

Supported Lodgings

SCOPE OF THE CHAPTER

These procedures apply to **Slough Children's Services** Trust Supported Lodgings and sets out the referrals and eligibility criteria, recruitment, assessment, support and management of Supported Lodgings carers.

The procedures also set out the referral process for the Supported Lodgings placement including monitoring and supporting the placement.

This chapter was added to the manual in January 2014

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 1. **Policy Aim.**
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This policy clarifies the purpose of Supported Lodgings and outlines the principles of this service. The practice guidance sets out the procedure and management framework for placing a young person in **Slough Children's Services**

Supported Lodgings arrangements and outlines how these placements will be appropriately and adequately managed.

2. Descriptions of the Supported Lodging Scheme

Supported Lodgings is a specialist service which provides transitional support and accommodation for young people, aged 16-Plus, who for many reasons are unable to live at home and are not yet ready to live independently. These arrangements main aim is to provide transitional placements focussing on assisting young people to gain independent living skills.

Supported Lodgings carers provide a safe, nurturing and supported environment in which a young person can gain the necessary skills for

independent living, through reasonable support, encouragement and guidance from the Supported Lodgings carer. It also aims to provide young people with practical and emotional assistance, whilst in the safety and security of a family environment.

The placements main objective is to offer each young person a wide range of learning opportunities to develop a broad range of independence skills so that they can eventually live in their own properties with secured tenancies.

1. Supported Lodgings is designed for young people, who are entitled to a leaving care services provided by the Leaving Care and 16- Plus Teams at **Slough Children's Services Trust** and are in education, training or employment, aged between 16-21 (or 25) (see Section 5 **Referral and Eligibility Criteria**). (trix please link) Supported Lodgings may also be a suitable option for other children and young people aged between 16 and 18, who may be at the risk of becoming homeless.

Acceptance is dependant on the young person meeting the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 5, Referral and Eligibility Criteria (trix please link)

Supported Lodgings carers approved through the agency will , have an extra room in their home and the ability to provide emotional and practical support to meet the identified needs of the young person's [Pathway Plan]. The Pathway Plan forms the basis of the type and level of support to be provided to the young person.

The placement will be used to facilitate the continuance of care for young people, aged 16- Plus with their current carer. Other young people who wish to access these types of placement after leaving foster care will also be able to access them by being placed with the Supported Lodgings carers.. These types of support arrangements may continue beyond the young person's 18th birthday and are in accordance with the Slough Children's Services Trust "Staying Put" policy. The eligible young person's vulnerability and motivation for independent living preparation and positive engagement in education, training and employment will be considered before placement's extension or placement approval.

3. Relevant legislations and policy context relating to the development and implementation of the Supported Lodgings Placements.

The following legislations and policies provides the framework for identifying the circumstances, situations and services required to meet the needs of [Looked After Children] and children leaving care:

- Slough Children's Services: Previous procedures and guidance on Looked After Children
- Slough Children's Services: Financial support for children and young people leaving care
- The Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children Act 2004
- Data protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children and Young Peoples Act 2008
- Children Act 1989: Guidance and regulations volume 3:
- Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers 2010
- Local Authority Social Services Act 1970
- Care Standard Act 2000
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Housing Act 1996
- Immigration and asylum Act 1999 and 2002
- Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009
- Quality Protects (1998 and 2006)

- Fostering Services (England) regulations and National Minimum standards 2011(England)
- Supporting people policy (Supporting People program)
- Government National Youth Homelessness Scheme (2006)
- Care leaver's sufficiency strategy, 2011
- Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and Young People in care (DCSF) Green Paper October 2006
- Care Matters: Time for Change (DCSF) White Paper June 2007
- "Moving on from Foster Care" Policy Paper April 2007
- (The Fostering Network)
- "Staying Put" Proposal Paper 2008(DCSF)
- Staying Put Policy – SCST (2016)
- Slough Children's Services Fostering care scheme
- Southwark judgment (2009)
- Hillingdon judgment (2003)

4. Historical development, policy and legal context of Supported Lodgings scheme.

'Looked After' young people are covered by the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 with its primary focus for the provision of accommodation and other support, to ensure looked after young children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted to achieve their full potentials. This Act which was implemented in 2001 coupled with Children and Young People Act 2008, Homelessness Act 2002 and Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 are aimed to strengthen the well acclaimed Children's Charter, Children Act 1989, working towards the following positive outcomes:

1. Promoting young peoples' placement stability whilst reducing the number of placement moves or disruptions in the care system
2. Preparing the young people well for independence rather than prematurely discharging them from care.
3. Strengthening the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care to improve outcomes for care leavers
4. Provides better personal and emotional support for care leavers.

5. Provides an increased choice of accommodation and secured tenancies for 'Looked After' children and young people.

The Children Leaving Care Act 2000 provides the legal framework for establishing Supported Lodgings scheme. It requires 'Looked After' children and Care Leavers to be in a suitable, safe and secured accommodation. It also develops eligibility criteria for every young person to have

1. Assessment and meeting needs
2. The provision of a personal Adviser
3. Development of a Pathway Plan
4. Ongoing contact with the young person and provide financial support till age 21 and 25, when the young person is in education and training

The Housing Act 1996 which is reinforced by the Homelessness Act 2002; stipulates that care leavers should be a priority group in respect of housing applications. Evidence from Supported Lodgings carers, young people and their families, other professionals and valid research evidences and literatures like "Me, survive and out there?" point out, that care leavers are faced with homelessness because of their vulnerability and lack of independent living skills. Supported Lodgings offers flexible opportunities to young people to develop the required life skills and confidence needed to assume and maintain their responsibilities as young adults. Slough Borough Council supports and promotes the implementation of Supported Lodgings; fitting into the wider development of 'Looked After' children and children leaving care, in accordance with Slough Borough Council's pledge to 'Looked After' children.

Separated or looked after children are entitled to the same legal entitlements as British, EU citizens and children of parents not subject to immigration control, in line with the British Government ratified S.20 of the UN children rights convention or charter. According to the Hillingdon Judgment and Government Circular (DOH 2003b), unaccompanied asylum seekers or separated children who are looked after in terms of Children Act 1989, are entitled to various forms of continuing support from their Local Authority Social Services, under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000.

Since, 2003, it is now clear that children seeking asylum should be accorded 'Looked After' status and be accorded leaving care services, provided they meet the eligibility criteria. According to Government guidance (DOH, 2003b),

“Where a child has no parent or guardian in this country, perhaps he has arrived alone seeking asylum, the presumption should be that he would fall under section 20 and become ‘Looked After’”

Slough Children’s Services Trust have a duty to provide accommodation for any child or young person in need within their area, who has reached the age of sixteen and whose welfare, the Authority considers is likely to be seriously prejudiced, if they do not provide them with accommodation (Section 20 (3), Children Act 1989). Young people who are placed in Supported Lodgings and are not 'Looked After' are placed under the duty to provide services to children in need (Section 17, Children Act 1989).

'Supported Lodgings' is a term that has no regulatory meaning and is used to describe different placements and situations. However, Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum standards 2011, apply when a placement is provided for a 16 or 17 year old who remains 'Looked After' by the local Authority. In these circumstances, it is required that the Supported Lodgings carer, has been through a thorough assessment and presented to a panel for approval, according to Section 22 and 23 Children Act 1989.

“Some 'Supported Lodgings' schemes are, legally, fostering services. They may be established separately from the fostering service for a number of reasons, such as to attract a different type of carer, to offer a different type of training and support to carers, to reflect the different needs of young people who are being supported to develop independent living skills and to move on to independence. However, if they assess, approve and support their carers in a way which meets the requirements of the fostering services regulations, including presenting those carers to a panel for approval, and if the carers are providing care for 'Looked-After' young people, the carers are foster carers. Some local authorities will have a separate fostering service and supported lodgings scheme that share the same panel. The Supported Lodgings

scheme may also differ from the fostering service in providing placements for young people who are not looked-after, including young people aged 18+ who remain placed with their former foster carer. There is no legal definition of 'Supported Lodgings' and therefore no legal framework for assessment."
(Information from Fostering Network February, 2008).

The White Paper, Care Matters: Time for Change (June 2007) recommends that young people should be provided with the opportunity to remain with their carers until the age of 21 or over depending on their circumstances.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 also extends the statutory framework for 'Looked After' children received high quality of services and care directed to meet the assessed needs of 'Looked After' children. Its main aim is to promote 'Looked After' children or children leaving care placements' stabilities and improve their educational experiences and attainment.

5. Referral and eligibility criteria for Supported Lodgings .

Children and young people who are 'Looked After' and/or are eligible for a leaving care service, who are 16 or 17 years old and are of statutory leaving school age, to 21 years (25 if in full time education) are eligible for Supported Lodgings placement, provided they are in employment, training or higher education.

Children and young people who are referred to as "eligible children, relevant children and former relevant children", depending on their legal status, their duration in the care system and circumstances, as defined in the Children Leaving Care Act 2002.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers or separated children depending on their circumstances and situations such as their age, whether they are accompanied by adults with [Parental Responsibility] for them and whether they are defined as "Looked After" within the terms of Children Act 1989, may be eligible for the provision of Supported Lodgings scheme.

Referrals are made through the young person's Social Worker/[Personal Adviser] within the remit of Slough Children's Services 'Looked After' Children (LAC) or 16-Plus Teams. The referrals should be incorporated in the young person's Pathway Plan and assessed needs. A young person who is not looked after and is in need of accommodation and support should be referred to the Family Placement Service by the 16-PlusTeam, if considered appropriate for Supported Lodgings.

A Placement referral form is in place that identifies the information that enables the placements co-ordinator of the Family Placement Service to make a decision, as to whether the referral is appropriate. An emergency telephone and verbal referral should be followed by a formal written referral. The referral form outlines the development and management of the support plan, which will include the young person's details with the following information:

1. Contact arrangements
2. Placement history
3. Family background
4. Developmental needs and outcomes required from the placement.
5. Risk assessment, analysis and management
6. An attached copy of the child or young person's Pathway Plan.

Supported Lodgings scheme offers placements to young people over aged 16 or up to 25 years old, depending on their circumstances, in accordance with some of the above mentioned legislations and guidance. The scheme is available equally to these young people, regardless of their gender, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexuality, disability or religious persuasion.

Children and young people do not need to be 'Looked After' to be placed in a Supported Lodgings arrangement.. It is the intention of **Slough Children's Services Trust** that children and young people will not be brought into or retained within the "Looked After" system unnecessarily. Consideration will be given prior to placement on the Supported Lodgings scheme, as to whether the child or young person's legal status remains appropriate, given their individual

circumstances. The decision as to whether the young person is provided with a service under Section 17 or [Accommodated] under section 20 should not affect the level of support offered to them, when living in a Supported Lodgings arrangement.

Children and young people already in foster placements can remain there, post-16 years old, with the agreement of a young person and all relevant parties. This arrangement must be approved by the Placement Service Manager and Placement Panel. However, once the young people turn 18, if it is in their interest to remain in the same placement and the foster carer is in support of the young person's Pathway Plan and also in agreement with the Financial Support for Supported Lodgings carers' policy, then this will need to be converted to a Staying Put placement, in accordance with Slough Children's Services Trust 'Staying Put' policy. This is necessary because, once the young person reaches 18; the young person is legally not a 'Looked After' child and their placement can no longer be a foster placement. If the foster carer also has younger foster children in place, then he/she can be approved both as foster carer and Supported Lodgings carer for Slough Borough Council. This fostering placement extension and arrangement will need to be presented to the Family Placement Services Panel for recommendation to the [Agency Decision Maker] for approval.

It is the duty of the Placement Service Supported Lodgings to supervise existing foster carers and ensure that the post-18 placement extensions do not in any form compromise, the existing fostering arrangements of the individual foster carers. The Placement Service must also consider the appropriateness of extra room in the foster carers' home for supported Lodgings. .

Where young people already placed in Independent Fostering Agency foster placements and the plan for them is to remain in the same placement post 18, then their allocated social worker and/or personal Adviser will need to discuss with the Contracts and Commissioning manager. This should take place as soon as this becomes the young person's [Care Plan] and well before the young person reaches the age of eighteen. This same approach will be adopted for all other placements of young people, aged 18, who are placed

with other local authority foster carers and other arrangements, unless the plan is for them to return to Slough.

The suitability of a young person for the Supported Lodgings scheme will be determined on an individual basis. The scheme may not be appropriate for a young person who is currently involved in serious substance misuse and criminal activity, habitually violent or exhibit extreme challenging behavior and who has serious mental illness and learning disabilities.

However, an eligible child and young person may have committed minor offences, use drugs, alcohol and smoke recreationally. The young person may also have minor learning disabilities or be emotional vulnerable and erratic.

6. Recruitment, Assessment, Support and Management of Supported Lodgings Carers: Practice Guidance.

Slough Children's Services Trust Supported Lodgings carers are assessed and approved in compliance with the Fostering Service Regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011, therefore meeting the requirements of the Children Act 1989, with regard to 'Looked After' children who are 16 and 17 years old and over. Consequently, even though they are carers for the Supported Lodgings scheme, they are technically foster carers whilst the young person remains 'Looked After'.

A recruitment strategy is in place for the safe recruitment of Supported Lodgings carers, as part **of Slough Children's Services Trust Recruitment Policy.** **The Slough** Children's Services Trust Placement Service is charged with the responsibility of recruiting, preparing, assessing, supervising, supporting, training, and developing the Supported Lodgings carers.

All approved Supported Lodgings carers will be supervised and supported by **a Supervising Social worker** following Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards, 2011.

7. Approval of Supported Lodgings Carers

Efforts will be made to recruit Supported Lodgings carers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, to reflect the ethnic backgrounds of the young people placed, and also to recruit Supported Lodgings carers who are able to offer a

service to young people.

The Supported Lodgings applicants are subject to statutory checks, references and assessments as with foster carers and they are expected to have the necessary experience and skills to support a young person and help move them on to independence.

Applicants are required to attend a preparation group, as part of their assessments.

The assessment is individual competency based, and the applicant is required to demonstrate that they meet these competencies by providing suitable evidence.

The completed assessment reports of applicants of the scheme will be presented to the Slough Children's Services Trust Fostering panel, for scrutiny and the applicant will be invited to attend. The panel will make a recommendation regarding an approval to the Agency's Decision Maker for endorsement, before placing a child or young person with a newly approved Supported Lodgings carer.

Where a young person is already in a foster placement and it is requested and agreed by all relevant parties including the Placement Service via the review process, then this would be converted to Supported Lodgings placement, if considered appropriate. A supervising social worker will update the foster carer's assessment and present the report to Family Placement Service Panel for approval. If appropriate, the applicants can be approved as Supported Lodgings carers in addition to their status as foster carers.

8. Requirements of the Supported Lodgings Carer.

The Supported Lodgings carer is required to provide the young person with a room, key to the front door if deemed appropriate, access to facilities in his/her home and some meals. The young person aged 18 and over, will be responsible for purchasing his/her own personal items and maintain his/her general living expenses from their own income.

The Supported Lodgings carer is also expected to keep records, communicate with other professionals and agencies, promote contact for the young person

and their birth family if appropriate, and attend meetings. The Supported

Lodgings carer will be required to promote the young person's independence skills such as budgeting, washing, cooking, shopping, using public transport, assist with applying for jobs, educational courses, benefits and any other tasks identified in the Sharing Home Agreement. They have a responsibility to promote the health and safety of the young person and help to develop their confidence and self esteem.

The Supported Lodgings carer may be required to offer ongoing help, advice and support to the young person after they have moved into their own accommodation, for a short period of time while the young person establishes his/her own independence. This will be negotiated with the Supported Lodgings carer, on an individual basis.

The Supported Lodgings carer will also be invited to Placement Service events and activities. They will also be required to undertake relevant trainings or workshops and attend Supported Lodgings support groups.

9. The referral process for a Supported Lodgings Placement.

Any recommendation for Supported Lodgings placement for a child or young person should be included in the young person's [Pathway Plan] and agreed by the relevant team manager/s.

A timely discussion should then occur between the young person's Personal Adviser, social workers and a Placements Service's Manager, regarding the appropriateness of a referral.

The 16-Plus Team will complete a written Placement Referral Form, obtainable from the Placement Service, providing details of the young person and any relevant information about them, for example, the type of

support they will need, identified risks or hazards and the tasks to be accomplished in a Supported Lodgings placement. The referral should include an attached copy of a young person's [Pathway Plan], before being considered for a possible Supported Lodgings placement.

The child or young person will be matched with a suitable Supported Lodgings carer according to the young person's needs. If there are other children in placement, then a risk assessment will be carried out, prior to a placement being agreed. In addition, any

young person over 16 years being placed with younger children will need to

have a satisfactory enhanced [Disclosures and Barring Service] checks (DBS checks). This will be undertaken by the young person's Personal Adviser and social workers.

The 16- Plus Team will be required to state how long the placement is needed and the purpose. A visit will then be arranged to the placement with the young person, Supported Lodgings social worker and the young person's Personal Adviser/ social worker. The parties will complete a 'Sharing Home Agreement', which will identify specific tasks to be achieved, ground rules, expectations of all parties and the procedures if there are any problems. All parties will receive a copy of this. The young person and the Supported Lodgings carer will be informed of **Slough Children's Services** complaints procedures.

Separate introductory visits will be arranged between the child, young person and Supported Lodgings carer for familiarization before the formal commencement of a placement.

Where the young person aged 16-18 becomes 'Looked After' for the first time the appropriate paperwork and notifications should be completed by the 16 Plus or LAC teams.

A Placement Approval Form is also completed prior to or at the point of placement by the young person's Personal Adviser/ social worker.

10. Sharing Home Agreement Meeting.

A Family Placement Service Manager and/or social worker in the placements service will organise a Sharing Home Agreement meeting before the child and young person, if placed with a Supported Lodgings carer. The aim of this meeting is to discuss payments to the Supported Lodgings carer, rules and expectations of the placement, child and young person's payment for utilities, food and his financial contribution for the placement.

The Sharing Home Agreement meeting will be held before a young person moves to a Supported Lodgings placement during a 'planned move'. In the event of emergencies, the Sharing Home Agreement meeting should be held within 7 days, after the child or young person has moved to the Supported Lodgings carer. This document should be agreed and signed by the young person and his/her Personal Adviser/social worker, Supported Lodgings carer and social worker. A copy will be given to all relevant parties.

A Sharing Home Agreement is subject to a review for a minimum of every six months depending on the duration of the placement, to evaluate the effectiveness of the placement.

11. Monitoring and supporting the Placement.

A supervising social worker will visit at least 6 weekly to the Supported Lodgings carer to monitor and support the placement. It is also an opportunity for everyone to discuss any concerns about the placement.

Supported Lodgings carers will be subject to annual reviews, in accordance with statutory requirements. It will include checks which will focus on potential hazards and risks in the home, changes in the household, relevant trainings attended and feedback from the Supported

Lodgings carer and the placed young person. Views will also be sought from the Supervising social worker and carer's children or members of the household, other significant people in the young person's life and the young person's Personal Adviser/social worker during or prior to the review. Full statutory checks such as Disclosures and Barring Services checks (enhanced) will take place at specific timescales.

The Supported Lodgings carer's annual review also aims to identify experience and skills gained, any difficulties and training and support required. The Supported Lodgings social worker will prepare a comprehensive review report, which will be shared and discussed with the Supported Lodgings carer and a Placement Service manager.

The Supported Lodgings carer's annual reviews will be chaired by a Placement Manager at an appropriate location. A Family Placement Service manager, will prepare a report from the review meeting and make a recommendation for the Supported Lodgings carer continuous approval or de-registration.

The first annual review of a Supported Lodgings carer will be presented to the Family Placement Service panel and it will invite the Supported Lodgings carer, the Supported Lodgings social worker and his or her responsible manager to the panel for scrutiny and recommendation. If satisfied with the service provided, the panel will recommend further approval or de-registration of the applicant to the [Agency's Decision Maker].

A Family Placement Service manager/ Supervising social worker may present his/her report to the Fostering panel for de-registration or suspension, where there are significant safeguarding concerns. The relevant parties will be invited to attend.

Supported Lodgings Sharing Home Agreements/Contracts should be reviewed and amended to meet the young person's changing needs, as part of the

Pathway Plan for a minimum of every six months, depending on the duration of the placement. Its main aim is to identify any problems or difficulties which may have emerged in the placement and what is also working well there. It will be attended by the young person, his or her personal Adviser/social worker, the Supported Lodgings carer and other relevant professionals and parents or people involved in the young person's life, if appropriate. This meeting will be recorded by the Supervising Social Worker and any tasks/actions and changes to the Sharing Home Agreement will be agreed by all parties. It will be the responsibility of the Supervising social worker to ensure that these placement reviews take place timely.

In the event of problems arising within the placement, an additional meeting will be held with the young person, his/her Personal Adviser/social worker, the Supported Lodgings carer and social worker, in order to discuss the problem/s and identify additional support/s and resource/s which may help. If this is not possible and the placement has to be terminated, then an alternative placement will be identified for the young person, if felt appropriate by his/her Personal Adviser/social worker.

The Supported Lodgings carer or the young person may also access out of hours support from the Berkshire's Emergency Duty team and the Thames Valley Police on 01344786543 and 01865291046 respectively. The fostering service also operates an out of hours phone service that can be accessed.

Every Supported Lodgings placement coming to an end must be evaluated to determine the efficiency of these arrangements.. A written evaluation form will be completed by the young person, Supported Lodgings carer and any relevant person involved in that particular placement. The feedback will be used for the improvement of the scheme.

The Personal Adviser from the 16-Plus Team will organise a '[Looked After Children's Review]', which will be attended by the 'Team Around the Child] or young person' before the commencement and termination of a Supported Lodgings placement, depending on the legal status, age and understanding of the young person, in line with the Fostering Regulations and Minimum Standards, 2011.

12. Financial support.

The Supported Lodgings carers will be paid an allowance by the Family Placement Service, which covers rent and support for the child and young person in placement, in recognition of the knowledge and skills that they bring to the placement. The young person will be in receipt of his/her own income either from his or her own earnings, via benefit entitlement or the 16-Plus Team and will be expected to pay a contribution to the Supported Lodgings carer for their up keep. The amount will be agreed and noted in the Sharing Home Agreement

13. Equal Opportunities and Confidentiality.

Everyone within the Supported Lodgings scheme must be unreservedly committed to the Slough Children's Services Trust Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Alleged discrimination or oppressive practice should be reported, challenged and addressed appropriately following **Slough Children's Services** procedures and regulations.

All individuals involved in the Supported Lodging arrangements must uphold and adhere to the scheme's confidentiality policy in accordance with Data Protection Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

14. Complaints, appeals and allegations against Supported Lodgings carer.

Prospective and Supported Lodgings carers, applicants and young persons will be adequately advised by the Family Placement Service and other relevant professionals about the **Slough Children's Services** Trust complaints and appeals procedures.

All allegations against a Supported Lodgings carer will be investigated in accordance with Berkshire Local Safeguarding Children Boards: Child Protection procedures.