



Staying Close, Staying Connected

Innovative support for young care leavers



Cambridgeshire
County Council



Norfolk County Council



Registered Charity No. 286650

Staying Close, Staying Connected

In 2016, Sir Martin Narey undertook a review of children's homes provision and praised the quality of care provided in many homes but said more could be done to help the residential care sector support young people who are moving on from life in a children's home when they turn 18.

The government responded to Narey's recommendations and pledged to introduce a specific funding stream as part of the £200m innovation programme to test innovative ideas for using residential care in a more dynamic and creative way. For those leaving care, this scheme is called Staying Close.

What is Staying Close, Staying Connected?

Staying Close, Staying Connected is a partnership between Break, Norfolk County Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. The aim is to change the way young care leavers are supported by putting a framework around young people as they leave residential care that will dramatically transform their outcomes. The project will focus on young people from Cambridgeshire and Norfolk but it is hoped that it will become nationally recognised as best practice in residential care leaver support.

Break is an East Anglian charity which has a proven track record in supporting young people leaving their children's home placement through the **Moving On Team**. This team was set up by Break seven years ago to provide lifelong support to every young person who had lived in one of the charity's children's homes.

Two years ago this scheme was developed to include a **Moving On House**, where young people could live, and be supported to live independently. This service has proved incredibly successful, with young people moving on to their own accommodation, and it is on this service that the Staying Close, Staying Connected model is based.



All too often young people leave residential care and experience a cliff edge: on one side a safe and supportive home and on the other minimal funding to help navigate the complexities of living independently. Funding for a children's home placement ends on a young person's 18th birthday, and while the local authority has a continuing relationship and responsibility to the young person, support and resources are significantly reduced. This, along with a range of other life experiences, can lead to high levels of mental health difficulties, unemployment, homelessness and criminal activity within this group of young people.

Challenges facing care leavers

Robert Goodwill, the Minister of State for Children and Families, has pledged that the Staying Close scheme will mean "care leavers will no longer have to face life's milestones alone - be it applying for university, getting a job or finding their first home". In essence it should mirror how a parent might support a young person leaving home, being agile and flexible around what they need and when.

Young people tell us that leaving care is a pivotal moment in their lives. Care leavers tell us they:

- Do not feel safe
- Are not ready to live independently
- Feel abandoned when they leave residential care
- Felt they went from people always being around them to being on their own, suffering from isolation and loneliness
- Want support to be available when they need it
- They need help enhancing practical skills such as budgeting, bill paying, cooking, washing clothes
- They need help to build their confidence

"Care leavers will
no longer have to face
life's milestones alone"

Minister of State for Children and Families



A partnership approach

At its heart, Staying Close, Staying Connected provides lifelong support and a 'forever family' for young care leavers and a connection to the children's home that is important to them.

Our vision is that aspirations for this group will rise and prepare young people to 'be somebody'. We will do this through a variety of means with an accommodation offer at the core.

Our vision

Individual support packages will be based on a 'pick and mix' menu of:

- **A Staying Close, Staying Connected** plan that will complement rather than duplicate or replace the Pathway Plan, to maintain and protect positive relationships with the children's home and build new relationships with the moving on staff team.
- **Transition Moving On Houses** for young people to live in safely while they are supported to develop the necessary life skills to live independently. Young people will be able to access these at any point up to the age of 25, where and when they need it.
- **Train the Trainer** packages to further enhance residential care teams' skills in supporting care leavers to gain independence and more effective independent living skills before they leave.
- **Intensive tenancy support** for care leavers to cultivate independent living skills. A 'learn it by living it' agenda will support them with all aspects of their life when they need it.
- **Emotional wellbeing service** to develop a young person's emotional resilience and link them in with community-based services as and when it is needed.
- **A peer support network** to enable young people to support and motivate each other.
- **Transition support** to nurture employability skills and to access educational and vocational skills development and apprenticeships.
- **Mentor support** for each young person when they need it to provide an additional person to talk to and share their journey, the highs and the lows.
- **Training packages** developed by young people for professionals to help raise awareness of the particular needs and difficulties facing young people when they leave residential care.

"I will try my best to become someone who can help and benefit others and society"

"There has always been someone with time to sit down and talk through my problems"

Measuring success

Staying Close, Staying Connected is being evaluated by the universities of Oxford and York.

We will know this project has been a success if we have evidenced that young people:

- have increased employment and education opportunities
- have improved independence skills
- feel safe
- feel supported and have a sense of 'extended family'
- feel an increased sense of control over their own lives
- have increased financial awareness and capacity for managing finances
- can identify a range of people who care about them
- can manage their own tenancy
- have a greater confidence in their own ability

Above all, Staying Close, Staying Connected will enable young care leavers to feel they have a supportive extended family for as long as they need it.

Your role

The project team asks that you get involved in whatever way feels right to you. This may be promoting the project to young people and other professionals; sponsoring a young person; offering solutions in housing, employment, training; or being a mentor.

You can contact the team on 01603 670 100 or email scsc@break-charity.org



 Together
we can make
amazing
things happen! 