

Lodgings Scheme A young person's guide to Supported Lodgings



What's in this handbook?

This handbook tells you what to expect from a supported lodgings placement and what we expect from you.

We have tried to cover most things, but if there is something you want more information or advice about, please contact your Scheme Worker.

The Supported Lodgings Scheme is based at 32 West Sunnyside, Sunderland, SR1 1BU.

If you need to contact the scheme, please telephone 0191 561 7302.

Section 1: Introduction

It is important that we monitor and record the progress of your placement to ensure that you are being offered appropriate support and that your identified support needs are being addressed by the scheme to promote personal development.

Information about you and your placement with supported lodgings will be kept in Individual files, which will be stored in locked filing cabinets, when not in use. We also have an electronic file on our computer system where information will be stored for each young person.

Each meeting and contact will be recorded on the Children's Services CCM system under your name.

We follow the Together for Children process when requesting access to your files.

1.1 What is the aim of Supported Lodgings?

The Supported Lodgings Scheme aims to provide good quality accommodation for homeless young people, who are aged between 16 and 21, and who need the security and support that living within a home environment, can offer.

It provides a stepping-stone, giving young people the chance to learn how to live independently.

1.2 Aims & Objectives

To provide a service where you will:

- Feel safe & secure
- Feel encouraged to pursue your religious and cultural beliefs
- Develop the skills necessary for independent living
- Feel you can talk openly and in confidence
- Access support to achieve your personal goals

1.3 Confidentiality Statement

Our aim is to build and maintain a trusting professional relationship with young people living within supported lodgings.

You have the right to privacy. Scheme workers and householders should not pass on any information about you to anyone outside the scheme without your knowledge or consent.

Householders will be given information about you on a 'need to know' basis. We will not pass information about you to other agencies, relatives or friends without your permission.

However, you must be aware that information given to scheme workers or householders, even in confidence, may be discussed with the staff team or with the householder concerned, where it is considered appropriate to do so.

How the scheme works to promote and maintain confidentiality will be discussed with you before you move in.

If you move into a placement then you will sign a separate confidentiality statement which will inform you of when confidentiality may be breached and with which agencies you agree information to be shared.

When will we break confidentiality?

If you tell us that you are at risk and we believe that this might be prevented or stopped if we were to pass information on to someone else, then we will break confidentiality.

If you tell us that someone else is at risk and we believe that this might be prevented or stopped if we were to pass information on to someone else, then we will break confidentiality.

There will also be occasions when we are obliged to break confidentiality by law, this may include activities that could be considered illegal or criminal. It will also include issues around child protection and mental health.

1.4 Equal Opportunities and Service Delivery Statement

The services of the scheme will be provided to a young person regardless of their gender, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or disability.

During the placement both the young person and the householder will be kept informed of any changes that may affect the placement with supported lodgings.

It is our hope that the placement will be comfortable and stress free as possible for everyone concerned. The scheme staff will try to provide you with a quality and individual service that meets your needs and will aim to help you with any problems you may have.

If you have any suggestions as to how we may improve our service we will welcome your comments. Should you feel unhappy with any aspect of the service please discuss this as soon as possible with a scheme worker.

As part of your time in supported lodgings, it is hoped that you will work with the householder to develop the skills you need to move on into more independent accommodation.

Section 2: Your Role

2.1 Behaviour

As part of your placement with supported lodgings you will be expected to behave in a reasonable manner and to treat the householder in the same manner you would expect to be treated.

To help with this we have made a list of house rules that both you and the householder are expected to work to.

In addition to the house rules you will also sign an agreement to pay your rent regularly, undertake a tenancy skills assessment and to work to your individual placement plan (Living Together Agreement).

If you don't stick to this agreement, you may lose your placement.

2.2 Payment of Rent

When you are given a placement, you will need to pay a weekly rent to the householder. The amount you pay will depend on how much money you get each week.

The rent payment covers your board and lodgings, which includes:

- Use of your own bedroom
- Heating and Electricity charges
- Two meals a day (normally breakfast and evening meal)
- Support and guidance offered by the householder
- Payment of rent is part of your agreement that you sign with supported lodgings.
- Failure to pay your rent may result in you being asked to leave the placement.

If you do have problems with paying your rent, you need to speak to the householder and the scheme workers as soon as possible.

A rent book will be issued to you at the beginning of your placement. The book will say how much rent you have to pay each week. All rent payments need to

given to the householder, who will sign your rent book to say you have paid your rent.

2.3 House Rules

Non Negotiable House Rules

These are the rules that you and the householder must follow:

1. You and the householder will treat each other with consideration and respect at all times.
2. You and the householder will respect each other's privacy at all times. You will not enter non-communal areas of the home (other than your own room) without the permission of the householder and the householder will not enter your room without asking you first. The householder will not touch your private possessions. Non communal areas may be areas such as other people's bedrooms. The householder will tell you which areas you cannot enter.
3. Any form of violent, threatening or abusive behaviour is totally unacceptable and may lead to the immediate termination of the placement.
4. You must not involve yourself in any criminal activity whilst living with the householder. Such activity would include:
 - Taking without permission
 - Using or supplying illegal substances
 - Malicious damage to property and may lead to the immediate termination of the placement.
5. You must pay the part of the board and lodging payment which is not covered by Housing Benefit or 'Top Up' payments on a weekly basis. Non-payment of this may lead to the ending of a placement. The payment of board and lodgings should be the only money exchanged between the householder and you; in particular, you must not ask to borrow money from the householder or other members of their family.
6. You must not stay out for more than three nights per week without first clearing it with the householder, they will then inform the scheme staff. Unauthorised absences must be reported to the scheme as soon as possible by the householder.

Negotiable House Rules

There are some house rules that you and the householder can agree between you:

1. Arrangements for coming in late and staying out all night.
2. Meal arrangements.
3. Arrangements for friends to visit or stay over.
4. Arrangements to cover:
 - Use of telephone
 - Smoking
 - Drinking
 - Playing music
5. Arrangements for your laundry.
6. Arrangements for the cleaning of the young person's room (and communal areas).
7. Arrangements for you to get into the house during the householder's absence.
8. Arrangements to cover general tidiness and cleanliness.
9. Privacy arrangements, i.e. whether you can have a lock fitted to the door of your room.

These negotiable house rules will be agreed prior to your move in and recorded on a separate house rules agreement. Should these negotiable rules need changing this can be done so by arranging a meeting with the householder and scheme staff to discuss what may work better.

10. Holidays

There will be times when the householder whom you live with will be on holiday and not at the home address. The length of this may vary from overnight to a number of weeks. Whether you remain in the house on your own (with or without

support) or whether you stay elsewhere will be discussed with you prior to moving in and also nearer the time of any proposed holiday. Staying on your own in someone's home is dependent on your level of responsibility, time in placement, level of independent living skills and individual needs. It is hoped that all young people who are within a placement will stay within the home on their own at some point to develop confidence and skills; however this is also related to your own level of engagement within the home.

2.4 Complaints

If you are unhappy about something to do with your placement, the householder or scheme workers, please do not hesitate to contact the scheme manager to discuss your concerns.

I can be contacted at the following address:

Laura Mills
Supported Lodgings Manager
Supporting Lodgings Scheme
32 West Sunnyside, SR1 1BU
Tel: 0191 561 7302

Alternatively, you can contact the Quality Assurance and Complaints Officer for Together for Children, who will be able to deal with your complaint. The Complaints Team can be contacted on 0191 561 1296 or email the complaints.team@togetherforchildren.org.uk.

Section 3: Matching You with a Suitable Household

The householder will support you with areas that you aren't too sure about so that you gain the skills you need to manage a tenancy of your own.

3.1 The Matching Process

When you are assessed and accepted onto the scheme, we don't just place you with the next available household. We consider carefully what household will match your needs.

So we can find out who is the right householder for you, we will talk to you about the possible householders we have and from there a decision will be made about the right match for you.

If both you and the householder agree, a meeting will be arranged for you to meet. A member of staff from the scheme will come with you.

The purpose of the meeting will be to introduce you to the householder and to pass on any relevant information.

If this meeting goes well, then arrangements can be made for you to visit the householder's home. This visit takes place with the scheme worker and your support worker and gives both you and the householder the opportunity to get to know each other. Further visits can then be arranged.

Once the visits have taken place the scheme worker will talk to you and the householder separately, to see whether you both wish to go ahead with the placement.

At these visits we will talk about the house rules and what is expected within the placement in more detail to make sure you are fully informed.

If you and the householder are happy for the placement to go ahead, a date for moving in will be arranged.

The scheme workers will help you throughout this process and offer continued support throughout your placement.

3.2 Placement Plan Procedure

Once you have settled into your new home and feel comfortable with your surroundings, the scheme workers will make arrangements to come out and see you on a regular basis. As part of the visits, scheme workers will undertake the following:

Tenancy Skills Assessment– This will take place about four weeks after your placement begins. Life skills are a range of tasks associated with independent living – such as cooking your own meals, doing your own laundry etc. You will spend some time with the scheme worker reading through a list of skills, identifying areas you feel confident to complete and those you do not feel too confident about.

Living Together Agreement – Once you have identified areas you would like to develop further, the scheme worker will complete a placement plan with you and the householder, outlining what tasks or goals are to be completed. Both you and the householder will receive a copy of this plan.

3 & 6 Month Reviews – During these visits the scheme worker will ask for your views about your placement and find out what tasks have been completed.

The aim of the review meetings to make sure that any issues or problems can be discussed and also to check on your progress in developing your ILS to see if you are ready to be referred for your own independent living.

If you are considered ready for independent living, the scheme will make the appropriate referrals to housing agencies to find you some accommodation.

Section 4: What Happens When You Leave Supported Lodgings?

It is hoped that when the time comes for you to move on to other more independent accommodation, that this will be a planned move for which you are fully prepared.

However, there are some occasions when this may not happen. This section covers the way a placement may come to an end.

4.1 Ending your Placement

Your supported lodgings placement can come to an end in one of three ways:

1. A Planned Ending
2. An Unplanned Ending
3. Emergency Ending

Planned Endings – This means that you will stay in your placement until everyone agrees that you are ready to move on into more independent accommodation.

The scheme will work with your support worker to identify appropriate accommodation.

Once this has been identified, all the necessary arrangements will be made to move you to your new accommodation. You will not be asked to leave your placement until your new accommodation is ready.

Unplanned Endings – Sometimes a supported lodgings placement does not work for the young person or the householder, in such cases the placement can come to an end much earlier than expected.

The Scheme workers will try to sort out any problems between you and the householder. However, there may still be situations when both you and the householder feel that the placement is not working.

When this happens, your support worker and the scheme worker will start to look for alternative accommodation for you.

Once accommodation is found, arrangements will be made for you to move as soon as possible.

Emergency Endings

Sometimes a placement needs to be terminated immediately.

This is usually when a serious breach of the non-negotiable house rules has taken place, particularly those relating to violent, threatening or criminal behaviour.

When this happens the scheme will make arrangements for you to move from your current placement and to find an emergency accommodation for you.

4.2 Evictions Procedure

If it is felt that you are no longer benefiting from being on the scheme and it is felt to be in the best interests of both the householder and yourself that your placement should come to an end, the following process will take place:

- We will talk to you about our concerns, highlighting problem areas, and look for solutions. We will make you aware of what will happen if you continue to choose not to follow the rules, i.e. your placement will come to an end.
- We will issue you with up to three written warning letters - dependant on the nature of the problem, these letters will detail the reason for the warning and what will need to change to maintain the placement. And what will happen next if the concerns continue.

The third written warning letter will include a suspended one week-notice to quit. This will explain to you what needs to be done in order to stop the notice to quit coming into action.

The letter will also include:

- (i) An explanation of why the notice to quit has been issued
- (ii) Information about accessing emergency accommodation
- (iii) Possibility of an Assessment of Homelessness Intentionally under Housing Act Legislation (and the consequences of that)
- (iv) Responsibilities about the removal of your belongings

• If your behaviour **does not change** after the suspended notice to quit letter being issued, we will then issue you with a letter to confirm that the notice to quit has been acted upon and that you will have to leave your placement. The letter will include:

- (i) Reasons why you are being evicted
- (ii) The date and time by which you have to move out and remove your belongings from the property
- (iii) Offers of help to remove your belongings and arrange emergency accommodation
- (iv) Explanation and details of your right to appeal

Evictions Procedure Continued

• In certain circumstances, if we feel it is unwise for the householder and yourself to continue to live together, even for a short period of time it may be necessary to end your placement within twenty-four hours. Such circumstances would include:

- (i) Instances of violence or other seriously inappropriate behaviour
- (ii) Gross invasion of privacy
- (iii) Serious malicious damage or theft

In these circumstances, you would be immediately issued with a notice to quit and you would be requested to leave your placement.

4.3 Failure to Return

Should you fail to return to your placement without prior permission, for five consecutive nights, then you will be seen to have abandoned your placement. If this happens, you will be issued with a notice to quit (delivered to where you are thought to be staying or to your placement if your whereabouts are unknown). The letter will state that your placement will end in twenty-four hours if you still fail to return, and that your belongings will be removed to a safe place for you to

collect. The letter will also explain that the Supported Lodgings Scheme can only hold your belongings for a period of 28 days.

Section 5: Other Information

5.1 Useful Telephone Numbers

Next Steps Duty- 01915617109

Emergency Out of Hours-Children's Services: 0191 520 5552

Travel Line (all bus & train times & prices) 0870 6082608

Drugs and Alcohol Helpline 0800 776600

Samaritans 0345 909090

Childline 0800 1111

Children and Young People's Advocacy Service 0800 085 0621

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