**Supported Lodgings Policy**

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**1. Introduction**

This policy sets out:

* The Supported Lodgings placement eligibility
* planning for a young person’s placement and
* arrangements for leaving a placement.

The Supported Lodgings Scheme exists primarily as a service for young people making the transition from care between the ages of 16 and 21 years of age. The Supported Lodgings Scheme also provides a service to young people who are experiencing homelessness, who require a supportive lodgings environment.

**2. Eligibility**

Young people can be placed in a supported lodgings placement if they are:

* Vulnerable 16-17 year olds estranged from family members and are at risk of being homeless and who do not wish to be [**Looked After**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/looked_after.html) (under the Southwark judgement) but who do not have the skills and abilities yet to live independently.
* 16-17 year olds who have been in foster care/residential care and who do not wish to remain in their placement and who do not have the skills and abilities yet to live independently. This arrangement would have to be made with the young person’s consent and meet the criteria and standards set out in section 7: “Placement of a Child in Care in ‘other arrangements’ including Supported Lodgings placements” below
* Young people aged 18+ who are experiencing homelessness or have been in the care of the local authority and who meet the suitability criteria.

**2.1 Suitability criteria**

The scheme works with young people who may:

* Be vulnerable or in need of some emotional support;
* Have some mild learning difficulties or mental health issues;
* Have committed minor offences;
* Have minor issues related to drug or alcohol misuse.

**2.2 Supported Lodgings are generally less suitable for those young people who have high risk behaviours or lifestyles, for example, who:**

* Are currently and persistently engaged in criminal activity;
* Are involved in escalating, potentially serious, alcohol or substance misuse, particularly if there has been a clear deterioration in the overall situation, characterised by an increase in use of abusive substances, evidence of injecting, using cocktails of drugs, poor levels of self-awareness and self-control and associated health problems;
* Are involved in serious incidents of self-harm: consideration needs to be given to the nature and seriousness of the incident, the young person’s history of self-harming, levels of self-awareness, and the likelihood of repeated action;
* Present with violent or abusive behaviour or mental health difficulties which place themselves or others at serious risk or in danger: consideration needs to be given to individual psychological difficulties or diagnosed mental health problems, the level of verbal, emotional, physical and sexual aggression that could constitute a risk to the young person and others;
* Involved in exploitative sexual relationships: consideration needs to be given to the emotional impact of physical and sexual aggression and long-term bullying and exploitation;
* Require additional personal care due to the nature of their physical, emotional or intellectual disabilities and/or are unable to communicate situations of abuse or harm and the possibility of exploitation.
* Has involvement in gangs and knife crime and who is currently involved with the Youth Offending Service.

As far as possible, Supported Lodgings should be accessible to all who meet the eligibility criteria and may be set up for young people with specialist needs, depending on the individual situation. However, these placements may not be suitable for all, so it is important that the service has a good understanding of the young person’s needs in order to decide whether a referral meets the eligibility criteria. A risk assessment should be carried out by the allocated Social Worker in conjunction or Supported Lodgings worker if the young person is involved in or experiencing any of the high-risk issues above before a referral is accepted.

**3. Placement Procedure**

**3.1 Referral Process**

1. The young person’s need for a Supported Lodgings Placement should be identified through their Pathway Plan by the allocated Social Worker;
2. The allocated Social Worker discusses the possibility of a Supported Lodgings placement with the Supported Lodgings Worker;
3. If the child is 16 – 18 years old and a Child in Care, the allocated Social Worker should submit a schedule 6 risk assessment to the Assistant Director who will make the decision on whether a referral for a Supported lodgings placement can be made. This is because Supported Lodgings placements are classed as unregulated.
4. The allocated social worker then needs to submit a Supported lodgings referral which should include a risk assessment if required to the ICS Supported Lodgings team clipboard;
5. The young person will be interviewed by the Supported Lodgings Worker and an application form will be completed. As much information as appropriate will be gathered by the Supported Lodgings worker.
6. The young person will then be linked to a suitable placement after the relevant referral information has been shared with the Carers, with the support of the young person’s social worker.
7. Relevant information will then be shared with the young person about the carers and their home and if all parties agree that the link should progress, an introduction meeting will be arranged. This meeting will include a matching meeting and will be held in the carers home; a plan for Social worker and Supported Lodgings worker visits will be agreed for all young people in placement, regardless of age.
8. When the young person moves in, the License Agreement and housing benefit application (if required) will be completed. An Information pack will be given to the young person which includes information on complaints, support, review and equal opportunities. The Licence Agreement is the agreement between the Supported Lodgings Scheme and the young person (licensee), granting the licensee permission to stay in the property and setting out the terms of the agreement, for example, that the young person will pay rent and the carer will provide access to the accommodation and keep it in good repair;
9. Regardless of the young person’s age, the first placement review will be carried out within 28 days of the start of the placement and copies of the review documentation will be given to the young person and the carer;
10. Subsequent placement reviews will be carried out on a quarterly basis by the Supported Lodgings Worker, during which the support plan will be reviewed, and a plan for an outstanding action will be agreed. Reviews and support plans will be young person led and based on their expected outcomes and aspirations. The review will require input from the young person’s support network, including their carer and other professionals. Any concerns raised by any party will be documented on the review form.

**4. Financial Arrangements**

Supported Lodgings Carers will receive payments as set out in the Fostering Services Scheme of Allowances which is reviewed annually. Under this scheme, the carer must provide a minimum of two meals per day for the young person.

If the young person is over 18 and in receipt of benefits, an income from employment or in receipt of a Further Education Grant, they will be expected to contribute the amount set out in the scheme of allowances each week to their carer. In these circumstances, Newcastle City Council will deduct this contribution from the payment made to the carer. In these circumstances, Newcastle City Council will deduct this contribution from the payment made to the carer.

Where housing benefit is applied, the Council will also claim the landlord element of housing benefit from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). This is paid directly to the Supported Lodgings carer.

**5. Support, Sustainability and the Ending of Placements**

Although technically the carer or young person can voluntarily terminate the placement at any time by giving two weeks’ notice, terminating the placement may not be in the young person’s best interests and the reasons for notice being given should be explored by the workers to see it there are any difficulties that need to be unpicked.

If the carers or young person think that a placement is not working, they should raise their concerns with the young person’s social worker and the Supported Lodgings worker as soon as possible. If these issues are not easily resolved, the Supported Lodgings worker will organise a sustainability meeting to review whether further support is required to help support the young person and carer in the placement. This may include increased visits, support to help the young person access additional services and resources and further training and guidance for the carer.

If it is agreed at the sustainability meeting, that further services and support will not be enough to sustain the placement successfully, the Supported Lodgings Worker and/or young person’s social worker will look for alternative accommodation.

**6. Warning Procedure**

In situations where it is clearly untenable or unsafe for the young person and carer to continue to live together for even a short period of time, the service would forgo the warning procedure and would aim to end the placement within 24 hours. Such situations would include:

* Instances of violence or other seriously inappropriate behaviour;
* Gross invasion of privacy;
* Serious malicious damage or theft.

In all other cases i.e. cases where a sustainability meeting has taken place and it has been recognised that the placement is in jeopardy due to the behaviour of the young person, the following procedure will apply.

**6.1 Verbal warning**

If a verbal warning becomes necessary, a discussion will take place between the young person and the allocated Social Worker and/or supported Lodgings Worker around the areas of concern and what needs to change. This discussion will make it clear what the next stage of the process will be and the consequences of continued non-compliance with the terms of their agreement (i.e. eviction). This will be recorded on file as a verbal warning.

**6.2 First Written warning**

As highlighted at the verbal warning stage, the first written warning will be issued if the concerning behaviour continues without improvement and the young person continues to break the terms of their agreement. The letter will include:

* An explanation of why the written warning has been issued;
* An explanation of what will happen if the license agreement continues to be broken;
* How long the warning will remain on file;

This will be recorded on file as a written warning.

**6.3 Final written warning**

A final written warning letter will be issued if the concerning behaviour does not cease and the terms of the licence agreement continue to be broken. The letter will confirm that the young person has been issued with a final warning and that a notice to quit the placement will be issued if the license agreement is broken again.

The letter will include:

* An explanation of why the final written warning has been issued;
* An explanation that a Notice to Quit will be issued if the license agreement is broken again;
* How long the warning will remain on file;

This will be recorded on the young person’s file as a final written warning.

**6.4 Notice to Quit**

If the situation fails to improve, a letter will be sent to the young person to confirm that a notice to quit is in operation and that the young person will have to leave their placement. The letter will contain:

* Reason(s) for the eviction;
* Date and time by which the young person must move out and remove their belongings from the placement;
* Offers of help to move belongings and arrange emergency accommodation;
* Right to appeal against the decision and details of the appeals procedure.

All warnings will remain active for a period of six months, after which they will be removed from the evictions record. All warnings with be recorded in the young person’s file, stating the date of issue, date of expiry and reason for warning.

**7. Placement of a Child in Care in ‘other arrangements’ including Supported Lodgings placements**

The assessment of the child’s needs to inform his/her care or pathway plan may conclude that for some children, these needs will be best met by a placement in ‘other arrangements’ (Care Planning Regulation 28).

These placements are not regulated under the Care Standards Act 2000 and as a result will not be inspected by Ofsted. In these circumstances, it will be essential that the local authority takes every step to establish that the child’s needs are matched to the services provided by the placement. For example, an eligible child aged 16 – 17 may be placed in supported lodgings to offer him/her opportunities to take on more responsibility for his/her own care, in order to prepare for the move to more independent accommodation when s/he reaches legal adulthood. In this case, the local authority will have to ensure that the carers have the necessary competences so that the support provided by the placement enables the young person to develop the skills needed to make a positive transition to greater independence in the future.

Before making an unregulated Supported Lodgings placement, the local authority must:

* establish that the accommodation is suitable
* consider the child’s wishes and feelings
* Consider the child’s assessed needs including any educational, training or employment needs

The Care Planning Regulations set out factors that must be considered in determining whether accommodation is suitable for individual care leavers (Schedule 6 – Care Planning Regulations).

The factors outlined in schedule 6 are not intended to limit choice for young people who wish to and are ready to move to more independent accommodation as part of preparing them for the transition to adult responsibilities. However, these factors outline the issues that will need to be considered at both a strategic and an individual level whenever commissioning unregulated accommodation for this group. Attention to these factors will assist authorities to be responsible corporate parents by ensuring that whenever children are placed in ‘other arrangements’ they can be provided with the necessary stability and support.