



UNIVERSITY
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Staying Close

*continuing care for young people
leaving residential care in England*

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Staying Close in England - pilot



- First Staying Close pilot funded via Dept for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme
- **8 Staying Close** pilots developed 2017 across England
- Test different approaches to continuing care specifically for young people leaving residential care (children's homes)
- They were **evaluated during 2017–2020** and key findings discussed today
 - 5 evaluated by Zinnia Mitchell Smith & team at Manchester Metropolitan University
 - 3 evaluated by Jo Dixon & team at University of York (2 with Mariela Neagu at Oxford University)
- Methods - qualitative & quasi-experimental, cost benefit + participatory approach with care-experienced peer researchers (*n.b mostly small scale, short term, no counterfactual*)
- Outcome of pilots – **DfE scaled up the programme** and is rolling out across other local authorities
- A new feasibility programme of development and evaluation of Staying Close across 15+ local authorities is underway by Chris Mitchel and team at Centre for What Works for Children's Social Care - initial results due 2023 + new phase 2024 <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-project/staying-close-feasibility-study/>

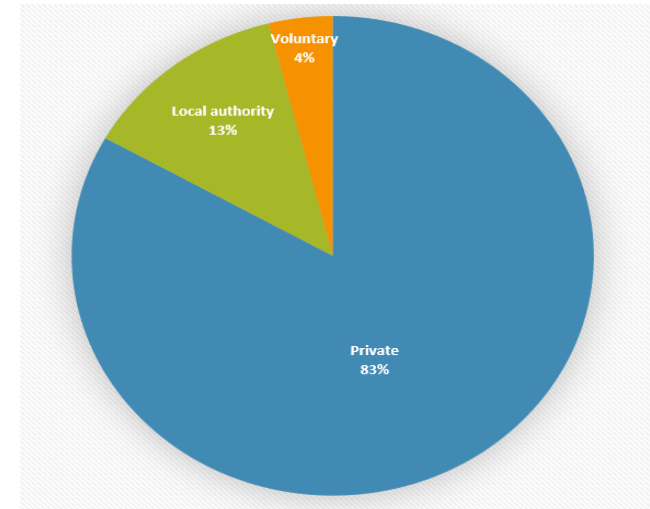
Staying Close - policy context



- The Children Leaving Care Act 2000 established **leaving care services** in all local authorities (LAs) and duty to provide advice and support to young people leaving care up to 21. The 2017 Children and Social Work Act extended that to **age 25**
- In 2014 all English LAs required to provide **Staying Put** arrangements to enable young people to formally remain with their former foster carers up to the age of 21
 - 2022 approx 50% care leavers staying put (at least up to 19, when numbers fall below 30%)
- Opportunity to remain with carers **not** formally extended to young people leaving residential care
- Therefore, substantial variability in provision for young people leaving residential care. **Staying Close** came from recommendation in Narey's 2016 report, which highlighted the inequity for residential care leavers – 'discrimination'?
- In 2017 the government dept responsible for children introduced a pilot programme to test models of continued care for young people in residential care – this was the start of **Staying Close**
- Staying Close is intended to remove the '**cliff edge**' of support that is faced by young people leaving children's residential homes in England, by extending the role of the '**key worker**' **beyond placement**


Staying Close - care context

- 82, 170 Children in Care in 2022 (70 per 10,000)
 - 70% in foster placements (majority unrelated carer)
 - Residential placements account for fewer than 1 in 5
- Approx 12,000 leave care 17-18yrs each year
 - Approx 50,000 17-21yrs in LCS, 92% 'in touch'
 - Most move to semi-indep/indep accommodation
- Children's residential care sector
 - 2, 873 residential children's homes in 2022
 - Unevenly spread – some LAs have no local provision
 - Approx 50% children placed 20+ miles from home LA
- Research shows **greater vulnerability** within the residential group:
 - Complex needs and vulnerable to risk (associated with placement instability, high level emotional/behavioural difficulties, SEN) (Narey, 2016)
 - More likely to be older - enter care later and leave care sooner (16/17)
 - More likely than foster care leavers to experience post care difficulties /struggles (Strijbosch et al, 2015)




Staying Close models – core elements

- Eight models developed 2017
 - Varied to meet needs of local context and local young people
- Core offer of all models:
 - Supported move-on accommodation from children's homes (having options)
 - Ongoing package of practical support
 - Ongoing package of emotional support (wellbeing)
 - Allocated residential worker with whom they already have trusted relationship



Co-production
young people
at the centre
and having a
say



This varied in practice across and within the pilots due to

- young people's choice
- not having a 'long term' worker
- availability of staff (turnover)

Overview of the 8 pilot projects

<p>Bristol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pod accommodation • Independent living skills courses • Key worker support • Co-production activities 	<p>North Tyneside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House share accommodation (one on the site of a children's home) • Outreach support 	<p>Suffolk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation support and tenancy guarantor • House shares • Bespoke support from chosen Staying Close 'hybrid' workers • Getting Ready for Independence training 	<p>North East Lincolnshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-In sessions • Chosen key worker • Bespoke support package • Tenancy and living skills support • Tenancies later created as an accommodation offer. 	<p>St. Christopher's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House share tenancies • Pop-up beds in children's homes • Life skills mentors • Staying Close key worker outreach work • Keeping in touch
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- Five local authority pilots
- Three 3rd sector/private pilots
- Use of move-on house shares
- All included an allocated worker(s)
- All provided independent living support
- Psychologist, therapist, wellbeing
- Multi-agency (e.g. housing, mental health, EET & adult services)

<p>Portsmouth Aspiration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House shares • Young people supported by project workers and educational psychologists • Some young people were unaccompanied asylum seekers 	<p>Break SCSC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House shares • Dedicated housing support worker • Dedicated independent living worker • Access to in-house wellbeing service 	<p>Fairways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House shares • Maintain contact with a carer from previous home • Have access to professionals, attend development and social activities at the Fairways Hub
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Learning - what worked well?

- Staff support - allocated worker(s)
 - built on existing **good practice** of residential staff keeping in touch
 - redesign **staffing model** to enable flexibility e.g. staff rotas, having core & outreach teams (Suffolk), forming a 'new' team (Break)
 - enabling staff to do skilled, direct work – extension to role of residential worker / recruit new specialist workers
 - using/introducing **strengths based and relationship based frameworks, therapeutic/trauma informed** – training and support
 - high **intensity & consistency** of staffing (e.g. Break 10+hrs contact pw, Suffolk visit 3+ times pw, scale down as needed. Portsmouth PA's begin contact while in Children's Home & maintain when leave)
- SC team help with finding **new support networks** to 'stay close' to, incl. rebuilding family ties, phased return to home LA
- Peer Support (house shares, peer mentoring, project activities)
- SC managing tenancies on behalf of provider to better manage young people's housing issues, avoid evictions & manage empty beds etc
- Multi-agency support e.g. links with adult social care and CP
- Evidence of cost effectiveness (cost of proj v cost of risks avoided)

Impact for young people

Early indication of modest, positive impact:

- Increased support networks (formal and informal)
- Increased practical skills and emotional wellbeing, (managing relationships, managing homes)
- Increased EET
- Evidence of reduced housing instability (fewer evictions, homelessness)
- reduced offending

Learning - stepping up to the challenges

- Getting buy-in from young people
 - some unwilling to 'stay close' / want to 'leave' care
 - required culture/mind-set change (a pathway towards independent living rather than leaving care)
- Is staying close possible for all?
 - some unable to 'stay close'
 - lack of support network in residential care
 - return home from out of area - high need young people placed in specialist residential units out of area (stepped approach to reintroduce to home LA & support networks (NE Lincs & Break))
 - ambiguity - what does staying close mean if they want to move back to home area – emotionally staying close e.g. Staying Connected (Break), Being Close (Suffolk)
- Lack of housing options
 - required flexibility and resourcefulness to ensure limited supply still meets needs & wishes
 - social housing stock, housing association, private, recommissioned hostel/CH
 - short stay/pop up options in case of emergency/respice
- Managing flow of referrals and capacity
 - small numbers and dependent on timescales for leaving care and buy-in from young people
 - need for early and contingency planning - 'right house, right time'
 - managing 'empty beds' (+ system pressure to use up) v house share matching policies and integrity of the model

Learning - things to consider

- Access to dedicated support worker(s)
 - staff support and training e.g. children's home staff taking on different role in supporting independent young adults (therapeutic approaches, wellbeing support)
 - team of workers? E.g. out of hours team, specialist housing worker, mentors, participation workers
 - staff availability - turnover, staff shortage in the sector, new teams
 - additional to the statutory role of leaving care worker
- Residential care run by range of providers so systems vary
 - need to establish agreements regarding referral flows, eligibility, finding properties etc.
 - takes time to set up/embed - building on existing relationships helps
- Is it staying close for residential care leavers or good 'continuing care' provision for all?
 - for those who can't stay 'put' as well those who can't or don't want to 'stay close'
 - hybrid - some projects supported broader group of care leavers
 - adaptations to the original model in new roll out
- Culture and expectations around 'leaving care'
 - young people, practitioners and policy
- Creative approaches to
 - physically 'stay close' (pod, trainer flats, pop up beds, return visits, supported house-shares)
 - remotely 'stay close' support to re/build new networks & keep in touch visits, emotional support
 - young person centred - at their pace e.g. stepped/phased approaches - creating a pathway with options to reverse....
 - co-production– engagement, supporting & working with young people to create a model that works

Final comments

“Don't rush everything, don't try and become independent all at once then try to move out in 6 months. Stay as long as you can, learn as much as you can.” (Young Person)

“[Our] value base is very much about learning; [there is] always something that we're changing and trying to make better and improve. [We] want to see it as business as usual, running this project. Actually, business as usual is still being innovative, [but] bringing in new ideas.” (SC senior manager)

“Transition workers generally hold the relationship and the relationship is paramount to young people accessing that support” (SC manager)

“Listen to your transition worker. Every bit of help that you get, that's going to help you a lot and it's going to get you on your way a fair bit. I tell you it will get you on your feet” (Young Person)

“What I find particularly new to my own skill set is the housing aspect; identifying the need for future housing and working with the housing timeframe versus the social care timeframe, which are totally different planets.” (SC local manager)

References

- Access to all eight staying close evaluation reports (and other evaluations of programmes for care leavers) is via <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childrens-social-care-innovation-programme-insights-and-evaluation#care-leavers-and-staying-close>
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