

# Learning Example: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People in Supported Lodgings

*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.*

## Introduction

### The Sector Awareness and Provider Preparedness Programme

This learning example is based on sector intelligence gathered through the programme and analysis of a focus group conducted by NCB. It explores practical examples of what good practice looks like in **supported lodgings** when working with UAS young people.

The focus group was attended by stakeholders working in the supported lodgings sector and explored key challenges and themes related to UAS young people living in this specific form of accommodation.

### 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. All providers of supported accommodation for looked after children aged 16 and 17 must either be registered or have had an application accepted as 'complete' by Ofsted by 28 October 2023. They must also meet mandatory quality standards as part of the Ofsted-led registration and inspection regime.

Supported lodgings is a form of supported accommodation where young people live in the home of a host individual or family. The young person has their own bedroom but shares kitchen and living facilities with the host. The host supports the young person alongside professionals to develop independent living skills.

### **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. There are other types of accommodation, such as foster care or residential children's homes, that may be more appropriate. 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.

## **Approach**

Those who attended the focus group shared a range of approaches when placing and working with UAS young people and hosts in supported lodgings.

### **Matching UAS Young People**

- Although family-based provisions like supported lodgings are not appropriate for all UAS young people, they can be a good option for those who want greater independence than a fostering placement offers, but still need support to live independently and develop skills for adulthood with support from hosts.
- To ensure the success of supported lodgings placements, it is important for UAS young people to be effectively matched with the hosts. UAS young people will have varying levels of need and independence, and hosts will have varying capacity to offer support depending on their existing responsibilities, commitments, and their lifestyle, e.g., if they work full-time.
- UAS young people may require a placement at short-notice or in an emergency. It may be that they were previously living in a hotel or reception centre. This can mean that the initial assessment and matching process is rushed.

- If possible, it is helpful to have a pool of hosts available and ensure that they have communicated their preferences and availability well in advance. This can enable young people to be placed in supported lodgings, even at short notice.
- As part of the matching process, it can be helpful if time allows for the young person to initially visit the family home to meet the hosts. This could be to share a meal, or for an overnight stay. This allows the host and young person to decide if it is a good match and encourages a gradual transition.

## Settling in

- When young people are settling in to supported lodgings, there should be an opportunity to discuss house rules and boundaries with hosts to ensure that expectations of family life and household responsibilities are aligned. It can be helpful for a social worker or support worker to facilitate this discussion.
- Looked after children will have an allocated social worker whose responsibility on behalf of the local authority is to safeguard and ensure the welfare of the young person. In addition, some supported lodging schemes through local authorities or other organisations provide a support worker who can offer additional practical support, particularly when the young person is settling in. They can also help to liaise with hosts and support them if there are issues.
- Supported lodgings schemes should look to support both the young person and hosts to ensure the stability of placements, particularly in the early days of the placement. Some supported lodgings schemes offer regular phone contact for young people, mediation support, or helplines for hosts.

## Ongoing Support for UAS Young People

- It may be helpful for those working with UAS young people through supported lodgings schemes to consider what local support is available for young people and hosts. This could include community, religious or sporting organisations.
- UAS young people are likely to speak English as a second language and will need extra support to register for English classes as well as be provided with an interpreter for initial conversations and translations of any important documents.
- Although there are frequently lengthy waiting lists for English classes, providers and hosts can work together to support the young person to attend English

classes with the Refugee Council. More information on extra support available can be found on the NCB website, [Information and Advice for Providers Working with Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People](#)

## Challenges

### Challenges of Family-Based Provision

- It is important to consider that some UAS young people may find a family-based setting difficult because of previous traumatic experiences before coming to the UK. Family-based settings such as supported lodgings may also involve specific rules or boundaries that UAS young people could find too restrictive.
- Living in a family-based provision such as supported lodgings can come with specific challenges for UAS young people and it may be that there are disagreements about the specifics of family life, rules and boundaries which can lead to placement breakdown. This can be disappointing for both parties involved and can feel particularly personal for a UAS young person who has experienced trauma, or for a host who feels they have opened their home.
- It is important that any disagreements in supported lodging settings are managed carefully and appropriately. It can be helpful to offer a helpline, regular contact from support workers and mediation input to resolve any difficulties.

## Key learning

Those working with UAS young people or in the supported lodgings sector may want to consider the following points as key learning:

- Supported lodgings are a useful form of accommodation for young people who want **greater independence** than a fostering placement offers, but still need support to live independently and develop skills for adulthood.
- Both hosts and young people need to be offered **support to ensure the stability** and success of the placement, particularly at the outset.
- Family-based placements such as supported lodgings can sometimes have **specific rules and boundaries** that can be challenging for UAS young people.

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](mailto:ncbsocialcare@NCB.org.uk)