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PLACEMENT IN SUPPORTED LODGINGS

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE**

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1.0 Introduction

This policy covers the recruitment, assessment, support and review of Supported Lodgings Providers as well as various issues affecting such carer/providers. This policy also details the procedural requirements concerning the scheme itself and the young people who will use it.

2.0 Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Government Guidance

Legislation and Guidance

- ✓ Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers 2010 (revised 2014);
- ✓ The revised Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (revised 2013 and 2014);
- ✓ Children and Families Act 2014;

In meeting the requirements set out in the above legislation and guidance, the supported lodgings policy will:

- Help ensure access for young people to a range of accommodation options suitable to the needs of care leavers aged 16+ at different stages in the leaving care process;
- Support positive outcomes for our children in care; research as well as practice evidence is clear that young people in supported lodgings achieve higher than average levels of success.

3.0 Aims of the Policy

The policy seeks to enable our children in care to make as smooth a transition as possible to independent living by offering a stepping stone of independent living with support, thus promoting positive planning and preparation for independence in line with the Pathway Assessment and Plan for each young person.

The aim is to support young people to gain the practical and emotional skills that they will require to achieve success when living independently.

The scheme is designed to help young people mature and develop by enabling them to experience being part of a supportive living environment. It is anticipated that they can benefit from a level of freedom and responsibility whilst still sharing a home and time with an adult/ adults who as positive role model/models are providing guidance, advice and support in a consistent and positive manner.

4.0 The Target Group

Supported Lodgings is a resource for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 16-21 years old (25 years old if in education or training) who are assessed via the Pathway Planning Process as needing this resource. This resource will provide housing and support to young people with a wide variety of support needs.

At the time of referral, a young person must be assessed as being ready to begin to live independently with support and this resource should be the most appropriate option available to meet the young person's accommodation and support needs as identified within their Pathway Plan.

Supported Lodgings Placements are likely to be most suitable for young people who are willing and able to:

- Regulate their behaviour to comply with reasonable house rules and expectations;
- Engage with the carer /provider to gain the skills needed to successfully live independently in the future;
- Engage with education, training, work experience and/or employment, working towards achieving economic stability into adulthood;
- Engage with other agencies and professionals to address any issues that would stand in the way of them moving forward and securing the skills and resources needed to achieving stability and success in their lives.

Supported Lodgings is unlikely to be suitable for those young people who for example have few boundaries to their behaviour, who would likely present a significant risk to others or who want/ need the freedom and anonymity of other settings.

5.0 What is Supported Lodgings

A young person will live with a family/ couple/single person sharing their home. The young person is a member of the household, not a member of the family, but will share in some household /family experiences.

The young person is provided with safe and appropriate accommodation, guidance and support to help prepare them for living independently. The Supported Lodgings Providers work alongside and in conjunction with others working with the young person promoting their practical, social and emotional development in keeping with their Care/ Pathway Plan.

It is envisaged that the young person will progress, developing new skills and confidence and the level of support offered by the carer/provider will reduce as the young person moves towards greater independence and the eventual move to independent living.

6.0 Supported Lodgings Providers and what they Offer

6.1 Who can be a Supported Lodgings Provider?

Children in Care and Care Leavers with a wide variety of needs require Supported Lodgings Placements. In light of this, we need providers who can support this group of young people. Supported Lodgings Providers can be married; single or in a relationship. Providers can be in employment or home based. Providers who work full time must be flexible to enable them to support the young person to develop their independent living skills. Providers must be aged 21 years or over, can be a parent or have experience of working with young people in a variety of settings. Providers can be home owners or rent their homes.

We require Providers who need to be resident full time in the property but can continue to pursue their own lifestyle including work arrangements, social activities and holidays.

6.2 Qualities and skills of Supported Lodgings Providers

Supported Lodgings Providers may be very different from each other. Each will have their skills and strengths but what providers will have in common is that they enjoy having young people around; have an understanding of the difficulties faced by Children in Care and Care Leavers and a desire to make a difference to their lives by equipping them with the skills and confidence to live independently.

They will also need to be:

- Warm and caring;
- Patient and tolerant;
- Flexible in their approach and able to adapt to different and changing situations;
- Have reasonable expectations of young people's capabilities and vulnerabilities, recognising their experiences;
- Willing and able to provide support to a range of young people;
- Willing and able to work in partnership with Social Workers, Personal Advisors, Housing Support Workers etc. in line with the Pathway Plan;
- Accepting that young people will make mistakes and often need a second or third chance to get it right.

Most young people who need Supported Lodgings Placement have been through some difficult and challenging times and may have some specific support needs as detailed in their Pathway Plan. Providers will be required to work closely with others to provide for the needs of young people.

6.3 What Supported Lodgings Providers offer to the Young Person

The service provided is individually tailored to meet a young person's need and circumstance as detailed in their Pathway Plan and will include:

Practical Support:

- A home-like environment and domestic routine consistent with the young person engaging in education, training or work;
- Prepared meals- this should reduce in frequency as the young person becomes increasingly more independent and prepares meals for themselves, with the provider purchasing the necessary ingredients;
- Support to gain the practical skills e.g. shopping, cooking, budgeting etc. that young people will need to achieve successful independent living;
- Support and guidance regarding money management and budgeting to enable the young person to pay their bills, live within their means and access any benefits they may be entitled to;
- Advice and support to achieve and maintain a reasonable level of personal and household hygiene;
- Advice and Guidance to maintain positive health and wellbeing which may involve supporting the young person to register with a GP, Dentist and/or to attend medical appointments.

Emotional Support:

- Modelling for the young person a positive way of living and engaging with the wider community/ society;
- Developing and sustaining a consistent, positive and supportive relationship with the young person;
- Acting as an advocate on their behalf when dealing with others/ agencies;
- Providing the young person with opportunities to share in some positive family/life experiences within their own families/ social networks;
- Acting as a mentor for the young person, providing guidance and support to help them address any emotional problems that the young person may be dealing with, signposting them to appropriate services if required;
- Support the young person with maintaining contact with family and friends;
- Support the young person to link into activities / social opportunities available in the local community.

7.0 Wider Expectations of the Supported Lodgings Provider Role/Task

7.1 Underpinning values

The following values will be integral in the Provider's attitude/interaction:

- Individuals are respected;
- Differences and diversity is valued;
- Equality is promoted;
- Discrimination is challenged;
- Confidentiality is maintained;
- Advice and feedback is provided in a constructive way to the young person in the placement.

7.2 Managing Confidential Information and Recording

In order to provide the best help and support we can and keep our young people as safe as possible we need to know as much as possible about them and their day to day lives e.g. how they are doing at college, who their friends are etc.

Recording this information helps us to follow their progress; informs their Pathway Plan and enables the appropriate support to be offered e.g. if a young person is struggling with attending college.

Often the people who have the best knowledge of these issues are the people who live with and care for our young people, so our Supported Lodgings Providers will be required to record information about their weekly lives with young people placed with them and some of the particular incidents that happen.

Each Provider's Support worker will provide clear guidance about what needs to be recorded and how and who this needs to be shared with taking into account the age of the young person.

7.3 Working as part of a Team

The Supported Lodgings Provider will be part of a team often involving a number of different professionals and agencies, working together to support the young person.

There is a requirement that the provider will not only provide direct support to the young person but also contributes in the planning for the young person, by helping assess their needs through the gathering and sharing of information with the rest of the team.

Maintaining regular contact with the professionals involved with the young person such as the Social Worker, Personal Advisor, Independent Reviewing Manager, College etc. will be an essential aspect of the provider's role.

Providers will participate in the statutory review process for young people in care, subject to their agreement, where the Pathway Plan will be reviewed. For 18 year olds, providers will participate in Pathway Plan Reviews.

8.0 Approval and Reviews of Supported Lodgings Providers

8.1 Assessment Process

An enquiry is made by a prospective provider, initially to the Fostering Team either via emailing supportedlodgings@halton.gov.uk or via the online enquiry page here <https://halton.me/support-lodgings/> . Telephone contact can be made with the Team by calling 0151 511 7878.

Basic information and background details will be taken in the form of an 'Initial Screening'.

If there is a clear reason why it is not appropriate to take the enquiry further this will be explained to prospective provider and confirmed in writing.

If it is appropriate for a home visit; the nature of the home visit will be explained to the prospective provider and arrangements will be made to carry out this visit, by staff from the fostering service.

During the home visit, the following issues will be addressed:

- Expectations of Supported Lodgings Providers;
- Financial arrangements;
- An overview of the assessment process including what checks and references will be required;
- Any relevant information in relation to health (physical and emotional), any convictions and/ or involvement with the Police and/or Children's Social Care;
- An overview inspection of the property including viewing the room proposed for supported lodgings use, as well as the general condition of the accommodation and shared living spaces.

Following the home visit a home visit report will be passed to the Manager/s of the Fostering Service with a recommendation as to whether to progress the application or not and the reasoning.

If the Fostering Service Manager's decision is not to progress the application further the applicant will be contacted and informed of this. This will be confirmed in writing.

If the decision is to progress the application to the next stage, the application form will be left at the home visit or emailed out directly afterwards.

When the application form is returned, the assessment will be allocated to a member of staff in the fostering service and the necessary checks will be initiated.

At this juncture the prospective Provider will be invited to a Preparatory Training Course which they may attend before or during their assessment.

8.2 The Assessment

The focus of the assessment will be the underpinning principles in terms of what constitutes good caring skills, the requirements of the task and the applicant's particular situation, experience, strengths and skills in relation to these.

It is expected that during the assessment potential supportive lodgings carers will be able to offer evidence of, as well as telling us about their suitability for and ability to undertake the different aspects of the role/task.

During assessment, a profile of the Supported Lodgings Provider will be drawn up by the Assessor detailing their particular strengths and skills and giving an overview of their family and living situation.

If, during the assessment, the assessor does not believe that a positive recommendation can be made the prospective provider will be encouraged to withdraw from the assessment process. Should the prospective provider decline to withdraw the assessor will complete a short report with a negative recommendation and present this to the Fostering Service Principle Manager for a decision.

If the assessment is positive, a recommendation should also be made as to the number of young people the applicant might offer support and accommodation to; this will normally be limited to one.

Once the assessment is concluded, Assessor will make a recommendation as to whether the prospective provider should be approved as a Supported Lodgings Provider or not and the reasons for this. The assessment will be quality assured by the Fostering Services Manager and if he/she agrees with the recommendation will sign off the assessment.

The assessment will then be forwarded to the Divisional Manager for Children in Care and Care Leavers for final ratification and registration as a Supported Lodgings Provider.

The registration as a supported lodgings provider will be notified to the Placement Team and Care Leavers Accommodation Group (CLAG). The provider will be required to sign an Agreement setting out the expectations.

8.3 Review of Approval

Supported Lodgings Providers will be reviewed on an annual basis. As part of the process, a meeting will take place that will include the Provider and placements team officer as a minimum.

Written Feedback will be sought from Social Workers, Personal Advisors and Young People regarding the providers within the review period, detailing how the previous period has gone and make a recommendation as to future approval as well as any development/ training issues.

The meeting will focus on the provider's experience of providing placements to young people during the review period and any changes in circumstances or proposed changes to the provider's profile.

The Lead Support Worker will complete a report for the Divisional Manager of Children in Care and Care Leavers summarising the above and make a recommendation with regard to ongoing registration and any development/ training/ work issues.

Any professional, young person and the Supported Lodgings Provider have the right to call an early review.

Should the Supported Lodgings Provider be subject to a serious complaint or allegation then, following any investigation and subject to the outcome, an early review will be completed with its recommendations being presented to the Divisional Manager for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

9.0 Training, Support and Supervision for Supported Lodgings Providers

9.1 Training

Supported Lodgings Providers will be provided with access to Core and Complimentary bundles of online training as part of their induction and on-going development:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Emotion Coaching
- First Aid Essentials
- General Data Protection Regulation
- Preparation for Independence
- Reporting and Recording
- Safeguarding Young People

Further training will be identified through supervisory visits and the review process.

Supported Lodgings Providers will be required and supported to maintain an individual Training Profile which will show which training they have attended and which training is still required.

9.2 Supervision

The Supported Lodgings Provider will have an allocated Support Worker from the Fostering Service. Their main focus will be offering guidance and support to the provider to enable them to meet the needs of the young person living with them. They will help address any problems, and where appropriate act as the link between the provider and other agencies working with the young person. At times they may help to explore what other resources might be needed to make the placement successful.

9.3 Frequency and content of visits

The Support Worker from the fostering service will visit the Supported Lodgings Provider at least every 8 weeks. The frequency of visits will depend on a number of factors including the stability of the accommodation; the provider's experience; any challenges regarding the young person in placement etc.

Between planned visits, the Support Worker will provide advice/ support via phone or e mail, or via additional visits if needed. Where the Support Worker is unavailable, the Provider will be able to access support via the Fostering Service Duty System – 0151 511 7878

If at any stage there are particular difficulties/ a crisis in placement, a meeting may be requested by the young person's Social Worker and/or Personal Advisor or the Support Worker to discuss the situation and plan the best way forward.

A “buddy” support and advice scheme will be run by the fostering service whereby more experienced providers are available to offer support and advice to their less experienced colleagues.

9.4 Support Groups

Providers will be provided with access to support groups, which will be held at varying times and venues.

As well as offering Providers the opportunity to meet, share information and receive support, the meetings will also provide a forum for training and information sharing sessions.

Out of office hours, providers can contact the Emergency Duty Service on: 0345 050 0148.

10. Finance

10.1 Weekly Allowance

Supported Lodgings Providers will receive a total income of £188.54 per week for each Young Person staying with them.

The total income will be made up as follows:

1	Rent	£62 per week
2	Professional Fee	£126.54 per week
Total Allowance		£188.54 per week

Supported Lodgings Providers will only receive placement income when a young person is in situ.

Additional payments for Christmas (or religious festival) and significant birthday's i.e.18th and 21st will be paid to the young person directly by their Social Worker/Personal Advisor. They are set at £50 each. There is potential to provide holiday allowances to the young person they will be considered on a case by case basis by the Social Worker/Personal Advisor.

For those Providers who offer a place to live to looked after 16 & 17 year olds, the Supported Lodgings payment will be paid by the Local Authority directly to the provider on behalf of the young person, payments are disregarded when calculating the providers entitlement to means tested benefits i.e. the Providers supported lodgings allowance payment will not impact on claimable benefits.

Where Housing Benefit is claimed by the young adult or they pay the £62.00 rent element from their earnings then this is counted as income for the Providers means tested benefits (i.e. this will affect means tested benefits).

In circumstances where a young person receives maximum Housing Benefit/Universal Credit, the full amount will need to be declared to The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the DWP should then apply the 'income from a boarder'.

The Professional Fee element will be paid directly by the Local Authority. Please see Allowances Guide. The Rent element can be paid via a number of sources. Please see Allowances Guide.

Supported Lodging Providers will not be required to give young people any finances, this will be arranged by their Social Worker / Personal Advisor and monies will be paid directly into the young person's bank account, this should be discussed at the Pathway Planning Meeting.

An additional clothing payment may be made to the young person by their Social Worker/Personal Advisor. This payment is based on an 'assessment of need' throughout the year (31st March – 1st April).

From the young person's 18th birthday the monies paid to the young person by their Social Worker / Personal Advisor will cease and should be replaced by the young person's welfare benefit claim (e.g. Income support/Universal Credit) or employment.

10.2 Set-Up Grants

To support Providers with unforeseen costs at the point of placement a Start-Up Grant of £100 is paid each time a new young person is placed.

10.3 Birthday & Festival Payments

Annual Birthday and Festival payments of £100 are paid directly to the Provider to support the purchase of gifts for a young person in placement.

11.0 Accommodation

As part of the assessment process, a Health and Safety Checklist will be completed and updated on a yearly basis. This includes the requirement that the provider should have an initial home safety inspection from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, and have a Smoke Alarm and Carbon Monoxide Detector fitted.

The whole of the shared parts of the accommodation should be clean, warm, and comfortable and decorated to a reasonable standard.

Each young person should have a room of their own that is large enough to comfortably accommodate a bed and drawers and/ a wardrobe, as well as the young person and their belongings.

The young person's room should be furnished at least to a basic standard and should be in reasonable order/ condition. The young person will have access to a kitchen, bathroom and laundry facilities.

12.0 Accessing the Scheme and Making a Referral

Referrals for supported Lodgings should be made by the young person's Social Worker/Personal Advisor using the Care Leavers Accommodation Group (CLAG) referral and sent to the Placement Team.

The placements team will agenda the referral for the next CLAG. Referrals that require urgent attention will be acted upon rather than waiting for the monthly CLAG meetings.

The CLAG will allocate and track all referrals and accommodation provided under the supported lodging scheme.

13.0 Making a Supported Lodgings Arrangement

The decisions to match a young person with their supported lodgings will be made between the Young Person's Worker, a Worker from the Fostering Service and the Young Person, enabling the best match to be achieved.

When a possible Supported Lodgings accommodation has been identified for a young person as much information as possible will be shared with the Supported Lodgings Provider about the young person's history, needs and functioning. Written information should be provided where possible in the form of an up to date Care Plan and / or Pathway Plan.

Information will be shared with the young person's Social Worker/Personal Advisor about the provider's experience, skills and living situation. Some of this information will be available on the Provider's profile which will be available but the worker for the young person can speak directly to the Provider or meet them at this stage.

If both the Provider and the worker for the young person are happy to move to the next stage, appropriate information will then be shared with the young person about the Provider and arrangements made for the young person to meet the provider.

Following this meeting, feedback will be sought from the young person and the Provider to determine if the living arrangements can proceed and a date set and arrangements for the young person to move in. The social worker/Personal Advisor will at this point also work with the Provider and Young person to complete Living Together Agreement which will be signed by the Young Person and Provider.

At the point of placement written information regarding the young person should be provided to the Provider, this would be a copy of the Care/Pathway Plan and any relevant documents consented to share with the provider by the young person.

When a young person is placed in urgent circumstances a planning meeting must take place within 72 hours of the young person moving into the supported lodgings.

14.0 Ending a Supported Lodgings Arrangement

Wherever possible, they should end in a planned way in line and in keeping with the Pathway Planning for the young person.

If the Provider is considering bringing the placement to an end it is expected that they will discuss this in the first instance with their Support Worker. Depending on the circumstances a support meeting may be called to explore the situation and whether anything can be done to preserve the supported lodging arrangement or whether it should be brought to an end in an agreed timescale.

A notice period of 28 days will be required.