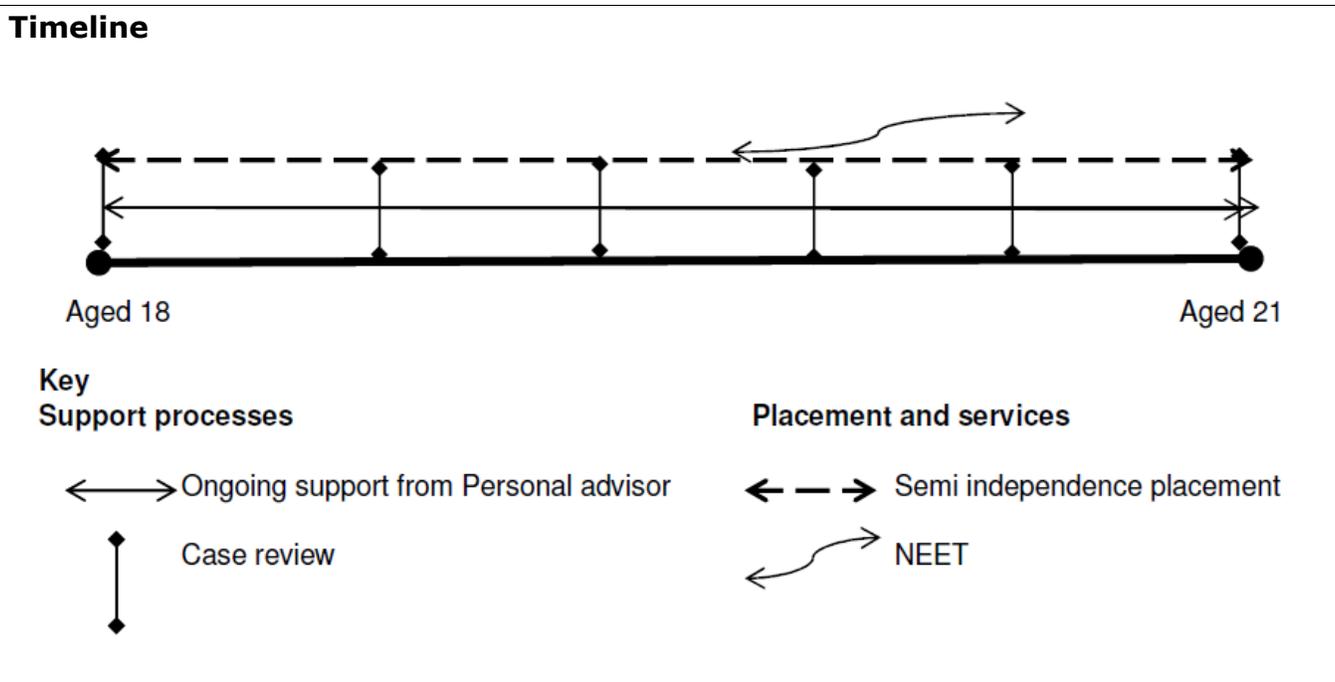
£323,535

¹⁶ The activity times for these processes are based on the findings from the evaluation of Staying Put in foster care (Munro et al., 2012), these have been multiplied by the unit cost per hour (taken from Curtis, 2013) for the relevant personnel involved in the process

¹⁷ The unit cost for the unit within the grounds of the residential home has been based on a proportion of the residential placement unit cost from Curtis (2013) using a mid-point between the weekly unit cost for a local authority provided placement and a placement provided by the private and voluntary sector (Schemas 6.2 and 6.3), the proportion of 65% has been based on current arrangements for placement costs for an independent provider. The NEET costs have been taken from the Unit Cost database compiled by New Economy. The database is available (online (http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/832-unit_cost_database)).

Hypothetical Case study 3 (Young person C)

Young person C was placed in a residential children's home from the age of sixteen and following discussion with her social worker and personal advisor it was agreed that he would move to supported accommodation attached to her current residential placement beyond the age of 18, possibly up to the age of 21, with ongoing monitoring and review of her progress and readiness for independence. During the first year of the time period shown on the timeline below Young person C began a part time apprenticeship and college placement, this lasted for one academic year, Young person C then spent a period of six months NEET until she started a trainee position.



Unit cost estimations

Support processes

Support¹⁸	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
PA (ongoing)	36 months	30	9,360
Case review	6 times	238	1,428

Total process unit costs **£10,788**

Placement, services and other costs

Service¹⁹	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
Semi Ind place	36 months	826	128,856
NEET	6 months	4,528	2,264

Total cost of other services **£131,120**

Total estimated cost for 36 months **£141,908**

Hypothetical Case Study 4 (Young Person D)

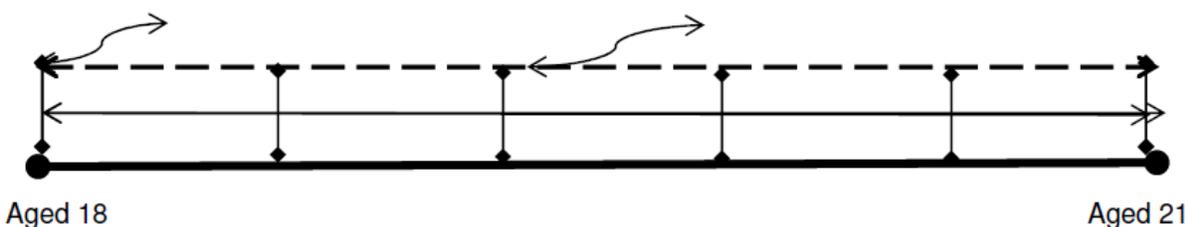
Young person D was placed in a residential children's home from the age of seventeen and following discussion with his social worker and personal advisor it was agreed that he would move to an independent placement in the same town as the residential children's home beyond the age of 18, possibly up to the age of 21, with ongoing monitoring and review of his progress. At age 18 Young person D was NEET (2 months) and with support from his personal advisor he secured part time work, this was followed by another short period of being NEET (3 months) before young person D became employed once again on a part time basis.

¹⁸ The activity times for these processes are based on the findings from the evaluation of Staying Put in foster care (Munro et al., 2012), these have been multiplied by the unit cost per hour (taken from Curtis, 2013) for the relevant personnel involved in the process

¹⁹ The unit cost for a semi independent placement have been taken from nationally applicable research figures based on Ward, Holmes and Soper (2008), inflated to current prices using the Inflation indices detailed in Curtis (2013). The NEET costs have been taken from the Unit Cost database compiled by New Economy. The database is available online (http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/832-unit_cost_database).

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

Timeline



Key

Support processes

↔ Ongoing support from Personal advisor

◆
Case review

Placement and services

↔ Independent placement (housing)

↪ NEET

Unit cost estimations

Support processes

Support ²⁰	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
PA (ongoing)	36 months	30	14,040
Case review	6 times	238	1,428

Total process unit costs

£15,468

Placement, services and other costs

Service ²¹	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
24/7 support	36 months	863	2589
Housing	36 months	89	13,884
NEET	5 months	4,528	1,887

Total cost of other services

£18,360

Total estimated cost for 36 months

£33,828

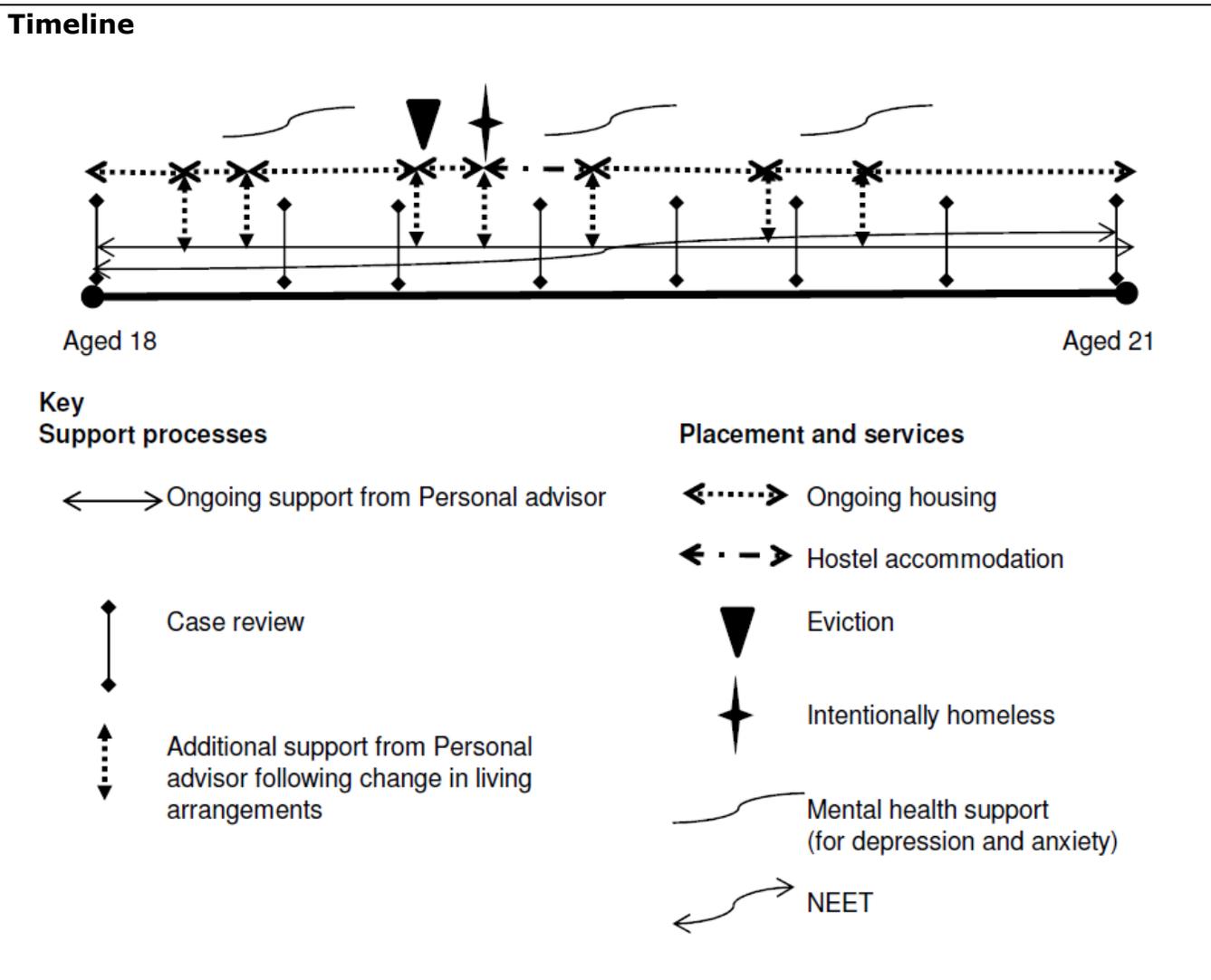
²⁰ The activity times for these processes are based on the findings from the evaluation of Staying Put in foster care (Munro et al., 2012), these have been multiplied by the unit cost per hour (taken from Curtis, 2013) for the relevant personnel involved in the process

²¹ These costs have been taken from the Unit Cost database compiled by New Economy. The database is available online (http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/832-unit_cost_database).

The NEET costs have been taken from the Unit Cost database compiled by New Economy. The database is available online (http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/832-unit_cost_database).

Hypothetical case study 5 (young person E): Alternative pathway without staying put support

Young person E was first placed in residential care at the age of 14 and then returned home until re-entry at age 16. Young person E was unsure whether he wanted to remain in his residential placement or return home to live with his family. Following discussions with his social worker and personal advisor he returned to live with his mother, step-father and younger siblings when he was aged 18. Without support the arrangements broke down within three months and Young person E went to live with his girlfriend (for one month) before moving into an independent placement. After four months Young person E was evicted from his accommodation following non-payment of rent and returned to live with his family on a temporary basis (for one month) before presenting to the local authority as intentionally homeless and subsequently moved into a hostel for three months before moving into another independent placement, which lasted for five months. He then returned to his family once again for three months and following difficulties at home he moved once again into another independent placement where he remained until age 21. During the three year time period shown below Young person E was NEET. He had also previously been diagnosed with depression and at several intervals shown below accessed adult mental health services.



Unit cost estimations

Support processes

Support²²	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
PA (ongoing)	36 months	30	14,040
PA (additional)	7 times	75	525
Case review	8 times	238	1,904

Total process unit costs **£16,469**

Services and costs to other agencies

Service²³	Frequency/duration	Unit cost (£)	Sub total (£)
Housing	33 months	89	11,748
Eviction	Once	733	733
Homelessness app	Once	2,656	2,656
Homeless hostel	3 months	114	1,368
Mental health	3 times for 3 months	80	720
NEET	36 months	4,528	13,584

Total cost of other services **£30,809**

Total estimated cost for 36 months **£47,278**

As shown in the timelines and associated cost tables above the fundamental cost for Options 1 and 2 is the weekly unit cost for the residential placement. For the purposes of this piece of work it has been assumed that the residential placement is providing all the associated support and services to meet the needs of the young person, in line with the residential provider meeting the national quality standards. The cost for Option 1 has

²² The activity times for these processes are based on the findings from the evaluation of Staying Put in foster care (Munro et al., 2012), these have been multiplied by the unit cost per hour (taken from Curtis, 2013) for the relevant personnel involved in the process

²³ These costs have been taken from the Unit Cost database compiled by New Economy. The database is available

online (http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/832-unit_cost_database).

been based on existing, published unit costs for residential placements for young people aged under eighteen. Therefore, using these figures is likely to be an overestimation of continuing Options 1 and 2 beyond eighteen when the cost potentially will be reduced because of a contribution towards the placement cost from housing benefits and potentially the beds being subsidised. This is an area that requires clearer information to accurately estimate the costs associated with continuing Options 1 and 2.

For Option 3 again the main cost is associated with providing the semi-independent, supported accommodation placement, whereas Option 4 the costs are more evenly distributed across the support (£15,468) and the services (£18,360).

Although the potential estimated costs for the alternative pathway case study shown above (young person E) are lower than for Options 1-3, it is important to note that it is likely that a young person experiencing an unstable transitional pathway will incur higher costs to the public purse in the future.

National cost implications

The hypothetical case studies included in this paper indicate the estimated costs associated with the four different Options, along with an alternative pathway for a young person not supported post 18. To fully understand the economic implications at a national level of introducing staying put to young people in residential care it would be necessary to explore key pieces of data from the SSDA 903 statistical returns along with a series of assumptions about the number of young people that would require the different staying put options, the length of time that support would be required, taking into account that some young people would require support until age 21 and others may be able to move on from the options at an earlier age. There would also need to be consideration of those young people who may move between the options, according to which option best meets their needs at a specific time point.

Furthermore, as outlined above, at this stage it is not clear whether staying put beds would be provided at a lower cost than beds for those under eighteen. To fully understand the national cost implications of rolling out staying put arrangements to young people in children's homes work is also required to understand the implications on placement sufficiency and whether this would have an impact on the available residential provision for those under eighteen. A full costing exercise would also need to take into account the cost of residential units developing or converting existing provisions to accommodate young people in line with the proposed options, similarly consideration of the costs of furnishing the properties would also need to be included.

A preliminary exercise has been carried out as part of this project to tentatively explore the national cost implications of extending staying put to young people in residential homes. These should be treated with caution for the numerous reasons already noted.

The following estimations have been based on the latest SSDA903 data (for the number of care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21) and the percentage of the care population placed in children's homes on 31 March 2014. With a lack of a comprehensive evidence base it has been necessary to base these costs on a series of assumptions. The rationale for each of the assumptions has been clearly stated to ensure transparency. These cost estimations should be treated with caution and have been estimated to provide an indication of the likely national cost implications of extending staying put for young people placed in residential care.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

Care leavers aged 19,20 and 21²⁴

Age 19	Age 20	Age 21	Total
9110	9230	8880	27220

Analysis provided as part of the statistical first release indicates that 9% of the looked after population are placed in residential settings, this includes secure provision and placements in hostels. This figure can be used to assume that 9% of the care leaver population are likely to require staying put support in residential provision. The figures below provide an indication of the potential numbers of 19, 20 and 21 year olds that are likely to require Staying Put support in residential provision (9% of the number of care leavers taken from Table F1).

Estimation of care leavers who may require staying put support in residential provision

Age 19	Age 20	Age 21	Total
820	831	799	2450

Making use of the findings from the consultation with the young people, it is possible to estimate some indicative, potential costs of young people staying put in the different options. From the consultation 47% of the care leavers indicated that they would like (or would have liked to Stay Put).

The consultation with the young people also provided information about their preferred option, the proportions of these are shown in the table below. The totals are shown for all young people continuing to receive support to age 21, or for one year.

Proportion of young people (%)	Frequency	Cost per young person (for three years)	Total cost per Option
Option 1 (25%)	288	£493,296	£141,995,994
Option 2 (13%)	150	£323,535	£48,427,618
Option 3 (17%)	196	£141,908	£27,776,933
Option 4 (25%)	288	£33,828	£9,737,441
Totals (3 years)	921		£227,937,985
Totals (1 year)	921		£75,979,328

The preliminary costs show the potential costs over a three year time period (to support young people up to the age of 21). A key finding from the consultation with the young people was the importance of them having choice, as such it is likely that some young people would be supported for less than the full three years and that young people would

²⁴ Taken from Table F1, SSDA 903 data published 30 September 2014 for 2013 to 14 financial year

be likely to move between options. Given this, a full costing exercise would need to take account of young people moving between options and being provided with support for differing lengths of time, dependent on their needs.

Any exploration of the costs associated with extending staying put to young people in residential care and the national cost implications need to be considered within the context of the longer term, lifetime costs of not providing support to vulnerable care leavers. As already highlighted in this report young people making the transition from residential care are particularly vulnerable and lack adequate stability or support networks.²⁵ As a result the costs to the public purse of poor outcomes for care leavers are likely to be high. Although there is no national data on the exact numbers of care leavers experiencing homelessness, research indicates that around a third of care leavers experience homelessness within six to 24 months of leaving care.²⁶ The costs associated with homelessness have been estimated to be in the region of £6,000 per year.²⁷ Given the complexity of the needs of young people making the transition from residential care the costs of extending support between the ages of 18 and 21 also need to be offset against the higher costs associated with earlier unmet needs, for example the annual longer term costs of being NEET have been estimated to be £56,000.²⁸ The costs associated with conduct disorder up to the age of 28 have been estimated to be just over £70,000.²⁹ Furthermore, a comparison of two different hypothetical pathways of care leavers indicated that a young person that experienced placement instability and poor incomes had a more costly trajectory up to the age of 30.³⁰

²⁵ Action for Children (2014) *Too much too young*, London: Action for Children.

²⁶ Wade, J. and Dixon, J. (2006) Making a home, finding a job: investigating early housing and employment outcomes for young people leaving care, *Child and Family Social Work*, 11(3), 199-208.

²⁷ Shelter (2012) Research briefing: *Immediate costs to government of loss of home*, London: Shelter.

²⁸ Coles, B., Godfrey, C., Keung, A., Parrott, S. and Bradshaw, J. (2010) *Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training*, York: University of York.

²⁹ Scott, S., Knapp, M., Henderson, J and Maughan, B. (2001) Financial cost of social exclusion: follow up study of antisocial children into adulthood, *British Medical Journal*, 323.

³⁰ Hannon, C., Wood, C. and Bazalgette, L. (2010) *In Loco Parentis*, London: Demos.

Part 4: Implementation

This section examines how the legal framework could be reformed to allow for young people to stay put in residential care and considers the regulatory and practical questions that arise.

Setting out a statutory entitlement

Legislation will have key role in ensuring such support is consistently offered to young people throughout the country, as part of a package of measures supporting implementation.

Responsible authorities' duty to provide accommodation and maintenance for care leavers currently ends when they reach 18. However they have duties to:

- provide general assistance (section 23C(4)(c) of the 1989 Act);
- provide a Personal Advisor (section 23C(3)(a));
- review and revise pathway plans regularly (section 23C(3)(b)); and
- keep in touch with the young person (section 23C(2)(a) and (b)).
- provide assistance in relation to education and employment including:
 - assistance with the expenses associated with employment (section 23C(4)(a));
 - assistance with the expenses associated with education and training (section 23C(4)(b));
 - vacation accommodation (or the funds to secure it) to care leavers in Higher Education, or in residential Further Education (section 24B(5)); and
 - a bursary (£2,000) to care leavers going on to Higher Education (section 23C(5A)).

Furthermore, statutory guidance states that

“Moving directly from a care placement to living independently will often be too big a step for young people. It will therefore be good practice for local authorities to commission a range of semi-independent and independent living options with appropriate support, for example supported accommodation schemes, foyers, supported lodgings and access to independent tenancies in the social and private rented sectors with flexible support.”³¹

The legislation enacted this year on staying put in foster care requires local authorities to 'support and monitor' the arrangement made for the young person to stay with their foster carer beyond their 18th birthday. The good practice guide produced by the Children's Partnership stresses that “ultimately it is the young person and their foster carer who make the joint decision to establish the arrangement.”³²

³¹ The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers

³² Children's Partnership (2014) *Staying Put Good Practice Guide*, London: The Children's Partnership

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

For those who have been in residential care the main providers of support post 18 would not be an individual foster carer, but wider teams working in residential care and the other staff described in the options in Part 2. Depending on how long the young person has been in the children's home and the type of accommodation and support he/she chooses post 18, they may not have a pre-existing relationship with an individual carer in the same way that is the case for a young person in a foster placement. This has implications for the nature of the duty that would need to be placed on local authorities to secure the necessary support for this group of young people. In order for the local authority to more proactively 'commission' the required provision, there would need to be correspondingly stronger duties on local authorities than they have regarding staying put in foster care.

The overall statutory aims of staying put support as outlined in Part 1 go beyond the support that all former relevant children are entitled to. It is also worth considering the key characteristics of what this support should look like for an equivalent staying put arrangement for young people who have been in residential care. As this report sets out a number of options which will inevitably have various governance arrangements of providers involved and a large degree of personalization around the needs of individual children, it would not be expected that every detail of the support would be set out in legislation or guidance. There are however key and common characteristics as follows:

- That the accommodation meets a set standard
- Practical and emotional support is on hand 24/7 from people whom young people can trust and get to know
- Support for independent living skills, developing less formal support networks and social relationships is part of the overall support package
- The young person is able, where they wish, to maintain contact and connections with the children's home they have been accommodated at

There are various existing legal frameworks which may be drawn on in the development of duties to secure this type of provision. For example the definition of suitable accommodation for relevant children or the approaches used to regulate care for disabled people in the community.

The Scottish Parliament has also passed legislation to enhance the support offered to care leavers up to the age of 21, enabling them to stay in their existing accommodation for longer. This places a duty on local authorities to continue providing the same support to young people after their 18th birthday as they were offered before as part of 'continuing care'. It applies to all young people leaving care except those who have been in secure accommodation. This appears to be legally quite different to staying put arrangements in England but has the significant advantage of providing a consistent entitlement for young people in different settings which could provide useful lessons as it is implemented.

Regulatory status of post-18 provision

As noted above in the discussion of option 1, questions were raised in the workshop about whether, and if so, how, provision for those aged over 18 in a children's home would be regulated.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

In law staying put arrangements are not foster placements, because the young person is no longer a looked after child but an adult, and the fostering regulations, statutory guidance and national minimum standards no longer apply. So, staying put does not offer an extension of regulated provision for those in foster care, only the duty on local authorities (discussed above) which is further supported by statutory guidance.

Stakeholders raised the question of what would happen to a children's home's registration and the process of inspections with Ofsted in the event that they were providing staying put provision. Children's homes are defined in law for the purposes of identifying which institutions are subject to registration and inspection by Ofsted. Section 1 (2) of the Care Standards Act 2000 states that

"An establishment is a children's home... if it provides care and accommodation wholly or mainly for children."

This raises the question of what would happen to a children's home if at any one time it was providing more staying put provision (for over 18s) than it was provision for children. This is not an unlikely scenario, considering that many children's homes cater for just four of five children, and that more than three quarters of children in homes are between 14 and 17 years old³³. In theory several could reach 18 within the same few months.

A similar issue faces staying put carers who wish to retain their approval for foster care

"Sometimes staying put carers are not able to take another foster placement whilst the young person remains living with them, but wish to remain approved as foster carers in order to resume fostering in the future. If the fostering service agrees that it is appropriate to continue approval then it must meet the statutory requirements regardless of the fact that no child is placed. This includes regular visits by the supervising social worker (including an annual un announced visit); reviews of approval; provision of training, advice, information and support; and support for continuing professional development." ³⁴

A similar arrangement may be needed for children's homes whereby they can maintain Ofsted registration throughout the period when they may not reach the 'wholly or mainly' threshold.

In the workshop questions were also raised about whether or not those providing support and accommodation to over 18s would need to register with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) – the quality regulator for health and adult social care services. Guidance from CQC suggests that registration would only be required if providing healthcare or personal care. Personal care includes physical assistance for or supervision of eating, toileting and bathing, for example. A children's home would only provide this assistance if providing specialist care for children with significant disabilities. Such children would be covered by an additional statutory framework under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and this type of support is not within the scope of this report.

To stay within the current regulatory provision, Options 1 or 2 set out in Part 2 would likely need to be regulated via Ofsted, as they would house children under 18 as well as care leavers over 18. Options 3 (shared home) and 4 (independent tenancy with

³³ DfE (2014) *Children's Homes Data Pack*, December 2014, London: Department for Education

³⁴ Children's Partnership (2014) *Staying Put Good Practice Guide*, London: The Children's Partnership

support) involve separate accommodation for 18+ care leavers that would likely not fall within current requirements for regulation by Ofsted.

However, despite the current regulatory framework, extending regulation and standards may be necessary to secure the consistent quality of staying put provision envisaged in each of the options set out in this report. It is worth reiterating that there was a majority view within the workshop conducted with stakeholders that this extended regulation would indeed be required, at least for option 1, if not for all provision. There could otherwise be a risk of young people staying put, via any of the four options, in accommodation that was of poor quality if there were not checks in place to maintain better standards.

If accommodation provided through a residential care staying put placement were regulated, there would then be a strong argument to extend the regulation of accommodation services for all vulnerable young people, whatever type of housing they are living in. This regulation might be delivered as an extension to Ofsted or CQC work, or as a lighter-touch accreditation process (such as some existing landlord accreditation schemes). Any developments in regulating accommodation for care leavers over 18 would also need to consider regulation of accommodation support services for vulnerable young people who have not been in care. This was acknowledged in the recent education select committee report on 16 plus care options which recommended that the DfE consult on a framework of individual regulatory oversight for all accommodation provision that is used by care leavers.³⁵

Safeguarding – potential risks posed by older young people

As set out in Part 2 in considering different options for applying staying put arrangements to residential care there are implications for safeguarding younger children from young people over 18. In practice, however, it is not necessarily the case that a young person would suddenly become more of a risk to children on their 18th birthday.

The good practice guidance on staying put in foster care points out that

“Since the young person who is staying put becomes an adult member of the foster carer’s household, to comply with fostering regulations an enhanced disclosure must be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)”³⁶

There is no existing parallel requirement in children’s homes, possibly because under current arrangements there are no adults (unlike in foster care staying put arrangements) present on an ongoing basis.

This poses the question of whether there should be a requirement for such checks on young people in residential care, and what other processes might be put in place in terms of considering the potential impacts on the welfare of other children placed in the home.

It is important to remember that processes such as DBS checks contribute little to keeping children and young people in these settings safe. They are unlikely to present any new information and those that are involved in planning and providing a young person’s care will already be in possession of much richer and more relevant information about a young person’s vulnerabilities. A more significant role will be played by the day

³⁵ Education Select Committee (20124) *Into independence, not out of care: 16 plus care options*

³⁶ Children’s Partnership (2014) *Staying Put Good Practice Guide*, London: The Children’s Partnership

to day decisions and practice of those working in the setting. This is perhaps better seen as a practical issue to be addressed by good care planning and supervision, which can be supported by training for those working with the young people concerned.

Young people involved in the consultation also discussed this issue and expressed a number of views and concerns (see Appendix A).

Safeguarding – risky behaviour and group dynamics

The young people consulted for this report highlighted a potential conflict that those taking up option 1 may feel personally between on the one hand the rules of children's homes and the fact that there are children in the home, and on the other, the things that care leavers would want to do as adults, like staying out late, smoking, drinking alcohol and having partners and friends to stay. This reminds us that older young people will rightly expect the freedoms of adulthood and should be able to take some of their own risks. It highlights a broader issue that was raised by stakeholders of the need for an age appropriate approach to safeguarding and to consider the interactions between young people, including those of different ages. Some providers may be concerned, for example about the potential group interactions of those placed at the home and whether rules in place to safeguard younger residents are harder to enforce with older, less supervised, young people present. Action for Children's Keeping Myself Toolkit provides guidance on working with older young people, particularly supporting care leavers to manage risk.

Part 5: Conclusion and recommendations

The consultation conducted for this report with children in care and care leavers and with other key stakeholders has underlined the need to provide continuation of support and stable accommodation for young people in residential care past their 18th birthday. Critically, it has also confirmed that in taking this forward it will be important to offer a range of options to young people, depending on their individual needs and preferences. These options largely differ in terms of the physical location and set up of the accommodation offered, with the aims and level of support offered always being consistent with the aims of staying put as it is being implemented for young people in foster care. **We recommend that, whatever mechanisms are used for implementation, that young people leaving residential care are offered consistent support towards independence, in a setting that best meets their needs and preferences based on meaningful consultation with the young person.**

In exploring potential regulatory and practical barriers to delivering the options set out in Part 2 we did not find any insurmountable obstacles. There are of course, however, important questions and considerations which would need to be addressed. First and foremost there must be a statutory duty, as there is for staying put in foster care. The duty must be sufficiently strong to ensure that all local authorities are in no doubt of their responsibility to commission the requisite accommodation and support, and sufficiently broad to support the offer of a range of options, in line with those set out in this report. It must reflect the fact this will not necessarily be based on an arrangement between a young person and the existing provider of care and accommodation (as in foster care staying put arrangements). This means that the duty would have to be different from that already in place for foster care and address the need for parity for all young people in care.

Having considered the options we believe the most effective way to achieve this is to set out a new duty to provide continuing support and accommodation for all children in care after they turn 18 up to the age of 21 that is far more extensive and wide ranging than the current entitlement for care leavers for support up to that age. It would be a single duty applying to young people who have been in foster care and residential children's homes setting out a strong entitlement to receive appropriate support. The new legal framework would incorporate and develop further the current staying put statutory framework and provide for not only appropriate supported accommodation that meets a set standard, but also adequate provision to ensure that the young person acquires the necessary skills for independent living and is supported to achieve the emotional capacity and self-confidence to manage through into adulthood.

It is likely to be similar, but not necessarily the same, as the new legislation in Scotland that places a duty on local authorities to continue providing the same support to young people after their 18th birthday as they were offered before. **We recommend that the Department for Education develops plans for a new overarching duty of continuing wide ranging support and accommodation up to the age of 21 for all young people leaving care, and in doing so draws on the learning from the Scottish reforms.**

In bringing forward reforms it will be critical to look at the regulatory status of residential provision for young people over 18. **We recommend that Ofsted work with stakeholders to clarify:**

- **Children's homes ability to maintain registration when they routinely cater for young people over 18 years old**
- **How children's homes provision of accommodation and support for young people over 18 years old will impact on inspections processes.**

As already noted, stakeholders were supportive of the extension of regulation to cover the options set out in this report to provide for clear expectations and consistent quality of provision. This would have wider implications for the regulation of other types of accommodation for vulnerable young people and adults which merit further considerations. **We recommend that the Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government review the options for extending regulation to a wider range of supported accommodation options for young people.** Our preferred option is for there to be a framework of individual regulatory oversight for all supported accommodation.

One practical challenge that has been highlighted is the effective safeguarding of children and young people across a broader age range. This is not a unique challenge to this area but may be magnified by the vulnerabilities of this group of young people and the number of children and young people potentially living in the same space. **We recommend that in developing plans for providing the equivalent of staying put support for children in residential care that consideration is given by the Department for Education to the development and rollout of appropriate training and guidance on safeguarding young people.**

The case studies and indicative costs in this paper provide an estimate of the financial outlay that might be required to maintain young people in the accommodation provided for three years. These, taken with case study on a young person who does not receive such support can be used as the basis for an estimation of the amount of money that would need to be earmarked nationally to take this forward. Due to the limitations of publicly available data many assumptions have had to be made. It should also be remembered that this does not represent a cost-benefit analysis, particularly as we have not considered the full range of implications of continuation of the status quo in this paper. **We recommend that the costings in this paper are used only as an indication of how much investment may be needed and that further detailed work is undertaken to inform potential allocations to local authorities.**

Appendix A: Residential care to 21 consultation with young people – full write up

This report was produced The Who Cares? Trust to gain the views of children in care and young and adult care leavers on staying put options for children in residential care.

Introduction

Over four weeks, we held a consultation with children in care, young care leavers (aged between 16 and 25) and adult care leavers (care leavers over 25). This report is a summary of the views and discussions that were had in focus groups, participation sessions and through an online survey. Where we refer to one young person, it is because it was a young person who gave an account of something, or made a comment. It does not mean that there were not others who agreed or disagreed. Not all respondents to the survey responded to the qualitative questions. Where we refer to young people, we don't necessarily mean that everyone who responded agreed, or that there was not one or two dissenting voices, but we are referring to a majority. Where we refer to some young people, we mean more than one young person. When we talk about many young people, we mean that there is a trend suggesting quite a bit of agreement.

Each group and survey response was different. Individuals liked different things, were worried about different things and all would have chosen different options for themselves. Many responses talked about choice, it being up to the young person, and young people all being different.

A key theme throughout the survey and focus groups was the focus on support and how important it was. Young people responding to the survey often said that an option was good because you'd get more support, even though they didn't detail always what support it was that they felt they'd get from the model.

Children and young people raised other points, including care leavers living with younger children, being restricted by rules or staff, relationships, independence, loneliness and isolation and offered a mixture of positive and negative views on each. They also had concerns and questions about sharing kitchens and bathrooms, safeguarding, stigma, having boyfriends and girlfriends to stay, drinking alcohol and taking drugs.

One focus group, in response to the staying close model, raised the question of what would happen if a young person was living in a children's home in a different local authority to their home local authority. Other questions included how homes would keep beds for children in care if care leavers were living there and how staying put might affect benefits.

Methodology

We ran an online survey over four weeks and created a pack for participation workers to fill in with their young people. We had 98 responses to the online survey. Where we use percentages, this refers to the percentage of people who responded to the question, not the survey. 48% told us that they were either currently living in a children's home or had left care from a children's home; 13% said that they were currently in or had left care from semi-independent accommodation. We also held three focus groups with 23 young people in total. 43% of these young people told us that they were either currently living

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

in a children's home, or had left care from a children's home. Those who took part in the focus group didn't have to answer this question, just as they were not required to in the survey. No young people were required to disclose any information that they did not want to, except in the survey where we asked them to identify whether they were in care and under 15; in care and between 16 and 18; a care leaver under 25, or a care leaver over 25, for the purposes of the questions. We wanted children and young people to feel comfortable sharing their views, and not required to share personal information. One group filled in and returned the participation pack. They were all either living in a children's home or had left care from a children's home.

We did not require respondents to have had experience of leaving care from a children's home or having lived in a children's home. We chose to enable people who had opinions based on experiences of others (for example siblings); young people who would like to be living in a children's home but aren't; and children who are currently living in a children's home and therefore who would be affected by staying put proposals (either because they may be sharing a house with care leavers, or may go on to stay put from a children's home in the future), to share their views.

Not all percentages will add up to 100% as some young people felt that none of the models proposed would be an option that they would choose, or that should be the only model of staying put.

We consulted young people about the following models:

Model One: Care leavers live in the same children's home that they were living in when they were in care. They can stay there until they are 21.

Model Two: Care leavers live in a separate building but in the same grounds as the children's home that they were living in when they were in care. They can stay there until they are 21.

Model Three: This option is like supported lodgings. Care leavers live in a **different** house to where they were living when they were in their children's home. Young people have to be 16-years-old or older to live here and will have to move from where they are living if they want to stay put until they are 21. Not everyone who lives there might be from care.

Model Four: Care leavers 'stay close'. They live independently in their own flat. It's down the road, or very close to the children's home they were living in when they left care. They have a key worker from their children's home who they know really well to help them with support. They can visit their children's home if they want – for example visiting for tea.

The words in bold are the words of children and young people.

Should care leavers who leave care from children's homes be able to stay put in some form?

77% of all respondents to the survey thought that care leavers who left care from children's homes should be able to stay put in some form. 9% of respondents thought that staying put in residential care in some form shouldn't happen. Of the respondents who said that they are currently living in, or had left care from a children's home, 76% said that care leavers who left care from children's homes should be able to stay put in

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

some form. 10% of respondents thought that staying put in residential care in some form shouldn't happen. All care leavers who said that they had left care from a children's home thought that staying put should happen.

We asked children in care and young care leavers if they would want to stay put in some form, or if they had already left care, if they would have wanted to. 47% of children and young people said that they would like to stay put. 17% said that they didn't want to, with 19% not being sure.

Children and young people told us that 18 was too young to live independently, and that being able to stay put in some form would mean more support, that it would give young people the opportunity to stay until they are ready to live independently and are emotionally ready. Other young people talked about their own experiences. For example some talked about how moving from their children's home into independent living, despite having made mistakes was the right thing for them.

The importance of choice

Choice was a key theme, across all models. Young people talked about not wanting to stay put because they want to live on their own, or return to their family, or options not being right for them, but how they might be right for other young people. Young people used words like 'choice' and 'option' a great deal. Many young people stressed the importance of choice being available for all children who leave children's homes and ensuring that no matter what choice young people made, proper support has to be available.

Don't just send people off into the world because to them it's bigger than you think.

Model One (staying put in your children's home)

25% of children and young people who answered the question said that of the four models this would be the option they would choose. 33% of all survey respondents who answered the question said that if staying put came in only one form, it should be in this form. In contrast, in one focus group the entire group said that this was a bad option. No one in the focus groups said that if staying put came in only one form, it should be in this form.

Support and care

Young people referred a lot to the benefits of this model being support. They often weren't explicit about the types of support that this would be, but some young people talked about emotional support and continued support, which suggests that they would want the same level of support as they had before. Some young people talked about continuity of care, feeling safe and cared for as being positive aspects to this option. They talked about the importance of this, saying that they felt that good support is important in order to make sure young people make informed choices.

Young people in the focus groups talked about being comfortable with the environment, the routine, and the people who you live with.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

Young people talked about needing support with budgeting, DIY, cooking and other independent skills. In the focus groups, young people talked about being supported regularly and specifically by staff in these areas. Two focus groups felt that staff would need training to support care leavers. They also questioned whether more staff would be needed.

More time

Learning to be independent and ready for living alone was a key theme for young people, but this was also closely linked to having the time to prepare. They said that being able to stay in their children's home for three extra years would give them more time to mature, and used words like 'panic' and 'rush' to describe moving on. They talked about the benefits of being able to plan and prepare and learn the skills they'd need to live alone. Some young people made reference to 17 and 18 being a young age to be made to move out, and also the additional pressures of being this age:

"Yes, I believe it is good because the age that they ask young people to leave care is just too young. As we are age 16, 17, 18, we are studying hard for our A-levels, the thought of living on your own and trying to balance A-levels is not an easy task. We are too young have this additional pressure. This residential care option, will take pressure off young people, this will enhance their performance at schools/colleges and university. It also gives the young person stability which is needed. It is also good because, it is what they are used to, it allows them to feel at home."

Stability and relationships

Some young people talked about knowing the routine of the home and stability being important. Young people talked about the stability of relationships with adults that you know being important as they know young people and will be able to support them to become independent. Young people in the focus groups also talked about it being good that young people know the environment of the home.

Young people also talked about the positives of being able to live with people that you trust, and living with people that they know, rather than attachments being cut off at 18. On the other hand, they also talked about sharing being negative and living with other people being disruptive if you don't like them.

Independence and responsibilities

Some young people talked about a benefit of staying beyond 18 being able to learn to be independent. They used words like 'gain', 'prepare' and 'learn', with reference to independent living skills and being on their own.

On the other hand, some young people thought that it could promote a lack of independent living skills and staff would treat young people like they are younger than they are. One group thought that some young people might need more independence than would be offered by staying put in a children's home. Another group suggested that staying put didn't give care leavers the opportunity to meet new people and wouldn't give care leavers the opportunity to adapt to new environments and situations.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

One group said that the location of children's homes was often isolated and felt that although this is good while a child is in care, it is not good for being independent. They felt that care leavers wouldn't want to rely on lifts to get everywhere and that public transport isn't good in isolated places. While they didn't offer solutions for this, they felt that this was an issue to be considered.

A key theme that emerged was the issue of rules and freedom. Some young people felt that it would limit freedom. Many raised the issue of young people being adults at 18, and at this age young people would want to be able to stay out late, drink alcohol and have boyfriends and girlfriends to stay. However, many recognised that this posed difficulties for living in a children's home with younger children. They felt that rules might have to be fair, which would mean that care leavers wouldn't be able to do the things they wanted to do, like stay out late and have partners to stay. They also felt that in some cases it conflicted with safeguarding, which many recognised as important (and will be discussed later). Some young people felt that this also raised privacy issues for care leavers.

The rules around kitchen usage were raised by two of the three focus groups. One group felt that care leavers should start having to cook for the house and have the freedom to do so. They suggested having a separate kitchen for the care leavers which can be locked, so that care leavers wouldn't have to worry about having knives locked away. Another group thought that care leavers should have separate fridges and cupboards.

Although they felt that rules should be more flexible as care leavers got older, young people in the focus groups talked about rules in children's homes being very strict and this being a reason why young people might not choose this option as they would want freedom and no restrictions.

Younger children - children in care and care leavers living together

This was a theme that divided those we spoke to. Many saw both sides of the argument, but more young people raised the issue of safeguarding than saw positives. Some young people felt that having care leavers as role models would be positive, and having care leavers living with children was comparable to family life. However, some young people also said that having care leavers could be disruptive and a bad influence on younger children.

Older ones might be leading a reckless lifestyle seeing as they're now an 'adult' and this could impact on younger ones. There are very different needs between 18-21.

I may be placed with young people that have problems in their lives and this may disrupt my life.

Some young people talked about safeguarding issues, raising concerns around 11 year old girls living with 21 year old males, sexual relationships between children in care and care leavers, false accusations of sexual abuse, as well as sexual abuse itself.

Rape and false allegations could happen. So could sexual relationships with children in care and care leavers.

Young people talked about there being a big age difference and said that as young people get older, they don't want to be around younger children. We also asked children in care if they'd like to share their children's home with care leavers. 65% said no, or that they weren't sure.

Other thoughts

Other questions and thoughts raised were how children's placements would be provided if care leavers were taking up beds; ensuring young people learn skills before leaving care and how instability can impact on care leavers. Some young people thought that young people might be bullied for still living in their children's home.

Model Two (staying put in a separate building to your children's home, but on the same grounds)

13% of children and young people who answered the question said that of the four models this would be the option they would choose. 24% of all survey respondents who answered the question said that if staying put came in only one form, it should be in this form. In contrast, this was the most popular of the options from the focus groups. Some young people in the focus groups felt that combining this option with staying close when young people were a bit older might be a good idea. This model had been suggested by young people when discussing the first option. Young people felt that the benefits of this were that there would be support close at hand, while being able to try out independence and have a bit more freedom than living in the children's home building.

Support and care

Young people also referred to one of the main benefits of this model being the support they would still receive from the home. They talked about being able to 'gain' skills while knowing that people were nearby for support, and close to support networks. Some young people also used phrases like 'secure' and 'know people are always nearby' although they didn't use words like 'care' in this context. One focus group talked about there being no geographical barriers to accessing support, and said that sometimes care leavers can feel that when they move to supported lodgings that they are expected to manage without support, and so find it hard to ask for help.

I'm in a semi independent flat attached to the house meaning I am fully independent and those skills are still there but I continue getting from my carers just like what a family would give.

Young people in focus groups discussed how staff could support them. They were clear that staff would need to support the young people to learn to live independently. Young people talked about being supported to acquire skills, for example DIY, cooking and budgeting. All focus groups talked about support from staff, but varied in the level of support they thought was needed. One group felt that there should be a dedicated

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

member of staff about during the day, but that they wouldn't be there all the time. Another group felt that there should be daily support provided by extra qualified staff. The third group felt that a staff worker should be there all the time, day and night. All groups were clear that there needed to be support during the night, and someone available to come to see them, even if the support was based in the main house, with key workers only coming across to help if they needed it.

Stability and relationships

Some young people felt that this model was a way of providing a change in environment, but keeping the same location.

Continuity in some ways, but would give the physical separation that may cultivate independence and also change the mindset of the yp that they are more 'grown up' and encourage individual responsibility.

Young people were concerned about sharing with other young people and not getting along with those they were living with. This was less of a concern than with model three. Some young people felt that it was a good way to be social.

Responsibility and independence

Young people thought that there would be more independence and this would be, in general, a positive thing. They talked about independence in a different way from when they talked about option one. They talked about independence both in an independent living way, but also in the sense of being more independent from rules and boundaries, and felt that this was a positive thing. They suggested that it might be less daunting and give a small sense of freedom. On the other hand, some young people felt that living with care leavers who didn't have the skills to live independently could be 'toxic'. One young person said that making decisions straight away can be overwhelming and not to put care leavers 'straight out there'.

One focus group discussed who would provide equipment for the home. They felt that the home should provide all furnishings and equipment, but suggested that care leavers should pay a nominal amount of rent (they suggested £10) to learn about paying bills and budgeting. Another focus group felt that the care leavers should be able to personalise the home, especially the bedroom, and suggested being able to have a budget for 'the house' for example to spend on cushions and rugs.

Younger children - children in care and care leavers living together

Young people thought that care leavers living separately would be a good idea. They thought that it meant that the care leavers could still socialise with the children and eat meals with them, but that there would be more privacy and space. Some young people said it was a good idea because it was better for the children who live in the home, while others said it was a good idea because it was better for the care leavers.

The youngsters could visit the old house to get a glimpse of elderly life.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

There were discussions in the groups about whether the children in the home could visit. Some felt that they should only be able to come at certain times, while others thought that they should not be able to. Some young people felt that it gave care leavers the opportunity to be role models for the younger children and still be able to play an active part in home life, while having their own space.

Loneliness

Some young people felt that it could be lonely if care leavers were living there by themselves, and that they could feel lonely and not wanted. They suggested that more than one care leaver was able to live there.

Other thoughts

One group wondered how much control the staff would have, and different groups had discussions about the role of the staff. Young people also raised the issue of drinking alcohol and having partners to stay, although the focus was more about any rules that there might be for where they are living have, rather than implications for younger children. One group wondered whether homes would have the capacity and space to be able to implement this model.

Option three ('move on' model house)

17% of children and young people who answered the question said that of the four models this would be the option they would choose. 14% of all survey respondents who answered the question said that if staying put came in only one form, it should be in this form (no care leavers aged between 16 and 25 said this should be the only model). In contrast, for the young people in focus groups, this was the second least popular option.

Support and care

Young people also referred to the main benefits of this model being the support they could continue to receive, although through the survey, they weren't very explicit about what they thought that should or would consist of, although one young person described it as help with 'daily stuff'. In contrast to the previous two models, some young people made negative comments about support. Some young people talked about support being different in a negative sense if it was provided by different people, with one young person feeling that they wouldn't be supported in the same way as they would if they continued to be with their previous carers, and one young person talked about his or her own experience of staff not being interested, resulting in bullying and young people's deaths. One young person used the word 'deserted' to describe how he or she felt when they moved to a similar model from their children's home.

The whole idea of staying put is that you stay in surroundings that you are used to with people that know you.

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

One focus group felt that the house should be staffed by a key worker at all times. One young person said that in his or her independent house the key worker was stretched looking after three young people. Some young people felt that a young person would need support beyond that of a personal adviser, as PAs are only around during the day. Young people felt that in addition, support should be provided through a step by step booklet, lots of preparation before leaving a children's home and lots of support through workshops, education, support with the use of equipment (for example boilers, washing machines) and tenancy workshops. One group felt that the lack of staff could lead to problematic and dangerous behaviour.

Young people didn't talk about care being something that they would get from this model.

Stability and relationships

Young people had mixed feelings about this being a stable option, although more young people felt that it was actually an unstable, uncertain option. Some young people said that it felt like a short term measure and it would be starting again in both a new place and with new people. Young people talked about it being an unfamiliar environment, and moving in with unfamiliar people and having to build trust with unfamiliar people.

I would not want to have to move with new people.

Some young people felt that it was an opportunity to make more friends and that it was good for care leavers to live with non-care leavers, though others were concerned about other young people not from care not understanding their situation.

Responsibility and independence

Young people referenced the balance between independence and support being a positive. One focus group in particular spoke about the benefits of helping young people learn skills, stay in education and learn how to cope alone, however all focus groups talked about concerns about having to share an environment with others who may not keep the house tidy and clean, steal food and other items. They also talked about young people having too much freedom and not being used to it, resulting in problems. One group talked about young people being a bad influence on other young people. One young person talked about their own experience of living somewhere where young people took drugs. Although they were screened by an interview, the young person said that you can lie in interviews.

It could be a bad idea having loads of 16-18 year olds living together if there is not enough support. I know I would have enjoyed living with my friends at 16 but I don't think it would have been the best thing for me.

In focus groups, young people discussed how many young people should be housed together in this type of accommodation. Two focus groups felt that no more than four young people should live there, while another group felt that four to six young people

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

should be housed there. One group felt that the rooms must be clean, brightly coloured, modern and aimed at young people. Young people in the focus groups were concerned about theft and privacy and some felt that shared areas should have places where you can store your own belongings privately and securely. They felt that the basics should be provided, but that young people should be able to save up and buy their own kitchen equipment. One suggestion was that contents insurance for all young people would need to be provided.

Younger children – 16 year olds

Young people felt in general that the age range of 16 to 21 was too big an age range. Young people felt that there are things that 16 and 17 year olds can't do, and that them being able to live there would depend on how capable they are. One group in particular felt that it should be adults only living here and that 16 was too young. One group felt that it could present risks to children (16 and 17 year olds). Another group felt that living here would require an understanding of consequences and safety.

No staff may lead to sex and violence against under agers [children].

Loneliness

I get scared at night.

Young people were more worried about care leavers being lonely in this situation than in the first two options. Some of the reasons they gave for this were separation from a carer, not being ready to move out and having to meet new people.

One group felt that by having to move accommodation, young people would leave friends behind, which would affect them in later life and cause anxiety. They were very clear that care leavers don't want to be isolated when they leave care, and were worried that this would facilitate isolation, rather than combat it.

Other thoughts

One question was how council tax and benefits would work with this model. Young people also discussed sharing, and some were clear that they wouldn't want to share with others, including communal living areas. Some were also concerned that this option gave a lack of privacy.

Option four (staying close)

25% of children and young people who answered the question said that of the four models this would be the option they would choose. 25% of all survey respondents who answered the question said that if staying put came in only one form, it should be in this form. This was also a popular model with young people who took part in the focus groups. Some young people in the focus groups felt that combining this option with staying in a separate part of the children's home, with young people moving out to stay close when they were a bit older might be a good idea. Some young people in one group also felt that this was ideal for those ready for more independence.

Support and care

Young people responding to the survey didn't really talk about support when they were asked about this option. They did however refer to the support of the key worker being important and knowing that you have somewhere to go if there's a problem like the washing machine breaking. One young person said that they felt the worker should change, as young people would become more independent and their needs would change, and a new person would better meet them.

I live nearby my children's home & it really helps.

Some young people talked about still needing support, including tenancy workshops, decorating a home, budgeting, going to the doctor's. One young person said that going to the doctor can be new as you've not made your own appointments before. Some young people felt that the support should be available in their own homes, while others felt it should be at the children's home. They also talked about there being a need for someone who is available out of hours, either to help with emergencies or if a young person is feeling down. However, young people didn't talk about care in this context either.

Stability and relationships

Young people talked a lot about relationships and how important it was to be able to visit and continue those relationships. One group said that being able to stay close wouldn't feel like the home was turning their back on the care leaver. Not all young people said that they would want to do it, and going back and visiting might feel odd. However, young people were clear that this only works if the support and relationships do actually happen and identified risks such as the home moving, or workers leaving the home.

It's not the flat that's important, it's the support.

I have seen this with a young lad who lived in the same place as me. They found him a flat a couple of minutes away and they promised him lots of support... They got bored after a few weeks and he was left to go it alone.

One young person said that living in the same area would mean that you're comfortable and you're close to what you know.

Responsibility and independence

A few young people were worried that this model could encourage dependency and a reliance on support. Several young people in the focus groups were concerned that some young people might not be ready to live so independently and would struggle with paying bills for example.

Location and privacy

Young people were divided as to whether living in the same street (or very close) to their old children's home was a good thing or not. Some young people really liked the idea of the flat being very close while others were concerned that it could be too close and staff

'Staying Put' for young people in residential care: A scoping Exercise

might drop by unannounced and check up on them. Some young people suggested a compromise and having it very close, but not so close. Only one person made a suggestion of what this might look like in practice: three streets away.

The age range

One group felt that some young people might not be ready to move out, and suggested that it should be compulsory for children to stay in care until they are 17 or 18 as 16 is too young.

Loneliness

While one group of young people discussed this being a positive option as it would open up the young person's social circle to include neighbours and friends, loneliness was a key theme for this option and many felt that this was an isolating option, despite the proximity to the children's home.

Young people talked about how loneliness occurs at night, often when support isn't around. One group talked about how everything is fine during the day when a young person has a routine, but it's at night that the loneliness can kick in. One respondent to the survey said that the feeling of isolation could undo the work that has been done to prepare a young person for independence.

Other thoughts

Young people in one focus group weren't clear what would happen after a young person turned 21, whether they would have to move out of the flat, or would get to stay where they were. One young person said "if you know you have to leave then you're staring into a blank space."

Some young people were concerned that care leavers' flats near the children's home could become known as the 'care leavers' flats' and there be stigma associated with this.

Some young people raised issues about housing stock, including there not being nearby housing and the waiting list for council housing being very long. They also said that this model was reliant on key workers staying at the children's home and thus being able to maintain the relationship, and on the children's home not moving. They also wanted to know what would happen if a young person was living out of their home authority, but wanted to stay close.

Commentary

It would be inappropriate to come to a conclusion about the model of staying put that has young people's support based on a short consultation of this nature. There was no consensus or even standout option in respect of the models proposed here. Options that were popular with focus groups appeared to be less popular with survey respondents, and vice versa.

Young people's responses to these models came from individual experiences, preferences and wishes, which were each as unique as those individuals. No one's experiences are

the same as another person's, just as no one's needs are identical. As such, no model will be the right one for all care leavers. Care leavers are not a homogenous group and cannot be treated as such. However, the vast majority of young people, were clear that there needs to be more support, stability and care for care leavers when they first leave care. Young people were also clear that everyone is ready to move into independence at different stages, and the options that young people have when they leave care should reflect that. Young people also talked about one of the benefits of staying in the children's home being having more time, which they didn't mention as a benefit of any of the other options. This may indicate that they see any other option as ending their period of care and forcing a change or decision before young people are ready.

It depends on the person, someone may have had a good experience being in care or in a care home, so they wouldn't mind [staying,] whereas others may not have had that experience and would like to move away as far as possible

Although young people's views and opinions were different, we were able to group their comments into distinct themes, the majority of which transferred across all models. This shows that any model must address these themes to ensure that they meet needs and address young people's concerns.

Young people associate different models with different things. For example, it is noticeable that no one mentioned care in relation to models three and four, whereas they did for models one and two (although to a lesser extent in the latter). They also didn't generally associate the first two models with loneliness, whereas they felt that the last two were more likely to be lonely for care leavers, particularly staying close. Young people talked about safeguarding in relation to the first three models, while didn't raise it as an issue for staying close. Young people also didn't talk about independence and responsibility much when they discussed the staying close model, but it may be because independence and responsibility are implicit in living independently and therefore they didn't feel the need to talk about this.

Young people also identified that the process of leaving care and entering adulthood is long and can be fraught with problems and obstacles. They were consistently clear about the types of support that they felt care leavers would need in each model. Their message was clear that there needs to be more support, provided by well trained professionals. Some young people talked about the importance of being prepared by the children's home in advance to help facilitate independent living. Leaving care from a children's home is different to leaving care from a foster home, and as such, extending staying put to children who leave from children's homes will require different options to meet different needs.

Young people didn't generally identify solutions to problems that they thought existed, but it isn't their responsibility to do so. They have offered views, opinions and solutions that should shape any further development of options available to young people who live in a children's home when they leave care. The key point is that it should be options plural, as young people should be able to make a well-informed, unpressurised genuine choice between options so that they can find the solution that is right for them at that point in their life. Anything less is not a choice.