



Homes for Children's Update Report

Scrutiny Committee
6 June 2023

Restorative Devon



Devon Children in Residential Care – Numbers

Cohort of Young People	March 2020	April 2022	Sept 2022	Jan 2023	March 2023	May 2023
Residential	70	101	90	109	104	102
Percentage Placed Outside of Devon County Council			43%		41%	41%
		July 2022		Jan 2023	March 2023	May 2023
Children in Care - 'Unregulated' Placements		20		11	13	10



Children in Residential Care – Cost of Placements

	Ave. Cost Per Week
Devon Children in Care (2020-21)	£4,844
Devon Children in Care (March 2022)	£5,906
Top 20 High Cost Placements (September 2022)	£12,617
Top 20 High Cost Placements (March 2023)	£12,358.
Cohort of children identified for new children's homes (May 2023)	£13,465

The high cost for DCC children in residential care reflects the limited supply of placements for complex needs children in care in Devon and in South-West England.



Improvement Actions

Outcomes:

- Improve sufficiency across all sectors, with a focus on internal provision / build.
- Develop our providers to better manage our young people.
- Better systems and processes to secure placements and track children and young people on their journey.
- Develop Provider Panel to secure placements for high needs young people.



Children in Residential Care – National Context

In 2022, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) completed a market study of children's social care provision, [CMA Report: England Summary](#). The study concluded:

'.... a lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, means that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets their needs.'

'It is clear to us that the residential care market is not working well and that it will not improve without focused policy reform.'

Following the interim CMA fundings and the related Independent Review of Children's Social Care, [Independent Social Care Review](#), the DFE announced the Children's Home Capital Grant Fund for local authorities for the creation of additional residential capacity.

Following an unsuccessful bid in Wave 1 of the DFE Capital Fund, Devon County Council were successful in securing £733,354 of DFE capital following a Wave 2 application.

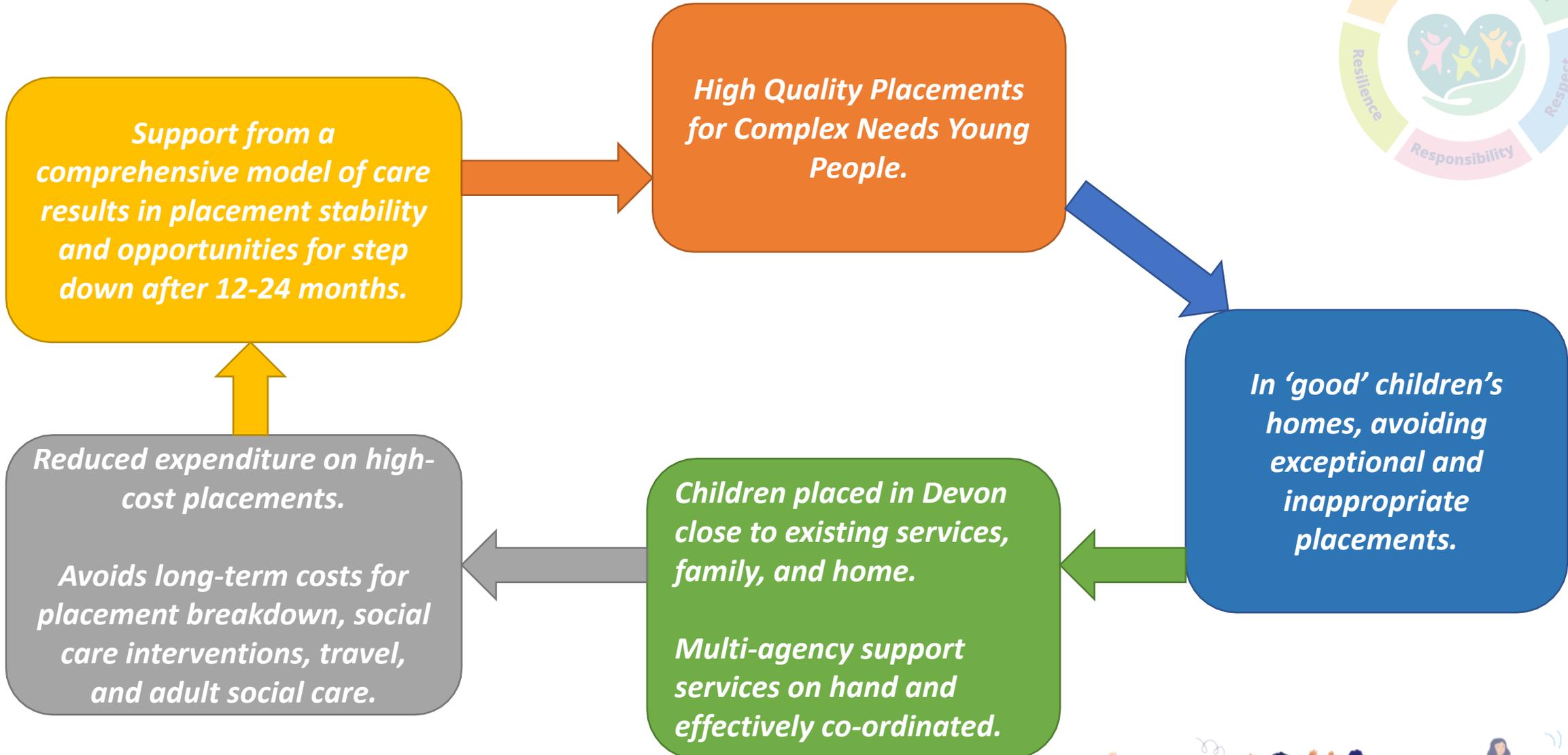
A Staying Close Wave 3 DFE Funding Bid was submitted February 2023. If successful the bid will result in the council securing up to 6 buildings to accommodate 24 care experienced young people aged 18+ in high and medium needs provision with the support of a personal advisor and key workers.

In-House Sufficiency Initiatives – Children in Care Impact and Benefits

Initiative	Impact	Key Benefits
DFE Children's Home Capital Bid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DFE Capital funding of £734,354 secured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stable placements that facilitate robust permanence planning.
Welland, The Link Centre and Barnes Children's Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7-8 self-contained residential placements for complex needs disabled young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long-term positive outcomes for vulnerable children.
Two extensions of existing children's homes and one new home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-county placements using a flexible in-house workforce.• Multi-agency therapeutic care, health and education offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Step down for young people into less intensive services.• Reduction in 'unregulated' placements. (could fill now)



New Children's Homes – Creating a Positive Cycle



Support from a comprehensive model of care results in placement stability and opportunities for step down after 12-24 months.

High Quality Placements for Complex Needs Young People.

In 'good' children's homes, avoiding exceptional and inappropriate placements.

Children placed in Devon close to existing services, family, and home.
Multi-agency support services on hand and effectively co-ordinated.

Reduced expenditure on high-cost placements.
Avoids long-term costs for placement breakdown, social care interventions, travel, and adult social care.



Improvement Planning Summary/Next Steps

Building Homes

- **Revenue budget for the new children's homes agreed at Full Council as part of MTFS on February 16 2023.**
- **Welland and Barnes capital tenders awarded following approval of Finance letter in May 2023. Plan to be open by January 2024.**
- **Further consultation on The Link Centre project before the tender is published. Aim is to open by April 2024, if possible.**
- **Recruitment of registered managers and individual in place.**
- **Consideration of further DCC properties and wider procurement opportunities to create additional 'step down' placements.**

Staying Close – Wave 3 Funding Bid

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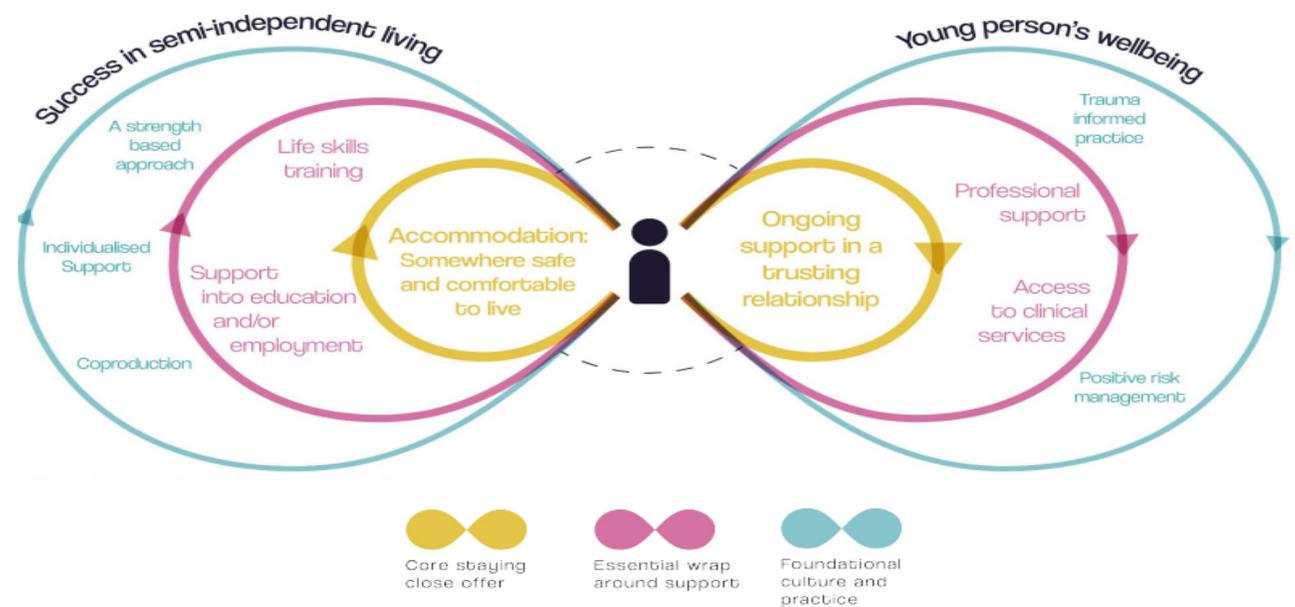
The proposal

- The council bid successfully for Wave 3 DFE Staying Close funding, securing £1.14 million of revenue funding to deliver this project in 2023-25.
- The council will secure up to 6 buildings to accommodate 24 care leavers aged 18+ in high and medium needs provision with the support of a personal advisor and key workers.
- These services will enable the Council to move young people out of high cost supported accommodation for 16-18 year-olds into semi-independent accommodation.



What is Staying Close?

It is a model which provides an enhanced support package for young people leaving care and is designed to be a **comparable offer to the option to Stay Put.**



Staying Close provides an offer of move-on accommodation, **alongside a package of practical and emotional support**, provided by a member of staff from their former placement or from someone who they know and trust.

Independent evaluations have shown **positive outcomes for young people involved in Staying Close**, including reduced eviction rates, increased engagement in education, employment or training (EET) and improved wellbeing and relationship management skills.

Why do we need it? What we know...

31 young people aged 18+ are in Supported Accommodation for 16/17 year olds

5 young people aged 18+ are in Residential Childrens homes

The current post 18 options do not offer the level of support needed for many care leavers, and these options also support adults at risk of homelessness

Lack of move on options for young people leaving care, resulting in risk of homelessness

Due to young people lacking the options for move on post 18, beds in 16/17 provision and childrens homes are being blocked for young people who need that level of support

Many of our young people are not ready or do not have the skills to live independently when they turn 18

Why do we need it? What care leavers have told us...

You said that rent in supported accommodation is high due to the support costs which means that if you work and earn over a certain level, you are worse off than just claiming Universal Credit, so why bother?

You said that sometimes you need to move a long distance to access supported housing which makes it hard for you to keep up friendships and your support network

We need to be aspirational in our role as corporate parents for all our Devon Care Leavers, especially those who have a high needs who will require packages of support to help develop their confidence and skills for independent living, and for their emotional health and wellbeing.

You said that sometimes you need more support than is on offer in the house which means that you can be at risk of losing your room there or cannot have a room in the first place

You Said that some supported housing does not feel safe

Benefits to the young people

- A relationship based approach to supporting young people
- Personal Advisors have a very small caseload of young people and work out of the homes where young people live.
- Young people in Staying Close are not allocated to a central team. The PA co-designs and delivers their pathway plan
- PAs meet young people when they are 17 to start building a trusted relationship.
- Floating support from previous placement to protect and build further positive relationships and a support network. To achieve a smooth transition.
- Engagement from wrap-around services, such as drug and alcohol services, mental health services, employment advice, access to education and training, etc
- Young people will be ready to successfully transfer to an appropriate tenancy at the end of the Staying Close arrangement. – **CLOSE WORKING WITH DISTRICT COUNCILS**

Potential Savings and Costs

By moving to a model which allows young peoples housing benefit to cover some of the cost

- As it stands currently, for 31 young people 18+ in SLO and childrens homes, DCC are funding the whole placement cost at an average of £1,500/week, but this is much higher for higher needs young people. The Staying Close model costs £600/week.

Expenditure	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Existing Placements	£486,500	£1,456,900	£967,800
Staying Close Model	£209,900	£628,400	£417,600
Total Potential Saving	(£276,600)	(£828,500)	(£550,200)

The anticipated contribution from DCC to the 2-year pilot will be £108,157

- Whilst there is a cost to DCC as part of this bid, the potential annual savings are projected to be £1,655,300 compared to continuing with the model we currently have. This will be determined in the pilot.

Ongoing Evaluation

The initiative will be closely evaluated within DCC and as part of the national evaluation programme. This will focus on positive outcomes to young people and the financial impact of the project.

Risks

Recruitment

- We may not be successful in recruitment. Short-term contracts will be required in the pilot period.
- There is a risk that by recruiting to the roles stated in the bid, that existing PAs and residential support workers may apply for these new roles, which will mean that DCC will have to back fill these posts with agency and recruit.
- Further consideration by Cabinet in July.

Cannot secure suitable property

- There is a risk that we may not be able to secure suitable properties, that are affordable, in the right locations i.e. where our young people are currently placed.
- Officers have identified 6 potential properties, which are owned by housing and children in care providers. Securing these properties will underpin the Staying Close. partnership model.
- Aim is for the first property to open in November 2023 with all further properties opened by October 2024.