

Children's Services

Supported lodgings

Homestays

Provider handbook



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1 Information about Homestays

1.1 Background to the scheme

Homestays, Cumbria's supported lodgings scheme was established in 2008. The scheme was set up in response to the growing number of young people leaving the care of the Local Authority who needed support to make the transition to independence.

Homestays, working on a supported lodgings model, recruits and supports a network of people across Cumbria, who can offer a young person a room in their home and support to enable them to develop independent living skills.

Supported lodgings are not a permanent solution to a young person's housing problems, but rather a breathing space and opportunity to develop the skills appropriate to independent living within a supportive environment.

In Homestays the young person is provided with their own bedroom but will be expected to share the other household facilities. Food for breakfast and evening meal will be provided by the Provider. The Pathways team and Supported People will pay the rent and support element direct to the Provider. The young person is also expected to pay a contribution to the household.

The project will offer support to the Provider whilst the placement is in force. The Pathways team will continue to offer the young person advice and assistance during the period of the placement.

1.2 Background to young people leaving care

One of the pieces of legislation that defines what we do and how we should work with children and families is the Children Act 1989. The Children Act gives Children's Service Departments the authority to provide care for children and young people if it is deemed to be in their best interests.

"Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24hours by the authority."

Why do Children become "Looked After"? There are many different reasons and routes in to care. Some children are accommodated by the Local Authority with the consent and agreement of their parents or legal guardians. Other children are taken in to care. When this happens the Local Authority applies to court for an order which will enable them to remove children from their parents care due to concerns about their welfare. This can include concerns about the ability of parents to safeguard their children's welfare, the need to support families who are under a great deal of stress or are unable, for a variety of reasons, to care for their children.

When children and young people come in to care there are different types of provision, these include residential care, foster care or placements with family and friends. When in care it is common for many young people to experience a number of moves and changes. There is a growing body of research that suggests that this is damaging to a young persons emotional well being.

When a young person reaches the age of 16 they enter into a period of transition often referred to as "Leaving Care." This may be a challenging time for many young people due to a number of factors including; difficult early life experiences; limited birth family support; a history of many changes whilst in the

care system. Research shows that many young people leaving care struggle to make it on their own. Nationally there are 6000 care leavers annually of which 4500 will leave without any qualifications.

Within 2 years

- 1200 will be homeless
- 2100 will be mothers or pregnant
- 3000 will be unemployed

The Leaving Care Act states that young people leaving care should have more support for a longer period of time to assist them in gaining independent living skills and making a positive transition to adult life. Supported lodgings are recommended as an effective way of supporting young people in this transition period.



2 How supported lodgings work

2.1 Aims of the project

The purpose of the project is to provide accommodation and support to young people leaving care in order to enable them to gain the skills to be able to live independently.

2.2 Role of the provider

A Homestays provider offers young people accommodation and support to develop independent living skills. Providers take on the role of “mentor” with the young people that live with them; they are neither a surrogate parent, nor just a landlord/lady.

2.3 Minimum standards for a Homestays placement

- 1 Accommodation to be warm, secure and friendly.
- 2 The young person should have their own bedroom, which provides them with privacy.
- 3 The accommodation should be safe, have adequate heating and lighting. An up to date CORGI check is required and smoke alarms should be installed and regularly checked. It is recommended that a Fire Safety Plan has been devised and implemented.
- 4 The Provider should provide a bed, bedding, bath linen, hanging space for clothes, storage space and curtains or blinds and, if appropriate, a table and chair to study.
- 5 A minimum of two meals per day should be provided, or the food available for the young person to make their own (this will be dependent on what has been agreed in the support plan). The meals should be of good quality and prepared in a hygienic manner.
- 6 The young person should have access to household facilities, including the lounge, kitchen, laundry equipment, hot water and bathroom.
- 7 In most circumstances the young person should have a door key, unless there is somebody available to grant access.
- 8 The Provider should give emotional and practical support to the young person, if and when appropriate, approximately 10 hours per week. There will be some weeks when more support is needed. In addition, at the start of a lodgings placement, more support may be needed to help the young person settle in.
- 9 Any relevant information affecting stability of the placement must be discussed with the Homestays Adviser. All parties should treat information about the young person and the Provider in confidence.
- 10 The Provider should keep records of all payments in respect of the young person staying with them. (Payment receipts are provided).
- 11 Regular contact should be maintained between the Provider and Homestays.

Both the Provider and the young person should work within the context of equal opportunities.

2.4 How Homestays is funded

The weekly placement fee paid to the provider is made up of:

- £65 rent.
- £80 support payment.
- £20 young person's contribution.

The young person's contribution includes an amount for their personal food, heating and lighting. The young person is responsible for giving this direct to the Provider. The support payment is in recognition of the support given to the young person by the Provider.

Providers will be funded directly by Homestays. However, in circumstances where a young person is working and earning a reasonable wage, they may be responsible for paying some or all of their rent direct to the Provider. In other circumstances, the rent element of the payment may be claimed via housing benefit. Homestays Advisers will assist the young person to claim housing benefit. The Provider will be expected to assist with the claims process by supplying relevant information and agreeing to a rent officer assessing the property.

The Provider is responsible for the collection of the young person's board and lodging contribution. Homestays must be notified straight away if this is proving to be problematic.

It is advisable to keep records of ALL payments received in respect of any young person. Homestays will provide payment logs for recording receipt of board and lodgings payments. Please bear in mind that an amount to cover the cost of the following is built into the boarding payments that you receive.

- Wear and tear of furniture and domestic appliances
- Provision and maintenance of laundry facilities
- Provision and maintenance of cooking facilities, heating and power
- General maintenance of property, including health and safety within the accommodation
- Council tax
- Insurance

Use of the telephone is a private arrangement between the Provider and young person. Contributions towards telephone bills are not the responsibility of Homestays.

2.5 Homestays panel

The Homestays Panel meet to assess applications to become a provider. They also review existing providers on an annual basis. The chair of the Homestays Panel is Cumbria Children's Services County Manager for Social Care Placements. Membership of the Panel will consist of a representative from the following:

- Housing
- Inspira
- Social care, Pathways team
- LAC nurse

The panel will consider assessment of new providers and will review existing providers annually.

3 Issues regarding placements

3.1 Matching with young people

During the assessment, the Homestays Adviser will have talked to you about your matching preferences, for example would you want a male or female lodger, any specific age group etc.? After you are approved, the Homestays Adviser will contact you to discuss any possible referrals that match your criteria. You should be given a copy of the young person's referral form to look at prior to the introductory meeting. (The Panel may have also made some recommendations regarding matching which will need to be taken in to consideration.)

3.2 Introductions

Once a potential match has been identified the Homestays Adviser will organise an initial meeting between you and the young person. This meeting normally takes place in your home.

In attendance will be:

- The Young Person.
- Personal Adviser, Pathways.
- Homestays Provider.
- Homestays Adviser.

The Personal Adviser, Pathways is responsible for supporting the young person before, during and following the meeting.

The Homestays Adviser will support the Provider, chair the meeting, complete and distribute a record of the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is to offer a basic introduction for the young person and the Provider; 'house rules'; a tour of the home and prospective bedroom and provide the opportunity for questions to be asked.

After this initial meeting, the young person and the provider will be given time in which to consider whether they would like to plan some further introductory visits. Following these introductions, if feedback from both the provider and the young person has been positive another meeting will be arranged to discuss plans for moving in.

At any stage of the matching process, the provider should feel able to decline to proceed further. It is important for the provider and young person to consider whether or not they would be compatible.

Once a placement has been agreed, a meeting will take place to draw up an agreement (This takes the form of a license agreement and will contain household expectations, an overview of the young person's support needs etc), an independent living plan (which provides details of the support needs of the young person and how these will be met) and a risk assessment that contains details of all potential risks and a plan to manage those risks. As part of the risk assessment, a safe support plan will also be completed. The Provider and the young person will both have copies of these plans.

3.3 Issues addressed in drawing up a licence agreement with a young person.

- 1 The Provider will ensure that the young person's room has adequate furnishings and that he or she has the use of the facilities within the house. The young person must report any breakages and likewise, the Provider must notify the young person if any of their belongings are damaged.
- 2 Both parties will need their privacy and it should be understood that this is vital if the placement is going to work out.
- 3 Access to a young person's room may be required for the purposes of servicing appliances, decorating, health and safety checks etc. The young person must give all reasonable assistance when these occasions arise.
- 4 If the young person wishes to stay out overnight, the Provider, and the Pathways Adviser must be informed beforehand, to avoid causing unnecessary worry.
- 5 If the young person wishes to invite friends/relatives etc to visit, permission must be obtained first from the Provider.
- 6 The use of the telephone can cause problems; therefore a clear agreement is needed on this point if the young person is to use the phone at all.
- 7 When a placement ends, any keys must be returned to the Provider. Any financial issues must be resolved at this point. Homestays must be informed immediately when a placement ends.
- 8 If the young person moves on without taking their property with them, the Provider will keep them for a maximum period of four weeks. Neither the Provider nor Homestays accept any responsibility for a young person's belongings.

The above issues are contained within the Homestays License.

3.4 Issues to be considered in drawing up household expectations

Catering

- Meal arrangements.
- Preparation – who cooks?
- Use of kitchen, times etc.
- Menu: any special dietary requirements?
- Shopping for food.
- Visitors and food.
- Food and storage: health and safety.
- Equipment: health and safety.

Cleaning

- Room checks: health and safety/frequency.
- Communal areas: responsibility?
- Laundry: responsibility, use of equipment, times etc.
- Drying/ironing: health and safety, use of equipment, times etc.

Visitors

- Introduction of visitors.
- Visiting times/frequency of visits.
- Visitors when Provider is absent.
- Number of visitors at any one time.
- Responsibility for the behaviour of visitors.
- Age of visitors.

Smoking

Rules of the house

Telephones

- Whether incoming/out coming calls are allowed.
- Times of calls.
- Premium cost of calls, mobiles, chat lines etc.
- Phone barring.
- Persons allowed access to Providers phone number.

Arrangements for staying out

- Agreed times, meal times, evenings out etc.
- Private space/time arrangements.
- Use of facilities TV/Sky/Computers etc.
- Noise: TV, music, late returns etc.
- Young person/Providers mail.
- Key arrangements.

3.6 Homestays expectations

Homestays requests that all Providers and young people abide by the following expectations:

- No lending or borrowing of money to take place between the young person and the Provider without consultation with Homestays.
- No credit agreements to be entered into by the young person ie catalogues, mobile phones, music/book clubs which cites the provider's address etc.
- Young person not to act as an agent for any company whilst living at the Providers address ie Avon, Tupperware etc.
- No young person should be considered as resident babysitters or childminders.
- Providers are to be reminded that it is illegal to buy alcohol for under-18's on licensed premises.
- No illegal drugs/goods should be kept/brought into the Providers premises by anyone.
- No pets allowed without Providers permission.
- No visitors without the Provider's permission.

3.7 Independent living plans

At the beginning of a placement, The Homestays Adviser along with the young person and their Pathways Adviser will assess the young person's support needs in relation to independent living skills. These will be recorded in an Independent Living Plan. As part of this process key tasks will be identified that will support the young person's growing independence. Tasks may be set for the young person, the provider and/or other agencies.

The plans will be regularly reviewed (initially fortnightly and then moving to 4-8 weekly) and progress monitored in relation to the tasks and goals that the young person has set.



3.8 Risk assessment and safe support plans

Once a placement has been agreed a further risk assessment will be undertaken. This will compliment the initial risk assessment contained in the referral form and will focus on how the identified risks will be managed.

The purpose of risk assessment is not to deny access to the service or place obstacles in the way. It is to be used to determine if Homestays can meet an individual young person's needs and to outline how those needs will be met whilst maintaining safety. Risk assessment should allow young people to learn from mistakes and as such should allow for appropriate risk taking. Risk assessments should be updated regularly and whenever new information or concerns arise.

As part of any placement agreement, safe support issues need to be addressed, discussed and an agreed Safe Support Plan should be attached to the agreement.

The Safe Support Plan must address the following issues:

- Physical contact.
- Privacy.
- Dress codes.
- Use of internet and mobiles.
- Providers going out or away.
- Taking photos and videos.
- Confidentiality and sharing appropriate information.
- Gift giving and receiving.
- Names/ terms of reference.



4 Support for providers

4.1 Provider reviews

Providers will have an annual review carried out by the Homestays Adviser. This is an opportunity to receive feedback from the young people who have been placed with you, and the professionals who have worked alongside you. It is also an opportunity for you to reflect on what you have learnt and the skills you have acquired over the past year, identifying any training needs or areas for future development. An updated health and safety check will also be carried out.

4.2 Annual checks

CRB checks will need to be reviewed every three years, your Homestays Adviser will carry this out for you.

By law as part of the health and safety check anybody providing lodgings must have their gas appliances checked and certified annually. If you are an owner/occupier this is your responsibility. If your accommodation is rented you must provide proof from your landlord that the necessary checks have been carried out, (this will be in the form of a certificate).

Fire safety plans will also need to be in place and reviewed annually and at the beginning of each placement. Smoke alarms need to be checked regularly and carbon monoxide detectors need also to be fitted.

Your Homestays Adviser can provide advice and assistance if required.

4.3 Training

Homestays Advisers will be responsible for informing Providers about any relevant training provided by the county council and support their access to this. As part of the Homestays assessment process, placement ending feedback and Provider annual review process, Homestays Advisers will collate information about training needs and attempt to provide access to relevant training.

Training will be offered on a rolling programme to include:

- Safeguarding.
- Drugs and alcohol.
- Solution focused approaches/ problem solving skills.
- Finance and budgeting.
- Equal opportunities and diversity.
- Health including sexual health and mental health.
- Self harm.
- Supporting young people to develop their own support networks.
- Attachment and development.
- Conflict and crisis management techniques.
- Education training and employment.
- Being a householder.
- Health and safety.
- Working with other agencies.

Some of these courses will be delivered within the support groups; others may be accessed as part of the county council's training programme and / or online training.

4.4 Support groups

A support group meeting is held quarterly in which you will be offered training which will be facilitated by the Homestays Advisers or guest speakers. These meetings will give you the opportunity not only to access training but to meet with other providers within the scheme.

4.5 Access to support

You will have access to your Homestays Adviser during normal working hours, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm and 4.30pm on Fridays. If you have any queries or concerns your Homestays Adviser can be contacted by telephone and additional meetings may take place.

Outside office hours, the Out of Hours Team can be contacted if you have any concerns for any young person under the age of 18 on the following number: **0333 240 1727**. In addition, relevant appropriate emergency services can be contacted for the young people placed with you if you have any concerns for a young person's safety and wellbeing. Included within the welcome pack will be a list of numbers detailing additional support services, advice and information.

4.6 Additional expenses

Additional expenses such as an allowance for introductory visits, overnight stays, and previously agreed travel expenses will be reimbursed.

4.7 Insurance

All Homestays Providers should ensure that their car insurance extends to cover use for business purposes. The county council's all risk policy specifically excludes motor vehicles; therefore Homestays Providers should be sure that all vehicles on their premises, or under their control, are insured.

Prior to the commencement of a placement, the Provider should have informed their insurance company of their intention to provide Supported Lodgings. It may be that their insurance company will require information about the young person's criminal record (if applicable). If you have any queries do contact your Homestays Adviser who will be able to provide additional information and guidance.

Most insurance companies will not cover individuals for non accidental damage. In such cases where a young person has been involved in causing non accidental damage to a Provider's property, the Local Authority will consider if it is appropriate for a claim to be made on the county council's Insurance. It is important that the Provider informs the department as soon as possible about any potential claim.

In such cases where there is an excess to pay either in respect of the Provider's insurance or the insurance cover from the county council, the referring Children's Services team will consider whether they can assist in reimbursing the whole or part of the costs incurred. Homestays Providers will come under the auspices of Cumbria County Council's Public Liability Insurance.


4.8 Tax and benefits

Tax

Homestays payments are eligible for tax allowances either under the Fostering care allowances or under the provisions for vulnerable adults placements; again independent tax advice should be sought regarding the application process and potential eligibility.

Benefits

Homestays allowances will count as income in relation to means tested benefits. It is recommended that if providers are receiving means tested benefits they should seek independent advice regarding any potential reduction/loss of benefit. CAB will be able to provide up to date accurate information.



**“Homestays
has given me a
chance of freedom
and experience”.**

5 Issues for young people

5.1 Mental and emotional health

Becoming an adult brings many new responsibilities and freedoms and is an important transitional phase of a young person's life. It can be a time of excitement and energy but it can also be a time of uncertainty and anxiety for many young people; particularly for those young people leaving care who have a limited support network and are coping with possible unresolved issues arising from their childhood years.

In these transition years young people may be engaged in looking for work, achieving qualifications, establishing intimate relationships, setting up in their own homes etc. These factors can be stressful and may trigger emotional and mental health issues. About one in 10 young people suffer from some form of mental health problems that can affect their behaviour, the way they eat or sleep, their ability to study and hold down a job and their ability to get on with other people.

If providers have any concerns about a young person's mental or emotional health, they should talk the issue through in the first instance with their Homestays Adviser. The majority of issues may be able to be resolved through sensitive support and access to primary health care resources. In some situations the young person may need additional support such as access to mental health services. The Homestays Adviser can offer advice and support in broaching these issues with the young person.

5.2 Physical health

As young people reach adulthood they assume responsibility for their physical health. For the majority of young people this will be a natural transition and they may just need general advice and support to maintain a healthy life style which includes eating a healthy diet, exercise, understanding the health risks that smoking, drugs, alcohol and unprotected sex can pose to their physical well being.

Some young people, who have to manage chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, eczema etc, may need additional support. Again these issues can be discussed as part of an independent living plan.

5.3 Sexual health, identity and sexual relationships

Sexual health is an important issue that all young people have to address as they become adults. Safe sex practices are critical in preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. There are many forums and information leaflets available to young people that provide information, guidance and support about sexual health issues.

In addition to sexual health issues during these transition years, young people are exploring their sexual identity. It is often the case that during this life stage a young person is coming to terms with their sexual orientation, ie whether they are heterosexual, gay, bisexual etc. Young people may need support to talk through their thoughts and feelings at this time. Your Homestays Adviser may be able to offer access to support groups and information.

As a young person makes the transition to adulthood it is normal to be experimenting with sexual activity. This is a natural stage of development. However it should be acknowledged that we all have different sexual mores and it

is important to respect a young person's choices.

Some young people, due to low levels of self esteem or abusive experiences in childhood, may be placing themselves at risk of exploitation or may be engaging in sexually harmful behaviour.

Homestays Advisers are available to offer advice and guidance in relation to any concerns you may have about a young person's sexual relationships and or behaviour.

5.4 Drugs and alcohol

As young people journey towards independence, they will encounter and often experiment with the use of drugs and alcohol. The majority of young people are able to make appropriate choices. For some, drugs and alcohol may become a coping mechanism or habitual form of behaviour that can lead to difficulties in other areas of their lives. As Homestays Providers you will have received information and/or training about drugs and alcohol. If you have concerns about a young person's use of drugs and/or alcohol, then please discuss these issues with your Homestays Adviser.

5.5 Education, training and employment

All young people referred onto the Homestays scheme are required to be engaged in some form of education, training or employment. The Pathways Adviser and Inspira worker have key roles in supporting a young person to access education, training or employment. However, Homestays Providers have a critical role in providing support to a young person, for example: encouraging them to remain motivated, time keeping, talking through any problems they are experiencing etc. If a young person is experiencing difficulties in their training, education or employment the Homestays Provider needs to contact the Homestays Adviser who can provide relevant advice and support.

5.6 Managing finances

Helping young people to manage their money is a crucial aspect of supporting a young person in their journey towards independence. The majority of young people need to learn how to manage on a very limited income. Providers can assist by enabling young people to draw up a realistic budget, supporting them to resist impulse buys and peer pressure.

5.7 Contact with family and friends

As a young person reaches the age of independence they also assume responsibility for maintaining or managing their contact arrangements. Homestays encourages young people to make appropriate decisions about contact with family and friends. Homestays providers have a key role in offering support to young people to explore these issues. The following factors may be helpful to consider:

- Venue or location of contact.
- Financial costs of travel.
- Any safeguarding issues.

- Frequency.
- Support for the young person both before and after contact.

Homestays Advisers can provide advice and support to providers when they are supporting a young person to manage their own contact.

5.8 Building up social support networks

The aim of Homestays is to enable a young person to be able to live independently. Part of managing independent living is building up a support network that can continue to provide advice, friendship and support after the lodgings placement has ended.

The Homestays provider can assist a young person to make friendships in their locality, and to become familiar with other agencies / professionals offering services / support in their local area. It is important to differentiate between integrating a young person in to the provider's social network and the longer term benefits of enabling the young person to build their own support network.

6 Skills you may need as a provider

6.1 Effective communication

Good communication between the Provider and the young person is extremely important. Some young people may find it hard to communicate clearly, particularly when faced with difficult or sensitive issues.

It is therefore important that you are open, clear and consistent in your communications in order to avoid misunderstandings.

6.2 Listening

Listening to young people has always been one of the most important aspects of support. It is important that we distinguish between talking to young people and listening to them, both are vital.

People communicate in many ways: talking; body language; with their eyes, or by acting in a loud and aggressive manner. Providers need to distinguish between what the young person is saying and what they really mean.

Quite often a young person will disclose something to the Provider when it is least expected. It may also be when they are involved in an activity and there is no eye contact, for example when the young person is in the back of a car. This may seem a less threatening way for the young person to discuss important matters.

A good communicator should not lie or build up false hopes. They should be reliable and honest and most especially a good listener. You cannot listen to a young person all the time but you can often spot those who have something important to say by a change of behaviour or mood.

6.3 Building self esteem and confidence

Everyone needs to feel valued, to feel special and important. By treating young people as individuals and offering your support they will build up their own confidence. By making opportunities for a young person to develop and succeed, you will build up their self esteem. At the same time we often learn through making mistakes; an environment which is understanding and supportive even when mistakes have been made, will encourage young people to learn from the past and become more resilient. No matter what difficulties a young person has faced in the past, they will benefit from positive supportive relationships. If you treat a young person with respect they will gradually learn to respect you and others around you, and also respect themselves for who they are.

6.4 Challenging behaviour effectively

Regardless of how effectively support is given, there may be times when a young person's behaviour will need to be challenged. It is crucial that challenges are delivered appropriately if the situation is not to be made more difficult.

It is useful to distinguish effective challenging from a confrontation. There is a potential for confrontations that become heated to be personal and undermine constructive communication. It is crucial that in working to resolve a problem situation, the needs of all parties concerned are addressed. Therefore an effective challenge is one that takes account of all these needs.

If there are issues to be looked at with the young person, the following guidelines may be useful in working towards a constructive solution:

1. It is always a good idea to pick an appropriate time to have a discussion of this kind. Therefore it is better to avoid times when somebody has had alcohol, is tired etc.
2. If a discussion is not getting a favourable response do not try and press the point too much. Leave the young person with time and space for your points to sink in, and come back later for a favourable discussion.
3. Be honest about your reasons for challenging behaviour. If the behaviour of the young person is a problem because it upsets you in some way, say so.

It is important to ensure that the young person is aware that you have listened to them and taken their views/ feelings in to consideration.


The following steps may help settle a conflict:

- Agree to tackle the problem.
- Arrange a place and a time when you and the young person can talk undisturbed.
- Set some ground rules for the discussion.
- Let each party explain their point of view and how they feel. Try not to interrupt each other. Talk through issues and make sure you understand the others position.
- Look at the options, talk through what the options could be to solve the problem and agree on one or more of the options. (You will probably have to negotiate to get an agreement).
- You may feel it is helpful to review your agreement. Homestays Advisers can offer support and incorporate any changes in to the License Agreement, Independent Living Plan, or Risk Assessment. This may help you formalise the arrangement.
- Despite trying to settle a conflict in this way you may not be able to reach an agreement. There are a number of things that you can try in this situation.
 - Take another look at the issue.
 - How important is it really?
 - Do you really want or need to pursue it?
 - If you feel you can, then back off.
 - You may dislike doing it but if its not important then let the issue drop.
 - If you think the issue is really important then you may need to re negotiate at another time.

6.5 Respecting young people; accepting their individuality

It is important for the Provider to recognise and accept all young people as individuals in their own right. It may be that the young person has different values, abilities and standards from you. These differences may initially give you cause for concern, but it is vital to realise that the way you would choose to do something is not necessarily the only way it can be done.

It helps if you are able to distinguish between understanding and respecting the individual's right to pursue his or her own route through life, and when a boundary needs to be set in recognition of the needs and wellbeing of all members of the household. Homestays Advisers are there to offer you support in talking through any concerns you may have.



“It’s great to give them a home from home, somewhere, where they can really feel supported”.

7 Practice issues

7.1 General guidance on safe working practices

Blood Borne Virus: It is recommended that providers maintain safe working practices with every young person who comes to live in their home. Providers may not know the state of health of any of the young people in the Homestays scheme. Special precautions should not be necessary when working with someone who is HIV positive or has hepatitis providing good hygiene practice is adhered to. Such good practice would include:

- Cover any wounds on your skin with adhesive water-proof dressings and/or gloves, your skin is an effective barrier to micro-organisms entering the body.
- If you are administering any first aid you must ensure that you are wearing gloves and an apron. Always wash your hands after administering first aid.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke or apply cosmetics while working in areas where you might come into contact with blood.
- Use good basic hygiene practices including hand washing and avoid hand to mouth, hand to eye contact etc.
- Dispose of all contaminated waste safely, either burn it or seal in a plastic bag and place in refuse.

In the interests of good practice with regards to hygiene the following additional actions should be taken:

- Do not share any items that could become contaminated with blood eg towels, razors and toothbrushes etc.
- Wash dishes and cutlery in the usual way with hot water and detergent or in a dishwasher.
- Use normal cleaning and disinfection methods for premises, especially toilets, baths, wash basins or sinks.
- Use separate disposable cleaning cloths for kitchen, toilet and washroom areas.
- Clean up as soon as possible any spillage of blood or any body fluid containing blood.
- Always wear good quality household or rubber gloves when handling soiled materials or working with bleach. These should be washed in hot soapy water immediately after use.
- Sanitary towels should be placed in a sealed plastic bag and placed in the refuse or burnt in an incinerator.
- Blood stained incontinence pads, disposable nappies, wipes, and dressings should be either burned or double wrapped in sealed polythene bags and disposed of in the household refuse.
- Wash soiled clothing in an ordinary washing machine using its hot washing cycle or, if non-washable, by dry cleaning.

7.2 Working with other agencies

As part of the provider's role in supporting a young person you may come in to contact with other agencies. It is important to ensure that you respect the young person's confidentiality and involve them appropriately. Your role may differ regarding individual circumstances of each lodging placement. Homestays

Advisers can assist in helping you to understand your role and responsibilities as a provider and expectations can be included in the license agreement.

7.3 Emergencies and criminal activities

Regardless of how effectively support is organised, from time to time emergencies can arise. It should be noted emergencies are rare and what is said in the following section should not give rise to any undue alarm. Homestays Advisers are not in a position themselves to provide direct support outside of office hours but this does not mean that you have to deal with emergencies unaided.

Cumbria County Council's Out of Hours Team can provide support and assistance to you and any young person under the age of 18 years. They can be contacted on **0333 240 1727** or you can also contact the police if you have concerns for a young adult's safety **0845 330 0247**.

If a young person has behaved in a way that might involve criminal charges eg violence, criminal damage, disruptive or threatening behaviour etc you should take such precautions as are necessary for ensuring the well being of you, your family and the young person concerned. You should inform the police immediately and arrange for them to deal with the situation.

In the event of a medical emergency eg finding a young person unconscious, then an ambulance should be called for admission to hospital.

If there are concerns that the young person may be involved in criminal activities you should discuss this with your Homestays Adviser at the earliest opportunity.

If there has been a confrontation, and circumstances permit, then resolution of the issues should be left until everyone has calmed down and support is available. It should be remembered that the immediate objective in an emergency is to take the heat out of the situation. Looking at what went wrong can wait until later, when these issues can be discussed calmly, perhaps with the support of a Homestays Adviser, or Pathways Worker present.

7.4 Handling money

Money management can be a challenge for some of the Young People we support in this scheme.

Some suggestions regarding money issues are as follows. Providers should be wary of:

- Borrowing, lending or giving money to the young person.
- Holding cash monies in their own account on behalf of the young person.
- Cashing cheques for the young person.
- Being involved in buying or selling with the young person.
- Being involved in cash in hand payments to a young person for work that has not been declared.
- Obtaining goods via catalogues etc, for the young person or allow the young person to obtain credit from their address.

The above issues can compromise the Provider and can often lead to problems. Providers can support young people to manage their money but this must be agreed by all parties and written in to the young person's Independent Living plan. If a young person has financial difficulties they should be encouraged to contact their Pathways adviser who can provide advice and assistance.

7.5 Confidentiality

Providers will come into possession of confidential information regarding the young person; therefore the importance of observing confidentiality must be stressed. Divulging information could be highly embarrassing to a young person. It can also lead to massive upheavals in a person's life; for example, loss of contact with friends or family.

Within the Homestays scheme, information held about young people will usually only be shared with others with their consent. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because in certain circumstances, for example where there are allegations of mistreatment or abuse, information must be passed on to others.

Providers should be reassured that though Homestays Advisers might not divulge everything they know about a young person, all relevant information that we are aware of and that may affect a placement will be passed on to the Provider.

In terms of the relationship between the Provider and the young person, complete confidentiality cannot be promised. A provider may find themselves in a situation where the young person has asked them to promise to keep a secret prior to making a disclosure. This may become a promise that cannot be kept and as a result may undermine the trust that a young person has in the relationship. It is important to explain that you cannot keep secrets and reassure the young person about who will be told and why and that you will continue to support the young person. Providers should be aware of young people hinting at concerns or allegations. Young people may decide who they are going to tell and test that person by giving them bits of information to see how they cope and whether they are going to be able to tell them more.

If you have any queries about confidentiality, these can be discussed with Homestays Advisers

7.6 Trips away from home

Before taking a young person away on a trip the following must be put in place/considered:

- Safety – are the activities, building, and transport safe?
- Insurance – check it is adequate to cover all aspects of the trip
- Medical concerns – medical information, which may be relevant, eg allergies etc. should be known prior to leaving. Prescribed medications need to be taken with consideration of where they are to be stored.
- If staying away then the sleeping arrangements should be checked to ensure private bathing and sleeping quarters.
- If a young person is on a care order then approval of plans must be obtained from the child's Social Worker.

7.7 Safe support

We all have our own boundaries where physical contact is concerned.

At the beginning of each placement and as part of your assessment, your Homestays Adviser will discuss Safe Support issues with you and involve the young person in negotiating a Safe Support Plan. Some issues to consider are as follows:

- Young people may have different boundaries/expectations of physical contact.
- Providers may on occasions feel like hugging a young person they are pleased with, putting an arm around someone in distress to give them comfort, but may worry about when touching a young person is acceptable. These issues can be addressed in a Safe Support plan.
- The young person's history should always be borne in mind. Many young people may have been physically and/or sexually abused. They may be distressed by physical contact, or even be aroused by it. When young people are first accommodated, it is advisable to establish how they feel about people touching them, so as to respond to them most appropriately.
- Verbal comfort is the recommended approach.
- Providers should be aware that they may, on rare occasions, find themselves attracted to a young person or a young person attracted to them. Such situations should be handled with great sensitivity since the young person must on no account be exploited. Open and frank discussion of the issue with a Homestays Adviser is essential.

If either Provider or young person has any concerns about physical contact they should raise these issues at the earliest opportunity with their Homestays Adviser.

7.8 Clothing

It is important to give consideration to dress code. Inappropriate clothing can give the wrong signal to young people. Again, a young person's history should always be borne in mind. Many young people may have been sexually abused. In a Safe Support plan it may be appropriate to consider dress codes for the household.

7.9 Gifts

Young people generally only have a limited amount of money and should not be encouraged to buy gifts for Providers. It may seem churlish or inappropriate to refuse a gift that has been given in good faith; therefore the receipt of any gift could be accepted and recorded in general observations. Providers should not accept gifts that appear to be unreasonably expensive, or which they feel may have been stolen. If you are uncertain please contact your Homestays Adviser.

7.10 Remit of support

Both the young person and the Homestays Provider need to be conscious of the limits to the support Homestays can provide. There are no expectations that Homestays Providers undertake any statutory responsibilities, neither are they deemed to be acting in loco parentis.

The support required of a Provider will be documented, negotiated and agreed prior to the placement starting and regularly reviewed thereafter. Details of the support tasks will be contained in the support plans and in the license agreement.

Listed below are typical examples of tasks carried out by Providers:

- Teaching a young person how to cook/planning a weekly menu with a young person.

- Giving the young person information about local facilities such as shops, buses, libraries etc.
- Assisting a young person to manage their finances.
- Helping the young person register with the local doctor.
- Shopping with the young person to compare food prices and encourage keeping within a realistic budget.
- Teaching a young person to use a washing machine.
- Listen to a young persons problems relating to issues such as family, relationships, loneliness etc.
- Encouraging the young person to make good use of their leisure time.

7.11 Young parent and baby placements

Homestays on occasion accepts requests for young parent and baby lodgings placements. The focus of these placements is to offer the young parent a stable, nurturing and supportive environment in which they can develop their parenting skills. In the event of being asked to consider offering lodgings to a young parent and baby, discussions will need to take place regarding any additional issues that needs to be considered. The license agreement needs to contain details about your role and responsibilities within the placement and the roles and responsibilities of the young person and any other involved professional. A comprehensive risk assessment will also need to be undertaken. Any equipment/ baby food will need to be provided by the young parent.

Any additional support needs will need to be agreed and recorded in the license agreement. The Homestays allowance will be reviewed and agreed on a case by case basis in the light of this agreement.

7.12 Codes of behaviour

Providers should be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in some contact sports with young people and exercise particular caution in areas such as swimming pools, showers etc.

Where a Provider has a concern about the nature of a particular relationship involving them or a young person they should discuss it with their Homestays Adviser.

8 Provider viewpoint

8.1 Provider compliments and complaints procedure

Homestays follow Cumbria County Council's Compliments and Complaints procedures, a copy of which will be made available to you. Complaints are taken seriously and are treated in the strictest confidence.

8.2 Appeals procedure

If you are unhappy with the outcomes of any decision made by Homestays you have the right to appeal against this decision.

8.3 Provider viewpoint

At times Providers may not agree with the viewpoint of their young person or the Homestays Adviser.

If Providers feel that their viewpoint has not been listened to, or they disagree with any outcomes of assessments or reviews they can discuss their viewpoint and/or make an informal complaint in accordance with Cumbria County Council's Complaints Procedure.

“Sometimes the simplest things can make a difference to a young person’s life”.

9 Values and policies

9.1 Homestays policy on 'Blood Borne Infections'

Cumbria Children's Services is committed to providing an environment compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and to provide services that are free from discrimination related to those who have HIV, AIDS or a Blood Borne Virus. Homestays recognises that there is no such thing as a 'risk group' in relation to HIV and AIDS, only risk behaviour. Homestays policy and safe working practice guide will be issued along with the license agreement.

9.2 Diversity and equal opportunities

The young people and Providers in our scheme have the right to be treated fairly with respect and without discrimination by Homestays.

Young people and Providers have the right not to be harassed or discriminated against.

Young people have the right to access independent advocacy and representation. Homestays can supply young people with a list of external agencies offering such services.

Homestays will seek the views and opinions of young people and Providers in respect of the services and the support they receive.

Homestays operate in accordance with Cumbria County Council's Policy on Equality and Diversity. See link below.

intouch.ccc/eLibrary/Content/Internet/536/656/38196101059.pdf

9.3 Safeguarding, child protection and vulnerable adults policy

Homestays operates under the auspices of Cumbria's Local Safeguarding Boards' procedures in relation to child protection and vulnerable adults policy.

Under child protection the word 'child' within this policy refers to anyone aged 18 and under. The aim of this policy is to provide information for Providers to be aware on how to be vigilant and to outline what to do in situations where child abuse may be a concern or suspicion.

In all cases the most important consideration to be taken into account is the protection of children. Their safety and well being must be our priority.

In respect of a vulnerable adult, this relates to those aged 18 and over.

Confidentiality

All information regarding any concern of possible child abuse or vulnerable adult abuse must only be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child or adult. However, giving information to those who need that information, for the protection of a child who may have been, or has been abused, is not a breach of confidentiality.

In matters of child abuse or vulnerable adult abuse the provider must never promise to keep any information secret, which may need to be divulged. Explain to the child/adult that it cannot be kept a secret but only those people who need to know will be informed.

Passing information to people not directly concerned will be considered as gross misconduct and treated accordingly.

Definitions of abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into different types: neglect, emotional abuse, organised abuse, peer abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any one given time.

Neglect: Neglect occurs where a child suffers sufficient harm or impairment or development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults or medical care. Whether it is significant is determined by their health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at a specific point. For instance a child whose ongoing failure to gain weight may be deprived of adequate nutrition.

Emotional abuse: Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a need for affection, approval, consistency and security is not met. For example:

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on their behaviour or actions.
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of a child.
- Premature imposition of responsibility.
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations.
- Under or over protection.
- Failure to show interest in, or provide age appropriate opportunities for cognitive and emotional development.
- Use of unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures.
- Exposure to domestic violence.

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour, their emotions state of their development.

Physical abuse: Causing significant harm, and including:

- Beating.
- Shaking.
- Deliberate poisoning.
- Suffocation.
- Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where caregivers fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness).
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for their gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others, for example:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child.
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation.

- Sexual intercourse.
- Exposure to material which has a sexual content.

Organised abuse: This occurs when one person moves into an area/institution and systematically entraps children for abusive purposes (mainly sexual) or when two or more adults conspire to similarly abuse children using inducements.

Peer abuse: In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In these situations the Child Protection procedures will apply for both the victim and the alleged abuser. If there is any conflict of interest the victim's welfare is of paramount importance.

Verbal abuse: This can include name calling, sarcasm and criticism, making reference to some physical characteristic, destructive criticism, derogatory remarks and gestures. It is important to take the age and stage of development of the child/young person into account when reaching a decision.

Bullying: Repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others and including:

- Teasing.
- Taunting.
- Threatening.
- Hitting.
- Extortion.

Financial abuse: This can include imposing financial penalties on a young person. It is acceptable that young people pay for damages that they may be responsible for and this would be called reparation. Taking money from a child through coercion would be a form of financial abuse, as would 'controlling' how a young person spends their money.

What to do if you have concerns

It is not easy to acknowledge that child or vulnerable adult abuse may take place within families or settings where people are supposed to be caring. However we need to be vigilant of this. Reluctance to think badly of people and/or to confront the matter can lead to resistance in recognising and dealing with the responsibility of abuse.

It is important to note that these abuses are not always easy to recognise. It is also important to avoid a situation where people are constantly wary and on the lookout for abuse or one where complacency exists. However the possibility of abuse should be considered if:

- A suspicious injury occurs or a pattern of injuries.
- A child or vulnerable adult seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems.
- A child or vulnerable adult shows unusual or fearful responses.
- A child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse.
- Disclosure from another person.
- Age inappropriate (child) or abnormal sexual play or knowledge.
- Attempted suicide.

It is important to recognise that many of these signs could occur for other reasons.

It is vital that anyone who discloses abuse feels supported. They may be feeling afraid, angry, despondent and guilty. It is important to understand that any negative feelings they may have may be increased by the response they receive. Any such disclosure is an act of trust and should be treated with respect, sensitivity and care. It is important to remember the following:

- Find somewhere private to continue the conversation as soon as possible.
- React calmly and try not to reveal your personal feelings.
- Listen carefully and attentively.
- Reassure the young person.
- Do not make false promises (particularly around secrecy).
- Do not ask leading questions – only ask questions for clarification.
- Check with the young person that what you understand is accurate.
- Record the conversation in as much detail as you can, as soon as possible. Try not to interpret the conversation. Detail where possible the exact words used by the young person. Sign and date the statement.
- Explain to the young person the procedures you must follow.
- Treat the information as confidential and follow procedures.

Reporting procedures

If a provider suspects that a young person is being abused they must contact their Homestays Adviser or emergency contact as soon as possible. In the event of a Homestays Adviser being unavailable the Provider must get in touch with their local Children's Services Department.

Allegations against a provider

If an allegation is made against a Provider or there are significant suspicions that a Provider may be abusing a young person, an inquiry will be initiated. In most cases the young person residing with the Provider will be moved to an alternative placement whilst the inquiry is conducted.

9.4 Data protection

Homestays abides by Cumbria County Council's Data Protection policy. Homestays is committed to holding accurate, reliable information and storing that information securely. For further details follow the link below:
intouch.ccc/eLibrary/Content/Intranet/536/647/1964/39548102719.pdf

10 Frequently asked questions

Will the payments I receive from Homestays affect any benefits I am entitled to?

Payments received directly from Homestays may be taken into consideration when calculating some benefits, but only if the young person is over 18 otherwise the payment will not be counted as income for benefit purposes. However a young person's contribution will always be taken into account if it exceeds £20 per week. The current personal contribution is £20 per week. You must ensure that all income you receive is declared to the relevant agency when applying for benefit. If you require further information please contact your local benefit agency.

How long might a placement be expected to last?

This is difficult to forecast, as all young people have varying needs, some requiring only short term support whilst others may have longer support needs.

Do you operate a waiting list?

Yes, at times we may not have a placement that is suitable to the young person's requirements, and they are then placed on the waiting list until appropriate accommodation is made available.

What happens if I go away on holiday?

You must inform Homestays if you are planning to go away, even if it is only overnight – this will enable us to consider if we can make alternative, appropriate arrangements.

How much access to the house will the young person require?

Although the young person is expected to be occupied during the working week, there will be times when this is not the case, eg during the school holidays or when waiting to commence training. The young person has the right to access their own room at all times.

It may be important to note that full time courses are not necessarily Monday to Friday, eight hours per day. There may be significant periods of time when the young person is not required to be in college or placement.

Who should I contact if there are any problems regarding the young person?

Homestays should always be the initial point of contact unless otherwise instructed. Each young person may be involved with several agencies therefore it is essential that the right person is contacted to prevent the placement being affected.