

**Derbyshire Supported Lodgings Policy**

This policy sets out Derbyshire County Council’s Supported Lodgings scheme and policy. The scheme offers homes to enable looked after young people to make as smooth a transition as possible from a care situation 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 Plan for each young person. The scheme can also be utilised to support care leavers aged 18 and over. It covers the referral, recruitment, assessment, support and review of Supported Lodgings Providers as well as various issues affecting such providers. This chapter details the procedural requirements concerning the scheme itself and the young people who will use it.

The supported lodgings scheme is based within Derbyshire’s Leaving Care Service with a Team Manager who leads on the scheme.

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**1. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Government 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;

•Fostering Regulations 2011 and 2013 assessing and approval update.

In terms of meeting the requirements set out in the above legislation and guidance, the Supported Lodgings Scheme:

•Contributes to Derbyshire to ensure access for young people to a range of accommodation options suitable to the diverse needs of care leavers aged 16 + at different stages in the leaving care process;

•Supports positive outcomes for looked after young people; research as well as practice evidence is clear that young people in supported lodgings achieve higher than average levels of success.

**2. Aims of the Scheme**

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 are positive role model/models providing guidance, and able to advise and support in a consistent and positive way.

**3. The Target Group**

Supported Lodgings is a resource for Looked after Young People and Care Leavers aged between 16-21 (25 if in education or training) who are assessed via the Pathway Planning Process and a Child Home Finding Request form, as needing this resource. If there is a scenario (such as a relatively new entrant in to care), a referral can still be made. The scheme will provide housing and support to young people with a wide variety of support needs.

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

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

•Comply with reasonable house rules and expectations;

•Participate with the provider to gain the skills needed to successfully live independently in the future;

• Participate with education, training, work experience and/or employment, working towards achieving economic stability into adulthood;

• Participate 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.

**4. What is Supported Lodgings?**

A young person will live with a family/ couple/single person sharing their home.

The young person is provided with safe and appropriate accommodation, guidance and support to help prepare them for living independently. The Supported Lodgings carers 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.

**5. Supported Lodgings Carers and What they Offer**

**Who can be a Supported Lodgings Carer?**

Looked after Young People and Care Leavers with a wide variety of needs require Supported Lodgings homes. In light of this, we need carers who can support this group of young people. Supported Lodgings carers can be married; single or in a relationship. Carers 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. Carers 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 carers 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.

**Qualities and skills of Supported Lodgings Carers**

Supported Lodgings Carers may be very different from each other and come from many different walks of life. Each will have their own skills and strengths but what carers will have in common is that they enjoy having young people around; have an understanding of the difficulties faced by looked after young people 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, Leaving Care Workers, 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 homes have been through some difficult and challenging times and may have some specific support needs as detailed in their Pathway Plan. Carers will be required to work closely with others to provide for the needs of young people.

**What Supported Lodgings Carers offer to the Young Person**

The service provided is tailored to the needs and circumstances of the individual and will include:

Practical Support:

• A home-like environment and domestic routine consistent with the young person participating in education, training or work;

• Preparing 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;

* Where appropriate and agreed with all parties, give lifts to the young person (such as college occasionally or seeing family). This is reimbursed at 45p per mile.

• Support to gain 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 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.

**6. Wider Expectations of the Supported Lodgings carers Role/ Task**

The following values will be integral in the carers 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 home.

**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 Carers will be encouraged to record information about their weekly lives with young people placed with them and some of the particular incidents that happen.

**Working as part of a Team**

The Supported Lodgings Carer 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 Carer 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, Leaving Care Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, College etc will be an essential aspect of the carer’s role.

Carers will participate in Looked after Reviews for young people who are looked after where the Pathway Plan will be reviewed. For 18 year olds, carers will participate in Pathway Plan Reviews.

**7 Approval and Reviews of Supported Lodgings Carers**

An enquiry is made by a prospective carer using the Supported Lodgings enquiry form; there is a link to this form on the webpage and social media, and once completed the form will automatically be sent to Supported.Lodgings@derbyshire.gov.uk. This mailbox can be accessed by the Supported Lodgings coordinators and the team coordinator linked to supported lodgings.

If there is a clear reason why it is not appropriate to take the enquiry further this will be explained to prospective carer and confirmed in writing. If the application proceeds, a home visit will be undertaken. The nature of the home visit will be explained to the prospective carer and arrangements will be made to carry out this visit.

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

* Expectations of Supported Lodgings carers;
* 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.

An application form which will include permission for the Local Authority to undertake the necessary checks will be sent prior to the initial home visit.

The completed home visit will be passed to the Manager/s of the Supportive Lodgings Scheme with a recommendation from the Supported Lodging Coordinator as to whether to progress the application or not and the reasoning.

Following the home visit and the completion of a home visit report, a decision will be made by the Manager. If the 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, contact will be made with the prospective carer inviting them to the the next stage of their assessment. If the carers wishes to proceed, their application form will be processed, including reference checks.

**The Assessment**

The assessment will be written in accordance to Fostering Regulations: Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations July 2013.

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.

The assessment will adopt a competency based approach. 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.

If, during the assessment, the Support Lodgings Coordinator and Team Manager do not believe that a positive recommendation can be made the prospective carer will be encouraged to withdraw from the assessment process. Should the prospective carer decline to withdraw the Support Lodging Coordinator will complete a short report with a negative recommendation and present this to the Supporting Lodging panel that have received supported lodgings training. Panel will be asked to make a recommendation that will be forwarded to the Independent Decision Maker.

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

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 two.

The concluded assessment will be forwarded to the Supported Lodging Panel that have received training in supported lodgings and usually, an independent care leaver. The Supported Lodging Coordinator and the prospective carer will be expected to attend. Panel will be asked to make a recommendation that will be forwarded to the Independent Decision Maker for ratification (should panel’s recommendation be positive).

Following ratification, a profile of the Supported Lodgings carer will be drawn up by the Supported Lodging Coordinator detailing their particular strengths and skills and giving an overview of their family and living situation. This will be made available to the Central Placement Team and to referring Social Workers and Leaving Carers workers. The carer will be required to sign an Agreement setting out the expectations.

**Review of Approval**

Supported Lodgings carers will be reviewed on an annual basis. As part of the process, a meeting will take place between the carer and Supported Lodging Coordinator.

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

Written Feedback will be sought from Social Workers, Leaving Care Workers and Young People regarding the homes provided within the review period.

The Supported Lodging Coordinator will complete a report detailing how the previous period has gone and make a recommendation as to future approval as well as any development/ training issues.

The Manager will review the report and make a recommendation with regard to future approval and any development/ training/ work issues. All annual reviews will be presented to the Supported Lodging Panel to make a further recommendation and presented to Independent Decision Maker for formal re-approval.

Both the Fostering Department and the Supported Lodgings carer have the right to call an early review.

Should the Supported Lodgings carer 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 Supported Lodging panel.

**8. Training, Support and Supervision for Supported Lodgings Providers**

**Training**

Supported Lodgings carers will be provided with a range of training as part of their induction and on-going development. There will be an expectation that providers attend ‘core training’ in line with other registered foster carers within their first year and then minimum training in subsequent years. Further training will be identified through supervisory visits and the review process.

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

**Supervision**

The Supported Lodgings carer will have an allocated Supported Lodging Coordinator from the Leaving Care Service. Their main focus will be offering guidance and support to the carer 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 carer and other agencies working with the young person. At times they may help to explore what other resources might be needed to make the arrangement successful.

**Frequency and content of visits**

The Supported Lodgings Coordinator will visit the Supported Lodgings Carer at least every 12 weeks, with a telephone/ email contact every 6 weeks. The frequency of visits will depend on a number of factors including the stability of the home; the carer’ s experience; any challenges regarding the young person in the home etc.

Between planned visits, the coordinator will provide advice/ support via phone or e mail, or via additional visits if needed. An unannounced visit to the carer will be made every 12 months.

If at any stage there are particular difficulties/ a crisis, a meeting may be requested by the young person’s Social Worker and/or Leaving Care Worker or the coordinator to discuss the situation and plan the best way forward.

A “buddy” support and advice scheme is available whereby more experienced carers are available to offer support and advice to less experienced carers.

**Support Groups**

Carers will be provided with access to regular support groups via the Derbyshire Fostering Service, which will be held at varying times and venues.

As well as offering carers the opportunity to meet, share information and receive support, the meetings will also provide a forum for training and information sharing sessions. 0ut of office hours, carers can contact the Out of Hours Team.

**9. Finance**

For the sake of this scheme, payments to the carers will be called ‘Supported Lodgings Allowance’.

For children in care, carers should receive a total of £215 which is made of £190 support element paid by DCC and £25 board paid from the young person’s weekly allowance.

For over 18 young people, carers should receive a total of £215 which is made up of £135 support element paid by DCC, £55 housing benefit equivalent paid by DCC and £25 board paid from the young person’s Universal Credit and/or employment salary to the carers. For over 18 young people, carers should receive the same amount of money but the £55 should come directly via housing benefit.

Supported Lodging carers will not be expected to give young people any monies; a weekly allowance should be paid to the young person by their Social Worker / leaving care worker directly into their bank account. Currently, the weekly allowance is equivalent to Universal Credit payments (£80 per week).

An initial clothing grant of £150 can be provided if a child is new into care. This is generally given in 3 instalments of £50 each, and would either be given to the supported lodgings carers to go shopping with the young person, or given to the young person in vouchers.

From the young person’s 18th birthday, the monies paid to the young person by their Social Worker / Leaving Care worker will cease and should be replaced by the young person’s welfare benefit claim (Universal Credit). The Leaving Care Team offers financial support up to 6 weeks after their 18th birthday as bridging payments to allow for any delays in receiving benefits to prevent financial hardship.

In situations where young people aged 18 plus are working, and do not claim a means tested benefit they will be expected to use their earnings to provide carers with an equivalent to housing benefit and board. For those young people who are on a low income, they may be entitled to full Housing Benefit and/or additional financial support from the Leaving Care Service to be able to sustain their employment and accommodation. For those young people that are not entitled to full Housing Benefit then they would be expected to contribute the short fall to the carers through their earnings.

Young people in supported lodgings home receive festivity/birthday allowances of £35 which are paid directly to them by social care/leaving care.

**10. Accommodation**

As part of the assessment process, a Health and Safety Checklist will be completed and updated on a yearly basis.

The whole of the shared parts of the accommodation should be clean, warm, 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.

**11. Accessing the Scheme and Making a Referral**

Referrals for the scheme can be made by the young person’s Social Worker/leaving care worker via Mosaic using the Child Home Finding request form.

Referrals should be sent to the Placement Team who will then liaise with the Leaving Care Service to discuss potential matches and availability.

**12. Matching**

Arrangements will be made in a planned way enabling the best match of home to be achieved and the carers and young person to be prepared for the move.

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

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

If both the carer 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 carer and arrangements made for the young person to meet the carer. Following this meeting, feedback will be sought from the young person and the carer to determine if the agreement can proceed. Other care plans/Pathway plans and any relevant risk assessments should be shared with the carer at this stage.

A home Planning Meeting must take place within 72 hours of the young person moving into the home. Where possible and/or appropriate, this meeting will take place in advance or on the day the young person moves in. For all looked after young people, this meeting will finalise the Living Together Agreement and Delegated Authority.

For care leavers, this meeting will confirm the purpose of the home; the role of the carer in preparing the young person for independence etc.

At this meeting the Living Together Agreement will be signed by the Young Person and carer.

**13. Ending a Supported Lodgings arrangement**

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

If the carer is considering bringing the arrangement to an end, it is expected that they will discuss this in the first instance with their allocated Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator. Depending on the circumstances, a support meeting may be called to explore the situation and whether anything can be done to preserve the home or whether it should be brought to an end in an agreed timescale.

A notice period of 28 days will be required, unless in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear safeguarding concern.