



# Brimming with Potential:

The case for supported lodgings

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November 2021

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**The potential in these young people is just unbelievable... We have hosted 11 young people in total and to invest in the life of a young person is a privilege.**

*Supported lodgings host*

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This report has been compiled by Home for Good, a UK-wide charity with an ambitious vision to find a home for every child who needs one. We seek to inspire those who might never have considered welcoming a vulnerable child into their family to step forward to foster or adopt. We then journey with them every step of the way – from inspiration right through to post-placement. We also equip their local community to offer the wraparound support that they need.

We are grateful to the Good Faith Partnership for helping to research and prepare this report.

In addition, we would like to extend our gratitude to all who contributed to this report, including local authorities, providers, charities and supported lodgings hosts. In particular, we would like to thank the care-experienced young people and adults who shared their experiences with us and whose perspectives have been invaluable.

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# Foreword



Home for Good is an innovative, solutions-focused organisation with an ambitious goal to find a home for every child who needs one. At present, the Children's Social Care sector is complex, fragmented and needs urgent attention. With a rising number of children entering care each year and an estimated £3.1bn shortfall in funding for children's social care by 2025, this is a system that is on its knees. Many professionals, carers and families work tirelessly every day to support children, but this stretched and burdened system is hindering children and young people from being served and cared for as they deserve. It needs rethinking.

As such, the Review of Children's Social Care currently taking place in England could not be more welcome and we are hopeful that much-needed radical change will be brought about as a result, so that we serve and support children and young people more effectively. The system as it stands is outdated and unable to meet the new demands being placed on it; change is needed. Alongside recognising the challenges within the system, we have been encouraged to see the Chair's focus on moving beyond identifying problems to developing effective solutions. We offer this report to the Review as one such solution to one of the biggest areas of need in the system.

**One of the most urgent challenges the system faces is the rising number of teenagers entering the care system and the lack of suitable homes available to meet their specific and often more complex needs.** As a result, the media and care sector has shone a light on the harrowing incidents across our nation where, due to a lack of good options available, vulnerable young people have been placed in inappropriate accommodation such as caravan parks, canal boats and tents. Many of these children have consequently been exposed to exploitation and harm.

We join with the rest of the sector in calling for an end to placing young people in unacceptable accommodation of poor quality. Home for Good's Five-Star campaign in 2019 called on Government, local authorities, agencies, support services, charities and professionals to become aspirational in the quality of care we provide to young people.

Alongside this, we want to offer a solution in this space; supported lodgings. This is not a new provision, but as this report will highlight, it is clearly underutilised and under-recognised. Its strength lies in providing a supportive, family-based environment in which young people can be supported in journeying towards and into adulthood. It is not suitable for all young people, but for many it can be life changing.

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**We believe that supported lodgings could serve many more young people than it currently does. With the Government's commitment to improving the provision for 16- and 17-year-olds and the Care Review shining a spotlight on where young people are being let down, we believe that this is the moment to encourage and expand this provision.**

There are improvements needed. We want to encourage the highest quality of supported lodgings to develop and flourish and to do so will require many stakeholders to play their part in introducing appropriate regulation, facilitating the sharing of best practice and raising awareness of supported lodgings among the general public. As we are calling on others to support the expansion of supported lodgings, Home for Good is committed to playing our part in seeing this vision realised. From our work in inspiring individuals and families from the Christian community to consider fostering and adoption, and having seen the response, **we believe that the Church is full of individuals and families who have the passion and space to care for older teenagers through supported lodgings.**

Despite this, we're not naïve to the challenges that come with welcoming a vulnerable young person into our homes.

**As a former supported lodgings host, I have experienced first-hand the ups and downs of journeying alongside precious young people. It is not always easy. But I have also experienced first-hand my church stand alongside me in those challenges. The organic support network that churches afford are what we believe will enable hosts from these communities to be resilient and supported.**

We commend this report to Government, local authorities, providers and wider society. Join us in this journey.

And to young people in the care system, we are committed to seeing you thrive. We hope that this report will be one step forward in enabling that.



**Tania Bright**  
CEO, Home for Good

# Terminology

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**Within this report, the terms below are used in the following ways:**

**Foyer:** A form of semi-independent accommodation that provides supported housing to young people aged 16 and over. They tend to be large settings, accommodating on average 30-40 beds.<sup>1</sup>

**Host(s):** An individual(s) who is assessed and trained to support a young person within their home, through a supported lodgings placement.

**Local authority:** An organisation responsible for governing a particular area, including the oversight of public services and facilities.

**Provider:** An organisation, including a charity or company, who are commissioned by a local authority to run a supported lodgings scheme.

**Residential Care:** A form of group care for children in the care system, where care is provided by teams of paid staff. A children's home would be one form of residential care.

**Semi-independent:** A category of provision for young people in the care system aged 16 and over where they receive support. This form of accommodation is used to enable a transition into adulthood.

**Supported housing:** A form of semi-independent accommodation which is not family-based but where a young person receives support.

**Supported lodgings:** A form of semi-independent accommodation where a young person aged 16 or over lives in the home of a host individual or family. The young person has their own room but usually shares kitchen and living facilities. The host is tasked with supporting them in developing skills for adulthood.

**Unregulated Accommodation:** Settings for young people in care aged 16 or over where they are supported to live more independently. This category includes both semi-independent and independent accommodation. These settings are currently not overseen by a regulatory body, meaning that there is no legal minimum standard in quality.

**Young adult:** An individual aged between 18 and 25.

**Young person:** An individual aged between 16 and 18.

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<sup>1</sup> The Foyer Federation, 2021, Available [online](#)



# Executive Summary

## Key Messages:

1. Supported lodgings is a valuable option for holistically meeting the needs of older teenagers in the care system, but it is under-recognised and therefore underutilised.
2. The Government has a role to play in enabling the expansion of supported lodgings and raising the quality and consistency of existing schemes.
3. The Church has a role to play in enabling the expansion of supported lodgings by providing well-supported hosts into the system, thereby enabling more young people to be given the option of a supported lodgings placement.

## The Problem:

### A care system that is failing young people

There is an **urgent need** to increase the availability of high-quality, cost-effective provision for older teenagers in the care system. The numbers of young people in the care system aged 13 and over **rose by 21%** between 2012/13 and 2017/18.<sup>2</sup> The average age of children entering care has been rising too, with nearly a quarter of young people in care over the age of 16.<sup>3</sup>

However, there are **limited high-quality options** for accommodating these young people in safe, appropriate places, with **a shortage of foster carers willing to care for teenagers** and huge variation in the quality and support of semi-independent and independent settings.

The **relational needs** of any young person are incredibly important. Every young person needs a family or tribe by their side every step of the way who are unwaveringly committed to their wellbeing. These fundamental needs are too often overlooked by an overstretched system struggling to cope where social workers have too few options available to them.

In addition to this, local authorities are also grappling with **funding shortages**. This is due in part to the high costs of much of the provision offered by private companies, some of which are making enormous profits and not always delivering a high quality of setting or support.

2 & 3 Children's Commissioner for England. 2019. Stability Index 2019: Overview Report. Available [online](#).

## What is supported lodgings?



Supported lodgings is a provision for young people aged 16+ whereby they live in a room in the home of a 'host' family or individual. The young person has greater independence than in foster care, with the host holding less parental responsibility but tasked with providing emotional and practical support to the young person, including supporting them to develop practical skills for adulthood such as cooking and budgeting.

Alongside the thorough assessment and training of hosts by a local authority or external provider, a careful process of matching a young person with the right host(s) is crucial to enabling the placement to be as stable and supportive as possible. Young people will have differing levels of need and hosts will vary in the degree of support they can offer. Supported lodgings is not suitable for all young people, but for many, it can be life changing.

## Where is supported lodgings currently being used?

We have found several good examples of supported lodgings schemes that have been successfully running for a number of years (p.35) and have spoken to young people and hosts who have found it to be a very positive experience. But across the country, there is little awareness of the provision and significant inconsistency in how schemes are run. Research from our Freedom of Information requests shows that **more than one quarter of local authorities do not use supported lodgings at all**. Of those that do, the average number of young people in these settings at the point of asking was just 17, with most schemes having less than 10 young people in a supported lodgings placement.<sup>4</sup> There is therefore huge potential for the expansion of this provision.

## What does supported lodgings have to offer?

Fundamentally, **relational support** is at the heart of supported lodgings. By living alongside one another, hosts are well-placed to help a young person by offering support as both the host and young person navigate life's challenges. This includes teaching **vital life skills**, thereby providing a stepping stone for young people as they journey towards becoming an adult. This relational support helps to provide the young person with the **stability**, confidence and skills they need to continue to develop and grow, providing an essential stable base from which they can pursue their goals and reach their potential.

<sup>4</sup> Home for Good. 2020. Freedom of Information Request

# Executive Summary (continued)



**I came from a family who didn't budget, who didn't do normal living. I had no idea how to pay my rent, I was from a house that didn't do that. Living in a house wasn't the answer. I needed holistic, all-round support and guidance from adults who did adulting really well and not really badly.**

*Care-experienced advocate*



Supported lodgings offers local authorities another placement option for older teenagers, who may want greater independence than fostering provides, but do not feel ready to live completely independently. It is a **financially sustainable** option, with placements often significantly cheaper than other semi-independent settings, where floating support or ongoing support workers can be expensive. Supported lodgings hosts are generally paid less than foster carers, with most paid between £100-£300 per week.

Supported lodgings offers the opportunity to **draw new individuals** into the children's social care system to care for teenagers as hosts. This includes people who might otherwise not be caring for children and young people; those for whom fostering is not a suitable option for varying reasons. Due to the greater independence of the young person in supported lodgings, the host carries less responsibility and fewer hours of support are required than in foster care. As a result, we have identified that becoming a host can be more appealing and accessible to a wider group of people, including younger professionals who may want to continue in other employment, which is easier to do as a supported lodgings host than it is as a foster carer. We have heard too that some hosts go on to become foster carers; supported lodgings can be a 'way in' for future foster carers. Similarly, foster carers looking to stop fostering will sometimes choose to offer supported lodgings, rather than exiting the social care system altogether. Therefore, supported lodgings presents an opportunity to draw new people into the system to care for young people and retain others with established skills and experience who might otherwise simply exit the system. This is a significant opportunity for a care system that is in desperate need of more carers.

## Expanding supported lodgings: Challenges to overcome



**I was like, what is that? Lodgings... I thought there were going to be multiple people. I thought it was like a care home with loads of people in it.**

*Care-experienced young person*



There is a **lack of awareness** and understanding of supported lodgings among local authorities, young people, social workers and other professionals. As a result, many local authorities are either not using this provision or are using it on a very small scale. Social workers who are tasked with explaining the option of supported lodgings to young people can lack knowledge and are unable to promote it sufficiently, and young people therefore may have little understanding of what it involves or be put off by the name. When supported lodgings is used, hosts and young people find it challenging to explain what it is when dealing with other public professionals such as the police or healthcare workers.



**I started off telling the police that I was a supported lodgings host, but they didn't know what it was. Now I just tell them I'm a foster carer to save having to explain what a host is.**

*Supported lodgings host*



There is a **lack of clear definition** or guidance on supported lodgings from Government, resulting in the term being incorrectly used. We found it was often considered to be synonymous with supported housing. There is **no centralised guidance** for established supported lodgings schemes or on setting up a new scheme, so many local authorities lack confidence in developing a scheme appropriately. There is little collaboration or sharing of best practice between schemes, leading to **inconsistency** in how schemes are run. We have found that there is often **no single designated official or team** in local authorities who holds responsibility for oversight of supported lodgings, which illustrates the lack of focus that supported lodgings has been given as a provision. In addition, we found that **two very different types of provision** are currently operating under the 'supported lodgings' umbrella: emergency provision (which lasts between one night and six weeks) and longer-term placements. This is confusing and the two must be distinguished, not least because the skills required to be a host for each are very different.

Many providers told us that their number one challenge to expanding supported lodgings was **recruitment**. Currently, this is largely being done by word of mouth at the local level, leading to a widespread lack of public awareness and understanding of supported lodgings. Community leaders and faith groups have a significant role to play in supporting and encouraging greater awareness of this provision.

# Executive Summary (continued)

There is **huge financial variation** in how much hosts are paid. No research has been done so far to determine what the most effective payment levels are to make supported lodgings an appealing and financially viable option for hosts. While some geographical variation in the payments provided to supported lodgings hosts is realistic, given the national variation in living costs, even small differences have an enormous impact over the duration of an average two-year placement as the table below shows:

	Local authority 1	Local authority 2
Weekly payment provided to their supported lodgings hosts	£95	£256.13
Annual payment provided to supported lodgings hosts*	£4,940	£13,319
Payment over two years to supported lodgings hosts <sup>5</sup>	£9,880	£26,638

*Figure 1: Comparison of annual payments offered to supported lodgings hosts across England*

Supported lodgings is currently unregulated since it is a form of semi-independent accommodation. **Appropriate regulation is needed** to ensure all supported lodgings provision is of a suitable standard while not introducing so much bureaucracy that it makes schemes unviable.

## How can churches help meet the need?



The Christian community is well-placed to address the barrier of recruitment by adding more individuals and families into the system. Home for Good has seen many individuals and families step

<sup>5</sup> Please note: these figures exclude holiday payments.

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up to care for children and young people when they are educated on the need and inspired about the part they can play. Local churches are then able to support families who welcome young people into their home in this way by wrapping around them with holistic support at the local level. This level of community support for hosts costs nothing to the Government but is invaluable to those caring for vulnerable teenagers. The Church, alongside other faith groups, is uniquely placed to offer this network to those within its congregations.



# Executive Summary (continued)

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## Recommendations

To enable the expansion of supported lodgings in England, there is a role for everyone to play. Therefore, this report makes the following recommendations:

### Recommendations to Government:

- **Raise the profile and encourage the use of supported lodgings** for older teenagers, activating local authorities to commission services, members of the public to come forward as hosts, and best practice to be shared among practitioners.
- **Ensure the voices of young people who have spent time in supported lodgings are heard** and meaningfully consulted in all policy developments related to this provision. Home for Good would be pleased to support in facilitating this.
- **Standardise language and definitions** of supported lodgings, including working with the sector on a new and improved name.
- **Ensure that new regulation around supported accommodation for older children is conducive** to the flourishing of high-quality supported lodgings, consulting with providers and Home for Good throughout the process.
- **Fund a research project** to understand the impact of different payment levels to supported lodgings hosts across the country and provide guidance to local authorities with recommended payment levels.
- **Establish a new fund** for local authorities to set up supported lodgings schemes or expand existing schemes through innovative approaches.

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### Recommendations to the Review of Children's Social Care in England:

- Use the opportunity of the Review to **publicly recognise and encourage supported lodgings** and its potential to help meet the gap in provision for older teenagers.
- Work with Home for Good and others to fully **understand and remove the barriers to uplifting the use of supported lodgings**.
- **Gather and showcase best practice** examples of supported lodgings.
- **Hold Government to account** on its response and use of this vital provision.

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## Recommendations to local authorities:

*For those who do not yet run a supported lodgings scheme:*

- **Investigate the potential for commissioning this provision** or developing an in-house scheme, conducting conversations with existing providers.
- **Approach neighbouring authorities** to start a conversation about potential collaboration on supported lodgings and to learn from existing models.

*For those already running a supported lodgings scheme:*

- **Designate an officer** responsible for leading the scheme and have a clear point of contact for anyone inquiring about becoming a host.
- **Join Home for Good's National Supported Lodgings Network** to connect staff working on supported lodgings with other authorities and charities, in order to share best practice (e.g. on recruitment, retention, assessments, training and funding).
- **Consider widening the use** of supported lodgings to young people who have moved into other forms of independent or semi-independent living but may be struggling.
- **Give specialised training to staff** on supported lodgings and how it works and connect hosts with mentors, including other hosts.
- **Partner with community organisations such as Home for Good** to encourage more supported lodgings hosts to come forward.

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## Recommendations to supported lodgings providers:

- **Join Home for Good's National Supported Lodgings Network** to connect with other practitioners, share best practice and learn about innovative approaches to supported lodgings being developed.
- **Share this report with local authorities** you wish to start working with.

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## Recommendations to church leaders:

- **Partner with Home for Good** to raise awareness among churches across the UK about the existence of supported lodgings and the urgent need to find homes for older teenagers in care.
- Join with Home for Good in **inspiring and educating individuals and families** about the opportunity to support a young person by becoming a supported lodgings host.
- Take a proactive approach to **supporting individuals and families** from within your congregation and community who step forward to care for teenagers through supported lodgings.

# Summary for Young People

We want to make sure there are more high-quality options available to older teenagers in care.

## WHAT IS SUPPORTED LODGINGS?



**Supported lodgings is where a young person lives in the home of a 'host' individual or family.**

Whilst this is not right for every young person, we believe that it could be a great option for many more young people.

It offers the chance for a young person to experience more independence but be supported by their host as they encounter challenges and in developing practical skills.



Many young people told us that they built a really good relationship with their host or host family and that even after they had moved out, they continued to see and be supported by their host on a regular basis.



## WHO NEEDS TO GET INVOLVED?

1

### We are calling on the Government...

to create a stronger definition of supported lodgings and encourage local authorities to invest in developing their supported lodgings schemes.



Currently, too many young people are given accommodation that isn't well suited to their needs.

## THE NEED TO RAISE AWARENESS



We have identified that not enough people know what supported lodgings is and what it looks like.

This includes social workers, members of the general public and young people.

In addition, the way supported lodgings is run in every local area often looks really different and there isn't enough consistency in the way it is run.



We want to raise awareness of supported lodgings to encourage more people to consider becoming a supported lodgings host.



We think the term 'supported lodgings' doesn't really reflect what this setup actually is, so we want to come up with a new name that sounds more inspiring and appealing.



2

### We are calling on local authorities...

to speak to other authorities to learn from them and improve the support they provide to young people in supported lodgings and their hosts.



3

### We are calling on the Church...

to raise awareness of supported lodgings and help us find individuals and families who would be willing to support young people as a supported lodgings host.



# Background

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**Home for Good has been exploring the use, merits and challenges of supported lodgings since March 2019. Our *Five-Star* interim report, published in January 2020, summarised our reflections on the drivers behind the significant lack of excellent and high-quality homes for young people and highlighted our commitment to exploring supported lodgings as a potential solution to meet the urgent need for high-quality care for older teenagers.**

18 months on, this report presents the findings of our further investigation and research into supported lodgings. **It is the culmination of a series of wide-ranging interviews with local authorities, practitioners, care-experienced young people and supported lodgings hosts across England.** We have spoken to local authorities who use supported lodgings and others who do not to understand why this is the case and to hear about alternative schemes they have in place. With many schemes commissioned externally to charities or organisations, we have also heard from those partnering with local authorities to provide and manage a supported lodgings service and have been alerted to the specific barriers and challenges they face. As hosts and young people shared with us their experiences and perspectives, we heard first-hand the ways in which both the strengths and challenges of supported lodgings are felt on the ground and the impact made on the lives of young people.

**In addition to this qualitative research, we have also undertaken desk-based research, including Freedom of Information requests to all local authorities in England.** These requests gathered information on the current usage of supported lodgings, costings and commissioning.

We have also sought to learn from best practice within the other nations of the UK. The Health and Social Care Board in Northern Ireland is reaching the end of a two-year project which has seen the rollout of supported lodgings across all five Trust areas. The learning, resources and approach to evaluation adopted by those leading on this work has been hugely insightful and there is much that can continue to be learnt in England by what stakeholders in Northern Ireland are doing in this area.

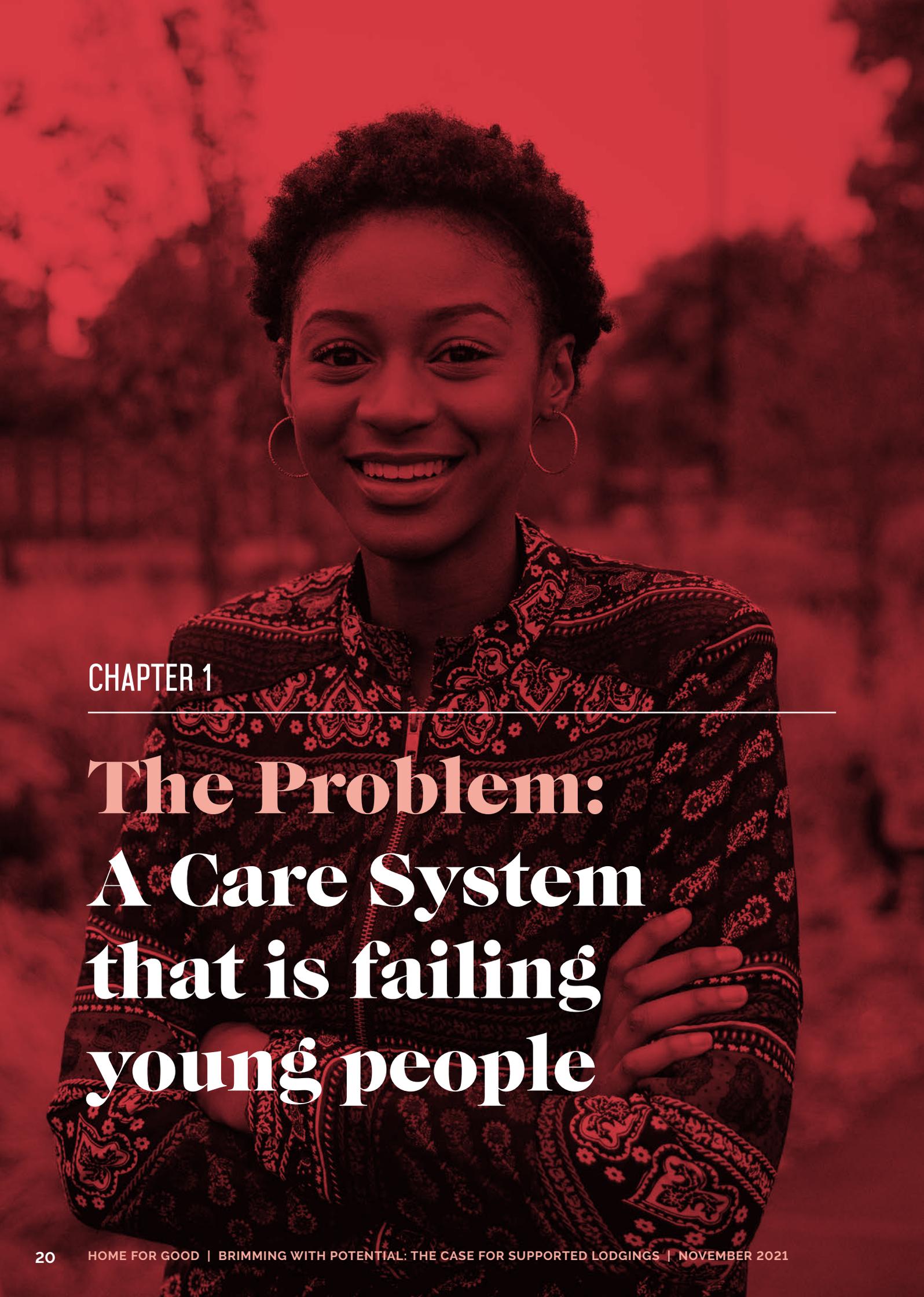
In November 2019, Home for Good launched a pilot project - *Families of Refuge* - during which we partnered with three local authorities in England to find and support supported lodgings hosts to care for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) being brought to the UK through legal resettlement routes. While this project was cut short because of the coronavirus pandemic and the closure of the resettlement route, three families went on to become supported lodgings hosts and welcomed unaccompanied young people into their homes. The insights of this short pilot project have also fed into the knowledge and evidence within this report.

In the process of our investigations, it quickly became clear that there is no centralised information about the state of supported lodgings provision across England, nor any national coordination. There is a huge lack of understanding and awareness of this provision even within the care system itself. The result is that supported lodgings providers often have very little knowledge of other schemes or where to go for clarity or advice.

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We hope that this report and the work we are doing to raise awareness of supported lodgings is the start of collaborative action to address these significant but wholly fixable gaps. We have already shared some of the information contained within this report via our submission to the relevant consultation held by the Department for Education on accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds. This report is a milestone, not an endpoint of our work and we are resolved to continue working to create an environment where this provision is used effectively and every young person has access to the care and support they deserve in order to flourish.





CHAPTER 1

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# The Problem: A Care System that is failing young people

# Rising numbers of older children in care

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**There are currently over 80,000 children in the care system in England, a number that has been increasing steadily over the past decade. Of these, 24% are aged 16 and over, with a further 39% aged 10-15 years, meaning that almost two-thirds of all looked-after children are over the age of ten.<sup>6</sup>**

The numbers of young people in the care system aged 13 and over **rose by 21%** between 2012/13 and 2017/18.<sup>7</sup> The average age of children entering care has been rising too, with the number of young people aged 16 and over increasing by 39% between 2010 and 2020.<sup>8</sup> A contributing factor towards this change has been the increase of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), who now comprise 6% of all children in care. 86% of this cohort are aged 16 and over.<sup>9</sup> The number of UASC in the system is anticipated to continue rising in the years to come.

With the Fostering Network estimating that England needs to recruit around 7,300 foster families over the next year,<sup>10</sup> and with a shortage of approved foster carers who are willing to care for teenagers, the system is being forced to urgently rethink how it can meet the increasing demand.

Most recently, the coronavirus pandemic has had a substantial impact on families across the nation and we are starting to see emerging evidence of an increase in children entering the care system for the first time as a result of the added strain felt by families and the temporary closure of many support services.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the children's social care system is increasingly being drawn in to support teenagers facing harms outside of the home, including youth violence and criminal exploitation.<sup>12</sup> As a result, there is growing concern about the capacity of the care system to adequately manage this rising demand and ensure that children and young people do not fall through the gaps.

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<sup>6</sup> Department for Education. 2020. Children Looked after in England including Adoptions. Available [online](#).

<sup>7</sup> Children's Commissioner for England. 2019. Stability Index 2019: Overview Report. Available [online](#).

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education. 2021. Statistics: Looked-after Children. Available [online](#).

<sup>9</sup> Department for Education. 2020. Children Looked after in England including Adoptions. Available [online](#).

<sup>10</sup> Fostering Network. Recruitment Targets. Available [online](#). [Accessed October 2021].

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, Fiona. 2021. More Children 'Made Known to Social Services in First Six Months of the Pandemic'. Children & Young People Now. Available [online](#). [Accessed October 2021].

<sup>12</sup> The Independent Review of Children's Social Care. 2021. The Case for Change. Available [online](#). Page 22.

## Limited options for older teenagers

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The steady influx of older teenagers entering care with more complex needs, coupled with an over-stretched system that has not developed provision in response to these changes, has meant a glaring shortage of options for older teenagers in the care system. As our *Five-Star* report highlighted, this has led to young people being placed in inappropriate settings that are unable to meet their needs.

The media has exposed horrifying examples of young people being placed in caravans, tents, B&Bs and even in canal boats. While most social workers do not want to place young people in unsuitable settings, many find themselves with a dearth of good options. Temporary placements made in emergency circumstances can end up lasting longer, due to a lack of alternatives. When social workers have no choices available to them, young people can often find themselves in settings far away from home with little support and few people to turn to who can offer them belonging and keep them safe. In the worst instances, this can leave them vulnerable to exploitation and harm. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults released a report entitled *No Place at Home* which raised concerns about the high numbers of children being placed far from home. Freedom of Information requests submitted by the group highlighted that more than 70% of police forces reported concerns that children being placed out-of-area made them more vulnerable to exploitation and often resulted in them going missing.<sup>13</sup> We must not continue to allow this to happen.

## High costs & stretched budgets

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Children's wellbeing, safety and flourishing should always be the priority and yet, economic costs significantly impact decision-making. Local authority budgets have become increasingly stretched over the past decade and the *Case for Change* published by the Review of Children's Social Care in June 2021 identified that as a result, a substantial proportion of children's social care funding is spent on responding to crisis, rather than preventative work and supporting families at the earliest stages. Acting responsively to situations of high need is often expensive. As a result, it is estimated that by 2025 there will be a £3.1bn shortfall in funding for children's social care.<sup>14</sup> Children's services teams are under incredible pressure, bearing the weight of responsibility for keeping children and young people safe in the face of shrinking resources to do so effectively.

Coupled with this is the increasing reliance on residential provision for young people with the most complex needs which is incurring heavy costs for the system overall. In a briefing entitled *The children who no one knows what to do with*, the Children's Commissioner for England highlighted that in

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<sup>13</sup> APPG for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults. 2019. *No Place at Home*. Available [online](#).

<sup>14</sup> Local Government Association. 2019. *Councils Can*. Available [online](#).

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2017/18, England spent £1.25bn on children’s homes, with some larger providers making around £200 million a year in profit.<sup>15</sup> Aside from these unsustainable costs, they become even more eye-watering when recognising that some young people are not placed in these settings because they are the best place for them, but too often because of a lack of suitable alternatives.

Residential accommodation and staff-run placements providing different services (including therapy) can cost up to £9,000 per week. And yet, with a shortage of places in residential settings, the market of semi-independent and independent provision has seen rising demand. While there are many well-intentioned providers within this sector, it has been identified that some private providers of such accommodation are charging high prices and making eye-watering profits, pushing costs up for local authorities whose hands are tied because there are no other available options.

## Neglect of the relational needs of young people

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The shortage of options available means that too often, young people’s relational needs are not prioritised as highly as they should be, despite the desires of many dedicated social workers working on the ground. The urgency of preventing homelessness (a legal duty for local authorities in the case of all 16- and 17-year-olds)<sup>16</sup> and the need to place a young person ‘*somewhere*’ often leaves local authorities with no choice but to provide accommodation with little more than a bed.

It is widely recognised that having relationships with others who are committed to your wellbeing is vital for all humans to flourish. This is especially the case for young people in care, given that 65% of children in care have experienced abuse or neglect.<sup>17</sup> Many continue to experience relational instability and broken attachments whilst in care. This is exacerbated for teenagers in care who experience the greatest instability, being 80% more likely to have two or more changes of home within a year, compared to the national average for all children in care.<sup>18</sup>

*The Case for Change*, published by the Review of Children’s Social Care, outlines a conviction that “*Care too often weakens rather than strengthens relationships*”.<sup>19</sup> In recognition of the monumental impact that safe, positive relationships can have on a child or young person, we concur with *the Case for Change* that the system “*must build not break relationships*”<sup>20</sup> and needs a renewed emphasis and strategy to build and enable positive relationships for young people.

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<sup>15</sup> Children’s Commissioner for England. 2020. The children who no one knows what to do with. Available [online](#).

<sup>16</sup> Housing Act. 1996. UK Public General Acts. Section 189. Available [online](#).

<sup>17</sup> Department for Education. 2020. Children Looked after in England including Adoptions. Available [online](#).

<sup>18</sup> Children’s Commissioner for England. 2019. Stability Index 2019: Overview Report. Available [online](#).

<sup>19 & 20</sup> The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care. 2021. The Case for Change. Available [online](#). Page 12.



CHAPTER 2

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**Supported  
lodgings:  
A pathway to healthy  
interdependence**

# What is supported lodgings?



**It's support while you're lodging. You get independence, but you're underneath their roof, you respect their rules, and you get support and have a bit of a safety net.**

*Care-experienced young person*



**Supported lodgings is a type of placement for children aged 16 and over which draws on similar principles to fostering, but with certain key differences. The young person lives in the home of an individual or family, often referred to as the “host(s)”. They have their own room and share kitchen and living facilities with the host, but unlike fostering, they have greater levels of independence and freedom in the extent to which they engage with the activities and life of the household.**

The host holds a lower level of parental responsibility for the young person but is tasked with journeying alongside and supporting them as they continue towards adulthood, both through helping them develop practical skills and providing emotional support. With the young person able to operate more independently, hosts often can continue in other employment, go on holiday and usually are required to spend fewer hours providing support to the young person than is required in fostering. For some older teenagers, the greater independence enabled through supported lodgings can feel more appropriate to their life stage, while allowing them to continue to receive support along the way.

Although not appropriate for all young people, supported lodgings can be suitable for a wide cohort of young people, including:

- Those entering the care system for the first time as older teenagers.
- UASC.
- Young people in care seeking to transition out of foster care and move towards independent living.
- Young people who have struggled with independent living and wish to return to a more supported environment.

Supported lodgings schemes are run by local authorities themselves or are commissioned by local authorities to external providers. These can be charities or organisations.

Each individual setting can vary hugely; from being a spare room in the heart of a family home to an annex on the side of a house with a separate entrance. Hosts also vary in profile, with their life stage and experience determining the level of needs they can support. This variety in accommodation and host profile is a great asset of supported lodgings, as it provides different options which can be matched to the specific needs and preferences of young people.

## What is supported lodgings? (continued)

Most supported lodgings schemes are intended to last between 18 months and two years. However, we have heard numerous instances where due to the strong relationship formed between a young person and host during this time, the young person has remained living in the home of the host individual or family, despite the official placement coming to an end. In other examples, a young person may move out of the home but remain in contact with the host who becomes a supportive figure in their life.

### Charlie's Story

Charlie\* went into a supported lodgings placement after the relationships in her foster home broke down. When she first met her host, she thought she was a bit crazy, but after a few weeks of settling in, she found that they got on extremely well. The placement lasted a year and a half, and they kept in touch. A few years later, Charlie is now in work and renting a room from her host. She takes her host's mum out and babysits the children – she says it's just like her family.

\*name changed for confidentiality

## The Legal Framework

Supported lodgings is recognised within The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3,<sup>21</sup> which gives the following guidance:

- 7.60. *The term supported lodgings has no formal definition or prescribed regulatory framework but supported lodgings services generally share key common characteristics. They provide accommodation for a young person within a family home, where the young person will have a degree of independence with their own room and will share the kitchen and bathroom facilities with the family or householder – or “host”. Hosts can be families, couples or single people.*
- 7.61. *The primary aim of supported lodgings is to provide a supported household environment that enables a young person to develop practical, emotional and relationship skills that will ensure they make a successful transition from care to independence and adulthood. They should be seen as part of a range of accommodation options on offer to young people aimed at preparing them for independence and adulthood.*

<sup>21</sup> Department for Education. 2015. The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations. Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers. Available [online](#).

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7.62. As commissioners and/or providers of supported lodgings, local authorities should ensure that clear policies and procedures are in place setting out:

- assessment and approval criteria for carer/s or host/s\*\*;
- nature and level of support for carer/s or host/s;
- allowance and fees structure;
- referral and matching criteria for young people to carer/s or host/s;
- expectations of carer/s or host/s and young people;
- safeguarding frameworks;
- financial arrangements (young people aged 16 and 17 and young people aged 18 plus);
- training available to carer/s or host/s;
- the income tax, national insurance and welfare benefits frameworks affecting payments made to carer/s or hosts.

\*\* Note that supported lodgings carers who are approved via the fostering regulations and fostering panel, to provide a placement for a looked after child will be treated as foster carers for income tax, national insurance and means tested benefit purposes. Less favourable rules apply where supported lodgings carer/s are approved outside of the fostering regulations minimum standards.

While this guidance provides a helpful introduction, the guidance around supported lodgings has not been updated in many years and provides only a basic and skeletal framework for the intended design and functioning. Much clearer and more detailed guidance is needed. We have also found that many local authorities and providers do not have these policies and procedures in place, leading to inconsistency in practice and hindering recruitment efforts.

## Assessment

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The assessment process for hosts varies significantly between schemes because of a lack of clear, centralised guidance about what this process should consist of. Through our FOI requests, some local authorities referenced using Form F from the fostering assessment process in its entirety to assess hosts, or a slimmed-down version of this framework. Some cited that fostering panels were utilised to make a recommendation about supported lodgings applications to the Agency Decision Maker, with others describing creating their own 'amended' process for assessing individuals and families.

This was echoed in our conversations with providers, with many choosing to develop their own assessment process, often drawing heavily on many aspects of the fostering assessment process, as referred to within the legal framework. However, due to the lower responsibility held by a supported lodgings host, they had chosen to develop a 'lighter' version of this process, comprising most commonly of a couple of interviews with the prospective hosts, collecting references and undertaking DBS checks.

# Training

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High-quality training for hosts is essential to ensuring that they are suitably equipped to support the young people entering their home, many of whom have experienced trauma and other challenges in their lives. Many schemes choose to enrol supported lodgings hosts in the same training as that provided for foster carers due to the overlap of experiences faced by young people in these provisions and the skills required to support their needs effectively. While many hosts reported receiving some level of training either during or shortly after their assessment process, a few hosts who had been supporting young people for a long time reported having never received any further training and felt ill-equipped to manage some of the challenges that presented.



**The regular training I completed was very basic and focused on things like what time the young person should come home. I have asked repeatedly for training around mental health for adolescents as this is a common need among the young people in my home, but I have never been given any.**

*Supported lodgings host*



# Matching

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As with many aspects of supported lodgings, the matching process varies significantly between schemes, often depending on the number of available hosts and therefore the choices available to young people. However, we consistently heard from local authorities and providers that the involvement of the young person in the process was a significant factor in the success of the placement.



**We interview the young person before they're placed to ensure they understand what the expectations of the scheme are, how it works etc. We do slow transitions – they meet with the carer, have coffee, talk about whether this is going to be a good space for them and they let us know whether they think this will work for them and look at their other accommodation options at the same time...We want them to be part of this process so they have some power and control.**

*Supported lodgings Lead, local authority*



Alongside the practical elements of the placement, including the location of the home and the type of room within that home, it was clear that strong matching also involved establishing whether there was a natural connection between the host and the young person. Young people often referred to the personality and the character of their host as important aspects that they felt had made supported lodgings a positive experience for them.



**My host is just so, like, warming that you could tell her something bad and she would give her honest opinion, but she wouldn't judge and she'd still be by your side.**

*Care-experienced young person*



FAMILY BASED

## Where does supported lodgings fit in the ecosystem of provision for older teenagers?

### FOSTER CARE

A young person lives in the home of a foster carer on a temporary, short-term or long term-basis. Foster carers work on behalf of a local authority or an independent fostering agency, with the local authority holding parental responsibility, often jointly with the birth parent, for the young person. The young person has their own room but is expected to partake in the life of the home as one of the family.

**Type of provision:** Family-based.

**Regulation:** Regulated by Ofsted.

**Main challenge:** Can be high social worker involvement in the life of the young person, the foster carer has to seek permission for certain decisions around the young person's life, shortage of foster homes available.

### STAYING PUT

Arrangements for older children who are aged 16-17 at their 18th birthday.

**Type of provision:** Family-based.

**Regulation:** Not subject to fostering services regulations.

**Main challenge:** Not available for those who do not have a suitable family or other suitable placement.

### SHARED LIVES

An arrangement for individuals aged 16-17 with mental health problems or other needs whereby they live with their family and community life and give up their own home. They move in with their carer, others are regularly in and out.

**Type of provision:** Family-based.

**Regulation:** The provision of personal care is regulated.

**Main challenge:** Only available to disabled young people.

### SUPPORTED LODGINGS

**Type of provision:** Semi-independent, family-based.

**Regulation:** Currently unregulated.

**Main challenge:** Not suitable for all young people.

LOW

LEVEL OF INDEPENDENCE

NON-FAMILY BASED

### RESIDENTIAL CARE

Children and young people live together in a building of varying sizes, with professional staff who look after them.

**Type of provision:** Non-family-based.

**Regulation:** Regulated by Ofsted.

**Main challenge:** Shortage of places, expensive, concern around its ability to provide young people with relationships they can continue to draw on after leaving, young person has to leave around their 18th birthday.

### STAYING CLOSE

Arrangements for older children who are aged 16-17 at their 18th birthday.

**Type of provision:** Non-family-based.

**Regulation:** Not subject to Children's Homes Regulations.

**Main challenge:** Not available for those who do not have a suitable family or other suitable placement, residential placement is not suitable, currently unregulated.

### SUPPORTED HOUSING

A young person lives in a private room with shared facilities. Recently banned for young people with mental health problems.

**Type of provision:** Semi-independent, non-family-based.

**Regulation:** Currently unregulated.

**Main challenge:** Not suitable for young people who do not have a suitable family or other suitable placement, concern around its ability to provide young people with relationships they can continue to draw on after leaving.

in foster care to stay with their foster carers beyond

services regulations.

who are not in foster care or for whom fostering is

and over with learning disabilities, mental health  
 are matched with an approved carer. The carer shares  
 s care and support to the person. Some individuals  
 ar daytime visitors and some do a combination.

are is regulated by the Care Quality Commission.  
 led individuals.

**S**  
 family-based.

ng people, currently underutilised.

DEPENDENCE

○ TOTAL

in residential settings to stay nearby beyond their

omes regulations.

who are not in a residential setting or for whom a  
 ently rolled out in only a few pilot areas.

with visiting support, often with other young people,  
 or children under the age of 16.

with a varying degree of support received, non-

people who would be better suited to a family-  
 bility to provide young people with relationships  
 ng.

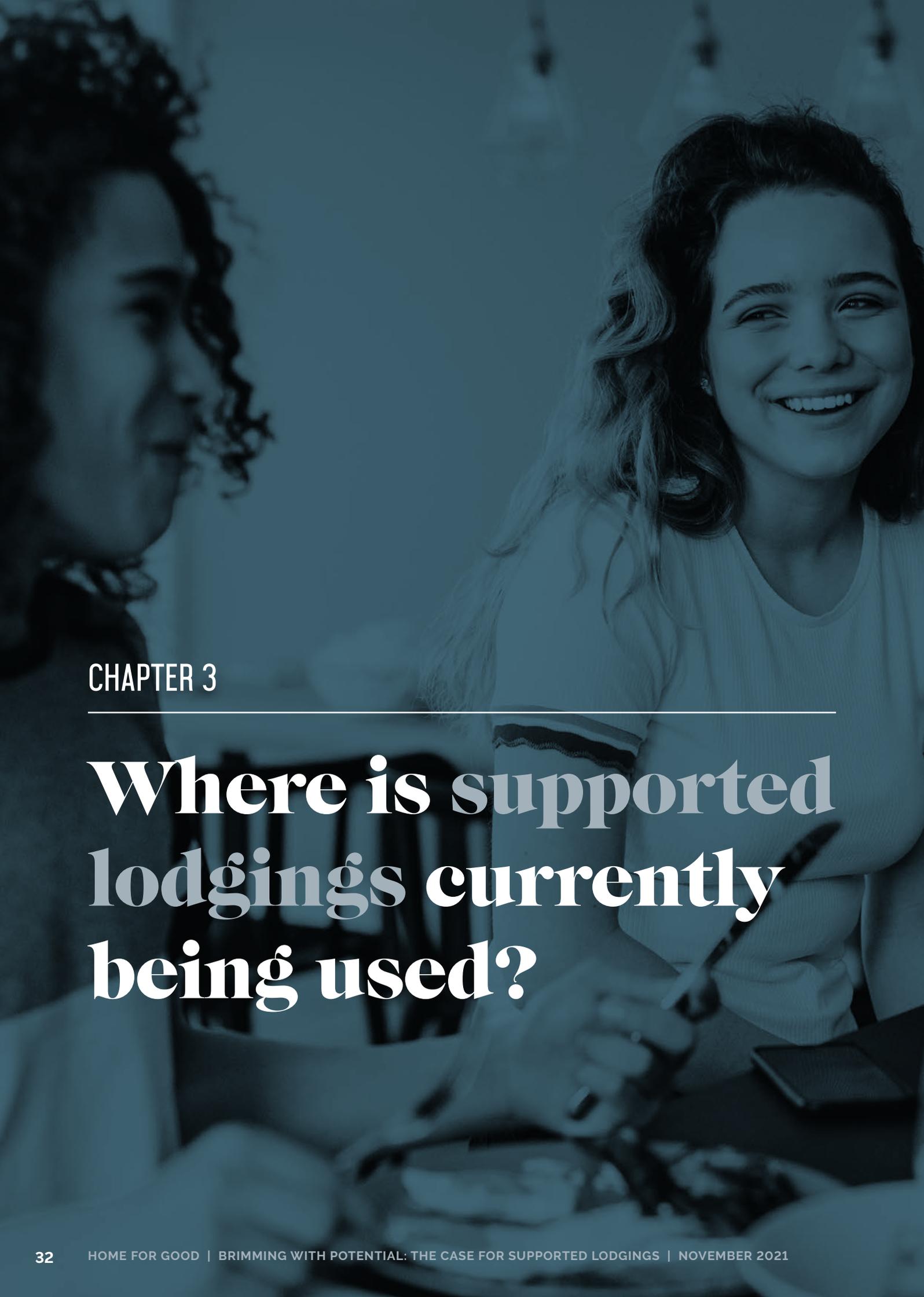
**INDEPENDENT SETTING**

A young person lives in private housing or a council home; this could be a houseshare, flatshare or studio accommodation, with no additional support. Recently banned for children under the age of 16.

**Type of provision:** Independent, non-family-based.

**Regulation:** Currently unregulated.

**Main challenge:** Lack of support, not suitable for young people who would be better suited to a family-based environment.



CHAPTER 3

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# Where is supported lodgings currently being used?

## Our research

To find out how extensively supported lodgings is used across England, we conducted research by submitting Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to 150 councils. Our requests issued in 2019 received 140 responses.

Of these responses, we were able to ascertain conclusively that nearly **two-thirds of councils** (62%, n=87) operate a **supported lodgings** scheme, with one quarter of councils (25%, n=35) **not using supported lodgings at all**. Of those that responded, 18 councils either refused the request, or provided information that was inconclusive in demonstrating whether they operated a supported lodgings scheme.<sup>22</sup>

Across the local authorities with an established supported lodgings scheme, our FOI requests uncovered that **more than 900 young people** between the ages of 16-18 are currently living in supported lodgings placements across England.<sup>23</sup> **More than half** (n=493) of these young people were identified as being **looked after** and just under a **quarter** (n=208) are **unaccompanied asylum-seeking children**.

With our FOIs indicating two-thirds of local authorities to be operating a supported lodgings scheme, we can project that around **1000 young people aged 16-18 across England are likely to be currently residing in a supported lodgings placement**.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Home for Good. 2019. Supported Lodgings Freedom of Information Request. 140 responses received. *Please note, when we repeated this question in 2020, we found consistent findings.*

<sup>23</sup> Home for Good. 2020. Supported Lodgings Freedom of Information Request. 134 responses received.

<sup>24</sup> Workings: 16 local authorities are yet to provide a response to our FOI request, just over two-thirds of authorities who have responded operate a SL scheme, with an average of 10 young people aged 16-18 per scheme. Therefore, we estimate that around 11 of the 16 local authorities may be operating a supported lodgings scheme, representing an estimated additional 110 young people to the 900 young people represented through local authorities who have responded so far.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Nearly  
2/3**  
of councils (62%)  
operate a supported  
lodgings scheme

**1/4**  
of councils (25%)  
are not using supported  
lodgings at all.

**1,000**  
young people  
aged 16-18  
across England are likely  
to be **currently residing**  
in a **supported lodgings**  
placement.

**37%**  
of all councils  
who currently use  
supported lodgings  
commission their scheme  
externally.

**56%** deliver their own  
internal scheme.

**7%** used a combination  
of internal and externally  
commissioned provision.

## Our research (continued)

We discovered variation in the number of young people placed in supported lodgings among local authorities, with **the majority placing fewer than ten young people in supported lodgings settings** at the time of asking. However, as a result of the broad range, the average number of young people placed by councils was **17**. The table below demonstrates the numbers of young people placed by each local authority.

Number of young people aged 16-17 placed in supported lodgings within each local authority. <sup>25</sup>				
Under 10	10-20	20-30	30+	Unspecified
41	16	5	10	6

Our research also showed that **37% (n=35) of all councils** who currently use supported lodgings **commission their scheme externally**. **56% (n=53) deliver their own internal scheme** and **7% (n=7) used a combination** of internal and externally commissioned provision.<sup>26</sup>

This research clearly shows that supported lodgings is not a 'new' form of provision and is very much established in some parts of the country. But it is a hugely mixed picture, with between one third and a quarter of councils not using it at all and many others only using it on a small scale. As such, we identify that there is **scope for significant expansion** in the use of supported lodgings across England.

The following pages set out four examples of schemes that are running in different parts of England, demonstrating what supported lodgings can look like in practice.

<sup>25</sup> Home for Good. 2019. Supported Lodgings Freedom of Information Request.

<sup>26</sup> Home for Good. 2020. Supported Lodgings Freedom of Information Request.

## Case Study: Young Devon



Young Devon started out delivering youth work and, over time, became all too familiar with the needs of homeless young people. They began raising awareness of the problem, but soon realised that there was an urgent need to take greater action. They firstly developed supported housing and then established a supported lodgings scheme. They now provide around 90 supported lodgings placements across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

Young Devon have three 'levels' of supported lodgings placements. The first level is a standard type of arrangement, the second is an enhanced provision with additional wrap-around support, and the third is a more intense package known as 'Plan B'. In Plan B, there is a strong multidisciplinary team around the whole household, including a youth worker, who will support the young person, and a clinical supervisor, who will support the host family.



**The effectiveness of this approach is clear: young people entering Plan B generally have 8 to 10 placement breakdowns before they get there, but we've only had one placement breakdown in the last four years of Plan B. It's a safe landing. It's transformative for the right young person.**

**We know the path to trauma healing is safe, good relationships around you. Supported lodgings provides a real opportunity to allow this to happen. It's not right for all young people, but for others it's fantastic.**

*Andy Moreman, Chief Executive*



By operating a three-tiered approach, the scheme can adjust to the changing and evolving needs of the young people in supported lodgings. Rather than needing to move the young person when higher needs emerge, which increases instability and breaks vital attachments, the support around the placement can be dialled up or down so that the young person can remain with the host and both can be supported as needs and challenges arise.

## Case Study:

# YMCA in the Black Country

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The YMCA's supported lodgings scheme in the Black Country started 12 years ago as a pilot project in Sandwell. The charity realised they had 16- and 17-year-olds in supported housing who were being negatively influenced by older adults living nearby and as such were vulnerable and not thriving. To combat this, they established a supported lodgings scheme to move these teenagers individually into the homes of 'host' families or individuals, with the young person still retaining a high degree of independence.

Since then, the charity has placed over 500 young people in supported lodgings and currently has 50 placements across four local authority areas. Each placement is intended to last for up to two years, although due to the strong relationships formed, many hosts and young people continue to stay in touch once the placement has ended and the young person has moved out. The project is supported by the YMCA team, comprised of a housing officer and four project workers, who are constantly recruiting, assessing and matching hosts with young people. They also have a designated Host Coordinator to support them in recruiting and training hosts.



**We have dozens of success stories. The placements provide a stable base that enables young people to go on to university or work. Hosts are a total cross-section... the best ones have lots of life experience and a big heart.**

*Rachael Taylor, Supported Lodgings Manager*



Of the young people who left their supported lodgings placement this year, 81% were in education, employment or training. Since 2016, 297 young people have moved on from supported lodgings, with 89% of these being planned moves. Over 50 of these young people have gone on to study at university.

The charity has strongly focused on recruitment and has approved hundreds of hosts since the start of the project. They currently have around 80 active hosts, 33 of which have been with them for longer than five years.



## Case Study:

# A Southern local authority

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**One local authority in the South of England has been operating an internal supported lodgings scheme for only a few years, having previously commissioned an external organisation to run the provision. Since then, they have developed the model to draw on many aspects from fostering, including the assessment process, training and reviewing procedures in place for hosts, who they refer to as 'carers'.**

As a scheme, they are clear about the challenges experienced by many young people that hosts may be faced with. They therefore ensure that carers are prepared and equipped for the complex needs of the young people moving into supported lodgings by being clear about the skills and capacity required. By only having a small cohort of carers, they are able to meet with each carer every six weeks and provide support on an individual basis. This, coupled with a comprehensive matching process and the setting of clear expectations for both the young person and carer about the intended long-term nature of the setup, means they have experienced very few breakdowns or emergency moves.

This local authority has found that the consistency and stability enabled by supported lodgings is a good fit with the lifestyle of their hosts, many of whom have other work commitments.

Given their geographical location, they also have several UASC living in supported lodgings and they recognise the specific support needed to ensure that these young people are matched with the right host. This involves bringing in interpreters to communicate with the young person and ensuring there is a good cultural competency among the supported lodgings household. They have found that many prospective supported lodgings hosts are stepping forward with the hope and intent of welcoming an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person and view this positively.

## Case Study:

# Concrete Rose

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**Concrete Rose is a new provider of supported lodgings in Cambridgeshire and is included here to demonstrate the innovation taking place in this area of care. Set up by Mike Farrington, who is highly experienced in youth work, Concrete Rose have launched a pilot scheme called Room to Spare for around ten young people aged 16 and over. Placements are expected to last for around 18 months or longer, and the charity is working with local churches to recruit hosts in addition to more general recruitment.**

Their model provides two distinct types of support, one for hosts and the other for young people. Once hosts are recruited and go through a highly individualised assessment process, they receive a robust induction and training in relevant skills (such as trauma-informed care), as well as 24/7 on-call support and access to clinical supervision. Young people are provided with mentoring, personalised youth work support, access to professional therapeutic services, budgeting training and move-on support.

Their model has two distinct features:

- Every young person placed in a supported lodgings setting is also connected with a youth worker who will build a relationship with them and provide support
- The scheme's outcomes will be measured by a framework that is centred on a therapeutic approach to helping young people recover from adverse childhood experiences, rather than the traditional measures of employment, education or training

Concrete Rose is developing a therapeutic culture in everything they do, so that vulnerable young people move towards recovery, healing and flourishing in their lives. Their framework is based on four main strands of wellness: peace in their home environment, positive relationships, personal significance and purpose in life.



CHAPTER 4

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# What does supported lodgings have to offer?

In the 2019 Stability Index published by the Children's Commissioner for England, the Commissioner states that young people in care have frequently asked her and her team to ensure that:

*"The people who are tasked with looking after them provide them with the support and stability they need to be able to begin to recover, build positive relationships and start to build their future."*

We believe that supported lodgings is well-placed to satisfy these asks and truly meet the needs of young people at a crucial time in their lives.

“

**Whatever happens in his life, we know that the time he spent with us will have had an impact on his life.**

*Supported lodgings host*

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## Relationships

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“

**My host was amazing. We clicked straight away.**

*Care-experienced young person*

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No young person ages out of the need for ongoing, committed relationships in their life. Even if not conventional, biological or legally recognised, every person needs a family or tribe by their side to belong to and receive support from. This family or tribe can enable young people to experience love, feel supported to take on new challenges, learn how to resolve conflict or disagreements and provide them with an environment in which they can grow and learn.

Supported lodgings is unique within the space of semi-independent accommodation in that it allows young people to be connected in an ongoing way with a family or individual by living in their home, while having the freedom and support to develop skills for adulthood. Many of the other options including good-quality supported accommodation can offer a high level of support, but it is provided by staff who come and go into the setting. Where good matches are made between hosts and young people, the relational nature of supported lodgings can provide a solid base for young people to learn, ask for help and journey at their own pace towards adulthood.

## Relationships (continued)



**[The host family] are not her blood relatives or her [birth] family, but she's experiencing the care like it is. There's really no sense of 'oh, you get paid by the [local authority] to look after me'...I think she sees that these people are genuinely interested that she is happy, doing well and progressing. And, you know, they're very good role models for her, the two of them.**

*Social worker<sup>27</sup>*



Young people need to be supported as much as possible to go on to achieve their ambitions and goals. For many young people, particularly those who have entered the care system at an older age, foster care can feel too restrictive at a stage in their life where they are approaching adulthood. Our research has found that this can particularly be the case for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young people, who have often journeyed on their own to the UK without the oversight of an adult. Although these young people need support, the close parental oversight that foster care provides can feel at odds with the greater independence and freedom they have experienced.

It is important to recognise that there is no silver bullet and different arrangements will be suited to different young people. For some, supported lodgings will not be right for them. However, we recognise the need to ensure there is a strong continuum of options available and that the more informal, but strongly relational way in which support is provided through supported lodgings could be an appropriate and good option for many more young people than it is currently offered to.



**My hosts] were different – they understood me, they don't look at it as a job, I'm part of the family.**

*Care-experienced young person*



We believe supported lodgings fills an essential gap in this continuum. For some young people, living alongside a stable, supportive individual or family, who are consistently there day-in and day-out, can make an astounding difference to their life. While not all hosts will form a deep and lasting bond with

<sup>27</sup> Ní Raghallaigh, Muireann. 2013. Foster Care and Supported Lodgings for Separated Asylum-Seeking Young People in Ireland: The Views of Young People, Carers and Stakeholders. School of Applied Social Science, University College Dublin. Dublin: Barnardos and the Health Service Executive. Available [online](#). Page 51.

the young person, supported lodgings provides an opportunity for hosts and young people to live alongside each other – not just interacting when things go wrong, but providing a space where the highs, lows and everyday challenges can be shared together.

Local authorities have informed us that supported lodgings has worked for a range of young people, including some who have struggled in residential care, thus pointing to the difference that a family environment can make.



**She's developed close relationships with her [host] and having been really on the brink of criminality, she's really settled. I do really think they make a huge difference to young people. Having that extra guidance and extra oversight, someone who cares, someone who trusts you in their home.**

*Supported lodgings Lead, local authority*



In addition, supported lodgings enables a supportive relationship to form that can endure beyond the placement. While other forms of semi-independent and independent accommodation can provide high quality support while a young person is in the setting, the professional dynamic of those providing that support, as well as the steady flow of young people in and through the accommodation, means that it can be challenging for a young person to maintain a relationship with those who have supported them after they have left the setting. In contrast, we heard many stories of young people who continued to receive support and stay in close contact with their host(s) many years down the line. As such, supported lodgings establishes a relationship dynamic that is sustainable even as the young person goes on to live independently.

This is important because the term 'independence' is often presented as the goal for older teenagers in care. We believe this has been misunderstood. 'Independence' should not and cannot be about a young person becoming completely self-contained and self-dependent. Among the general population, the average age for moving out of home is 23, however most young adults continue to draw on support from their birth families for the rest of their lives. Practical support on its own is not enough. It is the relational connections with others and a sense of belonging to a family or community that bring joy and meaning to a person's life. In referring to independence, we should not create or perpetuate practice that encourages young people to feel that they should venture into adulthood on their own, in order to be 'independent'.

## Relationships (continued)

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**I think I'm much more hands-on than [the local authority] think I should be. I think they think that me being hands off will help her be more independent whereas I think that being more hands on will help her to be in the right space to then explore and be independent.**

*Supported lodgings host*



The relational strength of supported lodgings is enabled not just in the relationship between the host and young person, but also in providing a gateway for young people to a wider community. For hosts who are part of a community, such as a faith community or local group, young people can access the broader services offered within these communities and also meet a wider range of individuals whom they can form relationships with. They can be welcomed into a wider network of people. At Home for Good we have seen first-hand the value that this can bring to a young person's life as they meet others who can be part of their journey and story. Hosts and supported lodgings providers have informed us that this is particularly valued by UASC, where cultural differences can often cause them to feel isolated within their local area. As supported lodgings hosts have informed us, this gateway can be as simple as inviting a young person along to a sports club, a religious service or a local event.

## Skills for adulthood

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Supported lodgings is ideal for assisting young people in developing life skills. For young people who have experienced trauma or instability in their lives, they may lack some of the basic skills needed to be able to live on their own in the future.



**I came from a family who didn't budget, who didn't do normal living. I had no idea how to pay my rent, I was from a house that didn't do that. Living in a house wasn't the answer. I needed holistic, all-round support and guidance from adults who did adulting really well and not really badly.**

*Care-experienced advocate*



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Hosts can support young people in developing these skills at a pace that suits the young person. This can include budgeting, cooking, applying for jobs, paying bills, and operating everyday household objects such as the washing machine or dishwasher. Research has shown that the development of these practical skills can increase a young person's self-confidence and wellbeing,<sup>28</sup> which is particularly important for older teenagers as they navigate this crucial transition between the care system and adulthood.

## Stability

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We have heard from many providers that supported lodgings can be an incredibly stable placement for young people, with many experiencing positive outcomes in their lives as a result.



**We find that outcomes for young people tend to be better. Our young people are all in Education, Employment or Training and they all have positive relationships with their hosts and are achieving. I really don't know if they would be doing that in a hostel or foyer or shared accommodation or what the risks or the peer pressure would be.**

*Supported lodgings Lead, local authority*



Providers tell us that the key to this stability is the successful matching of young people with hosts. Young people told us that being able to meet the host and get to know them before moving in had given them greater confidence about the arrangement and helped them to feel less anxious about what the placement would be like. A study conducted in Ireland that looked at UASC placed in supported lodgings and foster care found this to increase stability and help the young people to settle more quickly.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Shelter Scotland. 2018. Supported Lodgings Business Case. Available [online](#)

<sup>29</sup> Ní Raghallaigh, Muireann. 2013. Foster Care and Supported Lodgings for Separated Asylum Seeking Young People in Ireland: The Views of Young People, Carers and Stakeholders. School of Applied Social Science, University College Dublin. Dublin: Barnardos and the Health Service Executive. Available [online](#). Page 51.

# Financial Sustainability

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We believe supported lodgings presents a far more financially viable and sustainable option than many of the alternatives within the semi-independent and independent category, whilst also meeting the holistic needs of some young people more effectively and sustainably. The huge costs of residential provision and the wider pressures on children's services are set out on page 22. However, there is a stark lack of data available to provide a reliable assessment of the average cost of supported lodgings. This must be remedied.

Supported lodgings hosts typically receive a lower weekly allowance than foster carers, reflecting the lower time commitment, which in turn frees hosts up to earn income through other work. Their allowance is eligible for qualifying care relief in the same way as foster care allowances.<sup>30</sup>

Our research has found that there is huge variation between local authority areas on how much supported lodgings hosts are paid. Allowances tend to fall between £100 and £300 a week, depending on the geographic area and the support hours required from the host. Even with social work time and other setup and core costs, this can be significantly cheaper than many other forms of semi-independent or independent provision, where some placements for young people are costing upwards of £5,000 per week.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, there are secondary financial savings to be measured as a result of the stability of supported lodgings placements when good matches are made. Minimising placement disruption or breakdown avoids the high short-term costs of finding emergency placements.

This stability brings savings not just in the medium-term while a young person lives in supported lodgings but can also impact their stability over the longer term, which can bring financial benefits to councils and the taxpayer. Given the stories we heard of some hosts continuing to support young people long after the young person has moved out, we identify that this could present significant potential savings across many public services, including healthcare and the justice system, although the exact savings are complex to measure.

While our discussions with providers have suggested that supported lodgings presents very good value for money, no quantitative research has yet been undertaken to provide robust evidence of the potential cost savings for local authorities by increasing their use of supported lodgings. As such, we recommend Government undertake this research, as outlined within our recommendations on page 66.

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<sup>30</sup> HM Revenue & Customs. 2021. Guidance: HS236 Qualifying Care Relief: Foster Carers, Adult Placement Carers, Kinship Carers and Staying Put Carers (2018). Available [online](#). [Accessed October 2021].

<sup>31</sup> Marsh, Sarah and Walker, Amy. 2019. Revealed: Thousands of Children in Care Placed in Unregulated Homes. The Guardian. Available [online](#). [Accessed October 2021].

# Hosts

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A common concern about supported lodgings is linked to recruitment and, given the existing shortage of foster carers, whether supported lodgings schemes are in danger of siphoning off foster carers and therefore adding further pressure to fostering services. With the Fostering Network estimating that England needs to recruit around 7,300 foster families over the next year alone,<sup>32</sup> we recognise the importance of ensuring that the recruitment of supported lodgings hosts is not in competition with efforts to recruit foster carers. Our research has given us confidence that this is not the case.

Providers of supported lodgings told us that supported lodgings often attracts a new cohort of individuals and families for whom foster care would not be an option. Given the different level of commitment required, supported lodgings hosts often have a different profile to foster carers. While the majority (41%) of foster carers are in their 50s,<sup>33</sup> supported lodgings hosts are often either side of this age group – in their 20s or 30s or retired. Younger individuals often find supported lodgings appealing due to being able to host a young person alongside continuing in other employment more easily than in fostering. At the other end, retired individuals who have experience of caring for teenagers through bringing up their own children are often motivated to care for vulnerable teenagers, but express a desire to do so with less intensity than that required within fostering. Supported lodgings allows hosts to go on holiday more easily and spend more time out of the house than in fostering which can be appealing to this cohort.

We found that supported lodgings can not only draw new individuals into the system, adding additional capacity, but can work together with foster care recruitment in mutually beneficial ways. Some local authorities informed us that they had individuals who had become approved as supported lodgings hosts as a stepping-stone towards becoming a foster carer:



**Some people feel intimidated by fostering and so want to explore it through supported lodgings, as it gives them the opportunity to build a relationship with their local authority and see if it works.”**

*Supported lodgings Lead, local authority*



One local authority told us about a couple who were supported lodgings hosts as a first step towards considering adoption in the future and viewed supported lodgings as a good way to grow their experience of caring for older teenagers and care leavers.

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<sup>32</sup> Fostering Network. Recruitment Targets. Available [online](#). [Accessed October 2021].

<sup>33</sup> Ofsted. 2020. Fostering in England 2019 to 2020: Main Findings. Available [online](#).

## Hosts (continued)

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**People who want to foster often have a clear sense of what fostering is, they want to parent and look after a child, they want a child to be part of their family. With supported lodgings, [hosts] have more of their own lives, their children might be adults but they still have something to give and want to help and be hands-on. The young people are more self-sufficient and they as [hosts] are holding less responsibility and risk because the young person is supporting themselves.**

*Supported lodgings Lead, local authority*



Local authorities also informed us that some of their supported lodgings hosts had formerly been foster carers but had wanted to step back from the responsibility of this role. Becoming a host allowed them to do this while enabling them to continue playing a vital role within the care system. In this way, the system is able to retain many more individuals and families with experience and skills in supporting vulnerable young people.



**I do really think this is a hugely important foundation for people... they should have access to a family home and people who care for them. I think its a hugely protective factor to have a family home and people who care for you and advocate for you.**

*Supported lodgings Lead, local authority*



Nonetheless, we recognise that recruitment efforts around supported lodgings must communicate an honest picture about the reality of being a host. While the level of responsibility held for the young person may be lower than in fostering, many young people have experienced trauma and therefore contend with a range of challenges. The assessment and training process must acknowledge and equip hosts sufficiently to enable them to feel informed and confident in supporting young people to navigate these challenges. In recognising the strengths and benefits of supported lodgings and the huge privilege it can be to support a young person, we do not want to underestimate or misrepresent the challenges and sacrifices involved in being a host and supporting vulnerable young people in this way.





CHAPTER 5

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**Expanding  
supported lodgings:  
The challenges to  
overcome**

**This report contends that supported lodgings is an underutilised provision in the children’s social care system in England and could play a significant role in addressing the urgent shortage of placements, particularly for older teenagers.**

Despite the evidence laid out in Chapter 4 demonstrating the strengths of supported lodgings, there are several barriers that stand in the way of its expanded use. We believe these hurdles are currently preventing this provision from being as effective as it could be.

The Review of Children’s Social Care is a crucial opportunity to address some of these issues. In this section, we outline our key concerns and offer recommendations to Government, local authorities, the Review and church leaders on the role they can play in helping this provision reach its potential in meeting the needs of more young people.

## Lack of awareness



**I was like, what is that? Lodgings... I thought there were going to be multiple people. I thought it was like a care home with loads of people in it.**

*Care-experienced young person*



Our research has shown that there is a widespread lack of awareness and understanding of supported lodgings; not just among young people who might benefit from it, but also among local authorities, – even those authorities that use supported lodgings already – government officials, social workers, other professionals and the public. Due to the similar language, it is often confused with ‘supported housing’, which is a different provision that does not operate from the home of a host individual or family. This is a crucial difference.

Hosts have told us that when they engage with professionals such as the police or healthcare staff on behalf of their young person, their role is often not understood, and they have to frequently explain what supported lodgings is. Some described choosing to say they were foster carers, to avoid having to explain the distinction.



**I started off telling the police that I was a supported lodgings host, but they didn’t know what it was. Now I just tell them I’m a foster carer to save having to explain what a host is.**

*Supported lodgings host*



## Lack of awareness (continued)

There are many brilliant supported lodgings schemes with highly knowledgeable staff and social workers in some areas of the country. However, in other areas, hosts told us that their social workers had been unsure of what supported lodgings was, unaware of what the assessment and approval process should involve and the boundaries and important differences between fostering and supported lodgings. As a result, hosts expressed feeling unsure about whether to proceed in becoming a host and of the expectations involved.



**We were caught between the fostering service and the leaving care team. It felt like they'd never done it before. It felt like the social workers had never assessed someone for it or knew what to do. When we asked our lovely social worker a question, she always had to go and find out...it felt like the social workers were learning as much as we were...at the end, we questioned – should we just do fostering?**

*Supported lodgings host*



A lack of awareness among social workers is likely to be contributing to the recruitment challenge if they feel unable to confidently lay out a clear understanding of this provision to enquirers. In addition, if social workers are unsure of the purpose, design and practice of supported lodgings, they are unlikely to be able to present it as a compelling or positive option to a young person. This could even lead to young people being given the wrong information about what supported lodgings involves.

We have found that there is often no single designated official or team in local authorities who holds responsibility for the oversight of supported lodgings. This is illustrative of the lack of focus that this provision has been given. Not only can this make it harder for those interested in becoming a host to navigate the system but it can also prevent networking and sharing of best practice between councils because no single person or team has responsibility for doing this. It also impacts the experience of support for existing supported lodgings hosts. One host told us that although things were working well with the young person currently living with them, she felt concerned that there was not a specific person who they could approach if they faced challenges in the future. In her words, *“We have no designated social worker to call.”*

This lack of awareness is also present at the regional and national level with many practitioners unaware of other supported lodgings schemes operating nearby or around the country. Local authorities who run schemes are rarely connected with each other. As is identified to be the case in Scotland, schemes across England have mostly been developed by local partners in response to need,



and there is little standardisation or sharing of resources and best practice.<sup>34</sup> A report conducted by Shelter and Heriot-Watt University in 2018 described Scotland as having “no standard shape or model of [supported lodgings] services and they are run in a wide variety of ways”.<sup>35</sup> Our research has found England to demonstrate the same pattern.

As such, Home for Good will be working with providers and local authorities to establish a National Supported Lodgings Network to address this gap and improve the consistency and quality of schemes. It will also provide an easy way for local authorities who currently do not run a scheme but are considering developing one, to tap into a pool of expertise to inform their thinking. Through this they can hear about best practice and be given confidence in developing a scheme that is of a high quality and meets young people’s needs well.

**Improving understanding and awareness of supported lodgings is essential for the expansion of supported lodgings schemes and the effective running of current schemes. Government, local authorities and other stakeholders have a vital role to play in raising the profile of supported lodgings and encouraging connections between those involved so that best practice can be shared. Home for Good will work with existing providers within the sector to establish a National Supported Lodgings Network to bring leaders together so that practice can be improved and the quality of provision uplifted.**

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**34 & 35** Watts, Beth and Blenkinsopp, Janice. 2018. *Supported Lodgings: Exploring the Feasibility of Long-Term Community Hosting as a Response to Youth Homelessness in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland. Available [online](#).

# Findings from the public

We surveyed over 2,000 UK adults through Savanta ComRes to ascertain their openness to supporting vulnerable teenagers and their awareness of supported lodgings, with the findings outlined below.<sup>36</sup>

## AMONG THE GENERAL POPULATION...

**40%** told us they wanted to help vulnerable families and children within their local community. **This was 58% among regular churchgoers.**<sup>37</sup>

**33%** considered themselves educated on the challenges facing teenagers in the care system. **This was 55% among regular churchgoers.**

**35%** informed us that they already were or would consider supporting a teenager in care in developing life skills. **56% of regular churchgoers said the same.**

**69%** had never heard of supported lodgings. **This was 67% among regular churchgoers.**

**28%** had heard of supported lodgings but were unsure what it involved. **50% of regular churchgoers told us the same.**

**69% of the general population had never heard of supported lodgings.**

<sup>36</sup> Savanta Comres (2021) Supported Lodgings and Home for Good

<sup>37</sup> Regular churchgoers are considered those who attend a religious service at least once a fortnight.

HAVING BEEN PROVIDED WITH A SHORT EXPLANATION OF SUPPORTED LODGINGS...

**25%** of the general public said they would consider becoming a supported lodgings host. **Regular churchgoers are twice as likely (49%) to consider becoming a host.**

**49% of regular churchgoers told us they would consider becoming a supported lodgings host.**

**27%** of the general population said they would consider fostering a teenager, with **53% of regular churchgoers being open to this.**

THOSE WHO SAID THEY WOULD NOT CONSIDER FOSTERING TOLD US THEIR TOP REASONS...

**60%** of the general population said *"I don't feel able to take on the responsibility of fostering a teenager".*

**21%** of regular churchgoers said *"I don't want my current employment to be affected."*

**13%** of the general population said *"I don't feel that I have the skills or experience to foster a teenager".*

**Regular churchgoers are twice as likely to consider becoming a host compared to the general population.**

# Lack of clear definition

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While supported lodgings is recognised in The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3 (see p.26) this document explicitly states that there is **no formal definition** and only provides common characteristics and themes for local authorities to consider. This vague statutory guidance was last updated in 2015 and little legislative or policy effort has been made to provide further clarity.

This lack of a clear definition, or any substantial guidance on supported lodgings has contributed to poor awareness and understanding within the sector. While we want to ensure individual supported lodgings settings can enjoy a degree of variety, enabling a choice of options for young people, there is a need for greater clarity on what supported lodgings is and what is expected of local authorities in commissioning these services to give them the confidence they need to develop or commission schemes. This guidance and setting of expectations is also vital for establishing a vision for the quality of supported lodgings provision that is expected.

**We found that two very different types of provision are currently operating under the ‘supported lodgings’ umbrella:** emergency provision (which lasts between one night and six weeks) and longer-term placements. The conflation of these two models under the one banner is unhelpful, not least as providers told us that the skills required to be a host within each model are significantly different, which hinders clear recruitment messaging. We identify that the benefits of supported lodgings are seen most impactfully through the longer-term model and that a different term should be used for the emergency model to distinguish between the two. Clearly, there is a place for the emergency model, but we identify that it would be better for it to be renamed to bring clarity around what comprises supported lodgings.

In the absence of a clear definition or guidance, we found that some local authorities were judging supported lodgings by its name and disregarding it as “too light-touch”,<sup>38</sup> because it gives the sense that young people are merely lodgers and therefore under-represents the level of support and relationship provided.

Perhaps another consequence of the lack of clarity is the considerable variance in the names given to supported lodgings schemes, which reveal different understandings of what it constitutes. Our research found these to include Host and Support, Home2Home, Backup, Forum Housing, Safe and Sound Homes, Homestays, Low Lodgings, Supported Accommodation in a Family Environment (SAFE), Supported Board and Lodging Scheme, Supported Living, Step by Step, STEP and Family Placement.

We recognise that language matters. The lack of clear definition and the varied use of terms to describe supported lodgings schemes are a barrier to raising awareness and the expansion of supported lodgings at a national level. The use of a single name for schemes across the country would make it easier to understand and would raise the profile of supported lodgings to attract more hosts and develop new schemes.

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<sup>38</sup> Supported lodgings Lead, local authority.

However, it has been clear through our research and interviews that the name ‘supported lodgings’ is met with mixed responses, with many stakeholders not favouring the term. There was wide consensus among young people, hosts and providers that the phrase does not sound aspirational or appealing for many young people, and misses the opportunity of communicating the relational strength of the provision.

**Standardising language, boundaries and definitions is vital for ensuring that authorities are operating supported lodgings schemes in a way that is fit-for-purpose and facilitates their full potential. Clear messaging and guidance from Government is needed on supported lodgings, including a rethink of the name itself.**



# Recruitment

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One of the most significant challenges for local authorities and external providers is the recruitment of individuals and families willing to step up to support young people, whether as foster carers, adoptive parents or supported lodgings hosts. The capacity to recruit has been further stretched due to financial constraints and challenges imposed by the coronavirus crisis.

Recruiting supported lodgings hosts can be particularly challenging because of the low level of understanding of supported lodgings among the general public. As things stand, the name does not have the same level of recognition as fostering and adoption and requires serious intentionality and effort to promote and advertise the scheme. **Local authorities may benefit from considering collaborative arrangements** with other councils, charities, businesses and providers, to address the task of recruitment and wider operation of the schemes. Home for Good has found that the work of **other groups, such as the Church, can contribute significantly to the recruitment of families and individuals** when they are educated about the need and galvanised to take action. See Chapter 6 on page 62 for further information about the role the Church community can play.

That said, the recruitment process of supported lodgings hosts can be less intensive and quicker than the process for foster carers, due to the lower level of responsibility held by the host. As has been mentioned on page 47, this means that the opportunity to become a host may appeal to a wider pool of people.

For the strongest matches to be made between young people and hosts, the system needs a diverse range of hosts to provide choice to the young person and their social worker. This means that successful supported lodging schemes require a larger number of potential hosts than the number of young people being considered for this type of provision. Some hosts may be waiting for some time before a young person is found that is a suitable match for them.

Just as with fostering or adoption, we also recognise that ensuring that hosts are well-supported is key to successful recruitment and retention. One individual who had been supporting young people as a host for more than ten years told us that she had never been introduced to another host within her local authority during that time, which had left her feeling isolated and lacking support when things had been tough. Connecting hosts together and providing a space for them to hear about and learn from the experiences of others can make a huge difference in developing their skills and resilience. There are many existing organisations and charities who are able to support local authorities and providers in ensuring that this vital peer support is in place.

**Promotion of the value and importance of becoming a host must come from Government, local authorities, charities, churches and other faith communities to ensure there are sufficient supported lodgings hosts. This must be accompanied by realistic information and training for potential hosts, to ensure the appropriate people come forward. Local authorities and practitioners should share best practice on recruitment, training and retention of hosts.**

# Financial Variation

Our research has demonstrated that the payments provided to hosts can be a postcode lottery, varying between £100 and £300 per week, with no fixed or guiding fee structure available to local authorities. It is therefore challenging to determine an average cost per placement. Supported lodgings hosts are generally paid less than foster carers due to the lower responsibility of the host, which allows many to continue in other employment more easily than they might as foster carers.

While some geographical variation in the payments provided to supported lodgings hosts is realistic, given the national variation in living costs, even small differences have an enormous impact over the duration of an average two-year placement as the table below shows.

	Local authority 1	Local authority 2
Weekly payment provided to their supported lodgings hosts	£95	£256.13
Annual payment provided to supported lodgings hosts*	£4,940	£13,319
Payment over two years to supported lodgings hosts <sup>37</sup>	£9,880	£26,638

**Figure 1: Comparison of annual payments offered to supported lodgings hosts across England**

In addition, while hosts are permitted to undertake other employment, their propensity to do so may be impacted by the level of support that a young person in their home needs. Very little is known about the national cohort of supported lodgings hosts and, therefore, the impact of this variation in payments.

However, not only is there variation in the total figure that hosts receive, but the breakdown of this figure varies significantly too. In seeking to investigate this with providers and local authorities, we uncovered a complex array of models. Contributions came from the local authority, Housing Benefit and young people, based on their employment or education circumstances in varying degrees. The lack of guidance around supported lodgings is likely to be contributing to this variation in funding models.

**The Government should commission research to better understand the costs and funding models of supported lodgings placements, including the variation in payments to hosts. It should use this research to publish guidance to local authorities on funding models and provide a framework for determining the payments made to supported lodgings hosts, including recommended payment levels.**

39 Please note: These figures exclude holiday payments.

# Regulation

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After our *Five-Star report*,<sup>40</sup> which called for higher standards of accommodation for teenagers in light of negative media reports, we were pleased to welcome the Government's consultation on regulating those settings that are currently unregulated, which includes supported lodgings.

Home for Good responded to the consultation in July 2021 and made the following points:

- We welcome the prospect of supported lodging schemes being supervised and regulated by Ofsted and would like to see a hybrid cascade approach, where all providers are Ofsted inspected as a matter of course, and each is accountable for the implementation of national standards at individual-level settings. This would ensure that a reasonable proportion of individual settings receive an inspection or monitoring visit without overburdening Ofsted or individual staff/hosts while ensuring accountability for standards lies ultimately with the relevant providers.
- We want regulation to be timely. Given older children may only stay in one of these settings for a two-year period or less while 16 and 17, inspecting providers less frequently than this could mean two cohorts passing through their accommodation between inspections. Inspections should take place at least every two years.
- The Department for Education should consider moving away from using the terminology of 'support' and 'care' and instead use language based around 'needs'. This would enable a greater number of categories to be created (high needs, medium needs, low needs, etc.), which would result in better matching to the wide range of provision that exists within the system.

Regulation is vital to ensure no child receives 'one star' care or accommodation, and it needs to be introduced sensitively and appropriately with all types of housing in mind, including supported lodgings. Since many supported lodgings schemes are small and lack support and wider infrastructure beyond their locality, the additional costs that regulation will bring could be detrimental in the short term until they can be worked into business models. Although it is clear regulation is coming, the ambiguity around the timescales for decisions and implementation of the consultation means it is challenging for organisations to anticipate the costs or if additional staff will be needed.

We are concerned that the general lack of understanding and awareness of supported lodgings might mean that implications of changes around regulation on supported lodgings provision may not be fully considered when government officials work through the consultation submissions and prepare their response. We have sought to outline in our submission the particularities of supported lodgings that must be considered when developing the national standards, in order that they allow supported lodgings to flourish as a provision.

**It is vital that Government considers the impact of regulation on supported lodgings when responding to their consultation to ensure young people receive high-quality accommodation and successful supported lodgings schemes remain viable. Officials should continue to dialogue with Home for Good and supported lodgings providers throughout this process to understand the implications of different regulatory options.**

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<sup>40</sup> Home for Good. 2020. *Five-Star Interim Report*. Available [online](#).



A photograph of two men sitting on a large rock outdoors. The man on the right is bald and smiling broadly, looking towards the man on the left. The man on the left has short dark hair and is looking back at the first man. They are both wearing light-colored t-shirts. The background is a blurred natural setting. The entire image has a blue tint.

CHAPTER 6

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# How can churches help meet the need?

**Home for Good works to inspire individuals and families from the Christian community to consider how they might be able to support vulnerable children.**

**With approximately 50,000 churches across the UK<sup>41</sup> full of individuals and families who are altruistically motivated to serve their communities, we believe that the Church is ideally placed to support Government, local authorities and providers in enabling the expansion of supported lodgings in three key ways:**

- Providing hundreds of families to become supported lodgings hosts and support vulnerable young people in their community.
- Welcoming and supporting families, both pastorally and practically, who decide to step up as hosts, enabling them to remain resilient even as they face challenges in supporting young people.
- Stepping up to be a community that welcomes young people in care, including those living in supported lodgings. Providing them with a community they can be part of and supporting them in finding opportunities to grow and develop.

Many churches are deeply committed to outworking their faith by engaging with the needs of their local community. As Home for Good, we have sought to inspire churches and Christians to recognise the needs of vulnerable children and have witnessed first-hand hundreds of churches step up to care for children through fostering and adoption. In addition to this, we've seen church communities wrap around families caring for vulnerable children in all sorts of practical and creative ways, doing what they can to enable foster and adoptive homes to be havens for children and young people.

Awareness of supported lodgings is very low within the Church, mirroring the awareness levels across our nation. Through polling undertaken by Savanta ComRes, **we have found that 67% of regular churchgoers have never heard of supported lodgings.**

Despite this, there is much openness among Christians to play their part for vulnerable teenagers, demonstrated through our polling which found that **half of all regular churchgoers would consider becoming a supported lodgings host**, which is double the level of openness expressed among the general population overall (49% compared to 25%).

Our work has highlighted that when the need for families to step forward is made clear, the Church wants to respond and often does so in incredible ways. A good example is the way in which churches in Bristol partnered with the local authority to address the shortage of foster carers due to the coronavirus pandemic, which is outlined on page 65.

<sup>41</sup> Brierley, Peter. 2021. UK Church Statistics No.4 2021 Edition. Tonbridge: ADBC Publishers.

Furthermore, out of a desire to serve their communities, a range of initiatives have been developed within the Church across England which support individuals and families struggling with a range of challenges, including debt, food insecurity, loneliness and unemployment. Added to this are the thousands of youth clubs run through and via local churches in many communities. Support services such as these could be of huge value to young people living within supported lodgings and even after as they move on to other accommodation. By recruiting individuals and families from communities where these services are based, hosts are able to signpost young people, as appropriate, to these services where they can access both practical help as well as receive relational support from individuals within the community.



## Case Study:

# Emergency Fostering Recruitment Campaign in Bristol

March 2020 - July 2021

With the start of lockdown in March 2020, Bristol City Council approached Home for Good to ask if churches in Bristol might be able to find temporary emergency foster carers. There was genuine concern that there would be many foster carers who may not be able to continue fostering due to the high proportion of the council's foster carers aged over 65 and their vulnerability to the most severe coronavirus symptoms. In addition, there was a concern that many more children would come into care due to the impact of lockdown on families.

Home for Good set about activating its networks of churches across the city of Bristol, putting a spotlight on the need and calling individuals and families to step forward.

As a result of the appeal, 64 households enquired with Home for Good about becoming an emergency foster carer. As of March 2021, Home for Good has made 23 referrals to Bristol City Council. 13 foster carers have been approved, with a further 17 prospective foster carers currently in the assessment process. Many who have been approved as emergency foster carers have gone on to mainstream fostering, and those who could only foster temporarily are considering how they can continue to do so.



**Home for Good's commitment to children and finding families has been outstanding and we are very grateful to the team for their support during this time.**

*Ann James, Director of Children, Families and Safer Communities at Bristol City Council.*



# Key Messages and Recommendations

## Our key messages from this report are as follows:

- 1** Supported lodgings is a valuable option for holistically meeting the needs of older teenagers in the care system, but it is under-recognised and therefore underutilised.
- 2** The Government has a role to play in enabling the expansion of supported lodgings and raising the quality and consistency of existing schemes.
- 3** The Church has a role to play in enabling the expansion of supported lodgings by providing well-supported hosts into the system, thereby enabling more young people to be given the option of a supported lodgings placement.

## Recommendations to Government:

- **Raise the profile and encourage the use of supported lodgings** for older teenagers, activating local authorities to commission services, members of the public to come forward as hosts, and best practice to be shared among practitioners.
- **Ensure the voices of young people who have spent time in supported lodgings are heard** and meaningfully consulted in all policy developments related to this provision. Home for Good would be pleased to support in facilitating this.
- **Standardise language and definitions** of supported lodgings, including working with the sector on a new and improved name.
- **Ensure that new regulation around supported accommodation for older children is conducive** to the flourishing of high-quality supported lodgings, consulting with providers and Home for Good throughout the process.
- **Fund a research project** to understand the impact of different payment levels to supported lodgings hosts across the country and provide guidance to local authorities with recommended payment levels.
- **Establish a new fund** for local authorities to set up supported lodgings schemes or expand existing schemes through innovative approaches.

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## Recommendations to the Review of Children's Social Care in England:

- Use the opportunity of the Review to **publicly recognise and encourage supported lodgings** and its potential to help meet the gap in provision for older teenagers.
- Work with Home for Good and others to fully **understand and remove the barriers to uplifting the use of supported lodgings**.
- **Gather and showcase best practice** examples of supported lodgings.
- **Hold Government to account** on its response and use of this vital provision.

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## Recommendations to local authorities:

*For those who do not yet run a supported lodgings scheme:*

- **Investigate the potential for commissioning this provision** or developing an in-house scheme, conducting conversations with existing providers.
- **Approach neighbouring authorities** to start a conversation about potential collaboration on supported lodgings and to learn from existing models.

*For those already running a supported lodgings scheme:*

- **Designate an officer** responsible for leading the scheme and have a clear point of contact for anyone inquiring about becoming a host.
- **Join Home for Good's National Supported Lodgings Network** to connect staff working on supported lodgings with other authorities and charities, in order to share best practice (e.g. on recruitment, retention, assessments, training and funding).
- **Consider widening the use** of supported lodgings to young people who have moved into other forms of independent or semi-independent living but may be struggling.
- **Give specialised training to staff** on supported lodgings and how it works and connect hosts with mentors, including other hosts.
- **Partner with community organisations such as Home for Good** to encourage more supported lodgings hosts to come forward.

# Key Messages and Recommendations (continued)

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## Recommendations to supported lodgings providers:

- **Join Home for Good's National Supported Lodgings Network** to connect with other practitioners, share best practice and learn about innovative approaches to supported lodgings being developed.
  - **Share this report with local authorities** you wish to start working with.
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## Recommendations to church leaders:

- **Partner with Home for Good** to raise awareness among churches across the UK about the existence of supported lodgings and the urgent need to find homes for older teenagers in care.
- Join Home for Good in **inspiring and educating individuals and families** about the opportunity to support a young person by becoming a supported lodgings host.
- Take a proactive approach to **supporting individuals and families** from within your congregation and community who step forward to care for teenagers through supported lodgings.

# Next steps

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**We want this report to inform the independent Review of Children's Social Care and be a catalyst for the expansion of supported lodgings to help meet the needs of older teenagers in care. This must happen urgently: the current system, with its shortage of high-quality options, is failing too many of our most vulnerable teenagers.**

Home for Good is committed to playing our part to see supported lodgings reach its potential and support many more young people. In taking this report forward we will:

- Continue to build connections with providers and local authorities and in conjunction with these organisations, **establish a National Supported Lodgings Network** to bring leaders together and share learning between schemes.
- Act as a bridge between supported lodgings providers, local authorities and central Government to ensure that **policy changes are conducive to the flourishing of supported lodgings.**
- Consult with the sector on the **development of a new name** that can be adopted at this pivotal moment as we seek to expand the use of supported lodgings.
- Embed supported lodgings as a core strand within our own model and **launch a project to begin inspiring individuals and families from churches across the UK** to step forward to become supported lodgings hosts.
- Establish a series of **virtual peer support groups** for those who go on to become supported lodgings hosts and are part of the Christian community.
- **Equip churches with the tools and resources** to support hosts and young people living in supported lodgings in their communities.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues in this report with Home for Good, please contact us at [advocacy@homeforgood.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@homeforgood.org.uk).



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