

Learning Example: Supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People to Settle into a New Supported Accommodation Placement

This learning example was developed through the National Children Bureau's Sector Awareness and Provider Preparedness programme in relation to the mandatory quality standards and inspection and regulatory regime for providers of supported accommodation. Interviews took place before the end of the initial registration window with existing providers of supported accommodation. Every effort has been made to ensure this learning example represents excellent practice across the sector and we have developed this resource with extensive reference to the regulations and quality standards. It is highly recommended that you refer to [Department of Education](#) and [Ofsted's](#) most up-to-date guidance to support the application and registration process. Any placement of a young person in care whose needs can be met in supported accommodation should only be met with a provider who is registered with Ofsted. With thanks to:

- 123 Supported Accommodation
- 1625 Independent People
- Avenir Support
- Places for People
- Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA)

Introduction

The Sector Awareness and Provider Preparedness programme

This learning example is based on analysis of interviews conducted by NCB as well as sector intelligence gathered through the programme. It explores the different perspectives and practical examples of what good practice looks like when supported accommodation settings support unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people to **settle into a new placement**.

Providers were asked a range of questions to understand their approach to accommodating UAS young people, including working with local community groups and the voluntary sector, the skills and experience amongst staff, supporting young people when they first arrive to a new placement, and how staff respond to cultural and religious needs.

The legal framework for local authorities accommodating UAS young people

Local Authorities

Local authorities have legal duties to make sure that unaccompanied 16- or 17-year-olds seeking asylum are provided with accommodation which is safe, nurturing and meets their needs. In doing so, local authorities must act in the young person's best interests, consider their feelings and views, and seek to secure the best outcomes for them.

Supported Accommodation

Supported accommodation was previously a type of accommodation outside of regulated children's homes, kinship care and foster care, providing supported, semi-independent living for 16 and 17-year-olds. From 28 October 2023, to operate legally, all providers of supported accommodation for looked after children and young people aged 16 and 17 must either be registered or have had an application accepted as 'complete' by Ofsted by this date. Providers must also meet mandatory quality standards as part of the Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime, which apply to all types of supported accommodation, including providers supporting UAS young people.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People

In March 2023, there were 83,840 children looked after in England, with 7,290 of these being unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people. Over half of these UAS children and young people (61%) were placed in supported accommodation ([Children looked after in England statistics – Gov.uk](#), 2023).

Supported accommodation is not automatically the right setting for UAS young people, especially if they are not yet ready for greater levels of independence and preparation for adult living. There are other types of accommodation, such as foster care or residential children's homes that may be more appropriate, and local authorities must always consider the individual needs of each child or young person, ensuring their varying circumstances and histories are recognised and met by their care plan.

'Settling Into a New Placement' and the relevant Quality Standards

While supported accommodation providers are accountable to all the Quality Standards in the Regulations, supporting young people to settle into a new placement is particularly relevant to the **Accommodation Standard** and the **Support Standard**.

- The **Accommodation Standard** outlines that young people living in supported accommodation should "**experience a comfortable and secure living environment**" which works to ensure young people's needs are consistently met.
- The **Support Standard** outlines that children should "**receive individual and tailored support that meets their needs**". Children should be informed about the support, services and facilities are available to them, via a written 'Young Person's Guide'. This

should clearly communicate the support that the accommodation will be providing to them, and what is available from other organisations.

Approach

The providers that we interviewed shared a range of practical approaches to welcoming UAS young people to their setting.

Welcome Pack

- According to the **Accommodation Standard**, the provider should ensure that young people are provided with a welcome pack of basic items, such as toiletries and adequate clothing, if the young person doesn't have this.
- The welcome pack should also include basic hygiene items, as UAS young people are likely to arrive with few personal belongings. In addition to hygiene items like period products, providers should supply bed linen, towels, and essential clothing.
- It may have been many days since the young person has last eaten, so it is good to have a basic meal ready for them when they arrive.
- Providers recommended providing the young person with a mobile phone with a working SIM, as they are unlikely to arrive with a mobile phone and it is important that they can call key members of staff in the case of emergency.
- Providers also recommended having an on-site medical cabinet with basic over-the-counter medication, such as paracetamol and plasters.

Young Person's Guide

- The **Support Standard** states that young people should receive a comprehensive Young Person's Guide as part of their induction to the accommodation, which outlines information about the accommodation. This guide should be written in an accessible way, and providers should endeavour to translate it into different languages.
- As part of young people's induction to using the Young Person's Guide, staff should also spend time to explain other key documents relevant to the setting, such as GDPR documents and the occupancy/tenancy agreement (if relevant).
- This guide can help the young person understand what is expected of them in the accommodation, and what structures are in place and to help prevent ambiguity around house rules. Staff working in the accommodation should consider young people's cultural needs while supporting them to understand the expectations of living in the setting.

Bedroom

- The **Accommodation Standard** outlines that the "bedroom needs to be sufficient in size to keep a number of possessions and required furniture including wardrobe, single bed, bedside table, chest of drawers and mirror. The bedroom should be physically secure and lockable if appropriate."
- The bedroom should also have suitable soft furnishing including curtains and bedding.
- The young people should be encouraged to decorate their room as they wish, to reflect individual taste. It is useful if providers can support with this, for example, taking the young person to buy new bedding, to help the young person feel welcomed.

Respecting Religious and Cultural Beliefs

- It is important that staff use the induction period to talk with the UAS young person about what religious needs they might have/what religion they follow (if any).
- If they follow a religion, there are likely to need resources such as a prayer mat or copy of a religious text. They may also need help accessing specialist food shops, such as shops that sell Halal food.
- This falls under the quality standards with staff supporting young people with their rights and entitlements whilst a young person in care in the UK.

The Impact of a Positive Settling in Period on Young People

Young person focused

All providers emphasised the importance of the first two days after a young person arrives in their accommodation. There is a real focus placed on ensuring that the young person has time to acclimatise, rest and recuperate in their new home.

Providers commented on going beyond the recommendations outlined in the Accommodation and Support quality standards, as they felt this was necessary to welcome UAS young people to very unfamiliar, new surroundings and to navigate language barriers.

One provider facilitated this through a '*Knowing Us, Knowing You*' session as part of the induction, where they introduced the wider staff network and gave the young person to introduce themselves and share any information about their interests/culture. This can be particularly important opportunity for the young person to share any religious needs they may have and for the provider to act on these.

Introducing the local area

One particularly successful element involved taking the young person on a tour around the local area. UAS young people may have arrived at the setting during the night, and therefore are likely to be unfamiliar with their surroundings. A tour around the area can show them some

key sights so they are able to familiarise themselves when they are out and about by themselves.

Connecting with peers

Helping the young person to connect with the other young people staying in the accommodation and the wider staff workforce has also been impactful, as it creates a community around them that they can turn to for support.

Challenges

Trauma informed approach

Most providers highlighted the need for greater awareness and understanding of trauma among their workforce, and the ways in which this can affect a young person when they first arrive. They may be struggling with sleep and routine, and it is important to ensure that the young person is not retraumatised. Some providers have worked with their young people to develop toolkits of helpful information and guides to help new arrivals settle in.

Implementing trauma-informed training and practices amongst the workforce can ensure that staff understand how trauma may be affecting a young person and support they might need.

Importance of planning ahead

Providers have also commented on how UAS young people often need a placement with very little notice, and the local authority is unlikely to have much information about the young person. This can prove challenging when you want to ensure that the young person has a smooth settling in period to their new accommodation. Providers emphasised that to overcome this challenge, it is crucial to always be as prepared as possible – such as by having a welcome pack always ready and clean towels/bedding.

Legal advice and information

Providers also commented in the need to support UAS young people to navigate a complex legal asylum process. They are likely to have questions around what this process involves and the different timescales and outcomes, particularly when they first arrive to the accommodation. Ensuring that staff are trained on the basics of the asylum process can be very useful, to make sure that UAS young people can access the right information, and the staff feel able to answer basic questions the young person may have.

Key learning for other providers and local authorities

UAS young people are likely to have experienced trauma, violence, and conflict either before their departure from their country of origin or during their migration journey, and it is important that staff can offer a sense of safety and security as they ease them into a new environment. This approach is reflected in the key principles of supported accommodation in

the Government's [Guide to the Supported Accommodation Regulations](#).

Providers of supported accommodation and local authorities may want to consider the following points as key learning to support UAS young people to settle into a new placement:

1. The **first two days** are important for ensuring that the young person feels welcome and safe, with staff present to help them acclimatise and assist with the moving in process. Staff should have an accessible welcome pack and a young person's guide ready prior to the arrival of the young person, as they may arrive with little notice.
2. Young people are likely to be very **unfamiliar with their surroundings**, while facing language and cultural barriers as they settle into a new area. Providers should dedicate time to showing the young person around the area, and carrying out a direct work sessions session to get to know the young person so they feel more at ease.
3. Respecting the young person's **religious and cultural beliefs** is important to promoting a positive settling in period. Creating a space to talk about this during the induction period will help the young person feel supported and respected.

We have additional information and resources about supported accommodation and support for UAS young people and professionals who work with them [on our website](#).

If you are a supported accommodation provider, our online Community of Practice offers an online space to share ideas and support – email ncbsocialcare@NCB.org.uk