Providing more than a room

Supported lodgings: good practice guide
The Four Agency Supported Lodgings Project

This Good Practice Guide is one part of the suite of resources produced by the Four Agency Supported Lodgings Project which was funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government from April 2010- May 2011. The organisations involved were the Fostering Network, Depaul UK, YMCA England and the National Care Advisory Service.

The Four Agency Project was set up to raise the profile of the Supported Lodgings model and promote learning and development in the sector, with the ultimate aims of giving more young people the opportunity to live in Supported Lodgings in England and maximising the positive impact of the experience on their lives.

The partners worked with existing forums of Supported Lodgings schemes in the South West, North East and North West and brought together new groups in London, the South East, the East of England and the West Midlands, to inform the development of the following resources:

- National database of schemes
- Good Practice Guide
- Guides to benefits, tax and insurance
- Learning and Development modules for hosts/carers.

The resources are available to be downloaded from the websites of the respective agencies:

www.fostering.net
www.deapauluk.org
www.leavingcare.org
www.ymca.org.uk

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following people and organisations for their contributions to this publication:

- The young people at Hertfordshire Supported Lodgings scheme
- The Bournemouth Pathways Carers
- All of the Supported Lodgings Forums, old and new
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- John Short
- Mike Lane
- North Tyneside Depaul UK Supported Lodgings
- Portsmouth Supported Lodgings
- Safe and Sound homes (SASH) York
- Torbay Supported Lodgings
- West London YMCA Supported Lodgings
- Fylde Coast YMCA Lancashire
Terminology

Those involved with the provision of Supported Lodgings employ a wide range of approaches and language. For the purposes of these resources:

- Host/carer refers to the householders whose homes young people live in (although the separate terms ‘host’ and ‘carer’ are used when referring to examples from schemes using these terms).
- Scheme refers to the agency who manages the Supported Lodgings service.
- We have not used the term ‘provider’ because for some this refers to the host/carer and for others to the Supported Lodgings scheme/agency itself.

Jargon buster

**Eligible children**: young people aged 16 or 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks after their 14\(^{th}\) birthday (with at least one day of those 13 weeks being after age 16), and who continue to be looked after.

**Excluded licence**: where the licensee will be staying in the landlord’s home, as in Supported Lodgings, there will be an ‘excluded licence’ because it is outside the provisions of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.

**Former relevant children**: young people who are over 18 and were previously eligible or relevant.

**Licence Agreement**: a legal agreement between landlord (host/carer) and licensee (young person) granting the licensee permission to stay in the property and setting out the terms of the agreement, for example, that the young person will pay rent/charges and the host/carer will provide access to the accommodation and keep it in good repair.

**Living Together Agreement**: the agreement that underpins the Licence Agreement, setting out the respective expectations of the host/carer and the young person in terms of how they will live together.

**Pathway Plan**: part of the Care Plan for a young person who is looked after which details the plan and support that is available to assist them in their transition to independence.

**Placement Plan**: required for all children looked after aged 16 and 17.

**Qualifying**: young people aged 16 to 21 (and under certain circumstances up to 24) who at any time after reaching the age of 16 but while still a child was, but is no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered, but who did not meet the criteria of eligible or relevant children (i.e. 13 weeks). This includes young people who were privately fostered or under a Special Guardianship Order.

**Relevant children**: young people aged 16 to 17 who were previously eligible, but who have left care.

**Staying Put**: a specific type of Supported Lodgings placement where young people who have been in care stay on with their foster carers beyond the age of 18.
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Section 1: Introduction

About this guide

This guide is intended to help:

• organisations currently delivering Supported Lodgings to reflect on and develop their practice
• those considering developing new Supported Lodgings services to design those services
• commissioners of Supported Lodgings to design service specifications, selection processes and contract monitoring and management arrangements.

This guide intends to capture and share good practice and to support reflection, discussion and decision making focused on improving outcomes for young people. We have not provided a set of standards, but pulled together themes from the wide range of existing practice and resources. Practice in Supported Lodgings is evolving over time and this guide is based on what we know at the time of writing. We anticipate that the Good Practice Guide too will evolve in line with developments in the Supported Lodgings sector.

This guide is only about Supported Lodgings. Whilst we know that some schemes are run by small organisations where the scheme and organisation are one and the same, we have not covered wider organisational issues.

The guide is arranged in sections, each covering an area of Supported Lodgings practice. You will find the following throughout:

• Discussion of key principles, issues, practice and options
• Good practice examples and case studies
• Views from young people and hosts/carers, and ideas about how best to involve them
• Discussion points to help guide debate to some of the key decisions
• A list of potential policies and procedures relevant to each practice area.

Aspects of core practice in services to young people such as safeguarding, confidentiality, information sharing and involving young people are referred to throughout the document, but only where specifically relevant to the aspect of Supported Lodgings provision under discussion. We have not included separate sections on these topics as they are thoroughly dealt with elsewhere in practice, resources, legislation and guidance.

Other resources

There is a range of useful resources relating to Supported Lodgings, some of which are listed in the References and Additional Reading section at the back of this guide. The National Youth Homelessness Scheme website has a section on Supported Lodgings and Nightstops which merits particular mention because it includes a wide range of example policies, procedures, agreements and other tools intended to help with Supported Lodgings.¹ This site will soon be archived as part of changes to Government websites but will remain accessible and useful. The various Supported Lodgings forums around the country serve as a valuable source of support and resources.²

¹ [www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/accommodation/supportedlodgings](http://www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/accommodation/supportedlodgings)
² [www.fostering.net/supported-lodgings](http://www.fostering.net/supported-lodgings)
The concept and ethos of Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings provide young people with safe, supportive places to live in the homes of local people.

There have been two threads of development in Supported Lodgings services. The first thread has been led by children’s services, intended mainly as a service to young people making the transition from being looked after and closely linked to the standards and approaches prescribed for foster care. This includes, but is not restricted to, ‘Staying Put’ approaches which enable young people to continue to live with their former foster carers after they reach 18.

The second has developed as a housing option for young people experiencing homelessness in recognition that a supportive domestic environment is more suitable for some young people than more common options such as supported accommodation, foyers and floating support to young people living in independent tenancies. This thread has been driven primarily by voluntary sector organisations and local authority homelessness and housing support functions.

In recent years these two strands have become increasingly interlinked, often in recognition of the benefits of taking an integrated approach to planning and providing for local young people who need supportive accommodation whether or not they have been looked after.

For the purposes of this guide, a Supported Lodgings service is characterised by the following features, all of which should be in place:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The young person</th>
<th>is aged 16 or over and requires accommodation and support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The accommodation</td>
<td>a furnished bedroom in a domestic house, and the young person has use of a bathroom, cooking and laundry facilities as a member of the household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The host/carer   | • lives full time in the property but pursues their own lifestyle (including daily routine, attending work, holidays and weekends away)  
                  | • provides a home-like environment and domestic routine consistent with the young person engaging in education, training or work, including the provision of some meals  
                  | • establishes an appropriate and consistent personal relationship with the young person, including non-intrusive practical help and advice. |
| The service provider or agency | • undertakes recruitment, selection, assessment, vetting and approval of hosts/carers, their accommodation and their capacity and suitability to work with vulnerable young people in an unsupervised home environment |
| The care / support plan (agreed between the young person and their support worker and the host/carer) | • engages the host/carer  
• is developed with the young person to address the needs and aspirations identified with them in their assessment  
• supports the young person’s skills and development through involvement in improving and developing the service  
• uses a multi-agency approach to address young people’s needs and help them achieve their aspirations. |
|---|---|
|  | • provides general skills development, training and experience-sharing events for hosts/carers  
• undertakes assessment of young people referred for living in Supported Lodgings, matching them to individual hosts/carers, initial introductions and help in the early stages of developing a domestic routine  
• undertakes an assessment of each young person’s support needs, development of a support plan and delivery of some parts of the housing-related support required. This may be integrated into care, pathway and placement planning processes for young people who are looked after or leaving care  
• undertakes regular liaison and joint working with hosts/carers in delivering a package of support to the young person  
• provides accountability to commissioners and funders. |

(Adapted from Holmes, 2008)
Section 2: Scheme Purpose and Design

Introduction

One of the great strengths of the Supported Lodgings model is its flexibility to meet the accommodation and support needs of young people at various stages on their transition to independence. Decisions about the purpose of a scheme, its client group and the desired outcomes will affect the design of the service and its resource requirements, so it is important that they are made early.

With good planning and design, Supported Lodgings can address any or all of the following objectives as part of a local strategic approach to preventing youth homelessness and improving young peoples’ experiences of their transitions towards independence:

- Help prevent homelessness by providing ‘time out’ for families where young people are at risk of homelessness due to problems at home, or where a placement is at risk of breaking down
- Provide emergency accommodation for young people facing homelessness, for example after parental eviction or placement breakdown
- Provide stable, settled and supportive accommodation for young people where they can develop their skills as they move towards independence
- Enable looked after young people to continue living with their former foster carers after they reach 18 (termed ‘Staying Put’).

Some Supported Lodgings schemes tackle three or four of these options as part of an integrated package, whilst others focus specifically on one primary objective.

Case Study

Safe and Sounds Homes (SASH), York is an integrated scheme offering accommodation and support for young people for between one night and 18 months. They provide three types of placement - Nightstop, Crashpad and Supported Lodgings - all in the homes of fully trained and vetted ‘hosts’.

Nightstop placements are arranged for a young person if a personal or family crisis results in them having no home to go to. This enables all parties to explore more sustainable options, which might be a return home following mediation work with the family or carer. Nightstop is accessed by the young person the day they need it and they will be placed that night. The placement can be for several nights or longer term. Hosts provide Nightstop placements as volunteers.

The Crashpad service is an extension of Nightstop but the young person remains with the same host for a longer period of time, around three weeks.

Where returning home is not an option and if the young person meets the required criteria, Supported Lodgings accommodation may be offered. The young person is placed with a host who works with them and other agencies, such as colleges and local authorities, to act as a positive role model and provide a level of support determined by individual needs.

Many SASH hosts offer all three placement types. The scheme has clear guidelines for each, including role descriptions for hosts and guidelines for young people and referral agencies.
As shown in the diagram below, the flexibility of the Supported Lodgings model applies to a range of important variables. Please note that the scale for each variable is completely different in nature and the diagram is not intended to infer any overall left/right correlation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six variables in Supported Lodgings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Young Peoples’ Support Needs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low ➔ High</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Challenge and Risk from Young People</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low ➔ High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Duration and Purpose of Stay</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency/Time-out ➔ Planned and Settled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Geographical location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural ➔ Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Legal Entitlements for Young People</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low ➔ High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No duties taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Care/Leaving Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Housing or Children Act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Regulation for Hosts/Carers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low ➔ High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightstop volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Lodgings Hosts/Carers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Carers/Staying Put Carers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion Point**
Are there any other variables beside these for which the Supported Lodgings model can offer valuable flexibility?
Working in partnership

Decisions about the role of the scheme will need to be made in conjunction with key partners in the context of young people’s needs, gaps in services and local resources, strategies and plans. Consultations with, and involvement of, young people, parents and hosts/carers are key elements of this. For new schemes, it will be helpful to talk to young people who are in the situations the scheme is intended to address, and where possible, to other schemes about the messages they are getting from young people, parents and hosts/carers.

Some established schemes will be part of local networks working to monitor and develop services for young people. They will be in a position to work with funders and other partners to shape the scheme and respond flexibly to changes in the local environment. For other schemes, local authority commissioners will have made the decision before commissioning the service. Even so, the organisation setting up the scheme will want to clarify and refine what is to be delivered and identify which key partnerships will be required to make it work as well as possible for young people.

While it would be usual for children’s services, housing options and other statutory and non statutory services to be involved in most schemes, the depth of that involvement will vary considerably depending on the focus of the scheme.

For a scheme focused on transitions for care leavers, the primary partnership would be with the leaving care team. However, effective joint working with the housing options service will also be important. For example in order to secure move-on accommodation and prevent homelessness if a care leaver aged 18 plus is at risk of placement breakdown. One of the strengths of some Supported Lodgings schemes is that care leavers aged over 18 can move back to a supported placement if they do not manage independent accommodation at the first try.

Where a scheme focuses on emergency or time out provision to prevent homelessness, there will need to be very close relationships with those in children’s services and housing options leading on responding to homeless young people. This will help ensure that the collective focus is on maximizing support to young people and promoting family reconciliation whenever appropriate.

Schemes may find it helpful to establish a mechanism such as a steering or monitoring group for ongoing communication with their funders and key partners. This can help to continually refine the role of the service and the way it and other services such as supported accommodation, foyers and floating support, work together to meet young peoples’ needs throughout their journeys towards independence.
The impact of scheme purpose on design and resource requirements

The purpose and client group of a scheme will influence the outcomes it aims to achieve with young people, and therefore the processes and resources involved in doing so.

For example, specific design considerations for a short stay emergency and/or ‘time out’ scheme focused on preventing homelessness for young people might include the following, many of which contrast significantly with schemes providing settled placements for young people:

- Outcomes focused on keeping the young person safe, minimising the impact of crisis on their lives and supporting family reconciliation
- Referral, assessment, risk assessment and placement procedures to enable quick access to accommodation
- Capacity for staff to deal with high numbers of referrals, assessments, risk management plans, matches of young people with hosts/carers and support for young people moving in
- Relatively high levels of support for young people from staff because of the impact on their wellbeing of their immediate problems at home
- Support with family reconciliation as part of the role of scheme staff or provided through a partnership
- A different role for hosts/carers to the one they would perform in a scheme focused on preparation for independence, and relatively high levels of pro-active and responsive support for hosts/carers including a 24 hour on-call system
- Tighter boundaries and ground rules for living together. For example, would it be possible for all young people have their own key and be able to stay in the home on their own straight away, or would this depend on risk assessment? Expectations about what time young people should be home at night, staying out overnight and having visitors may all be different from a scheme providing longer term, more settled accommodation.

Factors such as the age of young people accommodated and whether they are looked after children or care leavers will affect the policy and practice frameworks that schemes need to operate within. For example, engaging with local safeguarding arrangements for children and/or vulnerable adults depends on whether young people are aged over 18, as well as specific national and local requirements for looked after children and care leavers.

**Discussion Point**

Do your decisions on the issues identified in this section have any bearing on your thinking about which term your scheme will use to refer to its hosts/carers, for example hosts, carers or householders?

Decisions on how to approach each of the practice areas discussed in subsequent sections of this guide will be affected by the purpose of the scheme and the needs and circumstances of the young people it will work with.
**Section 3: Recruiting Hosts/Carers**

**Introduction**

This section considers the process of attracting potential hosts/carers to your scheme and supporting their decision about whether to proceed to assessment. The following section looks at assessment and vetting.

During the initial stages of a Supported Lodgings scheme, building up the team of hosts/carers is likely to be the primary focus. Once the scheme is operating, recruitment is likely to be an ongoing process in response to a natural ‘turn over’ of hosts/carers. Many hosts/carers get involved with Supported Lodgings schemes in response to public advertising and promotion campaigns. Other routes such as word of mouth and friends or family hosting/caring, as well as Staying Put after foster care, are also very important sources of hosts/carers and are discussed below.

**Skills and characteristics of hosts/carers**

An important first step in devising an approach to attracting potential hosts/carers is to think about what the scheme needs from them in the light of the purpose, client group and intended outcomes from the service. Getting a good mix of hosts/carers can make a big difference to the quality of the matches schemes can make, and therefore to young people’s experiences and outcomes.

For example, if a scheme is designed to accommodate young people with higher levels of need, or challenging behaviour, they may want to target people who have professional experience of working with young people. It will be possible to make more suitable matches between young people and hosts/carers if the latter reflect the diversity of young people you will accommodate, for example in terms of sexuality, ethnic and cultural background and religion. It may also be helpful to have a range of all male, all female and mixed households to support matching with young people who are, suffering ongoing trauma from experiences of abuse in childhood, for example.

Thinking this through will help schemes decide on ways to target advertising and promotion to provide the best chance of ending up with a group of hosts/carers who, between them, will be able to offer suitable placements to the range of individual young people needing the service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Young person’s view point</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stability is important for longer term placements, so hosts/carers need to be able to commit to seeing them through.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Discussion point</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What mix and number of hosts/carers will you need considering your client group and the size of your scheme?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Processes

A strategy for initial and ongoing host/carer recruitment might include:
• Materials and recruitment packs e.g. leaflets, posters, postcards
• Where to advertise and promote hosting/caring opportunities, taking into account your decisions about the desired makeup of the group of hosts/carers. See top recruiting tips for ideas at the end of this chapter
• A team of people (including hosts/carers and young people) who have agreed to assist with the recruitment process
• List of contacts including media
• Plans to ensure people who respond to the campaign receive a quick and high quality response to their enquiry, including a written information pack about the scheme and the role and the process of becoming a host/carer
• Monitoring the numbers of people dropping out and their reasons, to inform future recruitment campaigns.

Advertising and promotion

Successful recruitment drives appeal to the individual motivations of potential hosts/carers. Services employ a wide range of advertising and promotion techniques to make members of the public aware of the opportunity to become a host/carer, and turn that awareness into action in the form of enquiries and applications. Established schemes will be a wealth of information on cost effective places to advertise and promote hosting opportunities and what has not worked for them, which is a topic that is regularly discussed at Supported Lodgings forums.

Discussion point

What reasons might people have for taking an interest in being a host/carer?

How can your advertising and promotion appeal to these motivations and what roles can young people play?

Host/carer view point

“Followed on from fostering”.

“Give youngsters a chance, have a positive impact on someone’s life. Good to see the change as a result of what you’re doing”.

“My wife had a tough time at home as a teen”.

“I know someone at college who was a care leaver and had nowhere to go so had to spend holidays in the college residence on her own”.

“I like having teenagers in my house, they are interesting and I regret not having had more children so enjoy giving them the lives they should have had”.

12
Do you have room....?

We need Pathways Carers to offer supported lodgings to young people aged 16 plus who are leaving the care of Bournemouth Borough Council. Our carers get full training, support and financial assistance. You will need to have a spare room, an understanding of young people, a desire to make a big difference and the patience to help them towards independence, including how to use the washing machine!

To find out more phone Mike Lane on 456745

Mike Lane
Accommodation Social Worker
mike.lane@bournemouth.gov.uk
Phone 01202 456745
Staying Put

When a scheme offers a young person the option of ‘Staying Put’ with their foster carers after their 18th birthday, the hosts/carers are of course already selected and approved. However, young people will only be able to ‘stay put’ if this option works for both them and their foster carer and is built into the local authority’s placement strategy.

In many schemes, ‘Staying Put’ hosts/carers receive considerably lower payments than they did as foster carers. Schemes will therefore need to begin to explore the possibility with the carer early and be able to provide them with a clear picture of the implications of the change from foster carer to Supported Lodgings host/carer to give them time to decide and prepare. It may be the responsibility of the young person’s social worker or personal adviser with the supervising social worker for the foster carer to explore this as part of the Pathway Plan, keeping the scheme informed of emerging Staying Put plans and involving them as appropriate. All looked after children who are deemed eligible require a leaving care assessment of need and a pathway plan from the age of 16, both of which provide an opportunity to start planning for the possibility of a Staying Put arrangement.

Discussion point

If your scheme will include Staying Put placements how will the scheme staff link in with social workers and personal advisers to explore Staying Put as part of the pathway plan?

Friends and Family Supported Lodgings hosts/carers

There may be other circumstances where a young person already has a potential Supported Lodgings host/carer. For example, young people who can no longer live with their parent(s), perhaps because of relationship breakdown, overcrowding or because parents have moved away without them, often end up staying with extended family members or other adults such as the parent(s) of a friend. These arrangements are frequently entered into on the basis that they will be short term, but for some young people they may provide the option of a more settled home within their own support networks. Becoming part of a Supported Lodgings service as a ‘friends and family’ placement can provide essential financial and other support to make the arrangement viable longer term, and ensure it provides a safe and positive placement for the young person.3

Opportunities for ‘friends and family’ placements are easy to miss. For example, if a young person seeks help from the homelessness/housing options service they may be placed with family or friends while the team focuses on enabling the young person to return to live with parent(s), and failing that, finding them suitable supported accommodation. If returning home isn’t an option the young person may be moved to some other form of accommodation without consideration of whether the household where they have been staying, or another in their network, could offer a Supported Lodgings place subject to assessment and vetting (see the next section).

3 For young people aged 16 or 17 who are, or are becoming, looked after, Care Planning Regulations with regard to ‘connected persons’ or friend and family fostering will need to be considered.

www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00185-2010.pdf
Eligibility for Housing Benefit will need to be checked out with the Housing Benefit department in advance for family placements as young people may not be able to receive Housing Benefit if they are living with certain categories of family member.

**Discussion point**

What are the potential benefits and challenges for young people in considering friends and family options?

What procedures would you need to put in place in order to make sure any potential friends and family Supported Lodgings placement options were identified and considered before or alongside ‘stranger’ placements?

What support would you need from referral agencies?

**Working in partnership**

When setting up a new scheme, it can be helpful to keep key partners informed of the timescale and process for recruitment, assessment and approving hosts/carers. It unavoidably takes several months to have homes ready for young people and schemes may need to manage the expectations of both funders and potential referral agencies, all of whom are likely to want to see the service up and running as soon as possible.

Partners can also help with recruitment. There may be opportunities to collaborate with some services, for example fostering services, Nightstops or, if there is one in the area, another Supported Lodgings scheme. Schemes might choose to plan and invest in advertising and promotion campaigns together to give people who might consider accommodating a child or young person in their home a range of options to consider and enquire about.

The **Hertfordshire** Supported Lodgings scheme (based in the council’s Children, Schools and Families service) works with other services in the department on recruitment, using a combined leaflet as a tool to recruit:

- adopters
- respite and short breaks carers
- foster carers
- Supported Lodgings carers.

In the **Bournemouth** scheme, when someone enquires about fostering, they are also routinely told about Supported Lodgings and vice versa.

An association with a Nightstop service can also be helpful. Nightstop involves a different commitment from its hosts. They have to be available for one or a few nights at a time and provide a safe place to stay in an emergency, but not ongoing accommodation and support. Some Nightstop hosts may want to use their experience and skills to become more involved in supporting young people and apply to become Supported Lodgings hosts/carers, and potential Supported Lodgings hosts/carers might want to try offering a Nightstop service first, before making long term commitments to young people needing settled placements.
A wide range of partner agencies might also be prepared to help you get information about hosting/caring opportunities to their staff teams, for example by circulating e-mails and putting up posters. This can be particularly useful if you want to target particular professions in order to help meet specific needs.

**Involving young people and hosts/carers**

Potential hosts/carers are likely to want to hear the experiences of both hosts/carers and young people who have lived in Supported Lodgings, what happens and what issues they have had. This can both reassure and provide a reality check to help ensure new hosts/carers recognise some of the challenges they might face in the role before deciding whether to go ahead with the assessment process.

Options for involving young people and hosts/carers include:

- involving them in recruitment events and providing opportunities for one to one conversations with potential hosts/carers
- asking them to participate in press and other publicity work, for example by doing interviews and providing quotes
- developing the role of ‘scheme champion’ to give presentations or talks to various groups
- asking them to distribute posters or leaflets to locations in their area or where they work.

Many established schemes report that the most cost effective method of recruitment is via ‘word of mouth’ and recommendation to the scheme by existing hosts/carers. Some schemes have a ‘bounty’ system, where there is a modest financial reward to an existing host/carer on the approval of someone they have recommended.

**Top tips for advertising and recruitment**

**Employers**

- The council in some areas is the biggest employer. Find out who on the council can help promote the scheme (this can include schemes run by and separate from the council). See if it is possible to get a paragraph on council payslips, or get something to the council staff. Some councils charge but often it is free if there is space.
- Contact other large employers in the public and private sectors to see if they have a magazine you can put an article in or if you can put something on their staff notice boards, intranet etc.

**Community**

- An article in the council magazine. Most tend to have one that goes to all residents and is online
- Many schools and school governing bodies produce a termly newsletter and are often willing to publish a paragraph about a scheme and the need for hosts/carers
- Posters on community notice boards (normally via the council or parish council)
- Posters (large and small) in public offices, community centres, GP surgeries, vets, libraries, sports / leisure centres / gyms, theatres, independent cinemas etc
- Posters in coffee shops, both independent and chains
- Contact residents associations and ask to talk at meetings, put posters on notice boards and in articles in residents newsletters
- Contact different faith groups and ask to do talks, put posters up and have articles in newsletters and websites. Some faith groups also have groups associated to them, such as mothers unions, fellowship meetings etc. The Anglican and Catholic churches will have an Area
Dean or Rural Dean who is responsible for churches in a certain area. Their contact details will be on the Diocese website.

- Try contacting voluntary groups or different organisations to see if they have newsletters, invite people to do talks etc where you can promote the scheme. Any groups who work with specific groups of people such as LGBT or BME could be targeted
- Stalls at events such as festivals, local events, multi-cultural events, Christmas Fairs, Pride events
- Local political parties have newsletters and websites
- Local trade union offices will also have membership you might be able to send information to
- Councillors and MPs
- Parish councils often have a newsletter, notice boards or websites and meetings
- Websites with a local section such as gumtree.com or myvillage.com
- Leaflet drops to houses
- Schools will often let voluntary organisations include their leaflets in children’s book bags
- Recruit in partnership with the local fostering service. They might be attracting people who might be interested in being a host/carer rather than being a full-time foster carer. It might be possible to send information (via the fostering service) to people who are no longer foster carers). If there is a Nightstop service in the area, discuss recruitment with them.

Press
- Publicise in local press and on TV and radio. Check your region as it may cover another scheme and you could look at joint publicity.
- Publicise in the free papers in the area and papers for specific groups such LGBT and BME groups.
- Advertise in your region’s The Big Issue It could be useful for joint publicity between Supported Lodgings groups.

Online
- Create a page on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter etc and ask people you know to join and spread the information to their contacts
- Look on the council website. It has a list of different places and different organisations to contact

Policies relevant to recruitment of hosts/carers

Recruitment and selection policy
Equal opportunities
Safeguarding
Data protection
Section 4: Assessing and Approving Hosts/Carers

Introduction

The purpose of assessment and approval is to select hosts/carers who can provide safe, secure accommodation, support vulnerable young people during their placements and help them develop the skills they will soon need to live independently.

The assessment and approval process will also provide the hosts/carers an opportunity to evaluate the scheme. The professionalism and quality of the scheme’s interaction with them at this early stage in the relationship will help determine the level of trust and confidence hosts/carers have in the scheme and influence whether they finally decide to take on the role.

The vast majority of applicants to become a host/carer do so for very positive reasons and want to support young people. However, there is a very real possibility that some people will apply in an attempt to get access to vulnerable young people and harm them. Assessment processes need to be designed and implemented with this in mind.

Assessment

Assessment can usefully be broken down into three key areas: the host/carer and their household; the property; and the wider environment, including regular visitors. This helps schemes ensure as far as possible that that the environment is a safe one for the young person in all respects.

Many schemes use assessment processes which comply with, borrow from or exceed the minimum requirements for the assessment of foster carers, whether or not the scheme is accommodating young people who are looked after or leaving care. These provide a useful reference point and are set out in schedule 3 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (see appendix 1).

The rest of this section sets out elements of assessment for schemes to consider when designing their own processes.

Information about the host/carer and their household

- personal details of name, address and date of birth of all household members, including any other adults
- particulars of the children/young people who are members of the family, whether or not they are members of the household or live elsewhere – this could include grandchildren, nephews/nieces or step children
- information about any other children or young people who are not members of the family but live in the household, for example friends of the family or foster children
- past and present employment or occupation and standard of living; leisure activities and interests of the person(s) being assessed
- marital/relationship status and current or previous marriage, civil partnerships and/or relationships of the person(s) being assessed
• the applicant(s) previous experience of caring for and supporting children and young people, whether they are their own children or children/young people they have been involved with in other capacities e.g. as a teacher or doctor
• the applicant’s financial security – in-depth checking may seem unduly intrusive but schemes may, for example, want to check that mortgage or rental payments on the property where young people will live are up to date
• applicants could be asked [and be required to sign a declaration] if they have ever applied to be a carer/host (foster care or Supported Lodgings) before, including whether they have been rejected or had an application terminated. If they state that they have, schemes will want to investigate.

The methods and frameworks through which this information is collated and evaluated will vary between individual schemes, as will the degree of depth of enquiry, depending on the number of visits made to the household and the content of those meetings. The worker undertaking the assessment may want to meet with all members of the household as well as the applicant/s who is/are being assessed. In some circumstances, assessing workers may meet with ex-partners if there are particular reasons why this would be relevant or appropriate.

Checks

• Enhanced CRB checks for all household members over 18 (some fostering services do this at 16)
• Wherever practical, other statutory checks through the local authority – with the education department, probation, police national computer checks. If a scheme is not run by the local authority, it may still be possible to ask them to carry out statutory checks, perhaps starting with an enquiry to the council’s fostering service to find about the checks available to them and who to contact
• Schemes may also want to undertake additional checks with agencies such as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association Forces (SSAFA) and the Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS).

References

Feedback from the Supported Lodgings forums has shown that most schemes require at least two references for hosts/carers and from people who are not related to the applicant. In some circumstances it may be helpful to seek more than two references as the aim is to acquire sufficient information to gain as full an understanding of the applicant(s) and their circumstances as possible and cross reference different pieces of information. Referees ideally need to be people who know the applicant well and have done so over a course of time. If there are two applicants and the applicants are a partnership, it is important that the references reflect knowledge of both applicants individually as well as in terms of their partnership. There maybe some circumstances when it is appropriate for family members to provide references, such as where an applicant’s networks are limited by geography or age considerations, or because their support network is almost exclusively their extended family. Schemes will need to consider if and how written references will be verified, for example by phone or visit, and how this will be recorded.

Health references from GPs can be a valuable source of information about risks related to both physical and mental health. Some GPs charge for this service.
Discussion point

Will you use medical references?

If so, what do you want to learn from them and how will you deal with concerns that might be identified in this way?

The property

Most schemes use some form of checklist to help them undertake sufficiently thorough and consistent health and safety checks on property, and recording the findings of checks on a room by room basis ensures clarity of actions and ease of follow up. Schemes are not expected to be experts and checks will normally be undertaken by observation and, where appropriate, discussion. Hosts/carers retain responsibility for the safety and maintenance of the property once they accommodate a young person and scheme checks will assist with this.

In the case of gas safety, schemes will need to ensure that the host/carer has an up to date gas safety certificate (a legal requirement for landlords) issued by a registered gas engineer. Expert assistance on fire safety is likely to be available from the Fire and Rescue Service who will often visit a home at no charge. They will advise on any aspect of fire safety within the home and help devise an escape plan, if there is not already one in place. Many Fire and Rescue Services will also fit smoke detectors where required, free of charge. For further information visit www.fireservice.co.uk and http://firekills.direct.gov.uk/index.html

Issues to cover in a checklist might include*:

- current gas safety certificate
- appearance of electrical appliances, sockets, switches etc (e.g. burns, cracks, exposed wires)
- bathroom electric appliances – light switches with pull cords or outside the room, no sockets except shaver socket
- fire safety – obvious fire hazards, fire safe furniture, escape routes, presence of smoke detectors which are regularly checked
- dampness and/or mould growth
- heating and ventilation
- stair banisters, handrails and tripping hazards
- decorative condition
- cleanliness and hygiene
- condition of furniture (including comfort and cleanliness of the young person’s bed and mattress) and floor coverings
- any garden issues, for example with regard to water features or hazardous plants.
- security from intruders
- risk of falling from upstairs windows.
*This is not an exhaustive list

Additional information can be found at the link below, but note that the site is aimed primarily at landlords rather than those letting to lodgers in their own home.
www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Privaterenting/Repairsandstandards/DG_189195
Additional issues to consider if there are household pets might include:

- type of pets (note that some breeds of dog are prohibited as pets under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991)
- number, size and temperament
- how they behave in the presence of young people and visitors
- any history of snarling, scratching, snapping, biting etc
- which parts of the property they have access to including e.g. the furniture, kitchen and eating surfaces
- where they sleep, and any issues with noise at night
- any issues with smells, feeding and waste
- the level of control and supervision.

If young people will be travelling in the host’s vehicle(s), schemes might want to consider checking MOTs, insurance, road tax and driving licences.

**Discussion point**

If you use a checklist for assessing the safety and suitability of the home, how will you ensure that unusual risk factors are taken into account, for swimming pools or legally held firearms?

Will there be a pet assessment? Which types of pet will be included and will you include the pets of regular visitors?

**Wider environment and matching considerations**

It will be important to take the environmental aspects of the applicant’s circumstances into account. Examples might include the neighbourhood in which they live, regular visitors to the property, accessibility to amenities and travel facilities in relation to a young person’s needs. Religion, race, cultural and linguistic background and sexuality may all be relevant to the matching process.

**Discussion point**

When should a visitor be CRB checked?

It is not possible to vet all visitors to the house but should regular (including overnight) visitors be CRB checked?

What do you need to achieve through home visits and how many visits might this take?

**Assessment panels and other partnership approaches**

The presentation of assessments for foster carers to a fostering panel is one of the statutory requirements for the approval of foster carers, and variations of ‘approval panels’ are used by many Supported Lodgings schemes. One option used by some schemes, most commonly those for young people leaving care, is to use the existing fostering panel which re-configures as a Supported Lodgings panel. Alternatively, schemes may want to establish their own dedicated panel.
Panels are usually made up of professionals from a range of agencies and disciplines and their role is to help quality assure the assessment and approval process for each host/carer by making recommendations to inform the scheme’s decision. For a panel to be effective, it is important that it has sufficient independence from the scheme and that both the scheme and panel members understand that a key part of their role is to question and challenge practice that they do not consider in the best interests of young people’s safety or wellbeing. In addition to their contribution to decisions about the approval of individual host/carers, it is useful (and required of fostering panels) to ensure the scheme receives regular overall feedback from the panel.

The process of assessing and approving hosts/carers can be strengthened in other ways by working with other agencies. For example:

- Those that can undertake particular tasks, such as the fire service for fire safety checks and the police, local authority and others who will undertake checks as part of the vetting process.
- Others working with the young people you support, such as a voluntary agency establishing a scheme for young people leaving care that could involve someone from the leaving care team in home visits.
- Schemes may also find it helpful to co-ordinate with other services with whom potential hosts/carers may have had previous assessments, such as fostering, adoption and child minding, to avoid duplication, particularly if they are part of the same local authority or voluntary organisation.

Young Devon uses a selection and approval panel to:
- provide a forum for the discussion of assessment documents
- provide consistent and thorough processes for making informed decisions
- agree on a common approach to identified risks and complex situations
- agree a process for re-approving and monitoring existing providers
- provide clear guidance and direction for applicants who are deferred, refused or de-registered from the scheme

Selection and Approval Panels consist of a Young Devon Senior Manager, a Young Devon Host Support Worker, a representative from Children & Young People’s Services, a representative from a Local Authority Housing Department and an approved Host Provider. Part of the report presented reflects the views of a young person who has visited the potential host with a Young Devon worker. The multi agency panel promotes safeguarding by ensuring safer recruitment guidelines and process are followed throughout the assessment process.

Unsuccessful applications

Schemes are likely to receive a small number of applications from people who eventually they will not approve as hosts/carers. Clear procedures can support these decisions and help ensure schemes deal fairly and appropriately with applicants who are not approved. Considerations include:

- what circumstances will automatically rule an applicant out, for example certain types of criminal conviction, previous involvement with children’s services for the safety and wellbeing of the host/carers own child(ren), failure of the property to meet the scheme’s minimum standards
- what are assessing workers expected to do when they first identify concerns, for example raising the problem with their line manager to agree next steps
• provision of clear information to prospective hosts/carers about who can/can’t be a host/carer at an early stage to give people the opportunity to opt out themselves if they know they are unlikely to meet the criteria and/or standards required
• letting applicants know as early as possible in the process if they are unlikely to be approved so as not to waste their time or that of the scheme
• establishing an appeal or complaints process for use by applicants whose assessments are discontinued due to concerns.

**Tax, benefits and insurance**

Schemes will need to provide basic advice and help to potential hosts/carers access advice about how Supported Lodgings income will affect their own financial circumstances and insurance requirements to enable them to make informed decisions about whether they take on the role.¹

**Tenancies and mortgages**

Supported Lodgings schemes should advise individual hosts/carers to check their tenancy or mortgage documents and speak to their landlord or lender to confirm that they can have a lodger without breaching their tenancy or mortgage agreement.

**Involving young people and hosts/carers**

Young people and hosts/carers bring different insights to assessment to those of scheme staff and other professionals. They can be involved in different stages of the assessment process, for example designing information and support for potential hosts/carers, looking at standards for assessment, assisting with health and safety assessments and sitting on panels. Including interaction with young people in the assessment process will help schemes consider how well applicants relate to and build rapport with young people.

**Policies relevant to assessment of hosts/carers**

Assessment policy
Acceptable behaviour policy for carers/hosts
Procedure for warnings and ending host/carer roles
Equal opportunities
Pet Assessment
Safeguarding
Data protection
Confidentiality
Lone working.

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¹ More information and links can be found in *Providing more than a room - Guide to benefits, tax and insurance* [http://www.fostering.net/supported-lodgings] and in appendix 2. [www.fostering.net/resources/advice/england/fosterline](http://www.fostering.net/resources/advice/england/fosterline) has a list of insurers in foster care and Supported Lodgings field.
Section 5: Support and Training for Hosts/Carers

Introduction

Hosts/carers and their families are at the front line of the service to young people 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This will only work well if they have confidence that the scheme is right behind them, both in terms of pro-active, ongoing support and training and for emergency backup if needed. The support offer therefore needs to be clearly defined, well understood by all involved and, crucially, always delivered.

This section should be read alongside Section 11: Supporting Young People.

A support system for hosts/carers might include:

- a named contact
- regular supervision meetings and visits
- out of hours support
- yearly reviews of the host/carer, including a health and safety check of the home to indicate ongoing support and training needs
- opportunities for hosts/carers to discuss safeguarding issues and gain knowledge of the safeguarding procedures
- ongoing training and development opportunities (see the Learning and Development modules)
- a peer support group for hosts/carers where experiences and practice can be shared (in either a social or formal setting)
- a mentoring scheme where experienced hosts/carers mentor new recruits
- alternative short term arrangements to allow hosts/carers or young people to take time out when necessary.

In North Tyneside, a bi-monthly evening training session is held for Supported Lodgings hosts/carers and Nightstop hosts where outside trainers deliver sessions on topics not covered in depth by initial training, for example drugs, mental health, asylum and eating disorders. Support sessions with the host/carer and Project Manager take place every 2 to 6 months depending on the host/carer’s wishes and identified need. Hosts/carers have a named contact who is always available and access to an out of hours service. Other contact with hosts/carers includes:

- a bi monthly newsletter
- a 6 monthly provider forum
- an annual event.

Schemes report the need to carefully balance offering sufficient support and training with demands on hosts/carers’ time, and it is important to seek ongoing feedback from all hosts/carers about their preferred ways of receiving support. Hosts/carers generally appreciate regular offers of support and efforts to engage them, and it should always be clear whether activities are optional or required. For required activities, schemes report that it needs to be very clear which these are and that delivery should be as flexible as possible.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Home from Home; developments in Supported Lodgings provision for young people conference report 28 April 2009.
Partner agencies will often be very happy to provide input for hosts/carers because they are likely to recognise this as a way of reaching and supporting young people. They may be able to provide written information about services and issues facing young people, but hosts/carers are likely to gain the most from face to face contact and discussions as part of training or support group sessions.

It is important to achieve a balance between sessions focusing on the problems and needs young people may have, such as those related to emotional wellbeing, substance misuse, exploitation or gang involvement, as opposed to opportunities available to young people locally, such as activities and learning.

The Four Agency Project Learning and Development modules are free for schemes to download and use as part of their training programmes for hosts/carers. They can be adapted for groups or one-to-one training setting as required.\(^6\)

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### Hosts/carer view points

**What about the way the scheme is run gives you confidence in your role?**

“Knowing that the scheme is optional and that both parties are choosing to be there”.

“It’s openness in terms of when/where [young people] can go and how much they join in the household”.

“It tries to treat the youngsters as adults, sure they’ll make mistakes but didn’t we when were that age”.

“Knowing that if [young people] break that trust they can lose their privileges”.

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### Top tips from young people

Involvement in training for hosts/carers is one of the most important roles for young people in the running of schemes.

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### Discussion point

**What specialist training can you access locally?**

Will new hosts/carers and those accommodating young people with more complex needs need more training and support, and what forms might this take?

How will you make training accessible if your locality includes rural areas where hosts may live many miles apart?

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\(^6\) [www.fostering.net/resources/training-materials/supported-lodgings-learning-and-development-modules](http://www.fostering.net/resources/training-materials/supported-lodgings-learning-and-development-modules)
Managing support to hosts/carers and young people

The question of whether the delivery of support for hosts/carers and young people should be separate generates significant debate, and a number of models are in operation, for example:

- Both the host/carer and young person have the same support worker from the scheme.
- As above, with procedures for bringing in separate support if any conflict of interest arises.
- They are supported by separate support workers, both from the scheme (either with dedicated host/carer and young people’s workers or integrated teams where each worker supports a number of hosts and a number of young people but never both in the same placement).
- The scheme staff provide support to the host/carer whilst the young people are supported by a different team or agency, for example the leaving care team or a floating support service.

Proponents of combined support see this as a good arrangement for ensuring cohesive support for the young person from their host/carer and worker, and for a collaborative approach to resolving any disagreements. However, others point out that at times the interests of the host/carer, the worker and the young person do not converge and that separate support is both helpful in terms of clarity and necessary to protect the interests of both parties when conflicts of interest do arise. One example of conflicting interests is where a host/carer feels the young person needs to leave the placement, the young person does not want to leave and the worker will be responsible for finding a new placement.

Practical and resource considerations also play a part in this decision, particularly in the smallest schemes where having the same worker to support both parties can be the only option.

In the Torbay scheme, the Supported Lodgings householders are supported by a Supported Lodgings co-ordinator and the young people are supported by their personal advisors.

Discussion point

What are the pros and cons for your scheme of combined and separate support to hosts/carers and young people, and what measures can you put in place to ensure that any potential disadvantages of your chosen approach are minimised?

Policies relevant to the support of hosts/carers

Safeguarding
Confidentiality and information sharing
Risk assessment
Equal opportunities and diversity
Data protection
Lone working.
Section 6: Payment to Hosts/Carers

Introduction

An obvious question with regard to payments to host/carers is how much should they receive, but in practice the 'how' often creates more challenge.

Most hosts/carers would prefer payments to be regular and from one source. Where the placement is for a looked after young person or a care leaver aged under 18, children’s services will be responsible for the placement cost and this should be fairly easy to achieve.

However, when rent (usually funded by Housing Benefit) makes up part of the funding package - for example for young people who are not looked after or leaving care and for care leavers aged over 18 in many schemes - it becomes more complex. Whether or not rent and Housing Benefit are involved, most schemes require young people to make a contribution from their own income (whether earned or from allowances or welfare benefits) towards the cost of food, utilities etc.⁷

Common funding sources for payments to hosts/carers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s services funded placements (usually for eligible and relevant children)</th>
<th>Other placements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young person’s contribution from their allowance and/or earnings</td>
<td>Young person’s contribution from their welfare benefits and/or earnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement cost covering the cost of the accommodation and support offered by the host/carer</td>
<td>Rent for which the young person is liable as the lodger and licencee. They will usually be eligible for Housing Benefit which will cover or contribute towards the total rent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support charge Usually paid for by the commissioner, for example Supporting People and/or children’s services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tax and benefits

The income that hosts/carers receive from Supported Lodgings hosting/caring is likely to be treated as income for the purposes of both tax and means tested benefits, although some concessions may apply.

The financial difference the tax and benefit regulations make to hosts/carers varies according to:

- their own circumstances
- the amount of money they receive for being a Supported Lodgings host/carer
- the age and status of the young people they accommodate
- whether or not meals are provided as part of the Supported Lodgings placements.

Hosts/carers are likely to need ongoing access to advice on tax and benefits issues.

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⁷ Please see Guide to Benefits, Tax and Insurance for more information relevant to the issues raised in this section [www.fostering.net/supported-lodgings](http://www.fostering.net/supported-lodgings)
Payment rates

There are no standard rates of payment to host/carers and no national benchmarks for minimum payments. In practice, a wide range of factors have influenced payments, not least the availability of funding, and the resulting range is considerable. Supported Lodgings forums are good places to investigate across a region the levels of payments schemes make to their hosts/carers.

The breakdown in the table above creates a useful starting point, particularly for schemes where rent and Housing Benefit are involved.

Young people’s contributions are necessarily constrained by their income, and calculations of what they should pay are often related to the amounts they will need to expect to spend on the same items (e.g. food, fuel and water) when they move on to live independently. This is often seen as an important part of helping young people to learn to budget. Research undertaken in 2008 found that rates of young person’s contribution varied from £8 to £30 per week.⁸

Rent is usually set at roughly the Local Housing Allowance rate of housing benefit that the young people will be eligible for, in most cases the Shared Accommodation Rate. Supported Lodgings rents tend to vary significantly between areas because Local Housing Allowance rates are related to market rent levels in each locality.

Support charges are made in recognition that the host/carer is usually expected to do a great deal more than providing ‘board and lodgings’ for young people. As such, some schemes pay different rates of support charge for placements for young people with different levels of needs. These payment may also vary depending on the intended balance between support from the hosts/carers and workers.

Many hosts/carers highlight that they prefer the scheme to manage the housing benefit and contributions from the young person in order that their finances are secure, and schemes taking this approach will need to budget for the associated financial risk. If hosts/carers are expected to manage the rent and young person’s contributions themselves, this and the associated possibility of some lost income will need to be made clear at the outset. Either way it is important that everyone is clear about who is responsible for which elements of payments to hosts/carers and what will happen if any part of the payment falls into arrears.

Some services also offer additional reimbursement of small costs to hosts/carers, for example out of pocket expenses.⁹

### Discussion point

- Will payments be tiered depending on young peoples needs, and if so how will the levels be defined?
- Will you take into account changing needs during placements?
- What sort of out of pocket expenses are likely to arise and how should claims be approved?

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⁹ Making a difference: Supported Lodgings as a housing option for young people, Communities and Local Government
Staying Put placements present specific issues with regard to the level of payments for hosts/carers because, by definition, they would have been set at fostering levels until the young person reached 18. As the Staying Put interim evaluation report noted: “While some carers continue on the same or similar remuneration packages, other carers within Staying Put now receive less financial reward for offering a Staying Put placement”. \(^\text{10}\) Staying Put carers therefore need to be made aware well in advance of the young person reaching the age of 18 what rate they will receive in order that they can decide whether they are able to continue to support the young person. Concern is often expressed by carers who are unable to take a reduced payment that it is their fault that the young person is unable to remain with them, and in these circumstances the ending of the placement will need to be managed in a planned and careful way to ensure positive relationships are not damaged.

**Housing Benefit**

Where rent and Housing Benefit make up part of the funding it is important that schemes, hosts/carers and most importantly young people understand that Housing Benefit claims are made by young people to help them pay their rent, and as such the young person is responsible for both the rent and the housing benefit claim. Learning how to manage the rent and Housing Benefit claims will be very important for young people if they are likely to need Housing Benefit when they move on from Supported Lodgings.

Many schemes have developed beneficial working relationships with the Housing Benefit service. Having a named contact and ensuring the manager is aware of the scheme can make a big difference to how flexible and supportive they will be. For example, with young people’s permission, some Housing Benefit services will pay the benefit directly to the host/carer (the landlord) or to the scheme (the landlord’s agent) rather than to the young person.

Other schemes find it difficult to reach agreement for Housing Benefit to be paid directly to the host/carer, primarily because regulations and guidance from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) discourage this except in individual cases where it can be demonstrated that a customer is likely to have difficulty paying their rent. Schemes may find the DWP’s Local Housing Allowance Guidance Manual 2011 helpful in addressing this. Chapter 5 deals with ‘Identifying customers who are likely to have difficulty paying their rent’ and paragraphs 5.071 to 5.073 encourage liaison with homelessness/housing options departments over these decisions. If a scheme is struggling to obtain direct payment arrangements a partnership with the housing options service may help.\(^\text{11}\)

**Policies relevant to payment of hosts/carers**

Rent and charges policy
Licence agreement and agreement between the scheme and its hosts/carers
Financial procedures – Fees and Expenses policies

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\(^{10}\) Evaluation of the Staying Put: 18+ Family Placement Pilot Programme Interim Report Overview of Emerging Themes and Issues.

\(^{11}\) www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/cha-guidance-manual.pdf
Section 7: Referral and Assessment of Young People

Introduction

The usual objectives for referral and assessment procedures for services to young people are to ensure that the service is appropriate to the young person’s needs and to provide the basis for support planning and risk management based on a good understanding of the young person’s needs, aspirations and risks.

For Supported Lodgings services, there are important additional objectives. They must gather information to inform the process of matching the young person with a host/carer and determine if there are any risks to either the young person or to hosts/carers and their households that mean a placement in Supported Lodgings should not be made and an alternative must be found.

Supported Lodgings work well for many young people but are generally less suitable for those with acute mental health needs, serious current substance use issues or engaged in current prolific offending, as most hosts/carers and schemes cannot provide the necessary specialist support. However, placements may be set up for young people with specialist needs. As far as possible, schemes should be accessible to all young people who meet the eligibility criteria for a placement.

Top tips from young people

It is important that the young person who is eligible for the service, finds it accessible and that the information they are provided with is correct and makes the service appealing. Young people need to feel that they are being treated as an adult and have a genuine role in decisions about their placement.

Referral

Referral arrangements will need to be agreed with the referring agencies and their effectiveness will depend not only on the paperwork and procedures but also on trusting professional relationships. It is particularly important for Supported Lodgings schemes that referral agencies do not withhold important information about young people in the fear that it will lead to their exclusion from the service. Building relationships through dialogue and openness can provide the foundation for full sharing of relevant information about young people in return for an inclusive, realistic and open approach to risk assessment and management from the scheme.

An important first step in this process is establishing a shared understanding of the role and nature of the scheme and its intended client group. In addition to this, clear agreements about any ongoing support to be provided by the referral agency and other partners will help the scheme to develop effective support and risk assessments and support and risk management plans.
Assessment

Schemes will want to undertake assessments with young people that will provide the basis for support planning and risk management, and most have developed referral and assessment procedures and resources for this purpose. However, it is also helpful to consider what statutory or other assessment and planning the young person has already undergone. For example, their assessment and care/Pathway Plan if they are leaving care which will have been made before reaching the Supported Lodgings scheme and how they can be built on in order to avoid repetition for the young person and to save time for the scheme. Schemes may be able to work with some referral agencies to ensure they contribute to the young person’s existing plans rather than starting again with new ones.

Schemes are likely to need to work with other agencies whose services the young person is using (with the young person’s consent) to gather and analyse all relevant information as a basis for needs led support planning. For example, if a young person is using mental health services, there may be particular environmental factors the scheme can build on or avoid in the matching and support planning process in order to promote the young person’s recovery.

A wide range of assessment frameworks are available and have been developed from a variety of sources including the Every Child Matters framework. Schemes are often happy to share through Supported Lodgings forums. Wider local systems may also influence a scheme’s approach to assessment – for example where the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is in use as part of an integrated approach to working with children and young people in the area, schemes may want or be required to use it as the basis for their own assessments.

Considerations specific to Supported Lodgings include:

- safeguarding issues for the young person, host/carer and any other members of the household including any other young person in the Supported Lodgings. This will include any risks posed by the young person and the host/carer or family
- the young person’s ability and willingness to engage with the host/carer and the scheme
- the needs of the young person in relation to the hosts/carers who are available [see section 8 on matching of hosts/carers and young people for further information].

Policies relevant to assessing young people

Risk assessment, assessment and support planning
Safeguarding
Confidentiality
Equal opportunities
Data protection.

Section 8: Matching Young People and Hosts/Carers and Moving in

Introduction

Young people consistently report that the relationships between them and those supporting them are one of the most important aspects of any service, and there could hardly be a circumstance where this is truer than when the young person is living in the home of one of their key supporters and their household. Matching is not the only determinant of a positive relationship, but most schemes report that a ‘good match’ is part of the magic of Supported Lodgings and can make a great difference to the experience for both young people and hosts and the impact of the service on the young person’s life.

Matching

It is clear that matching is by no means an exact science. There are plenty of examples of unlikely matches proving transformational which were considered only as the best available placement at the time, and of course seemingly perfect matches that were not so positive. Whilst luck, instinct and experience all play a part, learning from schemes shows that there are common approaches that can improve the chances of achieving good placements and getting them off to a positive start.

Factors to consider for potential matches

- Achieving a match over which the young person feels they have exercised an informed choice.
- Location and access for the young person to important people and places in their lives, for example family and friends, college or work, places of worship.
- Factors relating to the host/carer’s child(ren) where relevant.
- If another young person is placed in the household, any implications and keeping them both informed and involved.
- Where possible, matching the aspirations, interests or hobbies of the young person with the host/carer.
- Equality issues such as language, culture/ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, religion and disability.
- Whether a host/carer can support the young person with any complex issues they may have and what extra support the scheme will need to provide or broker.
- The financial implications for the host/carer of a particular match may also need to be considered, particularly if they are in receipt of means tested benefits.\(^\text{14}\)

Matching is another area where the purpose of the scheme has a significant impact on practice, most notably differences between shorter term emergency and/or time out placements and placements intended to provide a settled home for young people. Time is important in the matching process, and whatever the nature of the placement the opportunities for advance planning should be maximised through joint working between schemes and referral agencies. For planned, settled placements, the time between referral of the young person and their moving in can take up to six weeks.

However, for emergency placements, matches will need to be made much more quickly. In this case a ‘good match’ may be simply that a host/carer is available to take a young person at short notice and perhaps with only basic knowledge of their background, needs or possible behaviours.

\(^\text{14}\) Please see the *Tax and Benefits Guide* for details.
This gives rise to a strong argument in favour of having some emergency placement options available (either in Supported Lodgings or other types of provision) so that when a young person does need accommodation at short notice, for example due to family or placement breakdown, it is available and they are not rushed into a long term placement which may be at greater risk of later breakdown.

**Processes**

Most schemes have developed clear, flexible processes for matching young people and prospective hosts/carers. Common elements are:

- information in advance for the carer, often in the form of a referral document about the young person which they should have been involved in writing and should include risk assessment and risk management information
- a profile of the carer, their household and their home for the young person
- discussions with both the host/carer and the young person about the information they’ve seen: hosts/carers may need guidance about how to support the young person with any specific needs they have
- a first meeting with a worker present, which may or may not be at the host/carer’s home. Depending on how the scheme operates, there may be one worker or two (one supporting the young person and the other working with the host/carer)
- home visits, first with a worker then the young person visiting one or more times on their own, perhaps for a meal. These should give the young person the opportunity to find out about the local area as well, including transport to places they will need to go such as college or to visit friends, family or frequently used services
- a planned overnight stay
- opportunities for both the young person and the host/carer to talk to workers about any questions or concerns throughout the process
- a well planned moving in process with a warm welcome
- seeking feedback on the process from both young people and hosts/carers in order to refine it over time.

The skills of the staff are very important to this process, as is their ability to give sufficient time to the young person and host/carer. Established schemes report that knowing their hosts/carers, their homes, households and previous experience well is also a great advantage.

**Top tips from young people**

Ask young people to write their own referrals – regarding them as experts on themselves and treating them as adults (In some schemes where this happens there is a second referral completed by a professional who knows the young person).

Offer young people ‘profiles’ - like Facebook but not online - of potential hosts/carers and their homes beforehand to give them more information and, where possible, choice (after all prospective hosts/carers are given lots of information about young people).

Meeting the host/carer and their family before moving in.

A tour of the house.

A clean house.

Give as much time as possible for the process of matching and moving in.
Moving in

By the time a young person moves in both they and the host/carer and their household should feel reasonably comfortable, but it can still be an uncertain time and young people and hosts/carers identify small and large things that are important. As discussed in the sections on supporting young people and supporting hosts/carers, both are likely to require a higher level of contact with their workers near the beginning of a placement until the young person has settled in and their relationship is well established.

Policies relevant to matching young people

Risk assessment
Safeguarding
Equality and diversity

Top tips from hosts/carers

How would you feel about the idea of offering young people ‘profiles’
“Good – give the youngster an element of choice, if they are involved in the process they are more than likely to make it work”.
“We actually made a profile sheet, with pictures and short basic story on ourselves”.

What works well in the matching process?
“Being fairly compatible helps”.
“Meeting the young person and having a conversation and going with your ‘gut feeling’”.
“Good relationship with accommodation social worker and Pathways support workers and the Pathways carers to match people”.
“Honesty”.
“Meetings beforehand with social worker then as much information as possible, and then time to decide”.

Top tips from young people

Set up meetings when young people move in to set out and agree the house rules from the very beginning so that young people and hosts/carers are less likely to do things that cause problems for the other without even realising.

Having a meal cooked and eating together on the first night.

Getting a key.

Discussion point
What sort of information should young people and hosts/carers provide for each other before they first meet?

Top tips from young people

Set up meetings when young people move in to set out and agree the house rules from the very beginning so that young people and hosts/carers are less likely to do things that cause problems for the other without even realising.

Having a meal cooked and eating together on the first night.

Getting a key.
Section 9: Living Together Agreements

Introduction

‘Living Together Agreement’ is the term used in this guide for the document(s) that set out the commitments of the host/carer and the young person for the young person’s placement. The main purpose of Living Together Agreements is to help ensure that placements are safe and a positive experience for everyone involved. Investment in well developed and carefully implemented Living Together Agreements pays off because they can prevent many problems from occurring as well as providing clear and effective arrangements for resolving difficulties and disagreements with a minimum of escalation. Module 1 of the Four Agency Project’s Learning and Development modules provides information about Living Together Agreements.\(^{15}\)

Living Together Agreements usually include two distinct but connected elements:

- A licence agreement is the legal agreement granting the young person permission to occupy the property.
- Ground (or house) rules about how the host/carer and members of their household and the young person have agreed to live together in the property.

Broadly speaking, the licence agreement would usually set out the non-negotiable obligations of both the host/carer and the young person and be consistent for all placements in a scheme. Ground rules tend to be much more flexible and tailored, and are often negotiated specifically by hosts/carers and young people (usually facilitated by the scheme) for the individual placement. In some schemes, ground rules are linked to the licence agreement in that adherence to them by both parties is expressed as a condition of the licence agreement. The main implication of this is that repeated breaches of ground rules might cause the licence agreement to be terminated and the young person having to leave.

Discussion point

What obligations for both the host/carer and young person do you consider to be non-negotiable?

What other topics will be important to young people and hosts/carers living together successfully and how can the scheme support negotiation of these for each placement?

Licence agreement

This grants the young person permission to occupy the property as long as they adhere to certain conditions, for example paying the rent and/or charges due, not wilfully damaging the property or its contents and not harming or causing excessive nuisance to the host/carer, members of their household, visitors or neighbours. It should also set out the main obligations of the hosts/carer, for example setting out which parts of the house the young person can expect to have to themselves and which rooms and facilities they can use, and the host/carer’s responsibility to maintain the property and its furnishings and fittings in good and safe condition.

\(^{15}\) [www.fostering.net/resources/training-materials/supported-lodgings-learning-and-development-modules](http://www.fostering.net/resources/training-materials/supported-lodgings-learning-and-development-modules)
Where a young person is lodging in the host/carer’s home, the case in the majority of Supported Lodgings schemes, the question of whether they are working, in education and/or in receipt of welfare benefits has no impact on the licence agreement. For example, the young person is liable for payment of the rent and charges outlined in the agreement regardless of whether they pay entirely with their own earnings or with assistance in the form of Housing Benefit.\(^\text{16}\)

Strictly speaking, the licence agreement under which a young person aged 16 or over occupies the Supported Lodgings property is termed an ‘excluded licence’, so called because it is excluded from the Protection from Eviction Act 1977. The rationale for this is that when a person rents out a room in their ‘only or principal home’ they should be able to require the person to leave more easily than if they were letting a separate property. It means that the host/carer (landlord) can ask the young person to leave with ‘reasonable notice’. This could include asking a young person to leave immediately if this could be considered reasonable in the circumstances. For example if the young person’s behaviour had resulted in harm to a person or wilful damage to property, and/or if they considered there to be an imminent risk of harm.

It is important that Supported Lodgings schemes set out clearly with both hosts/carers and young people the types of behaviour which could lead to the young person being asked to leave and how the scheme (working with relevant partners) will try to prevent breakdown of the placement where appropriate or secure alternative accommodation for the young person if necessary. This can be covered explicitly during the induction of hosts/carers and young people who have been referred to the service at the beginning of placements (including through written information in the Living Together Agreement) and during support work and reviews if there are issues arising in the placement.

‘Red line’ issues are usually fairly consistent for placements within a scheme but there may be some circumstances where specific rules apply in individual placements. This may be because of particular circumstances and/or expectations of hosts/carers or needs of young people and expectations of the placement. For example, placements established explicitly for young people with high support needs may have fewer ‘red lines’ and/or allow young people second or third chances to improve their behaviour with accompanying specialist support.

Having clear procedures covering action that will be taken in response to unacceptable behaviour can help both young people and hosts/carers understand their rights and responsibilities. There may be some actions that will lead to young people having to leave immediately because of the levels of risk or harm involved, whilst others might lead to warnings which form part of a system that can ultimately lead to the young person having to leave if behaviour doesn’t improve, for example after two or three warnings. Where warnings are in place, it is good practice to set a time limit whereby they lapse if the young person’s behaviour has remained acceptable. If a decision is reached that a young person must leave their placement they should be given as much notice as possible, taking into account the risks involved in them remaining in the host/carer’s home, in order to maximise the chances of securing suitable alternative accommodation for them.

Schemes should be aware of the legal requirements for ending an excluded licence. The Department for Communities and Local Government has a useful publication, *Renting Rooms in Someone’s Home: A guide for people considering renting from Resident Landlords*, which outlines the legal framework - [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/rentingrooms](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/rentingrooms). There is also a wide range of advice online aimed at people considering renting a room, some of which schemes may find helpful.

\(^{16}\) See *Insurance, Tax and Welfare Benefits Guide* for more information.
Ground rules

Ground rules are needed to help hosts/carers and young people to live as harmoniously together as possible. A flexible form of documentation will enable the individual hosts to develop their own ground rules in discussion with the scheme at the outset, and the individual host/carer and young person to discuss and agree their own arrangements for living together at the beginning of the placement. The purpose and intended duration of the placement is likely to have a significant effect on ground rules with shorter term placements often having tighter rules than placements offering the young person a settled home.

Developing ground rules

Some of the things schemes recommend covering include:

- clarity about what happens when young people make mistakes, including sanctions for inappropriate behaviour
- the areas of the property open to the young person, their private space and any rules about keys
- helping keep the house clean and tidy, perhaps with a rota
- how and when the hosts/carers will access the young person’s own space e.g. if there are not enough clean cups in the house does the host/carer have permission to enter the room?
- staying out overnight – keeping the host informed and at what point a young person will be considered missing and steps that will be taken
- flexible living, like being able to text if you’re going to miss dinner or be late home
- having friends around, for example any limits on how many visitors at once, friends staying overnight, letting the host/carer know in advance about planned visitors
- use of facilities including washing machine, home phone and internet
- travel in the host/carer’s car
- smoking and drinking alcohol
- use of the address for buying services/entering contracts, for example for a mobile phone contract, catalogues
- noise – for example how loud can music be played and at what time
- expectations of communication and behaviour
- ways to respect one another’s personal space, time and privacy
- how the host/carer or young person will challenge the other if they feel an agreed ground rule isn’t being followed or that a new one might be needed, and when they might involve scheme workers.

The process of negotiation can be very positive, ensuring young people know that they are being respected as young adults and helping establish trust, compromise and negotiation within the relationship.
Top tips and view points from young people

Positive things:

“Trust from the beginning and only losing privileges if the trust is broken, e.g. having a key from the start and only having it withdrawn if misused”.

“A key is symbolic; this represents trust, having a safe place to live with private space.”

Negative things:

Having no key and waiting for someone to come home
Not being able to be in the home alone
Not being trusted
Not being able to use the address for phone contracts and other bills
Curfews and lots of rules
Having to ask in advance to have visitors
Limitations on use of equipment such as the washing machine
Not being able to travel in the host/carer’s car

Advice:

Don’t expect the carer to be a parent
Contribute to the household
Be sensitive to other people (noise etc)
Participate in household chores

Top tips from hosts/carers

Have definite rules and areas you are prepared to negotiate so the young person feels included.
Keep it simple.
Ask the young person what they feel is acceptable.
Be flexible and adapt rules when young person is ready.

Policies relevant to living together and house rules

Safeguarding
Equal opportunities and diversity
Risk assessment
Drug, alcohol and substance misuse
Ending placements
Confidentiality
Section 10: Supporting Young People

Introduction

There are numerous support planning systems including statutory frameworks such as Placement Plans for looked after children, Pathway Planning for young people leaving care, integrated working frameworks such as the Common Assessment Framework, and the processes designed by individual organisations and schemes to support the young people they work with. It is possible to identify four elements which are usually the core of these processes, with the young person at the heart of each stage and taking the lead as much as possible:

- Holistic assessment of needs, aspirations and risks
- Planning the support and services required to meet identified needs, help the young person develop and achieve their aspirations and reduce and manage risks
- Providing and/or brokering the support and services
- Regular reviews of progress and any changes needed to the plan.

The Four Agency Project’s Learning and Development modules provide more information about safeguarding and supporting young people ([www.fostering.net/resources/training-materials/supported-lodgings-learning-and-development-modules](http://www.fostering.net/resources/training-materials/supported-lodgings-learning-and-development-modules)).

Supporting young people in Supported Lodgings

While structured support is an essential element of Supported Lodging, not all of the support young people receive can or should be captured in it. Perhaps the greatest strength of Supported Lodgings lies in the day to day interaction between young people and their hosts/carers and their households, and the relationships built along the way, often enduring long after a young person moves on.

Top tips from young people

“If I have a bad day and an adult asks ‘how was your day?’, that makes my day as I know someone cares”.

“Someone to talk to about your problems and someone to offer moral support too”.

“I know that sometimes when I have been going through a rough patch, I have been a bit rude, but my carer has shown patience with me which is important”.

The combination of support given on an informal and relationship basis, and a professionally led assessment and support basis can be extremely powerful. It makes sense to invest in both elements. Much of the work schemes undertake to create the conditions for transformational relationships runs throughout the recruitment, training and support of hosts/carers, preparation of young people for placements and matching. The remainder of this section focuses on the structured support process.

Two key questions for Supported Lodgings schemes are:

- what will the respective roles of scheme staff, hosts/carers and others be?
- how will the scheme’s support planning processes interact with other care and support plans young people might already have? The most obvious example is care leavers’ Pathway Plans?
Who does what?

There are three distinct approaches, each with variations:

a) The scheme is responsible for the support process set out at the beginning of this section and undertakes structured support, whilst hosts/carers undertake informal support which may be loosely linked to the formal support plan.

b) As in a) but hosts/carers undertake focused and structured support which is designed to contribute to objectives set out in the support plan as well as offering informal support.

In both a) and b), the same scheme worker may support both the young person and the host/carer, or each might have a separate allocated worker.

c) The scheme is not responsible for the young person’s support, which is delivered by another organisation or team such as the leaving care team. Hosts/carers may or may not be required to provide specific support. The scheme’s main role is to provide placements with ongoing support and training to hosts/carers.

There is no evidence to favour any of these options above the others, and which is chosen for a scheme will depend on a range of local factors. In all three, clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of everyone involved is needed if young people are to receive coherent, outcome focused support. Agreements about how the scheme, hosts/carers and any external agency with overall responsibility for the young person’s support will work together and share information are an essential element of this.

Top tips from young people

Education – young people need time and space to study and they value encouragement, motivation and support from their hosts/carers.

Emotional support:
- empathy, understanding and patience
- someone to talk to about relationships and problems
- moral support
- trust and patience.

Other skills hosts/carers may help the young person develop can include:
- interpersonal skills - formal and informal relationship building
- identity - knowledge of and links with family and community; sexuality; cultural knowledge.

Problematic issues include:
- mixed messages
- finding support too intrusive
- how constructive criticism is given about how they complete tasks
- not feeling trusted.
The scheme, hosts/carers and lead supporter of the young person are unlikely to be the only ones involved in supporting a young person. Multi-agency working to support young people follows directly on from work with partners undertaken during referral and assessment. Young peoples’ support or Pathway Plans will often involve input from more than one agency in order to provide the best support and opportunities. For some young people, several agencies may be involved to help the young person address multiple or complex needs.

Where this is the case, it is good practice to ensure someone takes responsibility for co-ordinating the work of all the services, sometimes referred to as a lead professional role in a ‘team around the young person’ approach. It may be appropriate for the scheme to undertake this role for some young people, and for others, there will be another obvious lead, such as a leaving care personal adviser.

**Discussion point**

Under what circumstances would your scheme take on the lead professional role?

How would you do this and what would happen to the young person’s package of support when they moved out of Supported Lodgings?

**Planning the next move**

Young people often report that it is extremely important to them to have a sense of what their next steps could be and the support to take them, so a key part of helping them prepare for independence is working from early on in their placement to help them explore the range of housing options that might be available to them there and how realistic each option is. Young people need to have the opportunity to really weigh up the pros and cons of each option for them personally in the light of their needs, preferences and plans, and planning in advance can make space for this to happen.

Different options will suit different young people and for most there will be trade-offs in their choices – for example a young person might want the security of a social rented tenancy but want to live in an area where none are available, or want to share with friends which might not be an option in social housing. In some areas, social housing will simply not be an option for many young people.

Given the complexity of the options and the decision for each young person, access to good quality, impartial housing advice is very important as is time for the young person to consider, talk and decide (see also section 11, Young People Moving On).

**Independent living skills**

Most young people who need Supported Lodgings are in the process of what will be a fairly rapid transition to independence, and many will be expected to live independently as soon as they leave their placement. Depending on the services available locally, the amount of support available to them after they move on could be limited.

Helping young people to develop the skills they will need when they move on is therefore a top priority for most long term schemes, and where there is pressure on the capacity of schemes there may well be pressure to ‘get the young person ready’ as soon as possible or, depending on funding arrangements, even to a ‘deadline’ such as the young person’s 18th birthday. Whilst many schemes work to challenge these pressures, they often find there is no choice but to work as quickly as possible to help young people be a ready as they can.
There are a number of frameworks and resources available to support the process of developing practical life skills. One example is the 22 Life Skills set out in the regulations and guidance for the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. This was an attempt to identify the essential life skills that every young person needs in order to successfully move into independence. (See appendix 3 for the list). Numerous frameworks have also been developed linked to the supported accommodation sector, for example Amber Foundation’s Practical Housing Units.

The Amber Foundation’s Practical Housing Units is an accredited programme which focuses on basic skills, knowledge and understanding underpinning a person’s ability to sustain a tenancy and develop a healthy lifestyle. There are ten core units and others covering specific issues.

In some schemes, hosts/carers are trained and supported to use specific resources to deliver structured sessions to young people as part of their formal support. In others, there will simply be agreement that the host/carer will support, encourage and guide the young person and give them plenty of opportunities to learn and practice particular skills.

In Hertfordshire Supported Lodgings hosts/carers help young people with cooking as part of independent living skills. Young people described their carers as having:
• inspired their cooking
• taught them to cook a variety of food
• showed them how to make good balanced meals and include protein and carbohydrates.

Most of the resources and discussion on independent living skills focus on practical skills, but we know that the development of coping mechanisms for the emotional challenges of independent living, especially living alone for the first time, are just as important. This is often more difficult but requires equal attention for many young people. A combination of helping young people recognise and prepare for the potential emotional impact of independent living and helping them build dependable support networks in advance can work well. Opportunities to meet young people who have experienced the move to independence can help bring the challenge to life so they can begin to think about how they will best cope.
“Taste of independence” training flats, Bournemouth

Care leavers can stay in Bournemouth’s Taste of Independence flat for up to three weeks as part of their preparation for independence. The flat is fully furnished and the young person is provided with an allowance equivalent to current benefit rates. This gives them the opportunity to:

- experience independent living in a safe setting
- work on key areas of independent living skills e.g. budgeting, self-care, cooking, cleaning, healthy lifestyle, training, employment, education etc
- consider the emotional aspects of independent living, for example seeing how they feel spending time alone, thinking about their support networks, and planning how to use their time
- test their own readiness for independence and identify any gaps in their skills and expectations.

A support package using a team around the young person approach is set up for each Taste of Independence placement. This involves the young person’s family, carers and professionals and support is gradually reduced over their stay in the flat.

Young people going through the Supported Lodgings scheme and the training flat seem to make good tenants; to date not one has lost their tenancy.

Policies relevant to supporting young people
Support care/Pathway Plan
Confidentiality and Information Sharing
Section 11: Young People Moving On

Introduction

This section looks at some of the ways schemes can work with partners to help make more and better move-on options available to young people and ensure they have support if they need it.

Access to suitable, affordable accommodation, with support when needed, is often a major challenge for young people moving on from Supported Lodgings and other forms of supported living. Providers can help each young person on an individual level but it is also important to develop partnerships and influence local policies in order to reduce some of the barriers that block access to suitable accommodation and support.

Leaving Supported Lodgings

Personal relationships and commitments often develop between young people and hosts/carers during placements and they can remain a positive force in the lives of both, sometimes for many years. Examples of ongoing relationships described by schemes during the Four Agency Project have included a host/carer in Bournemouth becoming the godmother of a young person’s daughter, and another young person continuing to spend Christmas day with the family. In order to respect and build on these relationships, schemes, hosts/cares and young people all identify ‘good moves’ as very important, wherever the young person is moving on to.

Top tips from young people

Mark the occasion, e.g. with a goodbye meal.

Help with packing and moving.

Proper bags and suitcases, never using ‘black bags’.

A genuine goodbye and wishing you luck.

Continuing contact and knowing you can return for a meal sometimes.

Having the carer keep a spare key to the new flat.

Top tip from hosts/carers

“It is very important that they know you are willing to still help them.”
Move-on options

One of the biggest challenges in supporting young people to move-on is determining what housing options are actually available and whether there are ways to make more options accessible: specialist advice can help with this. There are a wide range of potential housing options for young people, for example:

- shared housing or lodgings in the private rented sector
- staying on with their former Supported Lodgings host/carer as a lodger
- self contained accommodation in the private rented sector*
- a tenancy with a housing association or local authority
- accommodation linked to full-time study at university or college
- supported accommodation schemes including foyers
- returning home or to live with family or friends
- specialist accommodation such as self contained accommodation with personal assistance or support, or therapeutic placements for young people with specific support needs.

*This is likely to be restricted for most young people because of the Shared Room Rate (SRR) restriction on Housing Benefit for young people under the age of 25 (planned to increase to 35). Small numbers of young people are exempt from the SRR including care leavers aged 18-20.

Whichever options are considered, the Care Planning and Review Regulations and Guidance [2010] provide a checklist of things to consider when determining the suitability of accommodation for young people. Schemes may find this helpful whether or not they are working with young people who are leaving care.

1. In respect of the accommodation, the:
   - facilities and services provided
   - state of repair
   - safety
   - location
   - support
   - tenancy status
   - financial commitments involved for the young person and their affordability.

2. In respect of the young person, their
   - views about the accommodation
   - understanding of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the accommodation
   - understanding of funding arrangements.

More discussion of each of these areas can be found in the guidance [www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a0065502/care-planning-for-looking-after-children-and-care-leavers](http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a0065502/care-planning-for-looking-after-children-and-care-leavers)
Improving access to accommodation

Both the availability of accommodation and difficulty of access varies considerably between areas, and schemes are often involved locally in working to both increase availability and reduce barriers to access by working in partnership with the local authority and other individuals and organisations. Where they exist, partnership arrangements such as homelessness and housing strategy groups and forums (sometimes specifically focused on young people) can provide opportunities for effective joint working and influencing at a strategic level.

Initiatives that can improve access to accommodation for young people include:

- Ensuring young people who are in learning or planning to study are supported to explore accommodation and funding options linked to their college or university, taking into account that they may need vacation accommodation too.
- Ensuring that for young people who need it, there is access to support after they move, perhaps through access to local floating support services. This both helps young people make a success of their tenancy and gives landlords in both the social and private rented sectors more confidence about letting to young people. In addition, if young people have undertaken accredited or locally recognised programmes in independent living skills many landlords are more likely to let to them.
- Services to help young people access private rented accommodation including help to find properties and prospective flatmates; bond schemes; and landlord accreditation schemes. Many Local Authority Housing Options services work closely with private landlords and can assist in accessing good quality private rented tenancies, sometimes linked to benefits such as landlord accreditation or longer tenancies than the standard six month minimum.
- Influencing allocations policies for social rented accommodation – for example in some areas young people needing to move on from Supported Lodgings or other supported accommodation are given a high level of priority for social housing in order to prevent silting up of scarce and expensive supported accommodation. Young people leaving care are often treated as having high priority for access to social housing in local allocation policies.
- Being alert to the possibility of some young people being able to stay longer term with their former supported lodgings host/carer, after support from the scheme has ended. Where this might be an option it can be planned well in advance, but of course the scheme will have to find a new host/carer to replace the ‘lost’ placement.
- Working closely with other providers of accommodation and support, and where they are in place access or referral panels or gateways, to enable young people to move between different services where appropriate to their needs. This can both support planned transitions and help prevent placement breakdowns.
Case study

YMCA Face-to-Face Rent Bond Scheme, Fylde and Wyre, Lancashire
This Rent Bond Guarantee gives landlords a certificate for the first period of an assured shorthold tenancy, normally six months, covering any damages during the period of the certificate. The Guarantee does not cover rent repayments, arrears, rent in advance, service charges or utility service charges.

An inventory of the accommodation is taken and agreed by the landlord and Face-to-Face at the beginning of the tenancy and the end of the period. If there is any damage to the property, fixtures or fittings at the end of the period, excluding wear and tear, it is paid for by the scheme under the Guarantee.

Support for young people
Ongoing support is provided by project staff and trained volunteers through floating support and drop-in sessions.

Discussion points

What would you need to consider if you wanted to offer young people and hosts/carers the opportunity to turn the Supported Lodgings placement into lodgings instead of the young person moving to different accommodation?
Section 12: Quality and Service Improvement

Introduction

Many Supported Lodgings schemes apply principles of continuous improvement to ensure that they are always focused on learning and using the lessons to develop their service and improve outcomes for young people. This section looks at some examples of approaches to continuous improvement and briefly considers the two quality assurance frameworks which are generally considered most relevant to Supported Lodgings – the Supporting People Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011) (NMS).

Key questions to consider when designing service improvement processes for any scheme include:

- What outcomes are we aiming to achieve with young people?
- What information will we need to determine how well we are doing and who can provide it?
- Who do we need to involve in order to obtain and interpret the information and plan change?

Quality assurance frameworks

Quality assurance frameworks generally prescribe specific sets of standards for services to adhere to. There is no framework specifically designed for Supported Lodgings, and the two which are most commonly used or referred to are the QAF and the NMS. Both provide valuable reference points for schemes but most argue that neither fits fully with the delivery of Supported Lodgings.

Supporting People Quality Assurance Framework

The QAF was originally devised as part of the suite of resources accompanying the Government’s Supporting People programme. This was launched in 2003 to fund ‘housing related support’ for a range of vulnerable client groups including young people at risk, young people leaving care and young parents. The Supporting People Programme has now ended as a national initiative and Sitra, the umbrella body for housing with care and support, now maintains and updates the QAF (most recently reviewed in 2009).

The QAF is made up of five core and seven supplementary service objectives, each with a set of standards. The core objectives are:

- assessment and support planning
- security, health and safety
- safeguarding and protection from abuse
- fair access, diversity and inclusion
- client involvement and empowerment.

The QAF was designed to address the quality of housing and support services which are mainly delivered in accommodation based or hostel type services or as ‘floating support’ to people living in a range of types of shared and independent accommodation.

17 [www.sitra.org/1281](http://www.sitra.org/1281)
As a result, it does not include standards which are directly helpful in relation to the recruitment, assessment, support and training of host/carers and it is of little practical value to schemes which provide placements where support to young people is delivered by another service or agency. Some schemes which provide support directly to young people have, however, found it helpful in relation to aspects of the service to young people set out in the service objectives, for example needs led, outcomes focused support, planning and delivery.

Many local authorities continue to use the QAF and other Supporting People resources when commissioning supported accommodation, and some schemes will be required to both undertake self assessment under the QAF and undergo external validation against them by their commissioners. As a significant number of Supported Lodgings schemes receive funding through this route, many have been, or are, required to use the QAF. This is likely to continue to be the case for some newly commissioned schemes, particularly where successors to Supporting People teams in local authorities are the lead commissioners.

**Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards (NMS) 2011**

The NMS are part of the regulatory framework for fostering services and for services to looked after children more broadly. They are primarily issued for use by Ofsted, who take them into account in their inspections of Fostering Services, but they can also be used by schemes for the purposes of service design and self assessment.

Because the NMS are designed specifically for fostering services, unlike the QAF they prescribe standards relating to both the care of the child or young person and how services work with foster carers as well as wider service delivery and sustainability standards. There are 31 standards in total, divided into Child Focused Standards and Standards of Fostering Service.

Many Supported Lodgings schemes, particularly those based in Children’s Services, adhere closely to the NMS and they provide a useful reference point for schemes. However, because the standards are an integral part of the ‘looked after’ system, some of the standards (and elements of standards) are not directly transferrable to schemes working outside this legal, financial and service context.

**Outcomes and monitoring**

Monitoring of outcomes is an essential requirement for any system designed to drive service improvement. Consultation during the development of this guide showed that there is little commonality between schemes with regard to targets set, the existence of any targets and what information is recorded to enable monitoring of performance. This is partly due to the differences in funding and the monitoring requirements of different commissioners.

In addition, the variations between schemes, in terms of their purpose and the needs and circumstances of the young people they work with, mean a standard set of outcomes would not be universally applicable. For example, outcomes for a short term ‘time out’ scheme might focus on keeping young people safe, helping them sustain positive aspects of their life such as education, and enabling family reconciliation where possible. A scheme providing longer term placements for young people moving towards independence may be more focused on longer term outcomes related to their ability to thrive and make a successful start in adult life.

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With this in mind, schemes and commissioners should ideally agree a simple set of specific outcomes, targets and monitoring requirements tailored to the aims and objectives of each scheme.

Whilst no longer actively promoted by Central Government, the Every Child Matters framework is still regarded by many as a helpful set of outcomes to guide the work of services for children and young people. The five outcome areas are:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic wellbeing.

In addition to their use in Children’s Services, many schemes originally funded by the Supporting People Programme have been required to deliver and monitor their services against Every Child Matters outcomes because they also underpin the outcomes system which was used by the Supporting People Programme.

Given that most Supported Lodgings schemes are aiming to help young people prepare for independent living, other important outcomes relate to what happens to young people after they leave the service, for example:

- Did they move on positively to a more independent setting?
- Did they move on in a planned way?
- Did they sustain the accommodation they moved to for a given period, for example six or 12 months?

Specific performance targets or benchmarks are often set by commissioners in relation to these.

**Discussion point**

What arrangements can you put in place to find out how young people are doing six to 12 months after leaving your service?

What would you want to know in order to help you develop your service?
Whilst in practice schemes are likely to be undertaking service improvement work all the time, it can be helpful to establish a service improvement cycle with a timeframe to provide a focus for information gathering, consultation and involvement, planning and action as in the example below.

### Depaul UK project review cycle

The purpose of a Project Review is to ensure that each year, project teams and their stakeholders:
- systematically review the events and achievements of the previous year
- review equality issues
- celebrate and reflect on these findings
- apply the learning to the coming year in order to improve services and outcomes.

Following each review the services produces a year plan which acts as:
- an operational blueprint that staff, young people, hosts/carers and stakeholders can refer to throughout the year. This blueprint incorporates the project’s Equalities Action Plan
- a baseline against which performance can be evaluated.

The review process

- Scheme managers lead their teams in to prepare for reviews by:
  - deciding on a date for a review day which all staff will attend
  - gathering input from young people, hosts/carers, key partners and other stakeholders
  - preparing evidence of client achievements, outcomes and equality considerations.

- Schemes hold a review day during which all the information is evaluated and plans made for the coming year.

- A written project year plan is developed and checked out with young people, hosts and other stakeholders.

- Delivery against the year plan is monitored throughout the year using a range of processes including ongoing review of monitoring information, team meetings, involvement activities with young people, stakeholder engagement and line management.
West London YMCA Supported Lodgings scheme uses a range of internal quality assurance and improvement initiatives in addition to frameworks such as the QAF. Examples of these include:

Monthly balance scored cards reporting

This is a report sent every month directly to the Chief Executive, that collates data such as involvement records, positive move-on, incidents, complaints, highs and lows during the month, achievements etc. The report is analysed (for each project) by the Chief Executive and follow up action taken where required.

Monthly, quarterly and yearly key performance indicators (KPI)

Performance indicators for service utilisation; move-on; number of young people involved in education, training and education; number of service user meetings held; feedback survey response rate; number of service user involvement; events and activities held, are all reported periodically as appropriate. Data submitted is monitored at directorate level to ensure targets set are constantly achieved.

Annual feedback survey

This survey is conducted yearly by an independent body and gives an opportunity to young people to have their say without fear or favour. The feedback from the survey is analysed and its outcomes used to improve the service. Each of the young people is informed formally, via letters, of the outcome of the survey and what action will be taken.

Policy review

Young people are involved in policy reviews which take place periodically.

Youth board

The board is made up of young people who are using various West London YMCA projects, and is responsible for deliberating and deciding on certain issues directly affecting them. Recently the board decided on how best to spend an involvement fund of £2000. The Board has the use of an office next door to that of West London YMCA’s Chief Executive.

Policies relevant to quality service development

Quality / Continuous Improvement polices including Young Peoples’ Involvement and Host/Carer Involvement.
Outcomes and Monitoring policy / system
Overall policy framework, kept under regular review.
Appendix 1

Schedule 3 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
INFORMATION AS TO PROSPECTIVE FOSTER PARENT AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HER/HIS HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY

1. Her/his full name, address and date of birth.

2. Details of her/his health (supported by a medical report), personality, marital status and details of her/his current and any previous marriage or similar relationship.

3. Particulars of any other adult members of her/his household.

4. Particulars of the children in her/his family, whether or not members of her/his household and any other children in her/his household.

5. Particulars of her/his accommodation.

6. Her/his religious persuasion and her/his capacity to care for a child from any particular religious persuasion.

7. Her/his racial origin, her/his cultural and linguistic background and her/his capacity to care for a child from any particular origin or cultural or linguistic background.

8. Her/his past and present employment or occupation, her/his standard of living and leisure activities and interests.

9. Her/his previous experience (if any) of caring for her/his own and other children.

10. Her/his skills, competence and potential relevant to her/his capacity to care effectively for a child placed with her/him.

11. The outcome of any request or application made by her/him or any other member of her/his household to foster or adopt children, or for registration for child minding or day care [1], including particulars of any previous approval or refusal of approval relating to her/him or to any other member of her/his household.

12. The names and addresses of two persons who will provide personal references for the prospective foster parent.

13. In relation to the prospective foster parent, either –
a) An enhanced criminal record certificate issued under section 115 of the Police Act 1997 [2] including the matters specified in section 115 (6A) of that Act;

Or

b) Where any certificate of information on any matters referred to in sub-paragraph (a) is not available to an individual because any provision of the Police Act 1997 has not been brought into force, details of any criminal offences –

(i) of which the person has been convicted, including details of any convictions which are spent within the meaning of section 1 of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974[3] and which may be disclosed by virtue of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975[4];

Or

(ii) in respect of which he/she has been cautioned by a constable and which, at the time the caution was given, he/she admitted; and in relation to each member of the household aged 18 or over, details of any criminal offences such as are mentioned in sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii) of paragraph 13(b)

(1) Registration for child minding or day care is provided for by Part XA of the 1989 Act in respect of England Wales and Part X of that Act in respect of Scotland.

(2) See the footnotes to paragraph 2 of Schedule 1.

(3) 1974c. 53.

Appendix 2

Supported lodgings schemes and insurance – Q&A

At the More than a roof conference, Pippa Bow, the Fostering Network, Katie Jackson, Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, and Sarah Longman and Spencer Holt, Bollington Care, led an interactive workshop looking at insurance and risk in Supported Lodgings. Participants were able to ask questions and learn more about the aspects that insurance companies look at when offering insurance and processing claims. This question and answer sheet summarises the discussion at the workshop.

Q Is Bollington Care the only insurance provider in this sector?
A No. Fosterline has a list of insurers in this field and hosts/carers are free to choose their own insurers.

Q If a young person is killed or injured, are they covered by insurance?
A Not necessarily. A household insurance will have public liability as a normal part of the policy and this will protect the host/carer if they are found negligent.

Q Should the scheme check the host/carer’s insurance documents?
A Yes. This helps the scheme to know that it is possible to claim through host-carers insurance rather than liability lying with the scheme. If it were a fostering scheme, there is a legal duty to do so and it may be seen as negligent not to do so.

Q Repeat insurance claims (such as water damage) could have an impact on premiums and result in the host/carer having mounting costs from paying the insurance excess. Is there anything we can do to help with this?
A One option is for the scheme to pay the excess. An issue for consideration is how the scheme would respond to increases in host-carer insurance premiums. Some schemes give a damage allowance to host/carers.

Q Is theft and malicious damage by the young person covered by household insurance?
A No, but some schemes cover this through their own insurance. If this is the case the hosts/carers should tell their own insurers and there are specialist insurance providers that also provide this cover for hosts/carers.

Q What happens if the friend of a young person placed with a household breaks the windows from the outside?
A This would normally be covered.

Q If the young person invites someone in, that subsequently causes damage or theft, would this be covered?
A Insurers cover vary, but exclusions apply such as ‘loss or damage caused by persons lawfully on the premises is excluded’ or others state ‘loss or damage caused by family members or persons residing at the premises is excluded’. You are advised to check the policy wording.
Q How do we manage to keep our insurers informed when the scheme has a high throughput and variable quality of background information about each young person?
A There are a number of ways of managing this. One example is a scheme that is well established and with a low history of claims which combines background information together with a risk assessment from the Youth Offending Service, and contains information on the young person’s offending history.

Q Is there a high level of claims?
A Malicious damage by a young person is the most common claim from foster carers. Sometimes it only comes out that they are not insured by their household insurer at the point of claim.

Q You offer specialist insurance. Is it more expensive than general household insurance?
A It may not be, although it probably can’t compete with the cheapest on the market. Some schemes pay the difference and many hosts/carers are happy to pay the difference for the extra security it provides.

Q Are some young people uninsurable?
A In the event that your insurer is unhappy to provide cover due to the background of young person, you could inform them that the young person has been subject to a vigorous checking procedure and risk assessment by the scheme prior to their acceptance. The scheme may be able to offer further detail of the processes involved for you to submit to your insurer to give them some reassurance.

Q Do we need to tell the insurance company each time a young person is placed?
A The general principle is to keep the insurance company informed (the Fostering Network has a leaflet with a standard letter). Hosts/carers need to tell their insurers what they are doing and informing them of any material change as soon as is practicable. This would not mean informing them each time a young person was placed, unless the risk related to the young person were significantly different or where there is a specific risk such as history of fire-setting, offending or sexual abuse. In this case, they may ask for a profile of the young person and may still cover the risk but perhaps with a higher excess. This profile should include the schemes assessment of risk and any measures that have been put in place to manage that risk (e.g. removing inflammables).

Q How does Data Protection impact on disclosure of profile information?
A As names or date of birth are not released there are no implications. Where hosts/carers use the same insurance provider, often the scheme would phone the broker to check prior to placement.

Q Why do we need to do this? If we were providing B&B we wouldn’t have the profile of the guests.
A B&B insurance is generally much more expensive. One host/carer had the experience of having previously taken foreign students, found they had reduced premiums after becoming a host/carer with a Supported Lodgings scheme. A result, he believed, of the scheme being seen by insurers as lower risk.

Q Should a claim be made, might the host/carer be faced with a higher premium during the year?
A There would not be any change to the premium during the year, however premiums are reviewed annually at each renewal date and adverse claims may cause the premium to rise.

Q If the host/carer cannot make a claim on their insurance can they turn to the scheme?
A Schemes should expect this to be the case and to plan accordingly.
Q If a young person moves on from Supported Lodgings and then cooks chips in their new accommodation, is the scheme liable, on the grounds that the young person has not learned sufficient skills to live independently?
A Negligence by the trainer would have to be proved. If a Court agreed that this were the case then compensation would be payable. Schemes might wish to consider public liability and professional indemnity insurance.

Q Do neighbours need to tell their insurers they live next to Supported Lodgings providers?
A No, generally the insurers would be expected to ask the questions they feel are relevant. Although their claims history might show if this is an issue.

Q Are Supported Lodgings schemes a high risk activity?
A Young people willingly enter into the arrangement and that the placement is a planned process which lowers any risk considerably. For example, the London YMCA Supported Lodgings scheme has operated for four years in four boroughs and no claims have been made.
Many young people leave care without adequate preparation in practical and financial skills and knowledge. These include:

- how to shop for, prepare and cook food
- eating a balanced diet
- laundry, sewing, mending and other housekeeping skills
- how to carry out basic households jobs such as mending fuses
- safety in the home and first aid
- the cost of living
- household budgeting, including the matching of expenditure to income, the regular payment of bills and avoidance of the excessive use of credit
- understanding personal risks and risk taking behaviours
- health education, including personal hygiene
- sexual education, including contraception and preparation for parenthood
- applying for, and being interviewed for, a job
- the rights and responsibilities of being an employee
- the rights and responsibilities of being an employer (disabled young people may use direct payments to employ their own personal assistants)
- applying for a course of education or training
- applying for housing and locating and maintaining it
- registering with a doctor and dentist
- knowledge of emergency services (fire, police, ambulance)
- finding and using community services and resources
- contacting the social services department and other caring agencies
- contacting organisations and groups set up to help young people who are, or have been, in care
- the role of agencies such as the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, local councillors and MPs
- how to write a letter (a) of complaint; (b) to obtain advice.
References and additional reading

Supported Lodgings resources
http://www.fostering.net/supported-lodgings

The Four Agency Supported Lodgings ‘More than a Roof’ Conference Report
http://www.fostering.net/sites/www.fostering.net/files/resources/reports/suppported_lodgings_confer
ence_report_jul11.pdf

Supported Lodgings Learning and Development Modules
http://www.fostering.net/resources/training-materials/supported-lodgings-learning-and-
development-modules

National Youth Homelessness Scheme website – particularly Supported Lodgings section. Includes case studies and example resources.
www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/accommodation/supportedlodgings

Holmes, J [2008] Making a Difference: Supported Lodgings as a Housing Option for Young People, Department to Communities and Local Government
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/makingadifference

Rainer [2004] Believing in Young People

Regulations and Guidance on Care Planning and Transitions to Adulthood (DfE)
www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a0065502/care-planning-for-
looked-after-children-and-care-leavers

Fostering Regulations, Guidance and National Minimum Standards (DfE)
www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/fostercare/a0071234/reqs

Journeys to Home and other accommodation resources from the National Care Advisory Service:
www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5730-11765.pdf