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**Darlington Borough Council Supported Lodgings Policy**

1. **Eligibility for Supported Lodgings**

In Darlington Borough Council a young person is eligible to be considered for Supported Lodgings when they have either been in a fostering or connected carer placement or lived in a residential children’s home.

Supported Lodgings is an accommodation scheme for young people aged 16 and over, who are not ready to live independently. Supported Lodgings placements are seen as a ‘stepping-stone’ from being in care to living independently. They aim to provide young people with practical and emotional assistance, in the safety and security of a family environment. Supported Lodgings enables young people to develop their independence skills so they can confidently live on their own.

Young people are expected to be in some form of education, training or employment prior to the Supported Lodgings placement commencing and throughout their time in Supported Lodgings. The young person should be supported and encouraged to progress in their education or employment and the placement could be ended if they are not in any form of education, training or employment.

1. **Establishing a Supporting Lodgings Placement**

The option of Supported Lodgings should be identified within the young person's Pathway Planning process and discussions with the young person should take place at the earliest opportunity once it has been established that Supported Lodgings would be a suitable accommodation option for the young person.

Advice about what a Supported Lodgings placement is should be given to the young person by their Social Worker or Personal Advisor, and the Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Co-ordinator, for the young person to make an informed decision about proceeding with the arrangement.

The young person’s Social Worker or Personal Advisor should inform the Supported Lodgings and Staying Put Co-Ordinator if Supported Lodgings has been identified as an option and is being considered by the young person. The Looked After Through Care Social Worker or Personal Advisor will then complete the Supported Lodgings referral and risk assessment for the young person.

Once the referral and risk assessment has been received by the Supported Lodgings and Staying Put co-ordinator, this can then be shared with Supported Lodging Providers deemed to be a suitable match. The young person will be matched depending on their needs and taking into consideration the Supported Lodging Providers skills, lifestyle and personal and professional commitments in assessing whether they can meet the young person’s needs.

If the young person and the Supported Lodgings Provider(s) both wish to progress with Supported Lodgings placement, the Supported Lodgings and Staying Put Co-ordinator will arrange for both parties to meet. This might take place in the community for the first time or alternatively the Supported Lodgings Provider might agree for the young person to visit their home. All meetings will be supported by the Social Worker or Personal Advisor and the Supported Lodgings and Staying Put Co-ordinator.

If the initial meeting was successful and the feedback from both parties is that they wish to progress with the placement, then further visits to the Supported Lodgings Providers home will usually take place over a period of 2 weeks, however this will vary to meet the needs of the young person. This allows the opportunity for the young person and the Supported Lodgings Provider to get to know one another and the option to stay for tea and have an overnight stay before the placement begins.

The Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Co-ordinator will organise with the Social Worker or Personal Advisor, the Supported Lodgings Provider and the young person a meeting before the young person moves into the Supported Lodgings placement. The Supported Lodgings placement agreement, license agreement and house rules will be completed and signed. The purpose of the Supported Lodgings agreement meeting is for both the Supported Lodgings Provider and the young person to appreciate what is expected of each other.

The Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Co-Ordinator will work with the young person to agree how they will pay the weekly £20 contribution. The Social Worker or Personal Advisor will also work with the young person to maximise their entitlement to benefits. Consideration should also be given to ensure that applications for benefits do not discourage a young person from obtaining or maintaining part or full-time employment.

Occasionally young people or Supported Lodgings Providers may change their minds after making an initial decision about Supported Lodgings. If the young person or Supported Lodgings Providers change their minds about Supported Lodgings this should be discussed at the earliest opportunity so that alternative options can be explored. A key priority is to ensure minimum disruption to the young person’s life.

1. **Professional Roles**

The Social Worker or Personal Advisor will continue to provide support to the young person throughout the Supported Lodgings placement. They will manage Pathway Plans and support the young person within the new arrangement. The Social Worker or Personal Advisor will ensure that the young person understands the terms of the Supported Lodgings agreement. This may include reinforcing what the young person is expected to purchase from their income, supporting the young person to apply for relevant funding and benefits, and helping them to establish a method of making their weekly contribution to the Supported Lodgings Provider.

The Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Co-ordinator’s role will involve supporting and supervising the Supported Lodgings Provider(s) with regards to the placement with the young person. Supervision meetings will take place approximately every 4-6 weeks. The frequency will reduce if the Supported Lodgings Provider does not have any young people in placement, or they are receiving a retainer.

Supported Lodgings Providers will welcome the young person into their home, and ensure they have their own bedroom, and encourage use of communal facilities within the house. The Supported Lodgings Provider will give support and advice to the young person and help to prepare them for independent living. The provider should seek information about the income tax and national insurance implications of offering Supported Lodgings as the Local Authority will provide only general advice, and the Supported Lodgings Provider will need advice about their own unique circumstances.

1. **Documentation**

The Pathway Plan should identify an intention to establish a Supported Lodgings placement.

A Supported Lodgings Placement Agreement should be completed and signed by the Supported Lodgings Provider, Young Person, Personal Advisor and the Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Co-ordinator before the Supported Lodgings placement begins.

A Supported Lodgings License Agreement should be completed and signed by the Supported Lodgings Provider and the young person which will be used to apply for the housing element of Universal Credit.

1. **Supported Lodgings Allowance**

The young person will be supported by their Personal Advisor to make a Universal Credit claim unless they are in employment or are under the age of 18 and receiving a Living Allowance from the Local Authority. This will enable them to purchase items to include clothes and toiletries and should cover social and leisure activities.

The Supported Lodgings Allowance is £270 per week for each young person. This comprises:

* £250 per week from the Local Authority and Universal Credit (housing allowance) if applicable
* The Supported Lodgings Provider will receive £20 per week from the young person

There will be an additional festival payment for each young person of £200. This will be paid just before Christmas to enable Supported Lodgings Providers to purchase gifts or treat the young person to a special outing over the Christmas period. The payment can be saved and used at another time to reflect the young person’s culture and religion.

If a single carer’s council tax reduction is impacted by offering a Supported Lodgings placement, the Local Authority will remunerate the carer to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

1. **Young Persons Contribution**

The young person will make a contribution of £20 per week to the Supported Lodgings Provider.

1. **Retainer/Allowance**

A retainer of £50 per week can be paid to the Supported Lodgings Provider in certain situations when the young person is not present in the household, but their room remains available.

Young people are not expected to contribute to the retainer.

When a young person returns to stay for a period, the Supported Lodgings Provider will be paid at the current Supported Lodgings rate. The young person will be expected to contribute to this depending on their income.

The retainer can be paid when the following circumstances apply:

Retainer - Armed Services

If a young person joins the armed services, the Supported Lodgings Provider can be paid a retainer while the young person completes the first three months of basic training.

Retainer - University

A retainer can be paid to the Supported Lodgings Provider for a young person who is at university during term time.

Gap Year Plans

Gap year plans that involve travel or studying abroad will be supported via the retainer arrangements. We will consider each individual situation and determine an appropriate timescale for the arrangement.

1. **DBS Checks**

If the Supported Lodgings Provider has the capacity and has been approved to offer more than one Supported Lodgings Placements, including availability for respite placements, then once the young person reaches 18, they will need to have a [Disclosure and Barring Service](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/dis_barring_service.html) (DBS) check as they become an adult living in the home. There must be a discussion with the young person to explain why a DBS check is required.

The Fostering and Supported Lodgings team must have regard to any risks the young adult may pose to other young people who may be in placement as part of the “matching” process.

Supported Lodging Providers DBS checks will continue to be renewed 3 yearly in accordance with service policy.

1. **Supported Lodgings Standards of Practice**

The following standards will govern the expectations of the Supported Lodgings Placement:

* Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Co-ordinator will notify the Head of Service every month of any changes within the supported lodgings arrangement.
* DBS checks every three years for every adult member of the household who are aged 18 years and over in accordance with service policy.
* Health and Safety checks, Fire Policy and Safe Care Policy to be reviewed annually unless an earlier review is required due to a change in circumstances such as a house move, building works, placement change, etc.
* Regular monthly supervision by the Supported Lodging/Staying Put Co-ordinator (unless the young person is away in the Armed Forces or at University when the frequency is reduced).
* Undertake relevant training as identified in supervision.
* Notify any significant events to the Supported Lodgings/Staying Put Co-ordinator.
* Medicals to be provided every 3 years.

1. **Monitoring and Reviewing Arrangements**

Supported Lodgings placements should be reviewed as part of the Pathway Plan Review a minimum of every six months. This should include a review of any problems or difficulties which have emerged, and what is working well.

A review can be arranged earlier by agreement between the young person, Supported Lodgings Providers, and the professionals involved.

1. **Ending the Supported Lodgings Arrangement**

The Supported Lodgings placement can be ended by the young person or Supported Lodgings Provider giving relevant notice. Both parties should give as much notice as possible, and this should in most circumstances be a minimum of 28 days’ notice.

The Supported Lodgings placement will end when the young person becomes 21, or 25 if the young person is in further or higher education.

Planning will be undertaken to ensure the young person can move on into suitable accommodation. As much as possible we want to ensure that the end of a Supported Lodgings placement is a gradual transition to independent living and the young person is supported with the move. If a young person was to move to a taster flat or a similar provision as part of moving on to independence, the Supported Lodgings Provider can receive a full allowance for 28 days to retain the placement in case the young person needs to return.

When planning to end a Supported Lodgings placement as a young person approaches 21 (or 25 if in further education), it needs to be considered that a young person will no longer be classed as in "priority need" for social housing when they reach 21 years. It may be necessary to plan for the young person to move shortly before this time if social housing is to be accessed.

**End**

Completed 8th September 2021

Review due September 2023