



Department
for Education

Staying Close 2022-25

Application guide for Local Authorities

April 2022

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1. Executive summary

Staying Close is a model which provides an enhanced support package for young people leaving care from children's homes and is designed to be a comparable offer to the option to Stay Put, which supports young people in foster care to remain with their former foster carers until age 21. It provides an offer of move-on accommodation, alongside a package of practical and emotional support, provided by a member of staff from their former children's home or from someone who they know and trust. These bespoke packages of support help develop their confidence and skills for independent living, and for their emotional health and wellbeing.

Since 2017-18, Staying Close has been piloted by 5 Local Authorities (LAs) and 3 private providers. The Department for Education is now looking to increase the number of LAs with a Staying Close offer over the next three years. Our ambition is for:

- Staying Close to be offered to as many young people as possible.
- More LAs, over a wider geographical spread, to have a Staying Close offer.
- Staying Close to be a recognised model of good practice that can be embedded into policy and practice and seen as an invest to save opportunity by delivering wider positive outcomes for young people leaving children's residential homes.

Each Staying Close offer should deliver the following benefits for young people leaving care from children's homes:

- Accommodation stability: including access to improved housing options, reduced rates of evictions and fewer placement moves.
- Wellbeing: positive changes in both mental and physical health and reductions in antisocial behaviour, episodes of going missing and criminal activity for young people at risk of these behaviours.
- EET: increasing numbers of young people in employment, education and training, including through support gaining work experience, with application forms and advice and guidance.
- Strong relationships and support network: an increase in social connectedness and developing healthy relationships.
- Independent living skills: including improvements in cooking, budgeting, time management and practical skills.

2. What is Staying Close

Background

Many care leavers report experiencing a 'cliff-edge' when they leave care and move into semi-independent accommodation or an independent tenancy. They report not feeling equipped to deal with the challenges of living independently and as a result, many care leavers get into debt and arrears and lose their tenancies.

Also, many young people leaving care do not have strong support networks to help them with the transition to independent living. As a result, care leavers are particularly at risk of homelessness due to a lack of transitional and practical support, and a lack of suitable accommodation.

Staying Close is not simply a housing offer. It is a model which provides an enhanced support package for young people leaving care from children's homes and is designed to be a comparable offer to the option to Stay Put, which supports young people in foster care to remain with their former foster carers until age 21. It provides an offer of move-on accommodation, alongside a package of practical and emotional support, provided by a member of staff from their former children's home or from someone who they know and trust. These bespoke packages of support help develop their confidence and skills for independent living, and for their emotional health and wellbeing.

Since 2017-18, 5 local authorities and 3 private providers (private providers include children's homes in the charity, private and voluntary sector) have been piloting Staying Close:

- Bristol City Council
- North Tyneside
- Suffolk County Council
- Portsmouth County Council
- North East Lincolnshire LA
- Break Charity
- St Christophers Fellowship
- Fairways Charity

The pilots received tailored coach support which centred on supporting them to develop and test their different Staying Close approaches (staffing and delivery), securing support at an operational and strategic level and assisting them to embed Staying Close into the Local Offer for care leavers. They worked to establish the Staying Close Framework, that drew on the discussions with the pilots to agree the core elements of Staying Close and helped identify other helpful interventions that supported young people in transition. The coaching team built up a

deep knowledge of the pilots that enabled the sharing of learning, connected pilots where they struggled and showed what worked well. The learning was summarised in notes and reports to help the pilots embed the practice, enabling staff to support young people. The coach also supplemented coaching support with technical support, for example, to help with planning for longer term sustainability.

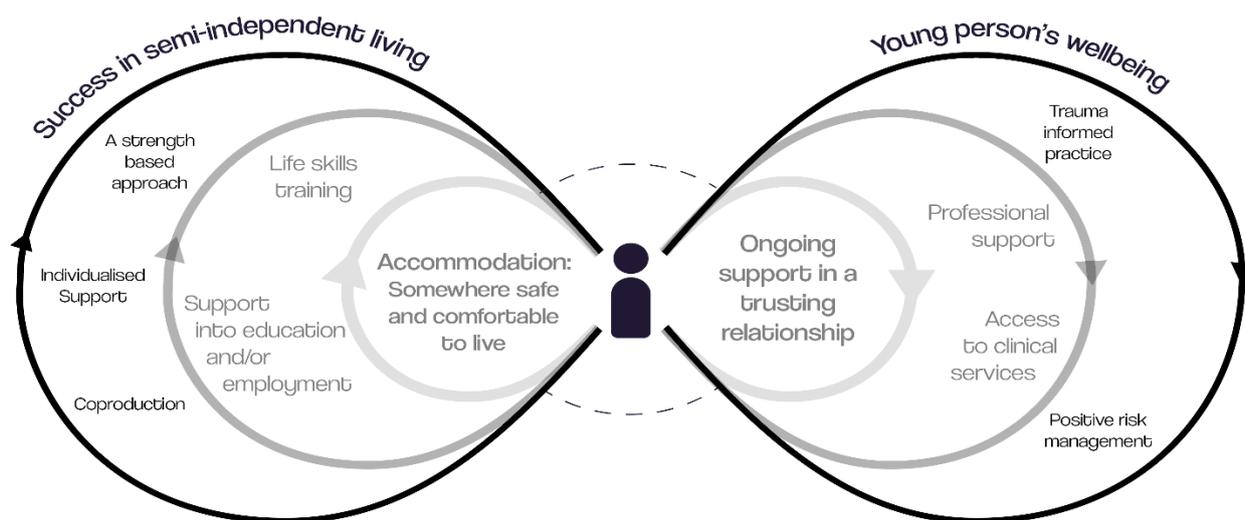
[Independent evaluations](#) have shown positive outcomes for young people involved in the programme, including reduced eviction rates, increased engagement in education, employment or training (EET) and improved wellbeing and relationship management skills.

Staying Close framework

The Staying Close framework (diagram 1) has been developed with pilot providers and sets out what we consider should form part of a Staying Close model. The diagram puts a trusting relationship and safe and secure accommodation at the core of a Staying Close offer and what we consider should be the **minimum** offer of support to care leavers. New LA providers should utilise this framework, to support a local adaptation of Staying Close for their young people leaving care. The framework should reflect the provider landscape, the local social care ecosystem, and most of all the needs and vulnerabilities of their residential care leavers, which are often very different.

Diagram 1

Staying Close – Supporting young people into independence





Foundational
culture and
practice



Essential wrap
around support



Core staying
close offer

3. Funding and eligibility

Available funding

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced £36m of funding for Staying Close over the next three years; £6m in 2022-23, £12m in 2023-24 and £18m in 2024-25.

This EOI opportunity is for LAs to apply for grant funding to establish and deliver a Staying Close offer in their locality for the next three years. Bidders will submit a programme plan for 3 years of funding however DfE will only commit to funding the successful LAs for one year. Subsequent funding for years 2 and 3 will be agreed each year, with no further need to bid, and subject to Departmental approvals. The total number of LAs to be awarded funding is not determined at the outset.

There will be subsequent EOI opportunities for LAs to apply for grant funding in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Who is eligible to apply for grant funding?

LAs can apply for grant funding individually or as part of a joint application with other LAs. Where LAs are applying as a group, a lead LA must be identified. The lead authority should complete and submit the EOI on behalf of the other LAs. The lead LA will be the point of contact, responsible for the grant funding and reporting requirements.

Private children's homes providers, charities and other voluntary organisations are not able to apply for this grant funding, but we would encourage all interested parties to work with their LAs to ensure the strongest Staying Close offer possible.

How can LAs use their funding?

Each Staying Close offer will be established and delivered by LAs to meet the needs of their young people and their locality, and to deliver the following benefits:

- Accommodation stability: including access to improved housing options, reduced rates of evictions and fewer placement moves.
- Wellbeing: positive changes in both mental and physical health and reductions in antisocial behaviour, episodes of going missing and criminal activity for young people at

risk of these behaviours.

- EET: increasing numbers of young people in employment, education, and training, including through support gaining work experience, with application forms and advice and guidance.
- Strong relationships and support network: an increase in social connectedness and developing healthy relationships.
- Independent living skills: including improvements in cooking, budgeting, time management and practical skills.

As part of their application, LAs are expected to provide a detailed breakdown of costs, based on an indicative cost per young person of £22k-£32k.

LAs can allocate their grant funding to support costs related to capacity, expertise, resources, and the ongoing delivery of their Staying Close offer. Funding cannot be used for capital costs.

How will the funding be allocated?

Funding is limited and where the number of successful applications exceeds the total amount of funding available, DfE will make decisions about the amounts to be awarded that enables more LAs, over a wider geographical spread, to have a Staying Close offer. Therefore, the amount awarded to an individual LA may be less than the total value applied for through the EOI. Applications will be selected based on the total scores, along with consideration of the total amount of available funding. If there is a concentration of bids in regional areas, we reserve the right to prioritise bids from other regions in order to enable an equal geographical spread. The total number of LAs to be awarded funding is not determined at the outset.

All applications will be assessed against the criteria set out in EOI form.

Breakdown of costs will be reviewed but not assessed. Any applications that exceed the maximum indicative cost per young person will automatically be deemed unsuccessful.

Funding will be allocated to successful LAs via a Section 31 grants and LAs will sign an MoU setting out data sharing and reporting requirements.

Working with the DfE

Successful LAs will be expected to join a community of practice alongside the pilot providers. The group will share learning and provide support and insight to all LAs as Staying Close becomes available more widely. This will include a start-up meeting in July 2022.

LAs will be asked to submit a quarterly report to DfE, setting out progress against delivery plans and data to support the ongoing evaluation and impact of their offer. A reporting template will be provided.

DfE will be evaluating delivery in 2022-23 to inform ongoing roll out and strengthen the Staying Close model as the number of LAs offering Staying Close grows.

LAs will be expected to engage with this evaluation and to support the work of the contractor. The evaluation will not be an assessment or judgement of an individual LA's capability, and we will be grateful for LA commitment to this important piece of work.

DfE will also be undertaking an impact evaluation of Staying Close in 2023-24 and 2024-5. All LA providers will be asked to participate in this evaluation.

4. Application process

How to apply

The application period will open from 5th April 2022 and will close at 23:59 on 28th April.

Expected key dates and milestones for the application process are set out in the table below.

Milestones	Dates
EOI opens	Tuesday 5 th April
EOI closes	Thursday 28 th April
Assessment of EOI applications	By Friday 20 th May
LAs notified of decisions and funding allocations confirmed	By mid-late June
Grant letters signed by LAs	By early July
LA providers commence delivery	From July

Completing your application

Please complete the accompanying EOI application form available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-close-expression-of-interest>

Further information and prompts have been provided to help you complete it. Some sections will require accompanying text to support your response and have stated word limits. Please ensure that you adhere to these, as your response beyond the word limit will not be

considered. Please include the total number of words for each section at the bottom of each text box.

Sections marked with * are mandatory and must be completed for your application to be accepted.

If you would like to receive additional materials from the pilot projects to support your application, please request this through the email address above.

Materials that will be available are:

- The slides from the learning events held in Autumn 2021. The learning events were an opportunity for those interested in learning more about Staying Close, to hear from the pilot providers about their projects and information on what a good Staying Close model looked like and how to develop on in your locality.
- The Staying Close Handbook – the handbook shares the insights and experiences of each of the pilots, the details of their offer and what they learned while designing and delivering it. It offers a framework for organisations hoping to develop a Staying Close offer for the young people leaving care in their locality.
- The Strategic Triangle to assess your readiness to implement Staying Close - the main purposes of the strategic triangle are to help you both diagnose your environments to spot the opportunities for creating value (either by avoiding a harm or advancing a good), and to design and test in your mind particular actions you can imagine taking that would exploit the opportunity. In this sense, it is an opportunity spotting and planning tool. It can also be converted into a tool for monitoring progress as one goes along and adapting as circumstances change¹.

Submitting your application

Please email a single Word or PDF version of your completed application to Staying.CLOSE@education.gov.uk. DfE must receive all completed applications by email by the deadline 23:59 on 28th April 2022 and will not be able to consider applications that miss this deadline.

Your 'LA name' followed by 'Staying Close EOI' should be included in the email 'subject' field when submitting your application.

¹ [Creating Public Value: The Core Idea of Strategic Management in Government | International Journal of Professional Business Review \(openaccesssojs.com\)](#)

When you have sent the DfE your application form, you will receive an email response letting you know that your application has been received.

5. Assessing the application and next steps

Selection process

Applications received will be evaluated by an assessment panel within DfE and will be assessed using a five-point scale for each relevant question.

Any applications where a question scores 2 or below will be deemed unsuccessful. Any application where costings are above the indicative range will automatically be discounted. Breakdown of costs will be reviewed but not assessed. Evaluators will use the breakdowns and information provided to assess whether the level of funding requested is suitable. The Department reserves the right to clarify and challenge costs where it deems necessary.

The selection process aims to ensure greater regional coverage to increase the number of young people who will be able to access a Staying Close offer.

Applications will be selected based on the total scores above, along with consideration of the total amount of available funding. If there is a concentration of bids from one or more regions, we reserve the right to prioritise bids from other regions in order to enable an equal geographical spread. The total number of LAs to be awarded funding is not determined at the outset.

Application outcome

The named LA contact from each EOI will be notified of the outcome of their application by email. LAs who are not successful in 2022-23 will not be excluded from re-applying when the next EOI round opens.

Drawing of funding

Grant payments to the successful LAs will be made through Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. An MoU will be issued to successful LAs on award. Grants will be paid in July and November 2022, and then at the same point in subsequent financial years. DfE will commit to funding the successful LAs for one year. Subsequent funding for years 2 and 3 will be agreed each year, with no further need to bid, and subject to Departmental approvals.

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