



**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

# **STAYING CLOSE 'STARTER' FLAT**

## **Operating Procedures**

## **OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR STAYING CLOSE STARTER (TRAINER) FLAT (FOR YP AGED 16-21 YEARS)**

### **1. VISION**

*'To provide a taste of independent living for young people aged 16-21 years within a supported environment and as part of their pathway planning before making that further step into their own tenancy and independent living. The 'Starter' flat will be a resource for young people, their carers and staff to access to practice independence and practical life skills to prepare young people for transition to adulthood underpinned by the Get ready for Adult Life toolkit.'*

### **2. BACKGROUND**

Traditionally LAC aged 16/17yrs 'move on' from their placements into semi-independent accommodation and at 18 years into their own tenancy. Research and local information shows that too few young people are prepared for the experience of living alone and taking the responsibilities that come with managing a tenancy i.e. managing finances and paying bills, menu planning/meal preparations, reporting and organising repairs, managing relationships with peers and living alone/loneliness. Local information tells us some young people struggle living independently and managing finances, too quickly build up arrears and face warnings for eviction.

The national average age of young people leaving families is 28 years, a difference of 10 years compared with our vulnerable young people. We are committed to widening our accommodation sufficiency so care leavers remain in supported accommodation post 18 yrs up to 20/21 yrs before moving into their own tenancy so they maximise support. Delaying young people moving into their own tenancy is also supported by the recent government announcement for a LAC 'staying put' with Foster Carers up to the age of 21 years.

The strategy for care leavers to be able to remain in supported accommodation /placements up to age 20/21 yrs reinforces the need for a 'starter' flat for 16-21 yrs young people so they can 'test out' independent living in a support environment before making that further step into their own tenancy and independent living.

### **3. THE PROVISION**

The 'starter' flat is fully furnished. The flat is available for LAC/ Care Leavers aged 16-21 years following social work assessment and pathway planning. LAC/ care leavers are able to get a 'taste of living alone' as part of pathway planning to prepare them for transition to independent living. Requests can be made for stays of between 1 day and 6 months.

Whilst at the 'starter' flat the young person will be supported by their parent/carer or RSW key worker. The support will be arranged around the young person's needs and the social worker/ personal advisor will meet with young person regularly to offer advice/guidance to planning the stay i.e. budgeting, menu planning, local facilities and amenities, emergency contacts.

Should the young person not be receiving benefits (18+) maintenance payment (16/17) then a financial pathway plan would be required for the duration of the stay.

The 'starter' flat is separate to the main house provision. However, the staff will monitor the CCTV around the property for health and safety purposes to ensure no unauthorised visitors/ inappropriate behaviour. Staff will notify emergency services police/OOH should an urgent response be required/, e.g. gangs of young people congregating around the property.

Should any urgent response be required, arrangements may need to be made for alternative provision.

### **4. THE REFERRAL AND SUPPORT PROCESS**

#### **4.1 Administration of Request for stay**

The administration of this 'starter flat' are arranged by admin via 16+ Accommodation Panel. Requests are made in the usual way by completing the referral form and requesting an agenda item at Accommodation Panel to consider approval to the request. Accommodation Panel will consider any potential issues or risks with the social worker/personal adviser. Should the request be approved dates will be offered for the stay around the needs of the young person and flat availability.

Requests for any support from other support services including the targeted preventative alliance for young people should be considered.

#### **4.2 Planning the stay**

The social worker/personal adviser will meet at least a week in advance with the young person and key staff/support to plan the stay e.g. finances, support with menu planning, support with budgeting and so on and will arrange visits throughout the young person's stay to support/monitor progress.

#### 4.3 On Admission

On or before the day of admission a meeting will be held with the young person, carer and Social worker/ personal adviser to complete the 'stay agreement' which will outline the expectations (Do's and Don'ts) and show the young person around the flat and complete the 'admission stay checklist'. A welcome/information pack will be provided outlining local amenities and facilities/bus routes etc.

#### 4.4 Support to young person throughout the stay

For LAC aged 16-18 years the young person should be supported by the carer/key worker (staff) who need to be available for the young person (day/night).

For care leaver over 18 yrs – if they do not have a carer/keyworker then these young people should be supported by personal adviser (Personal Advisers may need a referral to Targeted Preventative Alliance dependent on intensity of support required). This should be on the referral to Accommodation Panel when requesting approval for stay.

#### 4.5 Any disruption/urgent response required

At any point during the stay should there be any breach of the 'stay agreement' or requirement for emergencies services to be contacted an urgent planning meeting should be arranged with 24 hours as this may lead to a decision for the stay to be terminated.

#### 4.6 End of placement

Towards the end of the stay the Social worker/ personal adviser should arrange a pathway plan review meeting to review the stay and progress and feedback from the young person and supporters to inform future pathway planning and complete the 'stay checklist' and check inventory /young person feedback form.

### 5. **FINANCE/ COSTS**

The 'starter' flat will not be any additional cost to the LA for the premises as the flat is already available stock and being unused. It would provide more efficient and purposeful use of LA resources to the benefit of our young people, carers and staff.

The young person will require weekly finance to stay at the flat:

For LAC 16/17 yrs (Eligible/Relevant care leavers)

- For Eligible care leavers 16/17 yrs living in foster care £57.90 should be provided by the foster carer from any Boarding Out payments received.

- For Eligible care leavers 16/17 yrs living in children's home – this will be negotiated with the children's home provider to provide £57.90 to the young person and placements cost negotiated for the duration of stay.
- For Eligible/ Relevant care leavers 16/17 yrs who are living in semi-independent unit/or any other placements i.e. staying with parents/friends, the LA will fund £57.90 as part of financial pathway plan for the duration of stay.

#### For 18-21 yrs

- For care leavers aged 18 yrs plus they should be in receipt of weekly income i.e. benefits/training income/wages.

If there are any circumstances where a young person could be financially disadvantaged by a stay in the 'starter' flat then a financial pathway plan should be completed to request any shortfall/difference so young people are not disadvantaged and the details provided to the Service Manager.

## CHECKLIST/FORMS FOR SET UP OF STARTER FLAT

1. By Manager/  
Senior      Admission/End
  - Contract/stay agreement (Do's and Don'ts)
  - Welcome Pack for 'starter' flat and information (local amenities and facilities, GP, bus routes, shops etc).
  - Stay/Inventory checklist
  - Emergency contacts – Carer, GP, OOH, Police
  - Cheap menus/recipes/cook books
  - Tips for money saving/shopping
  - Local formation/bus timetables.
  - YP feedback form
  
2. By SW/PA's or  
carer/keyworker      Young Person's Support Pack during their stay
  - Pathway Plan
  - Diary sheet
  - Menu planning sheets
  - Shopping lists
  - Budgeting sheets

Guidance and resources for staff/ carers
  
3. Manager/  
SW/PA
  - Operational Procedures
  - Referral Form
  - Get Ready for Adult Life toolkit