

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel September 2018
SUBJECT:	Review of the Council's Staying Put Policy – Updated Proposal
LEAD OFFICER:	Philip Segurola
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Alisa Flemming
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:	
<p>Croydon Children's services aims to provide stability for Care Leavers and provide them with the best opportunities to realise their potential. Staying put arrangements are a positive approach to ensure the Care leaver has a supportive home environment whilst preparing for independence, when the young person has delayed maturity, vulnerability and/or in order to complete their education or training.</p> <p>A review of the Council's Staying Put policy has been undertaken; this is an action in the Children's Services Improvement Plan in response to the Ofsted inspection recommendations.</p> <p>A report was presented to the July 2018 meeting providing proposals around Staying Put approach and rates for carers. The Panel was not able to approve because of the need to have updated proposals on arrangements for care leavers working and council tax exemptions whilst residing in other Local Authorities.</p>	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	
<p>The Council receives a Staying Put grant from Central Government of £540k in 2018-19 – the 2nd highest in the country behind Kent County Council. Financial cost modelling based on a number of assumptions (outlined in the report of July 2018) has projected that an increase in Staying Put rates is affordable within the grant funding for up to 75 Staying Put arrangements per year; the current number of arrangements is around 45 per year.</p> <p>Based on the financial cost modelling, it is proposed that £534k of the £540k grant will be spent on the projected number of Staying Put arrangements.</p>	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel consider the updated proposals of Staying Put arrangements for care leavers working and council tax exemptions whilst residing in other Local Authorities; and approve the proposals

2. Introduction

2.1 The July 2018 report to the Board provided proposals around the review of Staying Put arrangements and proposed changes to the approach and rates for carers.

2.2. Proposed Staying Put policy changes were discussed and approved as follows:

- Staying Put arrangements is a universal entitlement for Care leavers from ages 18 until they reach 21 years, it will not be extended past this age
- There will be no criteria applied to Staying Put arrangements i.e. Carers will not receive enhanced payments if their care leaver is in education.
- Care Leavers with enhanced needs (e.g. disability) need to be supported in the policy and carers paid an enhanced rate for providing Staying Put arrangement for these young people. Particular focus is on helping care leavers that will not meet the Care Act assessment threshold but still have significant needs that need to be supported
- Carers for young people with disability/vulnerability should not be disadvantaged and will receive a higher rate than the standard tier
- Incentivising work for care leavers needs to be key aim of the policy
- Simplifying the staying put tiers as follows:

Current Tiers	Proposed Tiers
Tier 1 – Standard	Tier 1 – Standard including in education and NRPF
Tier 2 – Care Leaver in Education	Tier 2 – Disability/ Vulnerability
Tier 3 – Disability/Vulnerability	
Tier 4 – NRPF	

2.3. Increases in Staying Put Rates for Tier 1 and Tier 2 were considered and agreed in principle:

Allowance (including Council Tax exemption)	Tier 1 (Standard)	Tier 2 (Disability/ Vulnerability)
	£	£
Weekly	347.23	365.94
Monthly	1,388.92	1,463.75
Annually	16,666.99	17,564.97

2.4 However the Panel requested that further work is undertaken around the Staying Put rates for care leavers working and council tax exemptions whilst the care

Leaver is residing in other Local Authorities.

3. Staying Put approach and rates for Care Leavers working

3.1 The **previous proposal** placed a differential in the number of hours the care leaver worked above and below 16 hours per week as follows:

- If a Care Leaver is working below 16 hours takes place, the Council will still pay the full housing costs as well as contribution to Staying Put arrangement at standard rate
- If a Care Leaver is working over 16 hours (regardless of income) the Council will pay 50% of the housing costs as well as contribution to Staying Put arrangement at standard rate. The young person will be expected to contribute up to 50% of his/her earned income to the carer as their contribution to housing costs. This will be a negotiated agreement between the Carer and Care leaver

This was considered detrimental for young people who are working more than 16 hours per week but who are on minimum wage (£5.90 per hour) or apprenticeships (£3.90 per hour) being expected to contribute up to 50% of wages for rent.

3.2 **Alternative approaches have been considered** including:

- Tapering the reduction of Staying Put allowance to Carer based on young person's earnings. However this has been discounted as the administrative requirements will be significant and will likely require additional administrative resourcing
- Not having a reduction in Staying Put allowances for Care Leavers working for any working hours per week. This was not considered as attractive as there is a need for care leavers to understand the requirement to contribute to living costs whilst working, particularly as they move to semi-independent and independent living

3.3. The **revised proposal is for a nominal flat rate contribution for care leavers in work of £50 per month**, if they are working over 16 hours per week.

It is proposed a £50 reduction in Staying Put allowance per month for the Carer, with the young person expected to contribute his/her earned income (if working over 16 hours) to the carer as their contribution to housing costs; through a negotiated agreement between the Carer and Care leaver

If a Care leaver is on minimum wage of £5.90 per hour their approximate monthly salary will be £895, and if on an apprenticeship of £3.90 per hour their approximate monthly salary will be £590. For a young person on minimum wage this represents a 5.5% contribution of their monthly earnings and for an apprentice this is a 8.5% contribution.

The table below details the proposed Staying Put rates for carers where the young person is working:

Allowance (including Council Tax exemption)	Tier 1 (Standard)	Care leaver working under 16 hours	Care leaver working over 16 hours
	£	£	£
Weekly	347.23	347.23	335.70
Monthly	1,388.92	1,388.92	1,338.92
Annually	16,666.99	16,666.99	16,066.99

3.4. The Panel is requested to consider the revised proposal of a nominal flat rate contribution for care leavers working over 16 hours per week.

4. Council Tax exemptions

4.1 The Panel also raised concern that whilst Care Leavers and Carers entering into staying put arrangements in Croydon are exempted from council tax, this may not be the case for Croydon care leavers who are placed outside of the borough.

This only affects those young people employed, as young people in receipt of benefits will already be exempt from Council Tax in other Local Authorities.

4.2 Currently there are 75 other Local Authorities with a policy of exempting Council Tax for care leavers and carers. **Appendix 1** details these Authorities. Croydon Care leavers and carers residing in these authorities will be exempt from council tax.

4.3 If the care leaver resides in a Local Authority without a policy of exempting Council Tax. It is **proposed that Croydon Council will reimburse Council Tax payments.**

A process for Croydon reimbursing the Carer will be established. It will be the responsibility of the Carer to claim the reimbursement from Croydon. Croydon will need to inform the relevant carers of this requirement and check that the residing Local Authority does not have an exemption policy.

This will require administrative resource to manage the reimbursement process and Social Worker/Key Worker time to support the approach.

4.4 The Panel is requested to consider the proposal of reimbursing council tax for Carers in staying put arrangements residing in other Local Authorities that do not exempt Council tax

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF REVISED STAYING PUT POLICY

If approved, it is proposed the new Staying Put policy and rates are implemented from 1 October 2018.

The **key actions and timeframes** to implement the policy and rate changes are:

Action	Timeframe
▪ Staying Put policy and guidance updated	September 2018
▪ Briefing for Foster Carers, social workers, key workers, IFAs – meetings, info materials, internet update	September 2018
▪ Briefing of Care Leavers – through social workers, key workers, Care leaver App	September 2018
▪ Carers of Croydon Care Leavers residing out of borough in LA's that do not exempt Council tax contacted to claim council tax reimbursement from October 2018	September 2018
▪ Revised payments to Carers set-up	September 2018
▪ Launch date of updated Staying Put policy and arrangements	1 October 2018

5. MONITORING OF THE IMPACT OF STAYING PUT POLICY CHANGES

5.1 Regular monitoring of the impact of the Staying Put policy changes will be undertaken with review of take-up rates and monitoring of costs.

Feedback from carers and young people will be sought on how staying put arrangements are working in practice under the revised policy.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 Though the local authority are not legally required to consult on this matter it is good practice to engage with stakeholders. The review of Staying Put arrangements involved consultation with staff, foster carers and young people.

6.2 The relaunch of the policy as part of a set of activities to develop a wider publicised offer to Croydon's Care Leavers. This will include a re-launch of the policy to ensure it is well understood by carers, providers and staff.

7. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The cost modelling, contained in the July 2018, report has been based on a number of assumptions as outlined in section 3. If assumptions around the proportion of tiers are incorrect and if the number of Staying Put arrangements per year exceeds 75, affordability will be an issue.

Croydon currently receives a Staying Put grant of £540k from Central Government, if this grant is reduced in future years affordability will be an issue.

The proposal to underwrite the costs of council tax for Carers in staying put arrangements residing in other Local Authorities that do not exempt Council tax will have a cost implication. However given that the majority of care leavers reside in Croydon and a proportion are likely to be on benefits, it is not anticipated that this cost will not be able to be funded through the Staying Put grant.

8. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

There are no legal implications resulting from the proposals.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

N/A

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

Equalities impact will need to be considered to ensure that Care leavers are treated in a way that is clearly understood and given that young people's entitlements to public funds can differ depending on their circumstances.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

N/A

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

N/A

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Appendix 1:

Local authorities exempting Care Leavers from Council Tax

Barnsley

Bath & North East Somerset

Birmingham

Bolton

Bracknell Forest

Bradford

Brent

Brighton & Hove

Bristol

Bury

Camden

Cheshire East

Cheshire West and Chester

Cornwall

Coventry

Croydon

Darlington

Derby

Doncaster

Dudley

Durham

Hackney

Halton

Hammersmith & Fulham

Haringey

Hartlepool

Havering

Hounslow

Islington

Kingston upon Hull

Knowsley

Lambeth

Lancashire

Leicester

Lewisham

Liverpool

Manchester

Middlesborough

Milton Keynes

Newham

North East Lincolnshire

North Somerset

Oldham

Redbridge

Richmond Upon Thames

Rochdale

Rotherham

Royal Borough of Greenwich

Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

Salford

Sandwell

Slough

South Gloucestershire

South Tyneside

Southwark

St Helens

Stockport

Stockton-on-Tees

Stoke-on-Trent

Sunderland

Swindon

Tameside

Thurrock

Torbay

Tower Hamlets

Trafford

Walsall

Waltham Forest

Wandsworth

Warrington

Westminster

Wigan

Wirral

Wokingham

Wolverhampton

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/campaign-for-change/a-fairer-start-for-care-leavers>