

# Practice Guide

## Family Help & Children's Social Care Care leavers - Staying Close, Bolton

### Background, purpose and rationale

In Bolton we started our Staying Close service in January 2024 and became fully staff and launched by March 2024. To be eligible to receive Staying Close young people need to have been living in residential care for a period of 13 weeks or more after their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. Residential care can include children's homes, secure homes and custody. Bolton's Staying Close Service offers a relational wraparound intensive service to a small cohort of young people eligible for staying close services. The Team is made up of 1 Staying Close Team Manager, 4 Personal Advisers, 1 Education, Employment and Training Worker, 1 Emotional Health Practitioner, and 1 Housing Officer

### What we did to improve young people's outcomes and experiences

We are currently supporting a small cohort of 32 young people with each Personal Adviser working with just 8 young people to provide the time for the intensive support that our young people need and measure the effectiveness of this level of support. Visits are generally weekly to fortnightly but are based on individual needs and can increase or decrease with some young people requiring daily visits in times of crisis or specific needs.

We have developed a Staying Close plan and practice tool kit, supported by team development days and peer supervision. Young People have been involved in recruitment and worked on the branding of our service. The team has formed good links with partners including the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, Become, and also Bolton at Home - helping secure five ring-fenced lets for Staying Close young people, with two young people moving in so far. Independent Reviewing Officers have recognised the impact of supporting pathway planning.

A specialist Activities Policy provides young people with around £30 a month to do activities with their workers to build relationships and confidence. Activities completed include arcades, pool, gym, bowling, walks, lunches, and puppy play. Workers are creative in enhancing experiences with one PA taking a young person hiking in Bakewell, with the young person doing all the preparation for this. Many of our young people find it difficult to engage in group work activities, however we have delivered group activities at Christmas and for our 1<sup>st</sup> birthday which have been successful in supporting young people to get to know each other. We are planning a day trip to Blackpool, a walking group, and life skills group to continue to help build young people's confidence.

Recognising our young people may not have anyone to celebrate their birthday with we offer a celebration, gifts, a birthday cake and card from all the team as part of our Celebrations Policy. We also have parties, gifts, and hampers for Christmas and other religious celebrations. All our young people received an easter egg and we have celebrations for Care Leavers' Week.

As part of our second year in the trial we have introduced a Trusted Person's scheme in collaboration with Bolton Lads and Girls Club (BLGC). Whilst BLGC already run the independent visitor service, Trusted Persons differs in that young people choose a professional they have a pre-existing relationship with as their Trusted Person. This could be a previous residential staff member, social worker, IRO, nurse, or teacher. For the first year we will support 20 young people with trusted person matches to offer ad hoc support with transition to independence as part of their support network.

### What was the impact?

Since becoming fully operational at the end of March 2024 we have delivered 586 interventions in to obtain and sustain housing from our Staying Close Housing Officer. This includes supporting nine young people to move on from residential or custody to semi-independent provision; three young people to return to family; and supporting and sustaining five 18-year-olds in their own tenancies.

Personal Advisers have completed 779 direct work sessions including building life skills in cooking, cleaning, DIY, and budgeting; building self-confidence to access activities and the community; and working on family relationships to build support networks. Our Education, Employment and Training (EET) Worker has completed 870 interventions directly with young people or liaising with EET services. This has seen EET rates rise from 37% in March 2024 to 61% in March 2025

Our Emotional Health Practitioner has supported young people with 438 sessions and with accessing adult mental health services, neurodiversity pathways and services in the community. We are also supporting four young parents and two expectant parents. Our support to young people that are parents has prevented one child being subject to a child protection plan and two coming in to care. We are keeping Staying Close on the agenda within corporate parenting board and care leavers board to ensure that we take a whole council approach to supporting this vulnerable group.

### Resources

[Staying Close - Five minute facts](#)

[Journey Tracker](#)

[Staying Close Presentation](#)

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### Find out more

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