



Briefing: The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2025

Report stage – January 2026

Briefing on Report Stage amendments, House of Lords

Summary

This briefing covers our support for three important amendments on Staying Put – the arrangement that allows young people to stay with their foster families from 18 - 21.

Amendment 37 (tabled by Lord Watson of Invergowrie) proposes a review of current Staying Put funding to determine whether it is adequate. **Amendment 38** (also tabled by Lord Watson) proposes that foster carers receive the same level of allowances for Staying Put arrangements as when caring for 16–17 year-olds (amendment 38). **Amendment 59** (tabled by Baroness Tyler of Enfield) seeks to extend Staying Put arrangements to the age of 25, in line with the Bill's existing clause that extends Staying Close to 25.

1. Extend funding for current Staying Put provisions

Why we need Staying Put

Since the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014, young people in foster care have had the right to stay with their foster family from the age of 18 until 21 through Staying Put arrangements, if it is what the young person and their foster carers want. Staying Put provides young people leaving care with a stable environment with continued support from a trusted adult whom they've built a relationship with, helping them smoothly transition into adulthood.

Recent Ofsted data has found that in 2024/25, 62% of 18 year old care leavers continued living with their former foster carers, but this figure drops to only 33% for those aged 19-20.¹ This illustrates that Staying Put is potentially not being provided for as many young people as it could.

A recent Centre for Homelessness Impact evaluation of Staying Put found that the policy has led to an estimated 14% reduction in the likelihood of young care leavers experiencing homelessness.² It also found that young people in Staying Put arrangements were more than twice as likely to be in full time education at 19 and a slightly higher percentage were in full time training and employment. The evaluation describes Staying Put as a low cost, readily available intervention that can make a significant dent in the government's ending homelessness agenda.

Inadequate Staying Put funding

¹ Department for Education (2025) [Children looked after in England including adoptions](#)

² Centre for Homelessness Impact (2024) [Staying Put: Leaving Care and the Risk of Homelessness](#)

[Our State of the Nations' 2024 survey](#) (SoTN 2024) of 3,000 foster carers also found that three quarters of foster carers are financially worse off in a post 18 foster care arrangement.³ This means many foster carers who want to offer it young people in their care, are unable to.

Foster carers receive an allowance to cover the cost of caring for children set by the National Minimum Allowance and a fee to cover their skills and expertise. However there is no National Minimum Allowance for post-18/Staying Put arrangements and our survey showed the average foster care allowance decreases from £346.58 to £256.74, and the average fee decreases from £333.05 to £222.65 when children turn 18.³ These amounts vary widely across all local authorities creating a postcode lottery of financial support.

“Since moving LAs, it has become apparent to me that different LAs offer different support, financially and otherwise, but in effect, this makes it a postcode lottery for young people, and with agency carers, who could potentially have children from 2 different LAs, it could be that they are able to offer it to one and not the other.” – Foster carer, Foster Care Association (FCA) Forum

Once a young person turns 18, they are often expected to contribute towards their foster carers' allowance through their wages or benefits in order to make up the short fall. However, we are concerned this requirement sets young people up to fail by forcing them to claim benefits when they may not necessarily do so otherwise. In our SoTN survey, 69% of the foster carers in Staying Put arrangements said that the source of the young person's contribution was from their benefits.³ Young people are required to still be in full or part time education until they turn 18 (which may be before the end of the school year) which impacts on their ability to work and contribute financially.

“The cost of living is at its peak and to be able to secure decent accommodation in a safe area is way out of most young people's reach, let alone at the age of 21, which is why so many young people are still living with their parents at that age. Care leavers, in a majority of cases, do not have that choice unless their foster parents are prepared to continue to provide them with a home with no financial support from the state.” – Foster carer, SoTN 2024 survey

Support for transitioning to adulthood

Our SoTN 2024 survey found that the needs of children in foster care are becoming more complex and challenging, particularly mental health and special educational needs. This is partly because large proportions of children who need support are not getting it. 45% of foster carers said at least one child they foster is either receiving mental health or wellbeing support or is on a waiting list for support. Half (53%) of foster carers said at least one of the children they foster receives additional support with their learning.³ Therefore, it is crucial young people receive the right support when transitioning to adulthood and independence which is often best in a familiar family setting with an adult they trust.

“Most of our young people are not emotionally or psychologically prepared for independence and they should have a safe, family home to stay in or to fall back on just as their non-care experienced peers have.” - Foster Carer, FCA forum

“Children who are forced to leave stable places with their foster carers before they're able to cope could cause an exponential increase in cost to the housing department, justice department, mental health service and prison service.” Foster Carer, FCA forum

³ The Fostering Network (2025) [State of the Nations' Foster Care 2024](#)

We urge Peers to support our amendment to introduce a National Minimum Allowance for foster carers caring for young people who are over 18 in Staying Put arrangements at the same allowance rate as currently exists for 16 – 17 year olds.

This will ensure no young person has to claim benefits or pay their foster carers to remain living with them past the age of 18, prevent the postcode lottery of support foster carers currently face and allow more young people to stay with their foster families until the age of 21.

We also urge peers to support our amendment for the Government to conduct a full and comprehensive review into the level of funding allocated to local authorities for Staying Put arrangements to determine if it is sufficient to allow all eligible young people to benefit and meets its aims as set out in Staying Put Guidance. A review of funding for Staying Put is well overdue since it was introduced in 2014.

Amendment 38 (Lord Watson of Invergowrie)

After Clause 7

insert the following new Clause—

“Payment of a National Minimum Allowance for young people in staying put arrangements

In section 23CZA of the Children Act 1989, for subsection (4) substitute—

“(4) Support provided to the former foster parent under subsection (3)(b) must include financial support which is at least equivalent to the National Minimum Allowance for children in foster care aged 16 or 17 as set out in Standard 28 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (payment to carers).”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would introduce a National Minimum Allowance for foster carers offering “staying put” arrangements at the same amount paid for 16-17 year-olds.

Amendment 37 (Lord Watson of Invergowrie)

After Clause 7

insert the following new Clause—

“Review of staying put funding

(1) The Secretary of State must undertake a review of the level of funding provided for staying put arrangements (within the meaning of section 23CZA of the Children Act 1989) to local authorities and independent fostering agencies to determine its adequacy to meet its aims.

(2) The review must produce recommendations regarding any steps necessary to increase the funds available per young person.

(3) The review must be laid before both Houses of Parliament.”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would ensure the Secretary of State undertakes a review into the level of funding allocated to local authorities for “staying put” arrangements to determine if it is sufficient to allow all eligible young people to benefit and meets its aims as set out in Staying Put Guidance.

2. Staying Put extension to mirror Staying Close

We believe that the Bill is at risk of creating a two-tier system for residential and foster care as Clause 7 only extends Staying Close support. This includes help to find residential care or other forms of accommodation to the age of 25 for any former relevant child (which includes children in foster care) but does not extend Staying Put so this will not be an option open to young people.

“This transition has been traumatic and felt like we were being abandoned and also the continuing work we will do with the child unrecognised purely because they have reached a chronological milestone rather than adapting to the child’s needs.” – Care-experienced young person, SoTN 2024 survey

Benefits of extending Staying Put

An extension of Staying Put to age 23 was proposed by Josh MacAlister (now Children’s Minister) in the Independent Care Review and was committed to in the previous Government’s ‘Stable Homes Built on Love’ strategy so we were disappointed not to see this included in the Bill. On average, a young person doesn’t leave home until the age of 24, and the current cliff edge that care leavers face puts them at a severe disadvantage when navigating adult life, leading to poor outcomes across many areas.⁴

It is well acknowledged and found by the Independent Care Review that young people experience better outcomes when they remain in family environments such as foster care, in comparison to residential care. Foster carers are often best placed to prepare the young people in their care for independence, as they are the most trusted adult known to them.

The Independent Care Review found that extending Staying Put and Staying Close up to age 23 and scaling up supported lodgings would have an overall cost benefit to local authorities of £84 million over five years.⁵ This is largely from reduced homelessness episodes and reduced use of other types of accommodation. Foster care is also much more cost effective than residential care.⁶

Currently only 9% of young people Stay Put over 19 – 21 so the numbers staying from 21 to 25 are likely to be low and will not incur a huge cost for the Government.⁷

Staying Put extension amendments

We worked with Ellie Chowns MP (Green) to table an amendment on this issue which was supported by Lib Dem Children’s Spokesperson Munira Wilson MP in the House of

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2024) [Milestones: journeying through modern life](#)

⁵ Alma Economics (2022) [Costing and outline CBA of Independent Review of Children’s Social Care recommendations: Modelling assumptions](#)

⁶ In 2020, the average weekly cost of residential care placement was £3,830 – approximately £199,160 per year (The independent review of children’s social care (2022) [Recommendation Annexes: Additional detail on review recommendations](#)). In contrast, an average foster care placement has been estimated to cost £71,567 per year, comprising of £13,275 of staffing costs and £58,293 of placement costs (Competition & Markets authority (2022) [Children’s Social Care Market Study Final Report](#); Roger et al, (2020) [Family Safeguarding](#))

⁷ Department for Education (2025 live tables) [17-21 year old care leaver accommodation - NATIONAL](#) from ‘Children looked after in England including adoptions

Commons. The amendment was discussed at Committee Stage in the House of Commons on 23rd January 2025, but the Government rejected the amendment stating that they recognise the case that was made, but need to prioritise young people in residential care, who often have the most complex needs.

We worked with Lord Watson of Invergowrie to re-table the amendment at Committee Stage in the House of Lords. The amendment gained cross party support as well as support from multiple children's charities however it was again rejected due to the need to prioritise young people in residential care. However, it is well evidenced that young people in foster care also have complex needs, and many young people are only placed in residential care because there are not enough foster placements available for them.⁸

We are delighted that Baroness Tyler of Enfield is now tabling an amendment, supported by Lord Watson, to extend Staying Put provision to age 25 at Report Stage in the House of Lords.

The amendments would provide enhanced support for those leaving care from children's homes or other forms of residential care. We believe that young people should have the same opportunities to stay in the environment they feel most comfortable in as those living in residential care. The Bill needs to enable this by extending the offer of Staying Put to young people up to 25 so they can stay with their former foster care if they wish.

"The increase in the age for Staying Put would be of amazing benefit to care leavers. At the age of 21, many who have had the opportunity to go to university are just obtaining their qualification and have to face negotiating the next huge step, the job market, and to find that they are possibly homeless due to leaving their placement is a catastrophic step backwards."
– Foster carer, SoTN 2024 survey

We urge Peers to support this amendment to ensure parity with Staying Put and Staying Close, given the Government's widespread acknowledgement that foster care and a family home has the best long-term outcomes for young people transitioning into adulthood.

Amendment 59 (Baroness Tyler of Enfield, supported by Lord Watson of Invergowrie)

After Clause 11

insert the following new Clause—

"Extending "staying put arrangements" to the age of 25

In section 23CZA(6) of the Children Act 1989 (arrangements for certain former relevant children to continue to live with former foster parents), for "21" substitute "25".

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would extend the staying put arrangements to the age of 25.

⁸ One third of children in residential care had foster care on their care plan when they came into care (Ofsted (2022) [Why do children go into children's homes?](#))

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