



Kent and Medway Foreign Exchange Visit Guidance and Procedure

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Summary of Purpose	This procedure provides guidance for situations where students (age 18 and under) are accommodated in Kent whilst registered at an educational establishment in Kent.
Accessibility	This document can be made available in large print, or in electronic format. There are no copies currently available in other languages.
Equalities Impact Assessment	During the preparation of this policy and when considering the roles and responsibilities of all agencies, organisations and staff involved, care has been taken to promote fairness, equality, and diversity, in the services delivered regardless of disability, ethnic origin, race, gender, age, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.
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Policy Review Date	This document will be reviewed in June 2026.

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1. Context

This guidance should be applied to all situations where student (18 and under) are being accommodated with host families while registered at an education establishment in Kent and Medway whether the placement is short term or long term.

Children and young people on foreign exchange visits or attending language schools or language colleges are very vulnerable by the fact that they are away from home, have little or no established support network and are placed with families that they do not really know.

2. Expectations

There should be an expectation on all establishments, agencies and parents to ensure that the care provided by any host family, whether in Kent and Medway or abroad, is of the highest quality. It should be recognised that where there are lapses in the care provided, children or young people can suffer to such a degree that it could result in Significant Harm to the child.

There are a large number of language schools and colleges across Kent and Medway, therefore there are a large number of students in potentially vulnerable situations.

Schools, colleges, parents, and agents arranging host placements should only use placements where appropriate checks have been undertaken. Schools and colleges should only recommend agents who they know undertake these checks.

Even where parents abroad are arranging host families through foreign based agents, schools and colleges have a duty to inform parents of what should be expected in relation to agents undertaking basic safeguarding checks.

Schools and colleges have a duty to safeguard and promote children's welfare. This extends to considering their safety and how best to minimise risk of harm to those children during any exchange visit the school or college arranges, and when organising the care and accommodation for a child with a host family as part of the exchange. In circumstances where a school or college arrange for a visiting child to be provided with care and accommodation in the UK (including where they engage a company to make those arrangements) in the home of a family to which the child is not related the responsible adults will be engaging in regulated activity for the period of the stay. In such cases and where the school or college has the power to terminate such a homestay the school or college would be the regulated provider¹.

¹ [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022](#), Annex D, page 169.

Where any host family has been subject to either a Section 47 investigation or any other safeguarding investigation, they should be considered unsuitable and not allowed to continue to act as host for any child, until a satisfactory outcome has been reached.

3. Protection of Freedoms Act

The Protection of Freedoms Act² (September 2012) introduced a new definition of regulated activity in relation to children.

Where any individual is engaged in regulated activity, they should be subject to an enhanced DBS check³.

The new definition of regulated activity (i.e. work or activity that a barred person must not do) in relation to children comprises in summary:

1. Unsupervised activities: teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise, provide guidance and/or advise on well being of, or drive a vehicle only for children.
2. Work for a limited range of establishments with opportunity for contact e.g. schools children's home or childcare premises.

Work carried out under 1 or 2 above is regulated activity, only if done regularly. Regular means carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more) or on 4 or more times in a 30-day period (or where it involves overnight activity).

Do host families accommodating children or young people on exchange visits need an enhanced DBS?

Yes. As this is a regulated activity it is strongly recommended that an enhanced DBS check is undertaken on **all** those over the age of 16 living in the household where any exchange or language student is hosted.

Does the length of stay make any difference?

No. An enhanced DBS is required irrespective. The only difference relates to children or young people accommodated for 28 days or more. Where the host family accommodate any child for 28 days or more this is classed as a private fostering arrangement and must be discussed with the private fostering social worker (see section 8 for contact details).

Please note: private fostering legislation only applies to children under the age of 16 (18 if the child has special educational needs and disabilities).

² [The Protection of Freedoms Act 2011](#)

³ [Disclosure and Barring Service](#)

The requirement for an enhanced DBS should apply to any member of the host family over the age of 16 where they will have regular unsupervised contact with the child or children in the placement.

4. Dual Households

In the case of dual households, for example where a foreign student may spend part of their time in a host family's house, the guidance above should be applied to both households.

5. Agency Placements

Many exchange of home stay visits are arranged through agencies. In these cases, the same expectations should apply.

It is for the school or college and the agency itself to ensure that the appropriate checks are undertaken.

Where parents arrange placements directly with the agencies and there is no school or college involvement, the agency must still undertake the appropriate checks. In these cases, it would be expected that schools or colleges ensure that these checks have been undertaken, making clear to parents that this is an exception.

Ideally schools or colleges should hold lists of preferred agencies for which it is known that appropriate checks are always carried out.

6. The 'Three Month' Rule

Where a DBS certificate has been issued but the applicant does not act as a host within three months of the date of issue on the certificate, the check should no longer be considered valid and a recheck must be done.

A DBS disclosure is only as accurate as the information provided at the time of production. It should also be noted that a DBS in itself is not guarantee that an individual does not pose a risk to children. The DBS should not therefore be considered the only means of protecting children. It is important that all young people in placements are given access to emergency contacts – not just a guardian – so that they are able to raise any issue they are concerned about.

7. Checks on Host Families for UK Students on Exchange Visits Abroad

A host school (or placing agency) should have appropriate measures in place and carry out appropriate checks to ensure health, safety and welfare of any student involved in an exchange visit. The trip leader or organiser should seek assurances to confirm that all appropriate measures are in place; if not, the trip leader should reconsider whether the visit should take place.

Please note that a DBS certificate applies to UK residents only. Any checks undertaken by the host school for trips out of the UK should be those appropriate to the host country. Not all countries operate a system of criminal records checks, this should be reflected in risk assessments and procedures where necessary.

All students should be given details of procedures to follow in the event of them being concerned and emergency contact number issued to all. Where any concern or allegation is made in relation to any host family, these concerns should be reported to the relevant Kent or Medway agency (as listed in section 8).

8. Contact Details

Kent County Council Private Fostering Social Worker	Medway Private Fostering Social Worker
Anita Hiller Anita.hiller@kent.gov.uk 03000 410794	Lisa Villiers Lisa.villiers@medway.gov.uk 01634 331128
Kent Integrated Children's Service Front Door	Medway Council's Children's Social Care
https://www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/worried-about-a-child	https://www.medwayscp.org.uk/mscb/info/5/mscb-1/34/worried-child