

## Safer Caring: A New Approach supplementary resources (2017)

### Chapter 6: It's not just about you

#### Placement planning, preparation and support for permanence

Safer Caring: A New Approach highlights that foster carers cannot care safely without good practice on the part of the social work and fostering services. It explores the wider world of safer caring, acknowledging the key role that others in child care services play in creating the right environment in which foster carers are able to keep looked after children and their own families safe. It focuses on four key areas: placement planning; background information; preparing children and young people for placement; and positive learning environments.

In England in 2015, the fostering and care planning [regulations](#) and [statutory guidance](#) were amended (now incorporated into the updated [care planning guidance](#), June 2015). The regulations revised the definition of permanence in England and provided, for the first time, a definition of a long-term foster placement, as being when all of the following conditions are met:

- Foster care is the child's plan for permanence, as recorded in their care plan.
- The foster carer has agreed to be the child's foster carer until they cease to be looked after.
- The child's responsible authority has confirmed the arrangement to the foster carer, the child and their birth parents.

The amended guidance set out new expectations regarding the assessment and support of long-term placements, and a requirement for there to be an agreed process for matching that considers the carer's ability to meet the child's needs in the long term. Although there is no reference to Staying Put in the regulations and guidance, it would be appropriate, when considering the suitability of the proposed placement to meet the child's long-term needs, to discuss whether or not a staying put arrangement might be possible and appropriate when the child becomes 18.

For foster carers who agree to provide a long-term placement and are matched with a child, they continue to rely on the good practice of others in the child care services to support the placement. However, new guidance enables support such as social work visits and reviews of the child's care plan to be managed more flexibly where this is appropriate: this has the potential to support the carer's key role in relation to decision-making for and support of children in long-term placements.