



# Children and Communities

## Policies and Procedures

### Statement of Purpose - Supported Lodgings

Ofsted Unique Reference Number **2749903**

Version v1.0

Document owner: Brian Johnson

Responsible officer: Claire Cartwright

## 1. Legislative Framework

- 1.1. The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023.
  - (d) supported accommodation provided by an individual or individuals in a private residence which is the main residence of that individual or those individuals.
- 1.2. The guidance to the Children (Leaving Care) Care Act 2000 outlines the aims and objectives of the legislation. Those specifically relating to accommodation are to:
  - Provide stable placements, continuity of carers and the maintenance, whenever possible, of positive links when young people are 'looked after'.
  - Prepare young people gradually to be ready to leave care, paying attention to practical self-care needs - health, budgeting, domestic skills - and personal and relationship dimensions.
  - Ensure there is a contingency provision to support care leavers in the event of a crisis, including arrangements for short breaks.
  - Provide or enable ongoing personal support. This may include specialist 16-25 Scheme support, support by carers and Social Workers / Personal Advisors and support by youth workers, befrienders, mentors, or volunteers. This is underlined by the introduction of personal advisors under the 2000 Act.
- 1.3. Supported accommodation settings are registered, regulated, and inspected on a three yearly cycle by Ofsted.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. The *Statement of Purpose* for Staffordshire County Council's Supported Accommodation Service (Supported Lodgings) has been compiled in accordance with Regulation 9 of The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023.
- 2.2. The information is intended for a wide audience. The Statement of Purpose can be found on the fostering website [www.fosterforstaffordshire.co.uk](http://www.fosterforstaffordshire.co.uk)
- 2.3. The Young Person's Guide to Supported Lodgings sets out the aims of the service.
- 2.4. Supported accommodation aims to support young people to develop their independence and prepare for adult life while keeping them safe in a homely and nurturing environment.

### **3. Aims and Objectives of the Service**

- 3.1. Staffordshire County Council primary aim is to provide services to promote the health, education, and development of young people in ways that meet their best interests. For young people in our care our aim is to ensure that they achieve their potential by providing and supporting safe, stable, and positive experiences.
- 3.2. The Local Authority believes that young people are best cared for by their own family. Where this is not possible, or not in the best interests of the young person, we will support them to access safe and secure accommodation.
- 3.3. Our Vision is that every young person in Staffordshire should have access to a full range of housing services and the opportunity for a decent and affordable home suitable to their needs; and that vulnerable young people should be enabled to live in safe and suitable housing as a basis for supportive family relationships and thriving communities.
- 3.4. Our aim in Supported Lodgings is to ensure that young people feel secure living with families appropriately trained and capable of providing quality care to meet their needs and maximise their life chances. Our aim is to promote outcomes for young people by providing safe, secure homes and by being aspirational and ambitious for them.
- 3.5. The Supported Lodgings Service aims to provide and support appropriate family care, either directly, or by commissioning services from other agencies to meet young people's assessed needs and being sensitive to differences such as race, religion, culture, language, sexuality, gender, and disability.

## 4. Principles and Standards of Care

4.1. Staffordshire Supported Accommodation Service offers a wide range of opportunities for young people aged 16 -21 (25 if in full time education)

4.2. Key Principles:

- 4.2.1. All prospective supported lodgings hosts have background checks and are prepared, assessed, and approved in accordance with the relevant supported lodgings regulations guidance and standards.
- 4.2.2. The supported lodgings panel considers all applications to become hosts; there will be annual reviews where there are significant changes and reports concerning allegations against families.
  - i. Approved supported lodgings hosts have a named social worker and are supported and supervised in line with the Supported Lodgings policy and the requirements of the placement.
  - ii. Matching is carefully made, considering the needs of the young person, the experience of the host and the impact on the supported lodgings household.
  - iii. Supported Lodgings families are provided with as much information as possible about young people, including a comprehensive risk assessment and 'matching' document to support their care.
  - iv. Supported Lodgings hosts profiles will be shared with the young people prior to matching, by the child's Social Worker.
  - v. Supported Lodgings hosts, children / young people in our care and their parents will have access to the County Council's Complaints Service.
  - vi. Young People will have access to an advocacy service, an independent visitor service and also have an IRO.

## 5. Management Structure and Staffing Arrangements

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| The registered provider                | Andrea Johnson  |
| The responsible individual             | Nisha Gupta     |
| Supported Lodgings Senior Practitioner | Terry McDermott |

### Responsible Individual – Assistant Director – Nisha Gupta

Nisha is the Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care in Staffordshire County Council and is responsible for all services for children including Early Help, Safeguarding, Children in Care and Care Leavers, Fostering, Adoption, Residential, Practice Excellence and the YOS service. Nisha has over 24 years of social work experience, of which 20 years has been in statutory social work in the UK. Nisha’s social work experience and qualifications are as follows:

- Social worker
- Senior practitioner
- Team manager for Duty and Assessment, Safeguarding, and Children in Care and Care leavers services.
- Service Manager for Safeguarding, Children in Care and Care Leavers, Children with Disability, and Quality Assurance services.
- Head of Service for Children’s Improvement, and Quality Assurance including Principal Social Worker.
- MA in Social work
- PQ1 and 2 award

### Head of Child in Our Care and Care Leavers – Claire Cartwright

Claire has 28 years public sector experience and 24 years’ experience as a qualified social worker in children and families. For the first 4 years, Claire worked within Local Authority residential settings as a residential care worker.

Claire has 24 years post qualifying social work experience in children and families and is registered with Social Work England. Claire’s experience and qualifications are set out below:

- Social worker
- Senior Practitioner
- Children’s Guardian
- IRO Foster Carer reviews
- IRO / Conference Chair for children subject to a child protection plan and who are looked after

- Business Manager IRO / Conference Service
- Head of Service Early Help and Safeguarding – chairing MACE panels and Legal Gateway Meetings and Secure Reviews.
- District Lead – Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection, Looked after Children, SEND, Children with Disabilities, and Care Leavers
- HOS District Delivery and Strategy (Deputy AD level) responsible for all of the District Leads for 8 districts in Staffordshire and having ultimate responsibility for all of the children within those districts.
- HOS for children in our care and care leavers (Deputy AD Level) & Responsible Individual.
- Diploma in Social Work
- Degree in Social Welfare
- Masters in professional Practice with Children and Young People
- PQ awards 1 & 2 in childcare
- Higher Specialist Award in working with children and young people.
- Advanced award in Social Work as part of the MA award.
- Practice Educator Award
- NVQ level 5 Diploma in Management
- NVQ level 7 Strategic Leadership and Management

### **Registered Manager – Andrea Johnson**

Andrea qualified as a Social Worker in 1997 and has been employed by Staffordshire County Council since qualifying. Andrea's experience and Qualifications are set out below.

- Social Worker
- Senior Practitioner
- Team Manager
- Fostering panel advisor
- Adoption panel advisor
- Adoption panel Vice Chair
- Safeguarding
- Care Management
- Permanence – preparation for Adoption
- Birth record Counselling
- Children in Need
- Family Group Conferencing
- Fostering Assessments
- Adoption Assessments
- Adoption recruitment
- Fostering recruitment
- Fostering Training
- Fostering Quality Assurance
- Supported Lodgings Manager
- House Project Manager
- BA Applied Social Studies

- Diploma in Social Work
- Post Qualifying Award
- ILM Level 2 Team Leading
- ILM Level 5 in Leadership and Management

## **Senior Practitioner – Terry McDermott**

Terry the Supported Lodgings Co-Ordinator / Senior Practitioner. Terry holds a BA (hons) in Social Work. Terry qualified as a social worker in 2010 and has worked in adoption and fostering for much of that time. He has also worked with children in residential, young offenders, mental health and alcohol teams across Staffordshire.

Terry recruits, assesses trains and supports Supported Lodgings hosts across Staffordshire, and for Family and Friends beyond the Staffordshire border. He has a passion for empowering hosts to support young people in their care to achieve positive outcomes, including educational development and employment. Supported Lodgings is a busy, developing service

- 5.1. Andrea Johnson the Manager of Fostering Central – Engagement Team is the Registered Manager of the Supported Accommodation service and is responsible for the strategic development of Supported Lodgings and for ensuring that it meets and complies with statutory requirements and national standards.
- 5.2. The Fostering Service organises some tasks centrally, but the main responsibility for the delivery of individual support to supported lodgings hosts is with the Supported Lodgings Senior Practitioner.
- 5.3. The supported lodgings Senior Practitioner Terry McDermott will be Managed by the Fostering Central – Engagement Team Manager, who holds a relevant social work qualification and management qualifications and is the registered Manager for Supported Accommodation.
- 5.4. The Supported Lodgings Social Worker is registered with Social Work England. They hold a recognised social work qualification.
- 5.5. The Supported Lodgings Social Worker is experienced in working with children and families and are trained and skilled in undertaking strength-based assessments.
- 5.6. The Supported Lodgings Social Worker has access to information technology support and a dedicated administrative team, a mobile-working program enabling mobile access to the Children’s services records management system. Flexible working arrangements are in place.

- 5.7. Team Meetings are held regularly and are used to promote development; to share information, consult and to obtain feedback on issues relevant to the Service.
- 5.8. Supported Lodgings support groups are held at regular intervals to ensure that all hosts are involved in discussions about new developments, performance management issues, and key changes in legislation, regulations, and innovations.

## 6. Supported Lodgings: Roles and Functions

- 6.1. The **Fostering Central –Engagement Team** is the team where the **Supported Accommodation Senior Practitioner** is based. The team has a manager, social workers, and family practitioners, a qualified marketing and recruitment officer and business support staff. The team has countywide responsibility for the following functions:
- i. Development and implementation of a comprehensive recruitment and sufficiency strategy to attract a range of applicants to become supported lodgings hosts.
  - ii. Development of a comprehensive retention strategy
  - iii. Production of recruitment and publicity material.
  - iv. Responding to initial enquiries about fostering and supported lodgings and undertaking initial assessment visits.
  - v. Delivery of the 'Foundations to Foster' preparation course.
  - vi. Co-ordination and delivery of a comprehensive post approval training package for all foster families.
  - vii. Responsibility for the overview of the Standardisation Panel that reviews the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Families.
  - viii. Managing and chairing the Annual Reviews of foster families.
  - ix. Co-ordination of support groups for foster families.
  - x. Co-ordination of the Countywide Foster Families' Forum
  - xi. Support to the Voice of the Foster Families' Group.
  - xii. Co-ordination of a support group for sons & daughters of foster families.
  - xiii. Production of newsletters for foster families.
  - xiv. Organisation of social events, including the summer barbeque, Winter Fayre and long service awards
  - xv. Assess and oversee Private Fostering arrangements in Staffordshire.
  - xvi. Management and oversight of Supported Accommodation arrangement in Staffordshire, including Supported Lodgings and the House Project

xvii. Maintenance of the website [www.fosterforstaffordshire.co.uk](http://www.fosterforstaffordshire.co.uk)

## 7. Assessment, Supervision and Support of Supported Lodgings Hosts

- 7.1. The **Supported Lodgings Senior Practitioner** undertakes a county-wide function for the assessment of all applicants wanting to host, including family and friends.
- 7.2. The fostering central panel and approval team undertakes responsibility for the supported lodgings panel functions. The fostering panel is convened three monthly.
- 7.3. The supported lodgings senior practitioner is responsible for the following activities:
  - i. Providing regular and consistent individual supervision and support to supported lodgings households.
  - ii. Undertake placement planning meeting within 72 hours of placement.
  - iii. Undertaking reviews of placement, 4 – 6 weeks after placement.
  - iv. Undertaking post 18 planning meetings when the young person reaches 17 years and 11 months.
  - v. Undertaking post 21 planning meetings when the young person reaches 20 years and 6 months.
  - vi. Management and development of supported lodgings hosts skills through Personal Development and access to training and development opportunities. The aim being to increase the carers expertise and to improve outcomes for children.
  - vii. Contribution to the Placement Service and placement matching.
  - viii. Support family finding systems to search for appropriate permanent placements for young people.
  - ix. Promoting and supporting host's attendance at development opportunities and supported lodgings support groups.
  - x. Provision of essential equipment and developmental aids for families.
  - xi. Working to promote a restorative culture.

## 8. Stability and Sufficiency Team

- 8.1. The team consists of Team Manager, a Senior Practitioner, a Fostering Social Worker, Family Practitioners, and shared business support staff.
- 8.2. The team provides a county-wide service and is based in Stafford.



- 8.3. The team provides additional support to children and young people in Staffordshire's supported lodgings placements that are showing signs of stress that may impact on the family stability.
- 8.4. This service aims to support those young people by providing one to one intervention as well as a diverse range of practical support to the family.
- 8.5. The team monitors and reviews all stability plans and unplanned endings for the service.

## 9. The Placement Referrals Service

- 9.1. This team has one Placement Lead; six Placement Finders and one Senior Team Attached Clark. Their remit is to deal with all emergency and planned requests for new or alternative homes for young people and includes Supported Lodgings.
- 9.2. Homes are sourced through internal resources and external and independent providers.
- 9.3. The team are also responsible for completing match and risk assessments for new homes.
- 9.4. Identify gaps in provision to support future sufficiency planning.

## 10. Recruitment

- 10.1. **Sufficiency:** The Service will continue to recruit supported lodgings hosts to ensure there is sufficient placement choice to enable young people to be appropriately matched with host families, and to ensure that our families reflect the diverse population of Staffordshire.
- 10.2. The Service will ensure that it has enough worker capacity for supported lodgings hosts; to offer advice, support, and supervision. We will ensure that any vacancies are recruited to without undue delay and that interim measures are put in place so that families are supported. The structure of the service is designed to be flexible and adaptable with staff suitably trained and supported to work across the supported lodging's structure to support families.
- 10.3. **Recruitment:** The Fostering Service will work alongside the County

Council Communications Team to ensure that we have a strong market presence and effective recruitment and campaigning strategy and plans. Our comprehensive and targeted recruitment strategy is supported by:

- i. Dedicated recruitment and marketing officer for supported lodgings.
- ii. A strong internet presence.
- iii. An active Facebook site and Social Media presence.
- iv. Targeted and locality campaigns e.g. shared care week, fostering fortnight, and Staffordshire Day.
- v. Partnership with local commercial initiatives.
- vi. A regional recruitment campaign with neighbouring local authorities.
- vii. Extensive advertising to support campaigns such as google Ad words, backs of buses, and billboards.
- viii. Advertising in professional publications and local newspapers.
- ix. Editorial and articles in local papers.
- x. Sponsorship e.g. locality support, football teams etc.
- xi. Incentive schemes to encourage applications from supported lodgings families' own network.
- xii. 'Reggie' the recruitment bus which was designed to address some of the unique recruitment challenges that exist in a large geographic County. This enables recruitment messages to reach all communities in Staffordshire, including those on the extremities of the County.

10.4. **Enquiries:** all initial enquiries are received by the Fostering Central – engagement team. Enquiries can be made via a free-phone number with an answer phone facility out of hours. Enquiries can also be made on the [www.fosterforstaffordshire.co.uk](http://www.fosterforstaffordshire.co.uk) website.

10.5. An information pack is sent within one working day potential supported lodgings hosts are asked to complete a detailed information record.

## **11. Assessment Process (Not Including Family & Friends Supported Lodgings Families)**

11.1. When a person applies to become a supported lodgings host, the supported lodgings senior practitioner will assess their suitability to proceed. There is an assessment process, and the allocated Social Worker will arrange to visit the applicants at a time convenient to the prospective host.

11.2. Staffordshire Fostering Service will obtain the following information from the applicants:

- i. The applicant's full name, address and date of birth.
- ii. Medical checks from the GP
- iii. Particulars of other adult household members.
- iv. Particulars of children in the applicant's family (whether or not they are members of the household) and any other children in the household.
- v. Particulars of the household's accommodation.
- vi. The outcome of any request or application made by the applicant, (or any member of the applicant's household), to foster or adopt children, or for registration as an early or later year's provider, under Part 3 of the Child Care Act (2006), including particulars of any previous approval or refusal of approval to foster.
- vii. The name and address of any fostering service that the applicant has been an approved foster carer for, in the preceding 12 months.
- viii. Names and addresses of four persons who will provide personal references for the applicants; (three, if a single applicant) and one extended family member for each applicant; who will be asked to
- ix. complete a pro-forma reference and be interviewed by the Assessing Social Worker. The referees must know the applicants well and be able to comment upon all aspects of their lives.
- x. In relation to the applicant and each member of their household aged 16 or over, an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Certificate. Following receipt of a positive DBS check, a manager's positive DBS Disclosure Risk Assessment pro-forma will be completed and considered by the County Manager (Fostering).
- xi. Consultation with the Local Authority in whose area the applicant lives, if this is different to the Fostering Service.

11.3. If at any point during the assessment process, the Fostering Service's Agency Decision maker (Fostering Lead or Adoption Head of Service), decides that the applicant is not suitable to host, they must write to the applicant, informing them of this decision and giving full reasons for it. The applicants will be advised about how to make a complaint.

11.4. The assessment will collate information about the applicants and their family's motivation to host, as well as their capability to host young people. The assessment will take into account:

- i. Lifestyle

- ii. Mental, physical, and emotional well-being
- iii. Ability to be resilient and flexible.
- iv. Understanding of the supported lodgings task and the needs of young people in care
- v. Ability to manage and care for a young person in care and to work with birth families and the team supporting the young person.
- vi. Ability to meet cultural, ethnic, religious, health, and educational needs.
- vii. Ability to provide suitable accommodation.
- viii. Impact of hosting on the family
- ix. Ability to provide safe and stable care.
- x. Ability to understand confidentiality and to keep clear and accurate records.

11.5. Each host will receive an induction delivered by the Supported Lodgings Senior Practitioner

11.6. Family & Friends assessments follow a similar process. Applicants will be identified by the children's team, and a viability assessment will be completed by the child's social worker. The supported lodgings senior practitioner will complete the Part 2 supported lodgings assessment.

## **12. Supported Lodgings Approval (Including Family and Friends)**

12.1. The completed assessment report will be shared with the applicants and presented to the supported lodgings panel with a recommendation whether the applicant is suitable to host, and what the terms of their approval should be. The recommendation to panel will set out the number and age range of young people to be placed; or approval may be limited to a specific young person (for example, family and friends' approvals).

12.2. The supported lodgings panel is made up of children's social care representatives and independent representatives who have a relevant background and experience that support their role (e.g. fostering, care experience, health, education etc.).

12.3. Applicants are invited to attend the supported lodgings panel with the assessing social worker. Written information about the Panel's role and function will be available beforehand.

12.4. The supported lodgings panel will make a recommendation about

the suitability of the applicant to host and the terms of their approval.

- 12.5. The Heads of Service for Adoption and Kinship and Fostering Lead are the Agency Decision Makers and receive the recommendation of the panel. All information including the Panel minutes will be made available to the Agency Decision Maker to enable them to make a considered decision within 7 days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of minutes.
- 12.6. The supported lodgings host will be informed verbally of the decision within two working days and in writing within five working days, clearly stating the terms of the approval. Families will be required to sign the Supported Lodgings Agreement before they can be matched to a young person.

### **13. Post Approval Support and Supervision**

- 13.1. Newly approved supported lodgings hosts are required to access training and development and complete the supported lodgings induction. Continuing professional development that will equip hosts with the essential skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the young people they are hosting, is encouraged.

### **14. Post Approval Training**

- 14.1. The Fostering Service has a strong commitment to the ongoing training of supported lodgings hosts recognizing the valuable contribution it makes to their development, helping them to understand the hosting task, increasing their knowledge and skills, and underpinning the safe and appropriate care of children.
- 14.2. The training catalogue is reviewed and updated annually and currently offers an extensive and diverse range of training and development opportunities. The training can be in the form of workshops or courses that take place over one or two days, or more intensive training arranged over a number of weeks. The training covers subjects of a general and specialist nature. The fostering service also offers a range of e-learning modules to enable families to access essential information.
- 14.3. Supported lodgings hosts are also able to access multi-agency child protection and safeguarding courses and a range of childcare

courses, being trained alongside social work staff. Bespoke arrangements have been made available to families to undertake specific, relevant courses, the content of which can then be cascaded to others.

## 15. Support and Retention

- 15.1. Support for supported lodgings hosts is given a high priority in Staffordshire and the services available to families include:
- i. Supervision and support from the supported lodgings social worker a minimum of 4 times a year.
  - ii. A Mentoring scheme for supported lodgings hosts.
  - iii. Support groups who meet either face to face or virtually on a three-monthly basis.
  - iv. Out of hours support via the Emergency Duty Service.
  - v. Provision of equipment.
  - vi. Financial support through agreed allowances.
  - vii. Newsletter for supported lodgings hosts.
  - viii. Up to date information through the website and text and email alerts.
  - ix. Thinkwell for supported lodgings hosts (fast track service telephone support which aims to meet the needs of individuals who are struggling with their emotional wellbeing).
  - x. Physiotherapy Service which provides assistance for supported lodgings hosts with musculoskeletal injuries.

## 16. Comments, Compliments and Complaints

- 16.1. Staffordshire County Council welcomes feedback on the services it provides to young people, birth parents and supported lodgings hosts, to enable improvements to be made.
- 16.2. There is a complaints procedure which is accessible to all service users and families, and there are three stages to the procedure:
- i. **Stage 1 - Local Resolution:** The complaint is addressed at the point of service delivery by the responsible Team Manager. There is a 10-working day timescale for responding to Stage 1 complaints with the option to extend to 20 working days with the agreement of the complainant.
  - ii. **Stage 2 – Investigation:** If the complainant remains unhappy with the Stage 1 outcome, they can request to proceed to Stage 2. This must be made to the Head of Customer Feedback and

Complaints, advising why they remain unhappy and the desired outcome from the investigation. A Complaints Investigating Officer (CIO) or an external Investigating Officer (IO) will be assigned to the complaint and an Independent Person (IP) will work alongside the CIO to ensure an independent and objective view. There is a 25-working day timescale for completing the investigation although this can be extended to 65 with the agreement of the complainant. A response will be provided by the relevant Strategic Lead following consideration of the reports.

- iii. **Stage 3 - Review Panel:** If the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of the investigation at Stage 2, they can request an independent Stage 3 Review Panel. The complainant must outline in writing why they remain unhappy and the desired outcome from the panel. The Panel is made up of three independent people who will review the investigation undertaken.

## 17. Contact Details for Further Information

For further information contact:

Supported Lodgings

Senior Practitioner

Fostering Service,

Staffordshire Place 1

Stafford

ST16 2DH

For a complaint or representation re the Fostering Service contact:

Staffordshire County Council

Complaints and Representations

Staffordshire Place 1

Stafford

ST16 2DH

Tel: 01785 278601

For Ofsted contact: Piccadilly Gate Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## 18. Version history

### 18.1 Superseded documents:

List all documents that have been superseded by this policy.

### 18.2 Revision history:

| Version | Approved by       | Approval date | Effective date | Sections modified   |
|---------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 1.0     | Claire Cartwright | 05/03/2024    | 05/03/2024     | First known version |

#### Further Information

This section is not published on the final PDF document. It is for website purposes only

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|---|---|
| Search terms<br>(words/acronyms that people may type in the search bar when trying to locate this document) | Supported lodgings, supported lodgings hosts, supported lodgings statement of purpose |
| Review date   |   |
| Pages that this document needs to be visible on   |   |
| Other documents that this procedure will be referenced in   |   |