

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
21st April 2005

**MIDDLESBROUGH LEAVING CARE SERVICE
SUPPORTED LODGING POLICY**

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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with the Supported Lodging Policy for Middlesbrough Leaving Care Service.

BACKGROUND

2. The Supported Lodging Policy gives information regarding the Supported Lodging Scheme, which the Leaving Care Team aims to establish. It is hoped that the scheme will provide 8 placements for young people leaving residential or foster care in this current financial year. A Supported Lodging Scheme will enhance the supported provision currently available for the benefit of young people leaving care and formalise arrangements with existing foster carers where young people post 18 years are remaining looked after by them.

OPTIONAL APPRAISAL

3. This policy will provide a framework for development of procedures and will provide essential guidance for staff and supported lodging providers from which to work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

4. At this stage it is envisaged that funding of the project will be achieved within the current budget provision. We are currently identifying sources of additional funding to maximise service provision and income.

There are no legal or ward implications arising from this policy.

RECOMMENDATION

5. That the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to approve this policy document.

REASONS

6. It is important that elected members are aware and approve of this aspect of Children, Families and Learning work in order that they can effectively fulfil their responsibilities as Corporate Parents to children looked after and those receiving Leaving Care Services.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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MIDDLESBROUGH SUPPORTED LODGINGS SCHEME POLICY

1. DEFINITION OF SUPPORTED LODGINGS

- 1.1 Supported Lodgings is a form of supported accommodation for young people who are eligible for a leaving care service by the Leaving Care Team at Middlesbrough Council.
- 1.2 They are provided by private individuals who offer a room in their home and varying levels of support to the young person. A placement agreement will be in place that stipulates the type and level of support to be provided.
- 1.3 In some cases they will be used to facilitate the extension of some foster placements.
- 1.4 The provision will be co-ordinated by the Supported Lodging Scheme, which recruit and support a network of providers usually on a local basis.
- 1.5 The aim is to provide a safe and supported environment and the opportunity to develop necessary skills for independent living
- 1.6 It is envisaged Supported Lodgings will be of an emergency or task centred basis

2. BACKGROUND TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORTED LODGINGS

- 2.1 Young people who fall into the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 are seen as entitled to accommodation which safeguards their welfare, and general accommodation issues are contained within the new legislation and guidance. Implemented from October 2001, it seeks to strengthen the Children Act 1989, working towards the following:
 - reducing the number of placement moves within the care system
 - increasing placement choice
 - avoiding early discharge from care
 - improving outcomes for care leavers
- 2.2 This legislation provides a context for, but not a blue print or resources, for delivering supported lodgings in that it:
 - requires that care leavers be in suitable accommodation
 - sets a requirement for every young person to have
 - an assessment
 - continued contact until 21
 - a pathway plan
 - a personal advisor

2.3 Under the guidance and amendments to the 1996 Housing Act, care leavers are specifically named as a priority group. Housing providers often express concern about re-housing care leavers whose vulnerability and lack of preparation make poor tenants, in some instances ending up losing their tenancies. Supported Lodgings offers opportunities to young people to develop the life skills and confidence needed to assume and maintain their responsibilities as tenants and therefore Middlesbrough Council promotes the implementation of Supported Lodgings, fitting into the wider development of leaving care services.

3. REFERRAL/ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

3.1 Young People who are eligible for a leaving care service, who are of 16 years and statutory leaving school age, to 21 years (24 if in full time higher education).

3.2 Referrals can be made through the young persons Social Worker/Personal Advisor or by the young person themselves to the Supported Lodging Scheme co-ordinator.

3.3 A referral form is in place that identifies the scheme and requests information that enables the scheme co-ordinator to make a decision as to whether the referral is appropriate.

3.4 The referral form will include the young person's details and provide the following information:

- previous accommodation
- previous/present housing difficulties
- reason for referral
- any other support services involved
- identified support needs
- risk assessment e.g. known history or current difficulty with violence/aggressive behaviour, arson/fire related incidents, self harm/suicide attempts, drug/alcohol misuse, self neglect, sexual offences, criminal offences/convictions child protection issues etc.
- other support needs e.g. learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health difficulties, eating disorder, incontinence, epilepsy, diabetes, etc
- employment, education, training status

4. RECRUITMENT STRATEGY OF SUPPORTED LODGING PROVIDERS

4.1 A recruitment strategy is in place for the recruitment process of Supported Lodging Providers.

4.2 The responsibility of recruiting, preparing, assessing, supervising, supporting, training and developing Supported Lodgings lies with the Middlesbrough Leaving Care Team.

- 4.3 Recruitment will take place on a local level, through specifically targeted advertising, including, utilising media networks, posters and leaflets, internet, and information and training provision to relevant departments that may reach suitable candidates (e.g. fostering).
- 4.4 Recruitment will aim to attract the best possible response from all ethnic, cultural, racial and religious groups.
- 4.5 Applicants can be considered as a Provider if they are:
- a home owner or rent their house
 - parents, grandparents, child-free
 - from any racial or cultural background
 - single – male or female, aged over 21
 - couples of the same or different sex
 - in or out of paid work or retired
 - a person with disabilities or not
- 4.6 Applicants can not be approved with the Middlesbrough Supported Lodgings Scheme if they are already registered with another agency or service.

5. APPROVAL OF SUPPORTED LODGING PROVIDERS

- 5.1 Process begins with an initial application form “Registration of Interest”. This application form will be used to shortlist suitable candidates who will then be visited at their home on at least 4 occasions.
- 5.2 A report on their suitability will be produced based on the form F1 assessment for Foster Carers. There is a list of matters that must be considered during the assessment:
- age
 - health
 - personality
 - religion
 - employment
 - leisure
 - experience of providing support to young people
- 5.3 Relevant checks will be completed, including reasons for offering supported lodgings and Police checks for all household members over the age of 16 years. A health assessment for all providers will be required and a minimum of two personal references will be obtained. Checks will be carried out with the Family, Children & Learning Department and any other relevant agency such as Health, other Supported Lodging Schemes, NSPCC etc.

Note: Written consent will need to be obtained from the candidate and other relevant members of the household in order for any checks which involve obtaining information from a third party to be carried out. Where these checks involve requesting “sensitive” information – e.g. about criminal offences – this consent must be explicit in order to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

- 5.4 The draft assessment report prepared, must be read by the Leaving Care Team Manager, to identify any areas where further work may be required or issues clarified.
- 5.5 A copy of the completed assessment report (minus the information supplied by personal referees and the medical information) must be given to the applicant. They must be allowed 28 days to add written information or comments to be included in the report. If the applicant confirms in writing they do not wish to add any comments or send it in before the 28 days has expired, it is not necessary to wait the full 28 days.
- 5.6 The assessment report must be available for the members of the Family Placement Panel 7 days prior to the date of the Panel Meeting.
- 5.7 The completed report will be considered by the Family Placement Panel and a recommendation on the application reached.
- 5.8 The report and recommendation will be put forward to the agency decision-maker the Director of Education, Mr. Terry Redmayne for decision.
- 5.9 If the decision made is not to accept the application, the reason for this must be clearly stated and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 5.10 The decision made will be confirmed verbally within 2 days and written confirmation within 7 working days of the panel.

6. FOSTER PLACEMENT CONVERSION TO SUPPORTED LODGINGS

- 6.1 There will also be the option of converting Foster placements into Supported Lodgings once the young person reaches 18 years of age.
- 6.2 A referral should be made 6 months prior to the young person’s 18 birthday (late referrals can be submitted) using the referral form as stated in paragraph 3 Referral and Eligibility Criteria.
- 6.3 Prior to conversion, copies of any relevant documentation in relation to the placement will be provided from the Family Placement department to the Supported Lodging scheme co-ordinator. Confirmation of all CRB checks and the required renewal date is also required.
- 6.4 Financial arrangements will be discussed, and to be agreed by all parties prior to conversion

7. TRAINING PLAN FOR SUPPORTED LODGING PROVIDERS

- 7.1 All providers will partake in forms of preparation and induction training, this could be on a one-to-one basis or as part of a group. Ongoing training can also be provided at the provider's request or if identified as beneficial by a worker within the team.
- 7.2 A training package will be devised for each provider's individual requirements
- 7.3 All providers must have had training in the following areas:
- basic information on the organisation (policies and procedures)
 - information on why the particular client group needs accommodation (e.g. why young people come into care)
 - awareness around specific issues such as drugs, alcohol
 - how to manage difficult behaviour/critical incidents
 - working together to support the young person (e.g. communication, confidentiality, reporting concerns)
 - anti-discriminatory practice
 - safety and security of the lodging provider and property
 - importance of continuous evaluation and procedures
 - child protection training

8. MATCHING PROCESS

- 8.1 The most suitable placement will be sought for the young person to try to achieve a successful match between themselves and provider.
- 8.2 A number of meetings will be arranged between the young person, Lodging Provider, Personal Advisor, Social Worker if applicable, and Supported Lodgings co-ordinator. At least one occasion will be held for the young person and Lodging Provider to meet each other to help decide if they wish to go ahead with the placement.
- 8.3 Information gained from the referral form, referrer and young person will be used to achieve the most appropriate placement.

9. LICENCE AGREEMENTS

- 9.1 There will be a licence agreement in place defining the operation, declaration, conditions, termination & legal status between the Supported Lodgings Provider and the Scheme.
- 9.2 On making a placement a licence agreement will be drawn up between the lodger and the Scheme. This will define the operation, declaration, conditions and termination and legal status. It will also include agreed house rules to be adhered to.

10. HOUSE AGREEMENTS

10.1 Prior to the placement commencing a house agreement will be put into place. This will have been agreed to by the lodger, provider, PA and Scheme worker. Such agreements cover the ground rules of the household and areas of responsibility so that all parties are aware of what is expected of them during the placement.

10.2 The house agreement should define the rules for the following:

- Catering e.g. number of meals provided, use of kitchen , who cooks, meal times, food storage, shopping arrangements
- Cleaning of both lodgers room and communal areas
- Laundry e.g. use of equipment, times etc
- Visitors e.g. permission, visiting times, number of visitors at any one time, overnight visitors, behaviour of visitors , lodgers responsibility of visitors
- Smoking policy
- Telephone re. incoming/outgoing calls, payment arrangements
- Arrangements for staying out late/overnight
- Privacy e.g. lodging providers private space, use of certain rooms, playing music
- Keys (not to be given to any other person)
- Property (procedure for keeping lodgers property if leaves without taking it)

11. MONITORING OF PLACEMENTS/SUPPORT

11.1 Effective monitoring will be in place to ensure that the aims of the placement are achieved and that standards are kept.

11.2 Monitoring can take place through home visits, meetings, phone calls, reviews with other professionals involved etc. Written records will be kept of all contact and reviews.

11.3 All Supported Lodging Scheme providers will be supervised and supported through the scheme co-ordinator. Support can be provided on a one-to-one basis or as a group i.e. organised informal support groups of other providers. Other forms of support will be considered such as a regular newsletter to providers with articles and advice on common problems, useful tips etc.

11.4 On the placement commencement, the scheme co-ordinator will visit the provider at least once per week for the first four weeks. A new contact agreement will then be arranged to suit the providers needs.

11.5 The lodger will receive ongoing support through their Personal Advisor and any other relevant agencies as defined in their Pathway Plan.

- 11.6 The scheme co-ordinator and Personal Advisor will meet with the provider and young person at least every 6 weeks to evaluate the placement. The format of discussion will include, any change in circumstances, health and safety issues, complaints, the young persons support plan, and any training and development needs.
- 11.7 There will be an annual review of the suitability of the provider and accommodation. The annual review will include an accommodation check, lodgers room check, number of placements during the review period, any changes to the household, relevant training attended/required, positives and negatives about the scheme. Full checks including CRB will take place every three years.

12. END OF PLACEMENT EVALUATION

- 12.1 The evaluation of placements is essential for the continuous success of the Supported Lodging Scheme. An evaluation form will be completed by both the Lodging provider and lodger at the end of each placement.
- 12.2 The evaluation form must include:
- length of placement
 - type of ending i.e. planned, unplanned, emergency
 - whether the placement was satisfactory
 - what was achieved through the placement
 - whether the support received was sufficient
 - any possible improvements to the scheme
 - any identified training needs
 - lodgers move-on information i.e. independent living

13. FINANCE

- 13.1 The Supported Lodging Scheme will organise payments to the provider from the Leaving Care Team Budget for all lodgers 16 & 17 years old who are eligible for a Leaving care service.
- 13.2 Payments will be made to providers for lodgers 18+ from the Leaving Care Budget. But, where applicable, the scheme will reclaim the basic rent charge back from housing benefits and the support element of the payment from Supporting People (if funding in place) and will refund the Leaving Care Team budget.
- 13.3 The lodger is responsible to pay a designated amount towards the payment for Supported Lodgings to the provider, as indicated in the rental breakdown, towards meals and laundry costs.

14. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 14.1 The scheme has a confidentiality policy that must be adhered to at all times by all individuals involved.

- 14.2 Lodging providers should be made aware of which information about their lodger they can and cannot share with the rest of the household, close family, neighbours or any other third party. They should also maintain confidentiality in respect to past Lodgers.
- 14.3 Lodgers should be made aware at the referral stage that information about themselves will be shared between the Lodgings Provider and the scheme worker. They must also maintain confidentiality regarding the Lodgings Provider and their Household.

15. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

- 15.1 The Supported Lodgings Scheme co-ordinator will advise all providers and lodgers of the Middlesbrough Council Complaints Procedure.
- 15.2 No-one has the right to be a Supported Lodging Provider. The Complaints Procedure is not an appropriate mechanism to address situations when an applicant is not approved as a Supported Lodgings Provider.
- 15.3 An applicant who has not been approved or whose approval has been terminated can appeal against the decision within 28 days of being notified of it.
- 15.4 Upon receiving notice of the appeal, the Department's decision-maker will nominate a person who has not previously been involved in the situation, to undertake a review.
- 15.5 The review must include consideration of all the relevant documents and interviews with relevant parties. The person undertaking the review will, whenever possible, complete the review within 28 days. If this is not possible, they must inform the applicant/Supported Lodgings Provider of the reasons why and the expected time scale for completing the review.
- 15.6 On completion of the review, the applicant/Supported Lodgings Provider wherever possible, must be provided with a copy of all the reports which are to be considered by the Panel, 21 days prior to the meeting.
- 15.7 If the applicant/Supported Lodgings Provider wishes to respond to the reports and submit any report themselves for Panel to consider, they must do so within 14 days.
- 15.8 The appropriate documentation, together with the report of the applicant/Provider, and the findings and recommendations of the person undertaking the review, must be considered by the Family Placement panel as soon as possible. The Panel must give serious consideration to the matter.

15.9 If, after careful consideration, the panel's recommendation is unchanged and subsequently the Department's decision-maker endorses the recommendations, that decision will be final.

15.10 All decisions made following an appeal must be confirmed in writing, with the reasons why, wherever possible, by the Department's decision-maker within 7 days. The letter must be hand delivered by the most appropriate worker, to offer an opportunity to discuss the reasons for the decision,

16. EMERGENCIES

16.1 Information should be given to Lodging Providers regarding emergencies, including:

- definition of what constitutes an emergency
- who to inform about the emergency e.g. police, Children, Families & Learning department, next of kin etc.
- emergency contact details

16.2 The provider must be advised to inform the scheme of any breach of the licence agreement by the lodger to ensure any problems are acted on immediately.

17. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

17.1 All individuals within the scheme must adhere to Middlesbrough Councils Equal Opportunities Policy.

17.2 Any discrimination or oppressive behaviour should be challenged and addressed appropriately. E.g. complaints procedure, awareness raising/training.

18. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SUPPORTED LODGING PROVIDERS

18.1 All allegations of a child protection nature against Supported Lodging Providers should be reported via the Child Protection procedures.

18.2 Workers within the Supported Lodging Scheme must keep a professional stance in these circumstances and the Supported Lodgings Provider should be advised that anything they say will be reported to the investigating team.

18.3 On completion of the investigation the investigation team should inform the Manager of the Leaving Care Team and Scheme co-ordinator of the conclusions.

18.4 On monitoring the Supported Lodgings Scheme, if it has been identified a Supported Lodgings Provider has had 3 unproven allegations against them, a review should be held to identify any issues for practice and support of the Supported Lodging Provider.

18.5 All information and documentation concerning an allegation should be recorded and placed on the Supported Lodging Provider's file, regardless of the outcome of the allegation.