

# Staying Put Scotland

**Providing care leavers with connectedness and belonging**

Guidance for Local Authorities and other Corporate Parents:  
Supporting looked after children and young people to remain in  
care, as part of a staged transition towards adulthood and greater  
independence

**October 2013**

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## **MINISTERIAL FOREWORD**

I am delighted to introduce this Staying Put Scotland guidance, which has been produced as a result of work undertaken on behalf of the Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group. The transition to independence is one where young people are particularly vulnerable and corporate parents must ensure that the right supports are in place to improve the outcomes for looked after children. Although there have been significant improvements in outcomes for care leavers there is still some way to go and this guidance has been prepared to support practitioners and managers in continuing this improvement. It will contribute towards a necessary cultural change in the way we approach working with care leavers in Scotland.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring all children have the chance to fulfil their potential and believes there should be no difference between the outcomes of young people in care and their peers. As corporate parents our attitude should be that “these children are my responsibility, are in my care, and I need to do the best for them that I possibly can”.

Continuity of care and consistent relationships are clearly evidenced in this paper as crucial in supporting care leavers. We need to take action now to address these needs, in order that we can achieve the Scottish Government’s aspiration to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. Young people leaving care should get the support they need to secure a positive and sustained transition into adulthood. This should be when they are ready to do so and there should be mechanisms in place to allow them to return to their last care placement for support in times of difficulty. The aim of the throughcare and aftercare process is not to push young people into the adult world before they are ready, but to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary skills when the time is right for them to move to adult living.

The Children and Young People Bill proposes increasing the age care leavers receive aftercare support to 25 years based on an assessment of the young person’s needs. Advice, guidance and assistance must be provided if appropriate. This provides support more in line with the experiences of the general population. This guidance document sets out explicitly the values and principles that underpin the intent of the Bill. It was produced in collaboration with a number of organisations and stakeholders and I would like to thank everyone involved for their contribution.

**Aileen Campbell MSP**

Minister for Children and Young People

## STATEMENT FROM THE CARE INSPECTORATE

*“Professionals across Scotland have a profound responsibility to ensure that all children have care that reflects their needs and promotes their rights. It is widely acknowledged that children in care can be in more vulnerable positions than their peers.*

*That is why the Care Inspectorate is fully supportive of the principles and philosophy underpinning this guidance. We are committed to working in partnership with local authorities and other service providers to ensure its implementation.*

*We are all dedicated to ensuring that children and young people who are looked after and accommodated have the best start in life, and that their care journey enables them to have experiences which will equip them with the resilience and skills they need to make successful transitions to adulthood.*

*As such, we have drafted additional guidance for providers of care services for Looked After and Accommodated Children, outlining examples of current innovative practices we have registered. In doing so we hope that the perception of “we can’t do it because ...” will be dispelled.*

*We believe the principles of developing interdependence and networks of support for young people are critical to taking forward the GIRFEC agenda into adulthood. The Care Inspectorate is committed – in our role as a corporate parent – to be an active participant in developing and reporting on improved outcomes for young people who have been looked after.”*

**Annette Bruton**  
Chief Executive,  
Care Inspectorate

## INTRODUCTION

1. There is a pressing need to narrow the ‘outcomes’ gap between care leavers and their non-looked after peers, and one important way in which we can do that is by providing care leavers with a supportive environment for as long as they need it. The aim of this Practice Guidance is to assist local authorities and their corporate parenting partners in their development and implementation of strategies which enable care leavers to remain in secure, stable care placements (foster or residential) until such time as they are ready to move on. Strategies which emphasise young people’s entitlement to support into adulthood, and which offer them the option to return to care placements, if and when they encounter difficulties.

2. This guidance does not dictate specific practice. Instead it details the principles that must underpin an effective ‘Staying Put Scotland’ approach, and presents a range of useful practice examples. Taken as whole, this guidance has been developed to encourage and assist organisations to change the culture in which we try to meet the needs of looked after young people and care leavers. For while not all young people will want to remain in their care placements once their supervision order comes to an end, some will, and local authorities should be able to accommodate that request. Moreover, while it is young people with the most complex needs that are perhaps the least likely to choose to stay, they are also the group most likely to benefit from the Staying Put Scotland approach.<sup>1</sup> This is not, therefore, just about making placements available. It is about working with young people to identify choices which will benefit them in the long-term.

3. A local ‘Staying Put’ approach will enable young people to enjoy a transition from care to adult interdependence that more closely resembles that which is experienced by other young people. End-of-care planning decisions should be based on meeting the needs of the individual, rather than age or legal status. By embedding the principles and values outlined in this guidance, corporate parents will help to achieve that, creating the conditions for improved practice and positive outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> Munro, Ward, Lushey (2010) [Right2BCared4 Pilots: Final Report](#).

4. As the Care Inspectorate’s statement above makes clear, the Staying Put Scotland approach can be realised within the existing regulatory framework. Providers of services are therefore expected to demonstrate their implementation of this guidance through the course of regular self-audit and inspection. The Scottish Government may also undertake research to monitor and evaluate the implementation of this guidance.

5. Enabling young people to remain in – or return to – their care placements will pose challenges for services. It will require a flexible approach from all those with corporate parenting duties and responsibilities, including local authorities, independent care providers and the Care Inspectorate. Service managers should note that the Scottish Government and the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) stand ready to assist them in their efforts to turn ‘Staying Put Scotland’ into reality.

6. The guidance is divided into three parts. The **first section provides background** to the issues often faced by care leavers, and summarises the legislative and policy context. The **second section sets out principles of the Staying Put Scotland approach**. All relevant organisations will want to ensure that these principles are understood and implemented by their staff and partners. A number of local authorities have contributed directly to this guidance, providing examples of how creative and innovative practice can extend a young person’s journey out of care, improving both their experience of – and outcomes from – the transition. These examples have been included in the **third section, helping to illustrate how the principles outlined in this guidance can be translated into practice across a variety of different placement settings, and service areas**.

## **SECTION 1: CONTEXT**

7. This guidance has been developed in response to concerns about consistently poor outcomes for care leavers, with high rates of homelessness and low levels of engagement in education, training or employment. The Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group (LACSIG) invited a number of stakeholders to identify priority actions in respect of Throughcare and Aftercare. After extensive consultation with young people and service providers it was decided to focus, in the first instance, on issues relating to accommodation for care leavers. These were seen as being critical to the success of their transition out of care, with many other outcomes (such as employment) contingent on care leavers being able to access a range of appropriate, sustainable accommodation options; including the opportunities to stay in their care placement beyond the terms of their supervision order, or to return to care placements at a later date.

8. This guidance addresses the issues relating to 'staying put' (in care placements). It should be read in conjunction with Housing Protocols for Care Leavers: Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships, which addresses staged transitions out of care placements and into semi- or fully independent living.

### **CARE LEAVERS IN SCOTLAND**

9. Despite considerable investment of resources and effort over recent years, data and research continues to provide evidence of poor outcomes for care leavers. This includes mortality rates (for those under the age of 26), criminal justice, mental health, homelessness and teenage parenthood. Care leavers themselves describe the significant challenges they face, with pressing financial worries, a lack of family and friend support networks and stress over employment and education all underpinned by problems with unsuitable and unstable accommodation.

10. Research clearly demonstrates that the transition period towards interdependence is when looked after young people and care leavers are at their most vulnerable. It is the time in which councils and their partner agencies, as the young people's corporate parents, can make a particularly valuable contribution to

the future success of a care leaver's life. Firstly, research consistently shows that leaving care before a young person is ready for independence tends to lead to poor outcomes.<sup>2</sup> "Readiness" is the ability of looked after young people and care leavers to care effectively for themselves, and it covers a range of important, developmental areas: secure, positive social & support networks (including biological and extended family, if appropriate); practical skills and knowledge; engagement in education, training or employment. In each of these the young person must demonstrate the ability to make healthy life decisions.

*"Educational outcomes for young adults who remained under the care and supervision of the child welfare system were much better than those of young adults who had left care".<sup>3</sup>*

11. Guidance such as [Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland: Regulations and Guidance on Services for Young People Ceasing to be Looked After by Local Authorities](#), and high profile reports such as [Sweet 16: The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland](#) have highlighted the problem of looked after children leaving care too young.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the national average age for leaving home is now approximately 25 years old, the average age at which young people leave care in Scotland is 16-18 years old.<sup>5</sup> It is unlikely that any young person will be able to consistently demonstrate their readiness to move on to independent accommodation at such an age.

*"Probably the most critical factor for children looked after is the age at which they move on from being in care to living elsewhere, compared with the population at large"<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Stein, M (2012) [Young People Leaving Care: Supporting Pathways to Adulthood](#)

<sup>3</sup> Wade, J. (1997) [Developing Leaving Care Services: Tapping the Potential of Foster Parents, Adoption and Fostering](#), Vol; 21 No 3, pp 40-49

<sup>4</sup> Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2008) [Sweet 16: The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland](#), Edinburgh

<sup>5</sup> Hill, Duncalf & McGhee (CELCIS 2013) Still Caring: Leaving Care in Scotland, Glasgow

<sup>6</sup> Broad, B. (2007) *Care Leavers in Transition*, de Montford University

12. While it is the case that some care leavers successfully manage an abbreviated and abrupt transition from care, many will not. Care leavers who have a more accelerated, compressed and abrupt transition do not, unsurprisingly, achieve the same outcomes as their non-looked after peers.<sup>7</sup>

*“They are more likely [...] to have poorer educational qualifications, lower levels of participation in post-16 education, be young parents, be homeless, and have higher levels of unemployment, offending behaviour and mental health problems”<sup>8</sup>*

13. The pathways care leavers take in early adulthood are strongly influenced by the nature of their transition from care, and the support they receive after they leave. In order to meet our aspirations for looked after children and young people we therefore need to ensure that they are **encouraged, enabled and empowered** to remain in stable and secure care settings until they are ready to move on into adulthood; and that the same supports, standards and expectations are applied to them in throughcare and aftercare. This should be underpinned by a clear and positive philosophy of care – as outlined within this guidance – which emphasises young people’s rights, responsibilities and entitlements.

## **LEGISLATION AND REGULATION**

14. It is the aim of the Scottish Government that Scotland becomes the best place in the world to grow up in. Legislation and regulation establishing the framework within which the necessary improvements are made, building services which enable all young people to realise their potential.

15. The [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#) focuses on the needs of children and their families. It sets out the duties and powers available to public authorities to support young people in care. The following sections relate specifically to throughcare and aftercare:

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<sup>7</sup>Wade & Dixon (2006) *Making a home, finding a job*, Child & Family Social Work, 11,3, pp.199-208,  
<sup>8</sup> ibid

- *Section 17*: the local authority has a duty to provide advice and assistance with a view to preparing a child for when he or she is no longer looked after by a local authority.
- *Section 21*: sets out details of the co-operation between authorities and other bodies
- *Section 29*: sets out the main local authority responsibilities to young people who leave care after school leaving age. 29(1) establishes a duty to advise, guide and assist those under 19 unless the local authority is satisfied that the young person's welfare does not require it; 29(2) there is a power to provide advice, guidance and assistance to young people between 19 and 21 who apply to the local authority, unless the authority is satisfied that the young person's welfare does not require it; 29(3) states that assistance may include assistance in kind or in cash.
- *Section 30*: sets out when local authorities may give financial assistance towards the education or training expenses of those who have ceased to be looked after. This includes financial support for accommodation both during and out with term-times.

16. Published in 2009, the [Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland – Regulations and Guidance on Services for Young People Ceasing to be Looked After by Local Authorities](#) sets out the detail of how support to care leavers is to be provided.

17. The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Bill](#) (as introduced to Parliament in 2013) aims to put children and young people at the heart of planning and decision making, as well as ensuring their rights are respected and outcomes are the focus of all interventions. In respect to care leavers, the Bill proposes to extend the age up to which care leavers can receive support from their local authority.

18. Local authorities currently have a statutory duty to prepare young people for when they leave care, and to provide guidance and assistance for young people who have ceased to be looked after over school age up to eighteen, and a power to do so up to twenty one. Section 60 of the Bill proposes amending the 1995 act to provide young care leavers with the right to request advice, guidance and assistance from

the local authority up to twenty six years of age. In response to this request, the local authority will then be under a duty to conduct an assessment of the needs of that care leaver. If the care leaver has 'eligible needs' then the local authority must ensure that support is provided to meet those needs.

19. The proposed Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill by itself cannot ensure these challenges are met. Instead it seeks to support a significant cultural shift in the way in which corporate parents fulfill their responsibilities to their care leavers and ensure the issues our young care leavers face are addressed. It aims to put the question "is this what I would want for my child?" front and centre for all professionals and service managers.

20. The [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#) changed the system for providing services to young people leaving care in England and Wales. Its aim was to keep young people in care until they are prepared and ready to leave; to improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care; to provide better personal support for young people after leaving care and to improve the financial arrangements for care leavers. Section 6, which deals with access to social security benefits for some young people leaving care, also applies in Scotland.

## **POLICY**

21. In recent years there have been a number of policies and initiatives focused on extending and improving throughcare and aftercare support to care leavers in the UK, seeking to ensure that individual's unique circumstances and vulnerabilities are identified and addressed by services. This guidance seeks to build on these policies and initiatives, including similar schemes run in Northern Ireland (Going the Extra Mile), Wales (When I'm Ready) and England (Staying Put).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Northern Ireland, [The G.E.M Scheme \(Going the Extra Mile\)](#); Wales, [When I Am Ready: Planning Transitions to Adulthood](#); England, [Staying Put](#)

## ***We Can and Must Do Better***

22. In January 2007 the Scottish Executive published its response to a Ministerial Working Group on looked after children. [We Can and Must Do Better](#) was intended as a catalyst for improvement, identifying nineteen specific actions, across a range of services. The third part of the report (covering actions 12 – 14) concentrated on the importance of supporting looked after children and care leavers to become successful and responsible adults.

23. The report led to the development of a suite of learning and development materials for practitioners. These materials have recently been updated, and can be found at [www.wecanandmustdobetter.org](http://www.wecanandmustdobetter.org).

## ***Right2BCared4***

24. In October 2007 the UK Department for Children and Families funded eleven local authorities to carry out a three year pilot (involving approximately 1,100 young people) to see if better outcomes could be achieved for young people leaving care. The [Right2BCared4](#) approach (being piloted) was based on the following principles:

- Young people should not be expected to leave care until they are 18 years old;
- They should have greater say in the decision making process preceding their exit from care;
- Should be properly prepared for independent living.

25. The evaluation assessed the costs and effectiveness of processes adopted in the R2BC4 pilot sites, as well as drawing a comparison with two comparator authorities who were not part of the pilot.<sup>10</sup>

## ***These Are Our Bairns***

26. [These Are Our Bairns](#), published by the Scottish Executive in September 2008, expands on the concept of the 'corporate parent', setting out in detail what is

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<sup>10</sup> Munro, Ward, Lushey (2010) [Evaluation of Right2BCared4 Pilots: Final Report](#), London

expected of organisations which have a responsibility for providing services to looked after children. For care leavers it emphasizes the need for managed, supported transitions out of children's services (and – if necessary – into adult services).

### ***The Care Leavers Charter***

27. The [Care Leavers Charter](#) was produced and published by the UK Department for Education in October 2012, but developed by young people themselves. The Charter sets out the principles that underpin good quality support for care leavers throughout their transition into adulthood. The relevant Minister, Edward Timpson, wrote to all Directors of Children's Services (DCS) in England to ask that local authorities sign up to the Charter, and begin a discussion with children in care about what needs to be done to embed the principles into day-to-day practice. By July 2013, 110 of the 152 English local authorities had pledged to incorporate the measures in the charter into their own care leaver policies and practice.

### ***Staying Put***

28. [Staying Put: Arrangements for Care Leavers Aged 18 and Above](#) is guidance published in May 2013 by the UK Department for Education, HM Revenue and Customs, and the Department for Work and Pensions. It sets out the different frameworks and contexts which local authorities should take account of when developing a local 'Staying Put' approach (i.e. allowing young people to remain in care placements beyond the age of 18). It reflects the learning accrued through a series of 'Staying Put' pilots, which explored the various practical issues involved in extending a placement.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Access All Areas***

29. [Access All Areas](#) is a policy initiative (developed by a number of prominent third sector organisations) which seeks to ensure that all government policy is properly 'care-proofed', supporting – rather than impeding – care leaver's transition into

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<sup>11</sup> DfE (2012) [Evaluation of the Staying Put: 18+ family placement programme \(final report\)](#)

adulthood.<sup>12</sup> For instance where a public body has a discretionary power, care leavers should automatically be afforded a default bias in any decision making.

30. The initiative (begun in 2012) has the backing of the UK Department of Education and Cabinet Office, and the Minister for Children has actively encouraged colleagues (across both local and national government) to take note of the policy.

31. Although focused primarily on England and Wales, the Access All Areas initiative does relate to Scotland, particularly in those policy areas over which the UK Government has retained powers (such as welfare spending). In addition, the [Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland](#) has begun to explore how the initiative could be extended through Scotland's national and local government.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> NCAS, The Princes Trust, Catch 22, Care Leaver's Foundation, A National Voice (2012) [Access All Areas: Action For All Government Departments to Support Young Peoples Journey From Care to Adulthood](#), London

<sup>13</sup> CELCIS (2013) [Raising the Bar: National Throughcare & Aftercare Conference](#), Edinburgh

## SECTION 2: KEY PRINCIPLES

32. The idea of delaying the exit of young people from care settings until they are sufficiently skilled, and – more crucially – emotionally and psychologically equipped, is not new. But the Staying Put approach takes this idea further, demanding genuine needs-led assessment and the promotion of consistent positive relationships (which transcend both settings and roles). The key principles listed below are therefore both critical and explicit in all successful ‘Staying Put’ schemes, and must be understood across all relevant organisations, from front-line practitioners through to senior management.

- **Young people are encouraged, enabled and empowered to remain in positive care settings until they are ready to move on.** Local authorities and their partners – as corporate parents – will want to ensure that looked after young people are not only aware of their right to remain in their placement, but that they have opportunity to exercise that right. They must be provided with information about the options available to them (in a timely manner), and given the support to evaluate those options properly; this may involve direct work with a young person to highlight the long term benefits of certain choices, in light of their personal circumstances.
- **No looked after young person leaves care without the skills and support necessary for success.** As if they were their own children, staff across local authorities – and all agencies with corporate parenting responsibilities – will want to ensure that a looked after young person leaves their care placement with the practical skills and networks of supportive relationships that underpin successful adult life. This relies on proper needs-led, child-centered assessment, a commitment to providing training and / or practical support, and access to a range of accommodation options. As part of the assessment corporate parents will want to satisfy themselves that care leavers demonstrate an appropriate level of ‘emotional readiness’.
- **Local Authorities and their corporate parenting partners will have made explicit their commitment to the ‘Staying Put Scotland’ approach.** Local

Children's Services Plans and other relevant planning documents should be clear about the localities commitment to care leavers, and support for the 'Staying Put' approach. These plans will not only detail the policies and procedures which will make this practice real for looked after young people, but they will also identify the measures of success (i.e. outcomes for care leavers). Clear and explicit statements in strategic plans also encourage organisations to own the Staying Put agenda at a corporate level.

### **An Explicit Philosophy of Care**

33. The approach advocated for in this guidance – Staying Put Scotland – represents an explicit philosophy of care. While many elements of this philosophy are already reflected in the positive and successful practice evident across Scotland, the importance of having a strong, explicit philosophy of care cannot be over-stated. The central elements are the Staying Put Scotland philosophy as outlined below.

#### ***The Importance of Relationship-Based Practice***

34. In the pursuit of positive outcomes for young people leaving care, research consistently points to the importance of maintaining relationships and attachments. This applies not only to carers, but professionals also. Often forged in a period of significant stress and anxiety (as they come into a placement or prepare for a transition out of one), it is these relationships which can hold things together as the young person moves into a new and challenging period of their lives.

35. In the final report of *Making Not Breaking: Findings from the Care Inquiry*, both practitioners and young people emphasised how the option to remain in care placements (beyond the age at which they are entitled to leave) and opportunities to return for support when necessary, helped establish a feeling of belonging which – in the long term - actually enabled them to be independent and move on with their lives.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Care Inquiry (2013) [Making Not Breaking: Building Relationships For Our Most Vulnerable Children](#)

*“It was evident that those who stayed put had a wider network of support than those who did not [...] and often had stronger relationships with their carers.”<sup>15</sup>*

36. In line with the final recommendations of the Making not Breaking report, the Staying Put Scotland approach stresses that relationships formed between the young person and their carers (be that foster carers or residential workers) should wherever possible and desirable, be continued and maintained. There should – at the very least – be arrangements whereby a young person can return to their previous placement for an evening meal or period of respite. Professionals and carers who have formed a good relationship with a child should be encouraged and supported to maintain contact when they (the adults) change job, or the child enters or leaves care or moves to a new placement.

*“The weight of evidence, from all quarters, convinces us that the relationships with people who care for and about children are the golden thread in children’s lives...” and that “unless in exceptional circumstances....planning should focus on ensuring continuity of key valued relationships for the child”.*<sup>16</sup>

37. The notion of independence is perhaps better expressed as ‘interdependence’, more accurately reflecting the day-to-day reality of an extended range of healthy inter-personal relationships, social supports and networks. Local authorities and other corporate parents will want to ensure that their systems, procedures, processes and practice supports this primary focus on relationships for the child or young person, both within their care experience and beyond.

### ***Extended & Graduated Transitions***

38. Accelerated or abrupt transitions from care settings should be avoided wherever possible. Corporate parents will want to ensure that the encouragement, enablement and empowerment of young people to make gradual and phased steps towards more independent living settings, over extended periods, becomes standard practice. Moreover, care leavers must be able to return to care placements or a more supportive care setting – if and when they meet with any difficulty. This will provide

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<sup>15</sup> Care Inquiry (2013) Making Not Breaking: Building Relationships For Our Most Vulnerable Children

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

young care leavers with a vital 'safety net', at a time when their long-term health and well-being is at significant risk.

39. In the general population most young adults will phase their departure from the family home over months or years, depending on their own circumstances and needs. Within this, many young people will return to the family home for a period, perhaps between college and employment or over holiday periods, or to get additional support at times of difficulty. Accepting that there are practical difficulties involved, the Staying Put Scotland approach depends on corporate parents attempting to address those difficulties, putting systems in place that enable care leavers to return to a care setting. This should be accepted and embedded as a principle of good practice and responsible corporate parenting.

*"[...] having the scope to allow young people to return to care if they left and struggled to cope was therefore seen to be a positive development."<sup>17</sup>*

### **Post Care Accommodation Options**

40. Joint Planning and multi-agency and partnership working is at the heart of all good child care practice, and central to the principles of GIRFEC. The extension of this principle for care leavers should be carried on beyond their direct care experience, the "one child – one plan - one care journey" principle being continued into adulthood. Pathways or transitions and support plans should reflect the key roles and responsibilities of agencies and partners in meeting the young person's needs through a phased transition into adulthood. This should reflect the dynamic and changing nature of young people's needs and circumstances as they progress on their journey to adulthood and interdependence.

41. For specific detailed guidance on post-care accommodation options, please refer to: Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers: Guidance for Corporate Parents (2013, Scottish Government).

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<sup>17</sup> Munro, Ward, Lushey (2013) Right2BCared4Pilots Interim Report

## SECTION 3: PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

### PRACTICE EXAMPLES

42. Across Scotland there are a number of examples of innovative practice, where localities have supported looked after children and young people to remain in existing care settings, make graduated transitions, or to return to previous care settings (either on a planned or ad-hoc basis). These strategies have helped to maintain supportive relationships, and properly prepare young people for independence and adult life; the aims of Staying Put Scotland.

#### **Staying Put in Family Placements**

43. Many local authorities are enabling looked after young people to remain with their existing foster carers beyond the age of 18 years by facilitating a change of placement from 'foster care' to 'supported carer' or 'supported lodging'. This can involve the dual registration of carers as both 'foster carer' and 'supported carer', ensuring a greater sense of security for all concerned.

44. Young people who have experienced multiple placement changes are more likely to leave care early.<sup>18</sup> If foster carers are to continue to maintain existing placements and relationships with looked after children and young people for longer, clearly this changes the expectations of the role and highlights the need for specific additional support relating to local authority's throughcare and aftercare responsibilities.

#### ***Supported Carer Service***

#### **South Ayrshire Council**

We promote a philosophy of care across the service. This includes assessments, referrals and reviews. The Getting It Right For Every Child model we use ensures that our young people have a Pathway Plan or Support Plan to meet their individual needs.

<sup>18</sup> DfE (2011) [Evaluation of the Right2BCared4 Pilots](#), London

Sustaining established relationships is an important factor for all young people. The Staying Put agenda is promoted in this authority for young people currently in care. Foster care placements can be converted to supported care placements, allowing continued contact with their foster carers and providing continuity as they move forward into adulthood.

Young people are able to have stability and ongoing support as they move onto independence at their own pace and be supported to make the transition to adulthood in a more gradual way. Other young people rely on their own families at this age and stage of their lives.

Positive corporate parenting is also a major consideration of our practice. Examples of this include, paying retainer fees for placements when young people are in the army or at university.

Health support is integral and the nurse in our team provides general health assessments, advice and referrals onto specialist services. Other service areas include: mental/emotional health, sexual advice, substance misuse, advice in relation to self-harm, anxiety, anger, depression and stress.

The team also has a Literacy and Numeracy worker who has worked with young people on many varied areas, including supporting them with their driving theory.

The Youth Housing Support Group (YHSG) underpins effective multi agency working key partners including STEP, Quarriers, YPST, Housing & Health. This whole system approach aims to achieve positive outcomes for some of our most vulnerable young people, providing accommodation as the cornerstone to help them to fulfill their potential and become valuable contributors to their communities.

One of the strengths is that young people can return to supported carers if they do not manage independent accommodation at the first try. YHSG provides early interventions, outreach and transitional support to placement to bolster them if required. Young people are also supported on the next stage of their journey, for example onto temporary or permanent tenancies.

45. Developing the capacity of foster carers to respond to and meet the needs of looked after children and young people by providing ongoing support and learning is critical. For example, providing foster carers with information and training on the importance of 'permanence' – at an early stage – can help to prepare them for a situation where a young person wishes to remain with them into adulthood.

46. It is also important that the recruitment of carers emphasises the potential longer-term commitment that may be involved in caring for a child or young person. A clear, shared expectation between carers, agencies and children themselves is critical.

### ***Staying Put***

### **West Dunbartonshire Council**

Underpinning the development of the throughcare/aftercare service in West Dunbartonshire are the key principles of:

- Going the extra mile,
- Is this good enough for my child,
- Leaving care is a process and not a single event

The service is built on making and sustaining positive relationships with young people which involves:

- talking,
- sharing information,
- planning and providing accommodation options with support, beyond residential and foster care placements.
- continuity in the throughcare staff group during this time which has enabled the service provided to young people preparing to leave care.

Delayed discharges from residential care are the norm and foster placements can continue routinely until 21 years.

A mainstream tenancy is not the first option on leaving care with supported lodgings placements being a positive and successful choice by many young people over many years.

Access to temporary furnished flats which, if problematic, can result in a return to supported lodgings to build more skills and confidence.

West Dunbartonshire adopt a “trampolines and safety nets approach” since it is clear that young people need more than one opportunity to try things out as they make their way in the world today.

They also enjoy strong working relationships with a range of partners with the aim of supporting young people to achieve the best outcomes possible in all aspects of their lives.

The Pathway Plan approach covers the many important aspects which must be addressed as young people prepare to move on from residential or foster care.

There has been a strong emphasis on an investing to save approach and using the positive experiences of young people who have benefited from the service as peer educators and in talking heads DVDs.

47. Local Authorities and their corporate parenting partners will also want to ensure that any conversion of placement type does not threaten the stability of the placement by creating financial problems for the carer. Procedures should be put in place which acknowledge the on-going needs of the carer, but also the potentially changing financial position of the young person.

48. We know that placement stability is vitally important, and multiple placement moves is one of the key negative issues highlighted by looked after young people. Proactive and ongoing emotional and practical support must be provided throughout the transition from one setting to another.

The Resource Prioritisation Screening Group (RPG) provides city-wide screening, prioritisation and allocation of resources for some of Glasgow's most vulnerable young people (16 – 25 years of age). All young people requiring supported accommodation are screened for planned placements to ensure appropriate options are considered based on assessed needs. RPG takes account of emergency placements, which considers both care leavers and homeless young people. There is no limit to how often young people can be screened and re-accommodated.

There are a range of accommodation providers which Glasgow has commissioned to deliver supported accommodation, with links to about 30 different services including Local Authority managed Supported Carers, small 4 and 9 bed core accommodations offering 24hr support, larger semi-independent units and specialised services through the voluntary and independent sector.

### *Working with Partners*

Central Leaving Care team work closely with the Supported Accommodation providers. There is partnership commitment to supporting the RPG principles and process and participate in the panel. The 16+ units and homeless duty service link with the central LCS duty team to ensure placement prioritisation and progression is effective and responsive to the needs of emergency placement requests wherever possible.

The working relationship between the central LCS and the children and families/Homeless commissioning team is an essential component in ensuring the systems, services and feedback from young people and professional staff are interlinked when revising practice and planning. The Provider 16+ Managers and Youth Homeless services meet during the year with the LCS Manager to discuss new plans or shared issues.

### *Supported Carer Scheme*

Provides direct accommodation and support to young people leaving care or who have left care. Offers young people aged between 16 – 25yrs the opportunity to develop confidence and skills to live independently within a family or single person household.

Currently have a 100 carer households offering accommodation capacity for 147 places to young people; including 20 mother and baby placements and some respite facility. Service matches young people with carers, accommodates young people with challenging behaviours who are in need of care and support. Carers are expected to support and participate in the pathway plan, communicate with agency staff and respect the right of young people as young adults to make decisions and make mistakes. This is viewed as one of our intensive support services for Care Leavers. All young people are considered for supported carers and encouraged to think about this option as part of their leaving care plan.

While this is an adult care placement we employ clear scrutiny, training and supervisory arrangements as would be expected with foster carers. Dual registration of Foster Carers to supported carers is an established practice in Glasgow, with clear procedures set out for staff guidance and standards.

Recent agreement has been reached in principle between Glasgow and the network of fostering providers to extend our dual registration arrangement for purchased carers who wish to continue caring for young people into their early adulthood. This is a significant development supporting a continuum of care for young people and reducing the need to transfer care/support placement at such crucial stages in their lives.

## Staying Put in Group Care Settings

49. Group care is a key resource for looked after young people. To be effective and successful it must reflect a strong shared philosophy of care, and a positive culture which promotes a sense of connection and belonging. There are specific challenges in establishing opportunities to either 'stay put in' or 'return to' group care settings. However as the examples below illustrate, it is possible. Corporate parents – in partnership with the Care Inspectorate – should work to make these arrangements routine, and not the exception.

### ***Lothian Villa***

### **East Lothian Council**

Lothian Villa is a 6-bed local authority children's house. They have developed and embedded a clear underpinning philosophy of care demonstrated through consistent leadership and child-centered practice. This includes:

- Extending care placement to reflect a realistic notion of independence not based on chronological age, but stage of development
- Applying a continuity of direct care into aftercare work - key work support from the service during care continues into aftercare situation
- Awareness of staff about problematic transitioning of young people and to pace change better to help young people cope better
- Unit staff provide support with decoration and furnishing aftercare accommodation
- Continuity of care maintained in former resident regular participation in unit life with regular visits
- Provision of a "closed group" Facebook aftercare support page with contributions from staff and former residents – pictures, reminisces, stories from young people's time in care
- Residential crisis support – practical assistance if former resident is in crisis i.e. electricity/ gas has run out – unit can assist with food, fuel and direct crisis support
- Regular meetings with aftercare young people– "Lothian Villa Monday football night" supports and facilitates continued relational bonds after direct care

- Aftercare and staff nights out both at Christmas and Edinburgh Festival
- Anniversary remembrances (birthday's Christmas, special events); presents/cards still bought by staff
- Aftercare invitations to have Christmas Dinner/New Year Dinner with staff and current residents
- Unit remains as support for phone calls and support for former residents needing to contact external agencies – Housing/Health/Benefits
- Former young people's pictures remain on the walls in Lothian Villa – of unit holiday's – also put on Face Book
- Close liaison with East Lothian Aftercare Team – close collaboration on any problematic issues.

As a result of this type of support practitioners and care leavers have found that:

- crises for former residents are fewer and less frequent;
- ex-residents are not isolated and lonely;
- referrals about ex-residents children are rare, and supported by Lothian Villa staff if needed;
- child protection enquiries are lower; and
- the well-being of ex-residents far better as they are supported in continued relationships of trust & support.

***“Continued support facilitates independence”***

50. The ability to remain within an education setting for the full period of secondary education may go some way to mitigating the impact of previous unsettled education, and redress poor educational outcomes. The stability and security offered by 'staying put in residential (education) settings' will enable young people to better realise their potential, particularly in relation to formal qualifications and employment prospects.

51. Therefore, local authorities – and their corporate parenting partners – will want to ensure that all looked after young people are **encouraged, enabled and empowered** to remain in their education setting until the age of 18 years (whether or not this is a residential setting) in all but the most exceptional of circumstances.

52. Corporate parents will also want to ensure that the education settings in which looked after young people are placed are able to demonstrate their partnership working with further and higher education establishments, training providers and employers.

### ***Residential Services***

### **Inverclyde Council**

As Corporate Parents Inverclyde has, over the last 10 years, developed its residential services with a clear understanding and philosophy of care. The ethos is to establish a culture of nurture and permanence within residential child care. Young people will remain accommodated until they are equipped and prepared to move on. The average age for young people moving on to independent accommodation in the last 5 years is 18.5 years. Care placements are extended until the assessed needs can be met outwith the units. This is not based on chronological age, rather the individual's preparedness. This is evidenced in practice as follows:

- individuals will continue to be supported by unit staff/foster carers after they leave care. This continuity of relationships provides a greater sense of security to the young people.
- young people are encouraged to return to the unit for support. This may be practical, emotional or social.
- young people are offered support in crisis situations e.g. when feeling unsafe, without food, electricity etc., feeling isolated. They can come to the unit and stay overnight or alternatively workers will go out and provide support within the community.
- practical support with decoration, furnishing, shopping etc. when young people move into own accommodation is provided by the workers from the units.
- there is regular, ongoing contact from named individuals to provide support in line with agreed plan of care.
- invitations are extended to Christmas dinners, Sunday lunch, and birthday celebrations etc.
- care leavers with children are encouraged to maintain contact with unit staff who continue to provide support e.g. assisting with babysitting, helping organise baby

showers, encouraging attendance at health appointments etc.

- young people will, if required, continue to receive support from the LAAC nurse as if they retain the status as accommodated young people
- support continues to be available from the LAAC teaching staff, if required.

This ethos extends to the authority's fostering service where young people remain within the 'family home' often converting the status of foster carer to that of supported carer. As a result of these interventions care leavers:-

- appear to have greater emotional intelligence and personal resilience
- are less likely to experience crisis over time.
- have improved self-esteem.
- are less isolated and feel supported
- are able to continue with their meaningful relationships and with previous carers.
- have improved health outcomes
- are less likely to be involved in offending behaviour.

Corporate parents should ensure that appropriate reciprocal arrangements for the provision of throughcare and aftercare support are in place for young people placed out-with their home local authority. In some cases these young people may wish to remain in the host authority area, and placing authorities have a responsibility to make a range of post-care accommodation and support options available to them in their chosen locality. This may involve negotiation with independent providers and the host authority, and this should be considered at the outset of transition planning for the young person.

### **Sycamore Services**

### **Aberlour**

Sycamore is a community based cluster of residential, education and Fostering Services. Sycamore provides consistent, safe and therapeutic care and education support for children and young people aged five to eighteen. We are committed to remaining involved and available to young people throughout their lives, specifically with additional support from our Throughcare & Aftercare team.

We have recently completed a Practice Manual which provides a description of our practice (developed over the past 30 years) which is grounded in relevant research and theory. Social Pedagogy provides an ethical, values-driven and relationship

based approach to practice.

Aberlour Fostering support a team of volunteer Befrienders who build and maintain positive relationships with the children and young people throughout their stay and thereafter.

Continued support and contact with children and young people before, during and after their stay within the Service is provided in partnership with our Throughcare & Aftercare Team:

We have always embraced the philosophy which has historically been described as 'once a Sycamore child always a Sycamore child'. This is expressed through continued relationships and an understanding that we are always available to offer help and support. Our Aftercare Team offer both crisis and ongoing support to a broad range of adults and young people who have previously lived with us.

Access to our Family Resource Flats and Independent Training House where young people can return to the stay in both planned and emergency situations.

Young people who have lived with us continue to contribute to the Service through involvement in, for example, staff interviews, Service Reviews and voluntary work.

Our Aftercare Workers maintain contact and support at important times for the young people. These include birthdays, Christmas, hospital stays and medical appointments, prison and Court appearances, accommodation moves, the birth of a child, College placements and interviews. Supporting young people to cope with the many transitions of life as they learn to cope 'interdependently' in the community.

We have an understanding that 'a door is always open' approach makes accessing support more manageable, flexible and adaptive for our young people.

Working within established relationships provides consistency and continuity to our children and young people.

53. The suite of [‘We Can and Must Do Better’](#) training materials set out clear expectations for managers in educational and residential establishments in Scotland, which dovetail with this Staying Put Scotland guidance. The materials encourage us to raise our educational aspirations for looked after children and young people by promoting a holistic consideration of individual circumstance and potential. The role of external management in supporting and informing this approach is critical; for further guidance on the role of the external manager, please see [National Guidance for External Managers of Residential Child Care](#).

### **Criminal Justice**

54. Research consistently shows that care leavers are over represented in the criminal justice system. This is therefore an area in which further information and guidance is likely to be of benefit. However till that guidance is available, local authorities, the Scottish Police Service and the Scottish Prison Service – as corporate parents – will wish to ensure that care leavers are identified within the criminal justice system at key points: arrest; detention; and discharge. Once identified, all corporate parents will wish to ensure that care leavers continue to receive access to necessary throughcare and aftercare support services. This is particularly important at the point of arrest; throughout any period of detention and, critically, prior to and at the point of discharge.

### **Alternative Pathways to Adulthood**

55. The principles which underpin this guidance do not apply exclusively to young people accommodated by a local authority. Local Authorities – and their corporate parenting partners – should consider how the principles outlined in this guidance apply to children with disabilities, those looked after at home, and those accessing respite provision. These young people should continue to receive the same access to throughcare and aftercare support services as their peers.

56. In addition, adult services will want to ensure that they are fully meeting and reflecting their corporate parenting responsibilities to care leavers in all areas of service design and delivery. For instance Health trusts and Community Health

Partnerships will want to demonstrate that Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) fully embrace the philosophy and principles of this guidance by ensuring that the transitions of care leavers between children and adult services are proactively and positively managed. CAMHS will want to demonstrate the ongoing engagement of care leavers in accessing psychological services through this transition process.

57. Regardless of ultimate destination all looked after young people should be **encouraged, enabled and empowered** to remain in positive care settings, maintaining and enhancing supportive relationships until such time as they are ready to begin a graduated and extended transition towards adulthood.

## Further Reading

Munro, Ward, Lushey & NCAS [Right2BCared4 Pilots: Final Report](#) (2010)

Stein, M [Young People Leaving Care: Supporting Pathways to Adulthood](#) (2012)

Wade, J. '[Developing Leaving Care Services: Tapping the Potential of Foster Parents](#)' in *Adoption and Fostering*, Vol; 21 No 3, pp 40-49(1997)

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People [Sweet 16: The Age of Leaving Care in Scotland](#) (2008)

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*These Are Our Bairns: A Guide For Community Planning Partnerships on Being A Good Corporate Parent*, Scottish Government (2008)

*Making Not Breaking: Building Relationships For Our Most Vulnerable Children: The Findings of The Care Inquiry* (2013)

*The G.E.M Scheme (Going the Extra Mile) [Regional Guidance on the Provision of Financial Support to Carers who continue to Support / Accommodate Young People Aged 18 – 21 years who are engaged in Education, Training, Employment or Prevocational Initiatives](#)*

[When I Am Ready: Planning Transitions to Adulthood](#). Welsh Govt. (2012)

[Evaluation of The Right2BCared4 Pilots](#)

National Housing Options and Accommodation Protocol, for Care Leavers and their Corporate Parents, Scottish Government (2013)

DfE, DWP & HMRC Guidance, [Staying Put: Arrangements for Care Leavers aged 18 years and above](#) (2013)

Access All Areas: Action For All Government Departments to Support Young Peoples Journey From Care to Adulthood NCAS/Catch22 (2012)

National Guidance for the External Management of Residential Child care Establishments in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2013)

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[Biehal, N.](#), Clayden, J., [Stein, M.](#), & [Wade, J.](#) 2004 in N. Frost (ed.) Developing leaving care services *Child Welfare: Major Themes in Health and Social Welfare* Routledge, Andover pp.295-30

NCAS/Catch22, Staying Put 18+ Family Placement Programme (Peer Research Report)(National Care Advisory Service)

Emily R Munro, Clare Lushey, National Care Advisory Service, Debi Maskell-Graham and Harriet Ward with Lisa Holmes. Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University, Evaluation of the Staying Put: 18 Plus Family Placement Programme: Final report

Mike Stein Resilience & Young People Leaving Care: Overcoming The Odds (JRF, 2005)



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Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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