

## Education and Children's Services

### Supported Lodgings Policy and Practice Guidance 2009

**Authors:** Claire Corcoran and Tina Ryan

**Team:** Family Placement Service

**Approved By:** Children and Families Management Team (CFMT)

**Effective From:** 1st April 2009

**Review Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011

#### **Policy Aim:**

This policy clarifies the purpose of supported lodgings and outlines the principles of the service. The practice guidance sets out the procedure for placing a young person in supported lodgings and outlines how these placements will be approved, supported and reviewed.

#### **Definition:**

Supported lodgings is an accommodation scheme for young people aged 16 plus who are unable to live at home but are not yet ready to live independently. The main aim is to provide transitional placements focused on assisting young people to gain independent living skills. Supported lodgings placements are seen as a "stepping stone". They aim to provide young people with practical and emotional assistance, whilst in the safety and security of a family environment. The scheme enables young people to develop their independence skills so that they can eventually live on their own.

#### **Relevant Legislation and documentation:**

The Children Act 1989

Leaving Care Act 2000

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)

Policy and Procedure-Slough Supported Lodgings 1999

## **Legal Context:**

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 states that young people who have left care are over represented amongst young homeless people. Local Authorities have a duty to provide care leavers (eligible and relevant children) with suitable accommodation up to the age of 24 years if in higher education (section 23B (8)). In addition, any Local Authority Care Leaver who comes within the scope of the 2000 Act is entitled to receive assistance with vacation accommodation if in further/higher education (section 24B(5)). The Act recommends that Local Authorities develop a strategy in partnership with housing providers to provide a range of accommodation to meet the assessed needs of relevant children and other care leavers.

Local Authorities have a duty to provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who has reached the age of sixteen and whose welfare the Authority consider is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide them with accommodation. Children Act 1989. Section 20 (3). 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. (Children Act 1989 Section 17)

'Supported Lodgings' is a term that has no regulatory meaning and is used to describe different placements and situations. However, Fostering Service Regulations 2002 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 carer has been through a thorough assessment and presented to a panel for approval. (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 Feb 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.

## **Arrangements in Slough**

Slough's Supported Lodgings carers offer placements to young people post 16, and up to 24 years, in accordance with the above legislation and guidance.

Placements are available equally to these young people regardless of their gender, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexuality, disability or religious persuasion.

Slough's Supported Lodgings carers are assessed and approved in compliance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2002, therefore meeting the requirements of the Children Act 1989 with regard to Looked After Children who are 16 and 17 years old. Consequently, even though they are called Supported Lodgings carers, they are technically foster carers within the Family Placement Service. Supported Lodgings carers are allocated their own supervising social worker for continuing advice, support and monitoring.

Young people do not need to be 'Looked After' to obtain a Supported Lodgings placement. It is the intention of the Borough that young people will not be brought into or retained within the 'Looked After' system unnecessarily. Consideration will be given, prior to a Supported Lodgings placement, as to whether the 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 (Children Act 1989) or accommodated under Section 20 (Children Act 1989) should not affect the level of support offered to them when living in a supported lodgings arrangement.

Young people already in foster placements can remain there post 16, with the agreement of all relevant parties. However, once the young person turns 18, if it is in their interests to remain in the same placement and the foster carers agree, then this will need to be converted to Supported Lodgings. This is necessary because, once the young person reaches 18, they are legally no longer a 'Looked After Child' and their placement can no longer be a foster placement. If the carers also have younger foster children in place, they can be approved as both foster carers and supported lodgings carers for Slough Borough Council. This arrangement will need to be presented to the Slough Fostering Panel for their approval.

### **Supported Lodgings: Practice Guidance**

#### **Approval of Supported Lodgings Carers:**

- Efforts will be made to recruit carers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to reflect the ethnic backgrounds of the young people placed, and also to recruit carers who are able to offer a service to young people with disabilities.
- The Supported Lodgings applicants are subject to checks, references and assessment 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 prior to the commencement of their assessment.
- The assessment is competency based, and the applicant is required to demonstrate that they meet these competencies by providing suitable evidence.
- This assessment will be presented to the Slough Foster Panel for approval and the applicant will be invited to attend Panel.
- Where a young person is already in a foster placement and it is requested that

this be converted to Supported Lodgings, then a competency based assessment will be carried out and the report presented to Foster Panel for approval. If appropriate, the applicants can be approved as Supported Lodgings carers in addition to their status as foster carers.

- Supported Lodgings carers will be subject to annual reviews in accordance with the Fostering Regulations which will identify experience and skills gained, any difficulties and training and support required. This will be attended by the carer and their supervising social worker and chaired by a Family Placement Service manager. Separate views will also be sought from the young person and their own worker prior to the review.

### **Requirements of the carer:**

- The Supported Lodgings carer is required to provide the young person with a room, key to the front door if deemed appropriate, laundry facilities and meals. The young person will be responsible for purchasing their personal items and 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 with their birth family, if appropriate and attend meetings. They 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, education courses, benefits and any other tasks identified in the Placement 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 carer may be required to offer ongoing help, advice and support to the young person after they have moved into their own accommodation, for as long as deemed necessary by the department and young person. A fee will be negotiated in recognition of the carer's time and expenses.

### **The referral process**

- Any recommendation for Supported Lodgings should be included in the young person's Pathway Plan and agreed with the relevant Group Manager.
- A timely discussion should then occur between the young person's worker (e.g. personal advisor or social worker) and the Family Placement Service worker who is the supervising social worker for the Supported Lodgings carer regarding the appropriateness of a referral.
- The young person's worker will complete a written referral form, obtainable from the Family Placement Service, providing details of the young person and any relevant information about them, for example, the type of support they will need, and the tasks to be accomplished in a Supported Lodgings placement.

- The young person will be matched with a suitable Supported Lodgings carer according to their needs. If there are other children in placement then a risk assessment will be carried out by the Family Placement Service (FPS) worker prior to agreeing a placement. In addition, any young person over 16 years being placed with younger children will need to be police checked. This will be undertaken by their worker.
- The young person's worker 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, their worker and the FPS worker. The parties will complete a 'Placement Agreement' identifying 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 will be informed of the complaints procedure. (See Appendix A Placement Agreement.)
- Where the young person aged 16-18 becomes 'Looked After' for the first time the appropriate paperwork and notifications must be completed by their worker.
- There will be regular reviews of the placement. It will be the responsibility of the FPS worker to ensure that these take place and they will be chaired by a FPS manager. These reviews will take place after the first month of placement, then the sixth month and then annually unless it is felt necessary to review more frequently. These will be attended by the young person, their worker, the carer, their FPS worker and the chair. This meeting will be recorded by the FPS worker and any tasks/actions and changes to the Placement Agreement will be agreed by all parties.
- In the event of problems arising within the placement, an additional meeting will be held with the young person, their worker, the carer and their FPS worker in order to discuss the problem and identify additional support and resources 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 their worker.

### **Financial support**

The Supported Lodgings carer will be paid a fee by the Family Placement Service while the child is placed with them in recognition of the knowledge and skills that they bring to the placement. The young person will be in receipt of their own income either from their own earnings or via benefit entitlement and will be expected to pay a contribution to the Supported lodgings carer for their keep. The amount will be agreed and noted in the Placement Agreement. (See appendix B Financial Arrangements for Supported Lodgings placements.)

### **Supporting the Placement:**

The young person will be allocated their own worker (i.e. a social worker or personal advisor) and they will have a Pathway Plan which will identify the support they require. In addition, there will be a Placement Agreement which will identify the specific needs of the placement and who is responsible for undertaking certain tasks. The frequency of visits to the young person will be determined in the Placement Agreement.

The Supported Lodgings carer will be allocated their own supervising social worker who will visit on a regular basis to offer support and advice. The Family Placement Service Advice Line and the Education and Children's Service Out of Hours Service are also available to the carer. The carer will be required to undertake relevant training and will also be invited to Family Placement Service social events.

**Appendix A**

**SUPPORTED LODGINGS PLACEMENT AGREEMENT**

**Between**

**Supported lodgings carer/s.....**

**Young person.....**

**Supervising Social worker.....**

**Young person's worker.....**

**Date of Agreement.....**

**THE YOUNG PERSON'S NEEDS AND HOW THESE WILL BE MET (also see section on tasks)**

**Needs arising from the young person's identity** (personal history, religion, cultural and linguistic background and racial origin)

**Health needs**

**Education/employment needs**

**Needs arising from any disability**

**Safety needs and safe care arrangements/ issues from any risk assessments.**

**How FPS will support carer and personal advisor/social worker's role**

**What are the contact plans? (with whom, where, when?)**

**Has a contact risk assessment been completed? .....YES/NO**

**Is there a role for the carer or the FPS or social worker/personal advisor?**

**Living arrangements** Specify use of rooms, telephone, T.V, cooking facilities, arrangements for laundry, cleaning, shopping, visitors, day time occupation and going out.

**Tasks identified** Is help needed with budgeting, cooking, applying for jobs, health or identity issues etc. Support to be provided and by whom.



**Signed.....date.....**

**On behalf of SBC (                      Team) I ..... (social  
worker/personal advisor) undertake to comply with the terms of this agreement.**

**Signed.....date.....**

**(Copies of this agreement to be given to all parties)**

## Appendix B

# **FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR SUPPORTED LODGINGS CARERS**

**April 2009**

## **1. Definition**

Supported lodgings is an accommodation scheme for young people aged 16 plus who are unable to live at home but are not yet ready to live independently. The main aim is to provide transitional placements focused on assisting young people to gain independent living skills. Supported lodgings placements are seen as a “stepping stone”. They aim to provide young people with practical and emotional assistance, whilst in the safety and security of a family environment. The scheme enables young people to develop their independence skills so that they can eventually live on their own.

## **2. Financial support**

### **2.1 Young People under 18 years**

#### Payment to the carer

Slough’s Supported Lodgings carers will receive up to £400 a week payment for the first young person in placement and up to £200 a week for any subsequent placements depending on the needs and level of support required by the young person and, if they are a looked-after child, the demands on the carer in respect of writing reports, attending meetings, etc. This payment also recognizes the skills and time that Supported Lodgings carers bring to the placement and the resources they provide, such as laundry facilities, cooking facilities, food, use of computer etc. Supported Lodgings carers will not receive any form of “retainer” payment for the times when they do not have young people placed with them.

#### Maintenance for the young person

If the young person is an existing “Looked After Child” and remains in education then the Family Placement Team will pay the Supported Lodgings carer an allowance for the young person’s maintenance in accordance with the rates recommended by the Fostering Network. Otherwise the Pathway’s Team will provide the young person with an allowance for living expenses and also their accommodation costs which will be in line with income support and housing benefit rates. In these circumstances, the payment for accommodation will go directly to the Supported Lodgings carer and the young person will be expected to use their living expenses for going out, transport, toiletries, and other reasonable items listed within the placement agreement.

If the young person is in education they will also be entitled to the weekly Education Maintenance Allowance.

### **2.2 Young people over 18 yrs**

Post 18, the Supported Lodgings carer will receive a payment from the Family Placement Service of up to £200 for any placement, depending on the needs and circumstances of the young person at that time, i.e. whether they are in full time employment, how much support they need and how independent they are etc.

The young person will be responsible for their own living expenses and accommodation costs through

the income they are in receipt of, whether this is income through work, benefits or an education grant. They will be required to pay the Supported Lodgings carer an amount identified in the Placement Agreement for their accommodation.

Once the young person reaches 18, they are no longer a 'Looked After Child' and therefore the additional income may have implications for the carer's benefits. It is strongly advised that the carer seeks advice in this regard. In respect of tax, the placement will fall under "Adult Placement" regulations once the young person reaches 18 which allow the carer to receive £400 a week tax free for the first adult and £250 per week tax free for a subsequent placement.

### **3. Arrangements for payment**

Payment is made each fortnight on the Monday of the second week. If special arrangements are required e.g. Bank Holidays, Supported Lodgings carers will be notified of arrangements. Allowances will be payable for both the day of arrival and the day of departure. It is expected that carers will be paid directly into a bank account by credit transfer (BACS).

Occasionally delays in notifying changes relating to young people will occur and this could result in an overpayment. All overpayments will be reclaimed. This is usually obtained by a deduction made against future payments. However, Supported Lodgings carers are very welcome to discuss any preferred method with their supervising social worker.

### **4. Holidays**

Supported Lodgings carers will be entitled to 3 weeks holiday, paid at the rate of £200 per week. This is on condition that they give at least 28 days' notice of their proposed break and work in conjunction with their supervising social worker to make appropriate plans for any children or young people if they are placed with them at that time.

### **5. Fostering Network**

Slough Borough Council pays the annual subscription for all its carers to be members of Fostering Network. Carers are advised to read the Fostering Network publication "Foster Care Finance - Advice and information on the cost of caring for a child" which is sent to all Fostering Network members.

### **6. Employment Status**

All Supported Lodgings carers will be deemed as self employed and are therefore strongly advised to seek independent advice regarding income tax, national insurance contributions, benefits, etc.