Department for Education

Staying Close

Delivery plan form

August 2026

Section 1 – How your plan will be reviewed

There are four questions that we would like further information about. The questions focus on:

1) Your contact details
2) Your existing offer and outcomes for care leavers (you might prefer to attach this separately)
3) Your proposed Staying Close model, and how it will improve outcomes for the young people in your area. A clear and realistic delivery plan.
4) Costings and numbers of young people supported.

Delivery plans will be reviewed to ensure that plans are realistic and feasible for delivery. We will either agree your plan or give suggestions for improvements. As long as we agree plans that are within the scope of Staying Close, this will not impact the funding allocation we offer you – the feedback process is designed to support you to implement the programme, and agree ambitious but deliverable targets.

Section 2 – Contact details

Part A – Contact details

Name of Local Authority (LA)	Oldham Council
Name of Officer	Nick Whitbread
Role of Officer	Assistant Director – Corporate Parenting
Officer contact email	nick.whitbread@oldham.gov.uk
Region (East Midlands, East of England, London, North East, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humber).	North West

Section 3 – Your local authority profile – context

Oldham		
Existing housing provision		
Number of care leavers in community-building house projects	**Number of care leavers in supported lodgings**	**Number of care leavers in intensive family-based support**
0	0	0
Existing mental health provision		
Bee Connected app, Early Break provision and a Transitions Team with Adult Social Care.		
Statistics		
Number of care leavers aged 17-18 (2025)	**Number of care leavers aged 19-21 (2025)**	**Number of care leavers aged 22-24 (2025)**
74	207	157
Total number of care leavers aged 17-24 (2025)	**Spending on care leaver support (FY 2024-25)**	**Average spend per care leaver (approximately)**
438	£9,752,295	£20,488
Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 17-18 (2025)	**Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation 19 - 21 (2025)**	**Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation 22-24 (2025)**
-	94%	-
Number of care leavers aged 18 - 20 owed prevention or relief of homlessness (Oct to Dec 2025)	**Number of care leavers aged 21-24 owed prevention or relief of homlessness (Oct to Dec 2025)**	
4	1	
Additional information		
N/A		

Section 4 – Your Staying Close model

Q1) Please set out your proposed Staying Close model. This should include:

- Details of your Staying Close offer; how it relates to any existing provision; how it will meet the minimum offer set out in the new Staying Close programme outline and how you plan to enhance your offer through innovative or bespoke elements.
- How your offer will meet the needs of your young people, (with reference to any specific needs or characteristics of your young people or contextual detail of the local area which have relevance to the model and which cohorts you intend to target).
- How your offer will build capacity through additional provision, so that more care leavers can access high-quality accommodation with the right support.

Total word count: (Max 750 words)
Oldham Council proposes to deliver Staying Close through a relationship-based support model that combines dedicated Staying Close support, Supported Lodgings accommodation and enhanced mental wellbeing provision. The model has been designed to reflect the evidence underpinning successful Staying Close programmes, recognising that positive outcomes are achieved through sustained trusted relationships, practical support, emotional wellbeing assistance and stable accommodation pathways. The offer aligns with the national Staying Close programme objective of helping care leavers secure and sustain suitable accommodation whilst strengthening support networks and increasing independence. The model will target care leavers aged 18-25 whose pathway planning identifies a need for additional support to transition successfully into adulthood. Priority will be given to young people who are not eligible for Staying Put arrangements, those at risk of housing instability and those who would benefit from a gradual move towards independent living rather than progressing directly into tenancies or commissioned accommodation. Every young person accessing Staying Close will receive practical, emotional and relational support alongside the accommodation offer. Support will focus on helping young people develop independent living skills, maintain accommodation, strengthen family and community connections, access education, employment and training opportunities and navigate services. The offer will be flexible and responsive, enabling young people to receive additional support during periods of challenge or instability and reducing the risk of homelessness, isolation and placement breakdown. Supported Lodgings forms the accommodation element of the Staying Close model and provides young people with a room in a carefully assessed and trained host household where they can experience supportive family and community environments whilst continuing to develop independence skills.

Young people will be actively involved in decisions about their accommodation and support arrangements. The model will promote co-production, ensuring support plans are developed with young people and reflect their aspirations, strengths and individual circumstances. Where appropriate, Staying Close support will help young people maintain positive relationships with former carers, family members, trusted adults and wider support networks, recognising the importance of belonging and connection in successful transitions from care.

Alongside accommodation and Staying Close support, Oldham will introduce a dedicated Mental Wellbeing Care Navigator funded through the programme. The practitioner will provide early intervention, low-intensity mental health support, advice, guidance and service navigation, working closely with Personal Advisers, Staying Close workers, hosts and partner agencies.

The programme will contribute to improved outcomes across accommodation stability, emotional wellbeing, participation in education, employment and training, social inclusion and independence. Success will be measured through accommodation sustainment, reduced homelessness and housing instability, wellbeing outcomes, EET participation and feedback from young people. Outcomes will be monitored through quarterly performance reporting and regular reviews of accommodation stability, support engagement and young people's experiences. This evidence will be used to demonstrate the impact of the model, inform service development and build the case for continued investment.

Sustainability will be achieved through embedding Staying Close within Oldham's mainstream Leaving Care Service. The Staying Close Coordinator will work alongside Personal Advisers and existing corporate parenting services, ensuring that assessment for Staying Close support becomes part of routine pathway planning and transition arrangements. Learning from the programme will inform the development of family-based accommodation pathways across the wider Family First agenda, whilst outcome data, cost-benefit analysis and evidence of reduced reliance on higher-cost accommodation and homelessness services will support future investment decisions. By developing a sustainable network of local Supported Lodgings hosts and integrating Staying Close into core practice, Oldham will ensure that the benefits of the programme continue beyond the initial funding period.

<u>Recruitment & Retention Strategy</u>

Targeted Marketing & Community Outreach: Use local media, digital campaigns, and community events to reach people from all walks of life—including single adults, couples, and retirees—who have a spare bedroom.

Clear Messaging on the Role: Emphasize that hosts provide a stepping-stone family environment (teaching cooking, budgeting, and emotional resilience) rather than round-the-clock professional care.

Transparent Financial & Practical Offer: Clearly advertise weekly allowances or rent contributions, alongside access to dedicated support workers and comprehensive safeguarding training.

Streamlined Assessment & Vetting: Implement a welcoming yet robust application process—including initial inquiries, home visits, household interviews, and panel approval—while ensuring compliance with regulatory standards.

Retention and Succession Planning: Focus on peer support, ongoing training, and appreciation events to retain experienced hosts and build a sustainable workforce

It is confirmed that this proposal is to fund implementation of additional support that Oldham does not currently have in place. All similar and related support that Oldham already has in place will continue alongside the Staying Close programme.

Q4) Please set out a clear and realistic delivery plan to demonstrate how you will establish and deliver Staying Close in your locality (you may attach relevant plans if available). This should include:

- High level milestones for November 26 - March 28.
- A detailed resource plan (capacity, expertise, roles and responsibilities).
- Risks, mitigations and contingencies.

Total word count: (Max 500 words)

High-Level Milestones

November 2026 to March 2027

- Finalise Staying Close implementation arrangements.
- Appoint co-ordinator within Leaving Care Service.
- Develop Supported Lodgings recruitment and marketing campaign.
- Design policies, procedures and quality assurance arrangements.
- Begin recruitment, assessment and training of new hosts.
- Confirm partnership arrangements for mental health provision.
- Identify first cohort of care leavers for Staying Close support and match with hosts.
- Recruit Mental Health Care Navigator.

April 2027 to September 2027

- Launch expanded Supported Lodgings offer.

- Approve and onboard additional hosts.
- Match Staying Close participants with placements.
- Establish performance monitoring framework and outcome measures.

October 2027 to March 2028

- Increase placement capacity and programme reach.
- Review outcomes, placement stability and young people's feedback.
- Complete service evaluation and sustainability planning.
- Produce cost-benefit analysis and business case for future investment.
- Embed Staying Close assessment within standard Leaving Care pathway planning processes.
- Incorporate successful elements of the model into mainstream Leaving Care practice.
- Develop sustainability plan and future commissioning intentions.

Resource Plan

Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

- Strategic oversight and governance.
- Reporting to Corporate Parenting Board and senior leadership.

Head of Service for Children in Our Care and Leaving Care

- Operational leadership.
- Oversight of delivery, performance and quality assurance.

Leaving Care Team

- Identification and referral of eligible young people.
- Pathway planning and ongoing support.

Supported Lodgings Manager

- Host recruitment, assessment, approval, matching and support.
- Placement monitoring and quality assurance.

Mental Health Care Navigator

- Direct support to care leavers.
- Mental health advice, consultation and service navigation.

Housing and Finance Colleagues

- Housing identification for progressing young people to independent living
- Monitoring expenditure and sustainability planning.

Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Insufficient host recruitment	Early borough-wide recruitment campaign, use of fostering networks, community organisations and targeted marketing.

Placement instability	Robust matching processes, training, supervision and ongoing support for hosts and young people.
Low referral numbers	Embed Staying Close within pathway planning and care leaver reviews.
Delays recruiting mental health practitioner	Work with Greater Manchester NHS partners and explore interim commissioning arrangements.
Funding sustainability	Demonstrate impact through reduced homelessness, improved tenancy sustainment and reduced reliance on higher-cost accommodation.
Young people decline supported lodgings	Offer choice, co-production and integration with wider accommodation pathways.

The programme will be governed through existing corporate parenting arrangements with quarterly monitoring of accommodation stability, wellbeing outcomes, EET participation, placement occupancy and young people's feedback to ensure continuous improvement and long-term sustainability.

Section 5 - Costings

Please set out how you will use the funding to establish and deliver the offer. Costs should include the number of young people you anticipate will access support each year. You will have received details of your costing allocation separately from your DfE contact.

Sustainable models should be developed and you should evidence how you will realise Staying Close as an ‘invest to save’ opportunity. You should also consider where you can achieve economies of scale over the three years, while maintaining high-quality support to find and keep the right housing for young people.

The Department reserves the right to clarify and challenge costs where it deems necessary.

Part A - Summary of costs

Financial year	**Nov 26- Mar 27**	**2027-28**

Approximate DfE Funding Allocation – housing		
Spending on additional young people in community-building housing projects (optional)		
Spending on additional young people in Supported Lodgings (optional)	**£79,457 – DfE allocation – adjusted in table in Part B**	**£332,369 – DfE allocation – adjusted in table in Part B**
Spending on additional young people in intensive family-based care (optional)		

Financial year	**Nov 26- Mar 27**	**2027-28**
DfE Funding Allocation – mental health – separate funding stream		**£49,948.75**

Part B - Breakdown of costs

Please set out a detailed breakdown of your proposed costs. These costings should provide reasonable assurance that your delivery proposal and delivery of your proposed Staying Close model can be provided within the funding allocation.

Area of Spend	**Detail**	**Nov 26-Mar 27**	**Apr 27-Mar 28**
Staying Close Coordinator	Strategic and operational leadership, recruitment, quality assurance, safeguarding oversight and host support Grade 10 – Full Time post	£27,480	£67,640
Recruitment & Retention Officer	Co-ordinate recruitment activities, progresses assessment and application process, provides continues support Grade 8 – Part Time post – 3 days per week	£14,628	£35,100
Supported Lodgings Placements	Host fees, allowances and any costs for young people	£11,349	£197,629

Recruitment, Assessment and Training	Host recruitment campaign, DBS checks, assessment and training programme, IT and Digital offer	£10,000	£10,000
Independence and Participation Support	Life skills, tenancy readiness, EET and group activities	£10,000	£10,000
Essential, placement-related set up costs	Essential equipment in order to provide smooth transition into accommodation	£6,000	£12,000
Mental Health Care Navigator	Separate funding stream Direct support for young people to assist with their mental wellbeing and ensure appropriate access to services	£0	£49,948.75
Total		£79,457	£332,369
Total grant allocated Nov 26 – Mar 28: £411,701 Total spend identified Nov 26 – Mar 28: £411,826			

Part C - Number of young people your Staying Close offer will support

'Former relevant children' (i.e. care leavers) under the age of 25 should be assessed for Staying Close support as part of pathway planning, to determine whether their welfare requires it. LAs should prioritise young people who are not on Staying Put.

Please set out the number of young people you aim to support in each delivery year. We accept this is an indicative number and recognise that young people will need to access the support at different times and may require the support for different length of times. The quality of advice, support and learning opportunities provided to young people (and those around them) is equally as important as the numbers reached.

	Nov 2026- Mar 27	**Apr 27- Mar 28**
Number of additional young people supported with Staying Close housing	By end of March – 4	Full year – 12 Q1 – 3 Q2 – 3 Q3 – 3 Q4 – 3
Number of additional young people supported with Staying Close light touch mental health support	0	40

Section 6 – Declaration

Please complete the below declaration, to be signed by both the LA's bidding officer and a senior manager with the authority to commit to this plan, such as the Director of Children's Services (DCS).

DECLARATION* (Please complete in block capitals) Signatures must be either be submitted electronically or scanned in.	
I confirm that the information given in this application is true and complete; that, if successful, the local authority will administer any grant in accordance with the letter supplied by the Department for Education.	
Full name:	NICK WHITBREAD
Position (Job Title):	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – CORPORATE PARENTING
Date:	8TH OCTOBER 2026
Contact details including email address:	CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE LEVEL 8 SPINDLES SHOPPING CENTRE OLDHAM OL1 NICK.WHITBREAD@OLDHAM.GOV.UK
Signature:	
Countersigned (by the DCS):	 JULIE DANIELS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – OLDHAM CHILDREN'S SERVICES