**Kent Supported Homes**

**Young Person's Handbook**

A cartoon of a person standing on a sidewalk

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## **Overview of Kent Supported Homes**

Kent Supported Homes (KSH) is a service provided by Kent County Council, where recruited ‘Hosts’ support young adults like you develop the necessary life skills and promote maturity to enable you to become a successful independent adult. The service gives young adults the opportunity to experience living in a supportive family environment whilst learning and practising these important life skills. Sometimes, you will hear this service being referred to as ‘KSH’.

You can enter KSH at age 16 and remain there potentially, until you are 21 years of age. Sometimes, if you are in university, you might be able to return to your previous Host’s home beyond this age, during the non-term time. This means you always have somewhere to go during the vacation periods, that you know and that is safe and familiar to you and to spend time with people who know you and can support you if needed. This is a matter of choice for you and the KSH Host and you will need to discuss this with them and your Personal Advisor.

We hope and think that you will benefit from the freedom and responsibility you will experience, while sharing time and a home with positive role models who can support and help you in times of need. Your Hosts will remain focused on helping you to develop the practical and emotional skills you need to move on to become a successful, independent young adult who is able to reach your full potential.

There are expectations as to the standard of your accommodation, support and wellbeing as set out in the relevant regulations known as ‘The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023’. You can find a link to these standards, and to the guidance around them at the end of this handbook. This regulation is overseen by an organisation known as ‘Ofsted’, which is the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. They inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. They also inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people.

Your accommodation, support and wellbeing should meet these standards at all times and if they do not, raise this with any of the professionals supporting you and they will make sure that this changes.

## **Finding You the Best Host Family**

A KSH Host is the person with responsibility for supporting you whilst you live in their home and work towards your goals.

All Kent Supported Homes Hosts have undergone a full assessment and have been approved by an independent panel. They have undertaken training to support young people like you to achieve independent living skills and are able to guide and support you on your journey.

A Host will have been vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and their property Health & Safety checked to ensure it complies with the necessary regulations to keep you safe and ensure that only suitable people and properties are part of the Kent Supported Homes service.

Our Hosts may be a couple, or single person. They may have their own children living in their home. Depending on the size of the house and other factors, Hosts may be able to offer between 1 and 3 places to care-experienced young people from 16 years of age, in their homes.

Sometimes, Hosts will have other jobs, such as working in schools, hospitals, shops or many other places. This will mean that they are able to share their experiences of working with you and share in your own experience when you decide to begin working. Hosts should always have time to support you to achieve your goals, but if at any time you feel this is not the case, you can let someone in your support network know, or even have a chat with your Host (if you feel comfortable to do this) to raise awareness of your situation and how you feel you need things to change.

Your Social Worker or Personal Advisor will request that an arrangement be found for you, if you decide that Kent Supported Homes is the right choice for you.

The department within KCC (known as the ‘Total Placement Service’ or ‘TPS’) will then take the referral made by your supporting worker and match your needs i.e. requested location, college or work needs or the type of support you require, with a Host who best ‘matches’ this set of criteria.

An introductory visit will then be arranged for you to visit the Host and you can ask questions to determine if this is the right arrangement for you to achieve your goals and a place to call ‘home’ for the period you need it. When thinking about the best place for you, you might want to think about things like:

* Is this close to my school/college/work?
* Does it have transport links to the places I want or need to get to?
* Is it close to family and friends?
* Will visitors be allowed to visit me? If so, how often?
* What are the house rules I will be expected to follow?
* Is it close to other places I might need to attend regularly, such as a GP surgery, a dentist or an opticians?
* What sort of Host would I feel most comfortable with? A man? A woman? A couple? A large family?
* Would I like to live with pets?

We can’t promise that every one of these things will be fulfilled every time, but everyone will do their best to find you something which is suitable and in which they believe you can be very successful and happy.

## **Your Host’s Accommodation Officer / Fostering Social Worker and their Role**

An Accommodation Officer or Fostering Social Worker is a person that will be there to support your Host just like your Host is there to support you.

Every KSH Host will have one. They are there to support the Host to talk about how they are feeling, how they are managing their home and how they are making sure that everyone is safe. They will speak to your Host regularly and meet them once every six weeks as a minimum, to make sure they remain aware of the most important aspects of your support and wellbeing.

You will see the Accommodation Officer at an introduction meeting, when you first meet your new Host, where they will explain everything you need to know about Kent Supported Homes.

If you choose to move in, the Accommodation Officer will be there to welcome you and help you settle in. They will conduct a Move in Agreement Meeting where everyone will discuss their roles and responsibilities. After this meeting, you will see the Accommodation Officer at your Child in Care (CIC) reviews every six months and placement reviews every three months if you are under 18. If you are over 18, your Pathway Plan (PWP) Meetings will have the Accommodation Officer and Host present if that's ok with you. This is so the Accommodation Officer knows that your Host is meeting your needs and that you are engaging with the support. The Accommodation Officer will also see you if we need to try and stabilise the arrangement or move things on from your Kent Supported Home. Things may not be going too well, or you may be ready for independence! Never fear, you will be supported and guided by all you agree to engage with.

## **What to Expect in a Kent Supported Home**

Kent Supported Homes will provide you with a safe place to live, with support and guidance necessary for future independent living provided by the adult/family that live there.

The Host and their home are there for you to feel at home, at ease and comfortable. You will have your own space to relax, learn and develop. If you have any concerns or feelings that make it unenjoyable, you can speak to your Host or Social Worker/Personal Advisor who are there to support it being better for you. There are others that will be a part of the team supporting you, including: your Social Work Team Manager, 18+ Team Manager, your Host’s Accommodation Officer and many more! Every young person and adult that KCC supports has a team of professionals around them, trying to help them achieve their goals and fulfil their potential.

## **Your Space**

You will be provided with your own fully furnished bedroom with access to Wi-Fi and storage for belongings and have use of the kitchen, sitting room and bathroom facilities.

You will have a lock on your door and be able to have the privacy you need, as long as everyone knows you are safe.

You will be able to access the common areas of the home, such as the living room or kitchen and you will be encouraged to shop, cook and clean for yourself, as these are often some of the biggest challenges for young people and the most important things for them to learn. Of course, if you need support to learn these things, then you can ask your Host for this help. Hosts won’t usually do things ‘for’ you, but instead ‘with’ you, to show you how they are done.

When you move in, you may find that there are some items provided for you, such as bedding and soap and toilet paper, but over time, you might be expected to learn to buy these things for yourself, and manage your own living situation, but you will continue to receive support throughout your time with the Host / family.

## **Other People Accessing your Space**

Your bedroom will not generally be entered without your permission or advance notice, such as for a facilities inspection where required. What we mean by this is to check on the condition of important things, such as lights, plug sockets and other things which might impact on your comfort, safety or wellbeing.

In most instances, Hosts will inform you in advance of a check or inspection and agree a time for them to gain access to your bedroom. Immediate searching without permission may be necessary where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a safety risk to you or another person. If Hosts need to enter your room and are not able to let you know in advance, they will let you know that they are entering the room and explain the purposes for entering immediately afterwards. An example of this could be if there is smoke coming from your room, meaning there are concerns for your or the other people’s safety in the home and you are not able to be contacted.

If this happens, your Host will be expected to send you text, or an email if they can, so that you can find out as soon as possible. We want you to have your privacy and remain informed, but the number one priority for a Host is always the safety of all people in their home.

It is important that you feel happy and safe in your new home. If you have any concerns with the arrangement, it is important you share this with your Host so they can look at making changes for you.

If you feel you are not able to share these concerns with the Host, always remember that you can let your Social Worker, Personal Advisor or the Accommodation Officer know.

## **Your Support**

You will be able to access support in many areas across your experience of life, especially if it is your first time dealing with specific situations.

Doing things for the first time can be scary or make you feel anxious, and your Hosts will try to be there to support you whenever you need someone to talk to or to show you how to do something.

You will find that most Hosts have had full and rich lives and have done most of the things that you are going to need to do! This means that often, they can tell you what to do, or what not to do and what to expect when you do it.

Some of the things you might want them to help you to improve on are:

* Budgeting, including how to manage your incomings and outgoings, how to prioritise your spending, how to save for things you might need in the future and other things you might identify yourself.
* Cooking and shopping within your budget, including what is ‘good food’ to buy, how to make sure you are safe when cooking, how to prepare healthy and delicious meals and other tips and tricks your Host might have learned to keep your belly happy!
* Emotional support with your mental health, which might include giving you advice, sharing with you ways of keeping calm, how to take your mind off things which could be upsetting you, cheering you up, getting you in touch with experts for more help, or just listening.
* Education, employment and training support. This might include helping you look for jobs or talk about what you want to learn and where to go to do this.
* Support with applications, such as Universal Credit or other Department for Work and Pensions processes, accessing college, applications to clubs or activities you would like to do and many others.
* All other independence skills required for future independent living as best they can.
* Engaging with your chosen religious or spiritual beliefs, including attending your place of worship, meeting other people of the same faith groups as you, having time and space to pray or undertake contemplative reflection, allowing you to follow your religious calendar in respect of holy days, allowing you the freedom to wear your traditional cultural dress and follow any specific diet.

This is not a complete list and there may be other things that you want to discuss, such as achieving relationship goals, or a variety of other things. All you have to do is ask!

A Host will always be there for you to be a person to listen to you, give you guidance and support or just a reassuring listening ear if you need to get something ‘off your chest’.

Within a Kent Supported Home your Host will be required to give you between 15 and 25 hours of support per week. Once your home has been identified and you have moved in, a meeting will be arranged that will set out the goals for you to achieve.

The support given to you will be tailored to support you with your specific needs. This can include any of those things mentioned earlier on. Many of these goals will be recorded in your Care Plan, or in your Pathway Plan, so you might already know about what these will be and have some more suggestions to add.

At your own pace, you will be able to create a strong and trusting support network with your Host and the team around you. Your Host will have the support of their Accommodation Officer and you will also have the support from your Social Worker or 18+ Personal Advisor.

Regular meetings to review your plans to receive support will be held to ensure you are progressing and receiving the support required. At any time, you can discuss the things you want to work on improving and have these added to your support plans.

You will be empowered to feel comfortable and confident in learning your independent living skills. You will not be judged. The support you receive will be at an appropriate level for you to engage with and the hope will be that you can be confident in moving on at the right time before turning 21. After you turn 18, this support is provided to you by your Host and your Personal Advisor. The 18+ team have specialist teams to support with Moving on including the Housing Pathways Team, Education, Employment & Training (EET Team) and also Mental Health Social Workers.

## **Your Responsibilities and Challenges**

Whilst your Host is there in the home to support you, there will be some basic requirements of you in their home. These include but are not limited to:

### Follow the House Rules

* + Every home has rules and your Host will set these out clearly for you when you move in. You must follow these rules so that everyone can be treated fairly, and the home can be a happy, safe place for everyone.
  + Different homes might have different rules and if you move between different Hosts’ homes, you might see some differences.

### Maintaining your environment

* + This means things like tidying up after yourself, keeping your room clean, tidying the bathroom after you have used it and the kitchen once you have finished cooking or eating.
  + Don’t worry, if you struggle with these things, advice and guidance can be given but it won’t be done for you!

### Doing your own clothes washing

* + You will be guided and prompted and shown how to use the machine if you are unsure. This can seem complicated at first, but it usually turns out to be quite easy, once you get the hang of it.

### Going food shopping

* + Help will be given if you have not had to do a weekly shop before. Sometimes, it takes a bit of practice to learn where is best to buy certain items and how much is a ‘reasonable’ amount to pay.
  + At the start, you might instead choose to pay your Host an amount for food, so that they can buy this for you. This amount is currently £20 per week, but over time, this will be expected to change and you will be expected to do the shopping yourself.

### Cooking your own meals

* + As above, you may need to start by asking your Host to do this, but there is no reason that you cannot take part, learn from them and then do it yourself! Soon you will be able to cook your own gourmet meals and might even want to cook a meal for your Host to show off your new skills!

### Contribute towards the costs of utilities

* + This mean that you will need to make a contribution towards the ‘bills’ of the home.
  + This will initially be £10 per week. If you are under 18 you will receive an ‘Essential Living Allowance’ (ELA) payment every two weeks. This is for you to buy food and pay utilities first of all and the rest is for you to save, spend on phone credit or other things for yourself.

### Pay ‘Rent’

* + The rent which needs to be paid to your Host for your accommodation, will be paid by KCC if you are under 18 years of age.
  + Once you are over 18 years of age, your Host becomes a legal ‘landlord’ and you enter into a private agreement for your rent. You can apply for Universal Credit, which is a state benefit. There is an accommodation costs element to this and this needs to be paid to your Host.
  + If you are working, you may need to pay all of your own rent, depending on how much you earn. You can find a link to information on this at the end of this handbook.
  + All rent for those who are responsible to pay it over the age of 18, is charged at the Local Housing Allowance rate. A link to further information about this is at the end of this handbook.
  + **NOTE**: Provided you inform the Department for Work and Pensions that you are a care experienced person, you will be eligible for the single room rate until your 25th birthday.

### Engage with Support

* + Everyone wants you to succeed and to move into independence at the end of your time with your Host, but this can only happen if you engage with their support. It’s up to you if you want to engage with the support provided by your Hosts, but if you do not, then someone else must have the opportunity to work towards their goals and this may mean you need to move on.
  + You will be given every opportunity to engage with the support, as we know that accepting help can be hard sometimes and often, a little settling in period is required at the start, whilst you build your relationship.

### Expect Challenge

* + If you are struggling with your behaviour, or perhaps are involved in crime, your Host will need to challenge you to improve in these areas as part of their role is to promote healthy lifestyles and look out for your best interests.
  + Between you and your Host, you will need to find a way to respect each other and invite and manage challenge where you are not achieving at your highest.
  + You might also expect to receive challenge around other areas, including nutrition and healthy diet, exercise, harmful relationships, sexual health, contraception and use of new psychoactive substances (legal highs), drugs, alcohol and tobacco or inappropriate communications and disrespectful behaviour.

## **Changing Host Homes**

If there is a change in circumstances for your Hosts, say if they have family who need to come and stay with them, or if they are struggling with you not following the rules of the home, it might be that the decision is made, after a meeting to discuss this, that the best thing for you would be to move out of the Host’s home.

Dependent on the situation, it might be that you move to another Host’s home and continue to receive support, or that another form of accommodation is most appropriate. This will be a joint decision between you, your Personal Advisor or Social Worker and the Host.

If it is decided that you will be moving to another Host’s home, then the same process of matching you with a suitable Host will be undertaken. This may take some time, so everyone will need to be as patient as possible to make sure the best Host for you is found.

Your supporting professional will keep you updated on the progress of the move and ensure that you are aware of what to expect in terms of timeframe, location and matching.

## Your Voice

You are entitled to have an advocate – they act as your voice if you feel unable to speak up and are there to ‘be your voice’ if you do not feel your wishes are being heard and responded to. We hope and believe that you will be able to trust and rely on the adults around you, but an advocate can be a good way of getting a little extra support in sharing your thoughts and feelings.

KCC helps to fund an advocate service for the young people that are supported by it. This service is called The Young Lives Foundation. The Young Lives Foundation (YLF) is an award-winning independent children’s charity, with expertise in advocacy, mentoring, befriending and activity programmes.

The Young Lives Foundation believe that every young person in need should have access to the resources and opportunities needed for them to achieve their potential and lead fulfilled lives. This vision is shared by KCC and this is why we support them to support you.

KCC and TheYoung Lives Foundation aim to be alongside children and young people in need in ways that: enable their voices to be heard and champion their rights and interests, support them through times of difficulty and distress and assist them to achieve their potential.

If you want support from TheYoung Lives Foundation, you can use the information at the end of this handbook, to contact them for support.

We would always like to hear your thoughts and positive experiences of Kent Supported Homes so they can be shared with other young people who are thinking about moving into the same arrangement or not so positive experiences so improvements can be made for yourself and other young people in the future.

## Your Identity

One of the things which is most important to people of all ages, is their ability to grow and develop with freedom and to become the person they feel most accurately represents how they feel inside.

More and more, society now understands that this includes religious freedom, gender equality and expression, as well as all other factors which make up the identity of the person.

KCC are committed to allowing you every opportunity to be the person you want to be and to support you in this. You can talk to your Host at any time to find out more about what can be done to support you in this.

Regardless of your age, these discussions should form an important part of your planning process and you can discuss this with the professional around you to get more support to engage with community or specialist resources in the area of identity. Remember, identity, like most things, goes through phases of development and this means that sometimes, you will feel differently about it than at other times. This is OK and anytime you feel that things are changing, you should feel confident to raise this and get support.

There are many people out there who struggle with, or need to think about the same things that you do, even though it might affect them in different ways. This means that there will always be someone to talk to who understands, if you are willing to reach out to them. Groups, phonelines, online forums and many other ways exist of talking to one another about these things.

## Your Health

As you will already know, keeping healthy and staying safe are very important. Your body is sensitive to all sorts of things and needs to be looked after, in the same way as your feelings do! You need to be able to understand how your body works and how to look after it, in order to live your life as you want to. Your Hosts and your wider support network also want this for you.

In Kent Supported Homes, we can appreciate and accept that sometimes, you might not want your Hosts to be part of every aspect of your life and this may be a sign that you are progressing towards independence. This means that you might want to go to the GP on your own, or you might want to go to the dentist, without support from your Host. This is fine. This is your decision to make. However, if you do want some support from your Host in this, perhaps just to reassure you that everything is going to be OK, or to help you understand and remember the information you are told, this is OK too! You will need to make sure this is clear to your Personal Advisor or Social Worker in advance, to make sure that this is included in your plans and so everyone can be available to support you in the way you feel is best.

If at any time you need your Host’s support to book appointments for any medical reason, such as your GP, the hospital, the dentist, the sexual health/GUM clinic or anything else, please ask them. As this service tries to support you to become more independent over time, you might find that your Host expects you to do this with them, or listen to them as they do this for you at first, before sitting with you and expecting you to do this yourself as time goes on. This is called ‘role modelling’ and is a way of encouraging learning. If at any time you feel it is just too much of a struggle, your Hosts may or may not decide to do something for you and this will be raised with your supporting professionals to review your plans in this area and make sure it remains suitable to meet your needs.

In Kent Supported Homes, there are limitations as to what your Host is able to do for you. This is because this is not a provision of care, but of supported accommodation. You can find more information about this in the Ofsted guidance which is linked at the end of this handbook. This includes medications for times when you are not 100% well.

In some instances, if you request it, your Host may assist with the storing and managing of certain medicines. You will be expected to take the medication and know how much to take and when. Your Hosts can store it for you and remind you to think about when or if you need it, but cannot be relied upon to ‘make’ you take it, or give it to you in the dose you might require. Your medication will always remain accessible to you, so that you can take it when you need it.

It’s also important to remember that over time, you must focus on learning to do this more and more often without the support of your Host. Where you, your Hosts, Personal Advisor, or Social Worker have questions or concerns about your medication, or your ability to manage this yourself, any of you are able to discuss this with one another, to ensure that you are able to put a plan in place to make this work more effectively and safely and progress you to a stage where you are able to manage this more independently. Often, such plans might involve additional support from a medical professional such as a General Practitioner (GP) or community pharmacist. It might also involve others, including your Hosts, to support you with other things to help you manage this including, helping you to set alarms or reminders on your phone or computer, to take your medications. Try to think about what will work best for you.

If you are under 16, you will have routine annual check-ups, facilitated by your Child in Care service. Of course, no one can make you take part in these, but the reason they are arranged is to make sure that you are healthy and safe and are a little extra support for you if you are not yet good at taking care of yourself, or arranging these appointments for yourself.

‘Health’ doesn’t just mean physical health. We now understand that a healthy body and a healthy mind are both just as important as one another and in fact, one can often impact on the other quite a lot!

All the same support exists for your mental health as it does for your physical health. You can ask for support from your support network to access appointments, medication if needed and simply to discuss your mental health at any time. Like your physical health, it will form an important part of your support plans and you should feel able to talk about it without fear of judgement or embarrassment. Mental health issues affect most people at some stage of their lives and are often linked to periods of heightened emotion, such as the loss of someone or something you love, or when you experience any kind of pain.

As someone who has required local authority care, KCC anticipates that you have likely experienced some of these periods of heightened emotion and pain. Any kind of pain can create ‘trauma’ and this is likely a word you have heard used throughout your life. Trauma is the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Professionals working with care-experienced young people are all aware of the importance and impact of trauma and that those who experience it, often need to talk about it. They also understand that often, this is not possible straight away and that trust and respect have to be built up over time. This is something that you can expect from your Host. Someone to be there and listen to you when you need this, as well as to understand when this is not what you feel you need and give you the space and time required to ‘work things out’ a little yourself, before speaking about how you feel.

## Your Education, Employment or Training

If you are under 18, you are required to be engaged with education, under UK law.

KCC will do everything they can to support you to achieve this, in a positive and meaningful way.

Various methods can be used to support you in your learning and where you might have additional needs in terms of your learning and planning for this to be achieved, you may have an ‘Education Health and Care’ plan, sometimes referred to as ‘EHC’ plans or EHCPs.

The professionals around you will be well placed to know if these are required, as they watch you learn and develop, but you can request one of these at any time too, if you feel you need more help, or struggle with a certain aspect of your learning.

If you have an EHCP and turn 18, this can follow you for as long as you remain in education, without a gap, meaning that if you have an EHC P and are in school, college or another place for learning at the point you become an adult at 18, this will remain in place and providing you with the support you need up until the age of 25.

Virtual School Kent (VSK) are involved in supporting the learning and education of young care-experienced people in Kent via a process known as ‘Personal Education Planning’ (PEP).

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a handbook describing a course of action to help a child or young person reach their full academic and life potential. It is a legal requirement for every young person in care, of statutory school age, to have their PEP reviewed at least three times each academic year.

The PEP document is initiated by VSK which will contain some basic information, and it is then completed at a meeting attended by the designated teacher, the Social Worker and the carers or Hosts for the young person. Your views should also be included, either at the PEP meeting itself or through discussions outside the meeting. The PEP document contains the information that is needed to help guide the meeting discussions, along with the planning and delivery of what is required to make sure you get the support and resources you need to succeed academically. The PEP meeting is also an opportunity for additional funding to be considered (called Pupil Premium Plus, or PP+).

A full PEP document should be completed at any time of significant change:

* when a child first comes into care
* moves to a new care placement
* enters a new Key Stage (years R, 7, 11)
* changes school setting.

The PEP document is also a useful tool to keep track of your progress towards your own individual SMART targets, whether short, medium or longer term.

If you want to know more about the PEP process, or VSK generally, you can find a link at the end of this handbook.

There is also funding and financial support available to you whilst you learn and are between the ages of 16 and 19. A link to the overview of 16 - 19 Bursary Fund is available at the end of this handbook.

In fact, there are various different funds available to learners of different ages and more information about all of these and ways in which you can access different types of learning and education is also available at the end of this handbook.

As mentioned briefly earlier on in this handbook, once you turn 18 and move across from support from a Social Worker to a Personal Advisor, you are able to access support from the 18+ service’s Education, Employment and Training (EET) specialists & external agencies for adults and Care Leavers. Of course, throughout this period, your Host will remain in support of all of your EET goals. All you need to do if you want to access education support, training opportunities or paid employment, is speak to your 18+ Personal Advisor and they will signpost you to either the specialist EET Team, or to the right service or resources to meet your needs.

Support from the Host may include helping you to use public transport confidently and safely or supporting you to use technology to connect with online learning, along with many other things. Your Host, Personal Advisor and/or Social Worker should support you to access resources around career planning, including facilitating conversations with relevant professionals.

If you were not born in the UK and would like help to improve your English, your Host, Social Worker or Personal Advisor will support you to access resources to achieve this and practise when they speak with you. Typically, young people who enter the UK and who want to improve skills in English, access courses called ‘English for speakers of other languages’ (ESOL) which are for people whose first language is not English and are designed to help you improve your reading, spoken and written English for everyday life and for working in the UK.

The national Care Leaver Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently.

This covers five areas including education, employment & training, safety & security, mental & physical health and finance.

You will find lots of opportunities to work with different companies and organisations across the UK within it and KCC is a proud supporter of the covenant. A link to this is at the end of this handbook.

## **Respite or Host Holidays**

Sometimes, it might be best for you or for your Host to take some time apart and for you to spend some time with another Host. For example, Hosts have two weeks of holiday every year in which they can take time away to go on holiday or just relax.

Sometimes, your relationship with your Host might be under strain, and you might want some time away from them to refocus and relax yourself. This is what we call ‘respite’.

When respite is activated, you will be found a new Host to spend the period with within Kent Supported Homes. They will have all the skills for supporting you that are required but might have different house rules and expectations. KCC will do their best to match you with another Host who is a ‘good match’ with you for this period, to avoid disruption to your goals.

If there is a geographical change and you are under 16, your Social Worker will ensure that you can access your education, employment or training as you did with your main Hosts, for the period you are at the respite Host’s home.

If you are over 18, this may be possible, or you may need to make your own arrangements. You might want to stay with a suitable friend or family member for the period, but of course have the opportunity of a respite Host if you wish.

Hosts will tell you and KCC about their leave in advance, so that effective planning for this can be achieved.

If your Host has a ‘relief’ Host, you may find that you are able to stay where you are and that they ‘move in’ for a short period of time, which will mean that you don’t have to go anywhere else.

## **Moving on from your Host’s Home**

We would hope that the outcome of your stay in a Kent Supported Homes arrangement will be positive. Your Hosts, KSH and KCC staff will do their very best to support you to learn the skills to move on from KSH to a safe and secure, permanent place you can call home, be it private rented, social housing or further supported accommodation depending on your own specific needs. We would hope that you will have a secure income from your permanent job or appropriate support from the government depending on your circumstances. You may want to go to university. Further support can be given with accommodation in the university holidays, if this is the path you wish to take.

You can remain in KSH up to the age of 21. As mentioned above, you will have regular meetings with the Accommodation Officer and your Personal Advisor to monitor your progress. As an adult, you will need to take responsibility for move on plans and engage with the support offered to you to assist your move to independence and work to finding you your own safe and secure base you can call home. KCC may be able to assist with rent and/or a deposit and the support available can be found in the Kent care leavers offer, which is available via the link at the end of this handbook.

You will also be given the opportunity to undertake Tenancy Training which will show you what housing options would be available to care leavers and your responsibilities. You could also attend a My Housing Pathway meeting with your Personal Advisor and the Housing Co-ordinator or the local authority housing team under the Joint Working Protocol. Both meetings would assist you with moving on and the prevention of homelessness.

All of the professionals involved in your support have a role to play in supporting you with achieving your move on.

If you are under 16, KCC will have a responsibility to find you suitable accommodation. If you are over 18, they have a responsibility to help you to find your own accommodation.

If over 16, you are able to register for allocation of social housing but will not be able to actively ‘bid’ on this until you are 18. You must have a local connection to the area in which you are looking to register on the housing needs register. The local connection requirements differ by the location of the district housing authority, and you will need to speak to them to know what is possible for you to achieve in this regard. Of course, your Personal Advisor will support as required.

## **Complaints, Comments and Compliments**

Complaints are a valuable source of information to help us:

* put things right where they have gone wrong.
* learn from our mistakes.
* improve our services for all our customers.

In the first instance, it is best to raise your issues with any of the professionals involved in your support. This will give them the opportunity to change things as soon as possible and improve your situation.

If you do not feel this approach is working, our complaints, comments and compliments policy sets out our position on complaints management. There are certain exceptions to the main process for complaints about the Freedom of Information Act, Adult Social Services, Children's Social Services, Schools and County Councillors and you can find the information you will require to raise your issues on the [Kent County Council complaints and compliments page](https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/complaints-and-compliments).

When you first enter a Kent Support Home you will be asked to sign a moving in agreement that sets out some basic expectations of both you and the Host. At this meeting you will be given a copy of Kent County Council’s leaflet called “how to make a complaint, comment or compliment about children’s services” which you can [view on Kent Procedures Online](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/12796/complaints-leaflet.pdf). There is also a telephone number: 03000 41 11 11 or an email address [cscomplaints@kent.gov.uk](mailto:cscomplaints@kent.gov.uk)

Anything you have to say to us will be taken seriously and sensitively and we will work as best we can with you to find a resolution.

If you feel you need another way to raise issues you might be experiencing, you can contact the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) or other organisations. The NSPCC can be contacted [via their website](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/) or by calling this number ﷟ [0808 800 5000](tel:+448088005000) or by emailing them at [help@NSPCC.org.uk](mailto:help@NSPCC.org.uk)

The Children’s Commissioner has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a particular focus on children and young people with difficulties or challenges in their lives, and in particular those living away from home, in or leaving care, or receiving social care services. As someone within Kent Supported Homes and with care experience, your voice and rights are extremely important.

The Children’s Commissioner is here to protect you and listen to your experiences to shape a better future for other young people in the UK. At any time, you can make contact with the Children’s Commissioner via either [their website](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/about-us/contact/) or via phone on [0800 528 0731](tel:+4408005280731) or﷟ [020 7783 8330](tel:+442077838330).

## Advocacy

The Young Lives Foundation is commissioned to deliver the representation rights and advocacy service, based locally in Kent. This includes:

* Advocacy for children in care
* Advocacy for care leavers aged 18 – 25
* Independent visitors for children in care aged 8 – 18 years
* Independent person for stage 2 complaints under the Children Act 1989
* Accompanying adult service for age assessment interviews for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

You can refer yourself or be referred by your carers, key worker, Social Worker or Personal Advisor. More information is available on [The Young Lives Foundation website](https://ylf.org.uk/).

## Contacts and Links

### Contact the 18+ Accommodation Team

Accommodation Manager:

Sebastian Blythe: (03000 422918) or (07773 066187) or [sebastian.blythe@kent.gov.uk](mailto:sebastian.blythe@kent.gov.uk)

Accommodation Officers:

Deal, Dover, Folkestone, Ashford (part), Canterbury

Marie Parker: (03000 415770) or (07971 984055) or   
[marie.parker@kent.gov.uk](mailto:marie.parker@kent.gov.uk)

Thanet

Danielle Witherington: (03000 418243) or (07971 098207) or [danielle.witherington@kent.gov.uk](mailto:danielle.witherington@kent.gov.uk)

Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Maidstone, Sheppey, Ashford (part)

Ben Marshall: (03000 412811) or (07816 365661) or [benjamin.marshall@kent.gov.uk](mailto:benjamin.marshall@kent.gov.uk)

Swanley, Dartford, Gravesend, Medway

Temi Awe: (03000 423270) or (07812 757190) or [temi.awe@kent.gov.uk](mailto:temi.awe@kent.gov.uk)

Accommodation Finance Officer:

Diane Holmes: (03000 412401) or (07971 950871) or [diane.holmes@kent.gov.uk](mailto:diane.holmes@kent.gov.uk)

### General KCC Contacts

KCC Out of Hours Service: 03000 419191

18 + Duty Team: 03000 421124

**My Social Worker**: ............................................................................................................

**My Personal Advisor:** ......................................................................................................

**My Independent Reviewing Officer:** ...............................................................................

**My Advocate:** ....................................................................................................................

### Other Useful Contacts, Information & Links:

You can read the [Guide to the Supported Accommodation Regulations including Quality Standards](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1187743/Guide_to_the_supported_accommodation_regulations_including_quality_standards.pdf), as well as [The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023 legislation.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/416/contents/made)

There is statutory guidance for local authorities about [Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683556/Promoting_the_education_of_looked-after_children_and_previously_looked-after_children.pdf)

Virtual Schools Kent (VSK) have useful information about [support available post-16 on their website](https://virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/post16/useful-information/), as well as information about [Personal Education Plans (PEPs)](https://virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/information/personal-education-plan/)

[Overview of the 16 - 19 Bursary Fund](https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund)

Browse information about [apprenticeships, 14 to 19 education and training for work.](https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/find-course)

[Universal Credit information](https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit) including eligibility, amounts and how to claim.

[Local Housing Allowance Rates](https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/), which can be searched by postcode or local authority.

The Childrens Commissioner’s [Help at Hand advice and assistance service.](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/)

[The Young Lives Foundation (YLF) website](https://ylf.org.uk/)

[The Kent Pledge](https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/4790/The-Kent-Pledge.pdf) to children and young people in care.

[Kent care leavers local offer](https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/children-in-care/care-leavers-local-offer), that explains what support young people are entitled to and what is expected of them.

[Care Leaver Covenant](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/care-leaver-covenant--2) – a commitment from public, private and voluntary sector organisations to support people leaving care.

## Appendix: Moving In Agreement

