

Rent a Room Providers Handbook





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As Rent a Room providers with Leeds City Council you will need a range of information, guidance and advice to assist you with your role. This electronic handbook is designed to provide essential information covering a range of subject areas relating to the Rent a Room task.

We will send you additional or amended information as and when needed.

Emergency Duty Team Service & Out of Hours Support

Introduction

This guidance is for Rent a Room providers and relates to responsibilities for social care emergencies outside of office hours:

Monday to Thursday 5pm – 8am, Friday 4.30pm – Monday 8am and Bank Holidays

The EDT function has been separated into two teams – Adult Services (ASC) and Children Services (CS). The CS EDT will deal with children's services and will only be able to respond to emergencies that involve immediate harm child protection and safeguarding concerns, they will prioritise response and involvement to clear and immediate safeguarding and child protection referrals only.

Emailing CS EDT Service

It is recognised that Rent a Room providers may wish to notify an important placement issue out of hours e.g. a young person missing from placement. Under these circumstances Rent a Room providers can notify CS EDT by emailing:

[**childrensedt@leeds.gov.uk**](mailto:childrensedt@leeds.gov.uk)

Please remember to copy any notification emails to your Support Worker and the young person's Social Worker / PA so they have a record of your contact and they can follow this up with you during office hours. This is a notification service only where EDT will log notifications and will only respond if they feel the email warrants clarification or further action.

The Leeds Foster Carer Association (LFCA) provide out of hours support to approved foster carers and are extended this offer of support to Rent a Room Providers. Their details are:

website: www.lfcauk.org support line: 07505091219

membership and general enquiries: (0113) 2935591 or

email: support@lfcauk.org

Rent a Room Provider Induction Checklist

Factfile/Handbook	
Documents to prioritise: Safe Care/ H & S	
Rent a Room Policy	
Bank details form	
I.D Badge pictures	
Equipment requirements	
Training Calendar	
Support Group Calendar	
Visit Frequency (inc unannounced)	

Signed (SWA):

Signed (Rent a Room Provider):

Date:

HMRC Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rent-a-room-for-traders-hs223-self-assessment-helpsheet/dgh>

HS223 Rent a Room Scheme (2016)

Updated 17 June 2016

The Rent a Room Scheme allows owner occupiers and tenants to receive tax-free rental income if you provide furnished accommodation in your only or main home.

For the tax year 2015 to 2016, the annual Rent a Room limit is £4,250. This reduces to £2,125 if someone else receives income from letting accommodation in the same property, such as a joint owner. The limit is the same even if you let accommodation for less than 12 months.

From 2016 to 2017 tax year, the annual Rent a Room limit has increased. For more details see [Rent a room in your home](#).

When you can use the scheme

You can use the Rent a Room Scheme if:

- you let a furnished room to a lodger
- your letting activity amounts to a trade, for example, if you run a guest house or bed and breakfast business, or provide services, such as meals and cleaning

When you can't use the scheme

You can't use the Rent a Room Scheme if the accommodation is:

- not part of your main home when you let it
- not furnished
- used as an office or for any business - you can use the scheme if your lodger works in your home in the evening or at weekends or is a student who is provided with study facilities
- in your UK home and is let while you live abroad

Rent a Room Scheme

If your gross receipts from letting are not more than the Rent a Room limit of £4,250 (or £2,125), you don't pay tax on your profit. If they are more than the limit, you may still be able to benefit under the Rent a Room Scheme.

Your gross receipts include:

- rental income (before expenses)
- any amounts you receive for meals, goods and services, such as cleaning or laundry
- any 'balancing charges'
-

You usually count your gross receipts for a tax year - that is, from 6 April one year to 5 April the next.

If your letting activity amounts to a trade, you count your gross receipts for your basis period. [How to calculate your taxable profits: HS222 Self Assessment helpsheet](#) provides more information.

If your gross receipts are less than the Rent a Room limit

If your gross receipts are less than £4,250 (or £2,125), you are automatically exempt from tax on that income.

If you have made a loss, however, it may be better for you to pay tax in the normal way - that is, on your receipts less expenses. You will need to tell HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) that you want to do this within the time limit.

If your gross receipts are more than the Rent a Room limit

If your gross receipts are more than £4,250 (or £2,125), you can choose how you want to work out your tax:

Method A

You pay tax on your actual profit - your total receipts less any expenses and capital allowances.

Method B

You pay tax on your gross receipts over the Rent a Room limit - that is, your gross receipts minus £4,250 (or £2,125). You cannot deduct any expenses or capital allowances if you choose this method.

HMRC will automatically use your actual profit (Method A) to work out your tax.

If you want to pay tax using Method B, you need to tell HMRC within the time limit. You will continue to pay tax on your gross receipts over the Rent a Room limit until you tell HMRC that you want to change back to paying tax on your actual profit (Method A).

If you pay tax using Method B, this automatically stops if your rental income drops below the £4,250 (or £2,125) limit.

Changing the way you pay tax on your rental income

You can change between each method from year to year. You need to decide which method is best for you and tell HMRC within the time limit each time you want to make a change.

Example

Chris rents out a room in his own home. The rent is £150 a week plus contributions to heating and light. His gross receipts for 6 April 2015 to 5 April 2016 are £8,000 (£7,800 rent plus £200 for the heating and light).

Chris has expenses of £4,500:

- if Chris uses his actual profit (Method A), he pays tax on £3,500 (£8,000 minus £4,500)
- If Chris uses his gross receipts over the Rent a Room limit (Method B), he pays tax on £3,750 (£8,000 minus £4,250)

It is better for Chris to pay tax on his actual profit, using Method A. If Chris had previously asked to pay tax using Method B, he will need to tell HMRC that he wants to change back to paying tax on his actual profit (Method A).

If you move home during the year

If you rent out a room in both your old and new home, you need to add together the total rent from the old and new home that you received for the year. If your total gross receipts are below £4,250 (or £2,125), you don't pay tax on your lettings.

Time limit

You must let HMRC know by 31 January following the end of the tax year if:

- you don't want to use the Rent a Room Scheme when your receipts are below £4,250 (or £2,125), for example, if you want to claim losses
- you want to start or stop paying tax on your gross receipts over the Rent a Room limit (Method B)

Example

Greg runs a small bed and breakfast business. A few years ago, he told HMRC that he wanted to pay tax on his gross receipts over the Rent a Room limit (Method B). For the tax year ending 5 April 2016, Greg has worked out that if he paid tax on his actual profit (using Method A) then he'd pay less tax. He must let HMRC know that he wants to use Method A by 31 January 2017.

Extending the time limit

You can only extend the time limit in certain circumstances. For example, if you were seriously ill and it was impossible for you to deal with your tax affairs.

Losses

Creating a loss

If you use the Rent a Room Scheme because your gross receipts are exempt from tax (under £4,250, or £2,150) or you pay tax using Method B, you cannot create a loss.

If you want to create a loss, you must tell HMRC that you want to pay tax on your income less expenses (Method A).

Using losses

If you have made a loss, you can use them against your rental profits in future years to reduce the tax you have to pay. You can also use them against your gross receipts over £4,250 (or £2,125) if you pay tax using Method B.

If your letting activity amounts to a trade, you can use your losses in other ways. [Losses: HS227 Self Assessment helpsheet](#) provides more information.

Good Practice Guide:

Ending a Placement

Young people placed with rent a room providers may have already experienced multiple and / or unplanned moves, often in sudden, abrupt or chaotic ways.

It is our intention that rent a room providers through support, training and an appreciation of their role are able to support these young people to settle into their placements and when the time comes to help them move on in a planned way.

We consider that it is good practice that if the placement needs to end that the young person is prepared and given enough notice and information to be able to adjust to this new set of circumstances.

Generally, 28 days' notice is considered a reasonable amount of time but this is not a hard and fast rule and consideration should be given to the circumstances of why the young person is leaving the accommodation.

Whilst placements do end for very good reasons and for reasons that cannot and maybe should not be prevented, when there are issues within a placement that can be resolved we endeavour to provide support to maintain placements. Our goal is to reduce young people having multiple placements where possible. Therefore communication between rent a room providers and their support worker is encouraged and any issues that arise should be discussed at an early stage to prevent them becoming bigger issues in the future.

Health and Safety Guidance for Rent a Room providers

Introduction

The Fostering Service needs to be satisfied that Rent a Room providers household accommodation is safe and healthy. The following guidance is provided to highlight some common areas of concern regarding household health and safety and to assist Rent a Room providers in offering an appropriate safe environment for young people.

Accidents and Risks, some facts:

- More accidents happen when people are in a hurry, under stress, or in unfamiliar surroundings.
- Your risk of an accident at home increases in the first few weeks following a major change in your life. This includes when a child / young person either comes to stay with you or leaves your home.
- Collisions with a person or object are the second most common type of accidental home injury and the only one where the injury rates are approximately the same for children / young people of all ages.
- Burns and scalds are the third most common type of home injury. Burns and scalds particularly affect babies and very young children, with scalds from hot drinks being the most common cause.

Leeds City Council require that the Rent a Room providers home and immediate environment are free of avoidable hazards that might expose a young person to risk of injury or harm.

The Fostering Social Worker / Social Work Assistant completing your assessment will have completed a health and safety assessment with you as part of this process.. It may be necessary to update the assessment at other times e.g. if you move house or carry out major structural works or other changes to your existing property, or where there are major changes to the immediate environment surrounding your home.

Safety in the home

There are a number of precautions which should be taken to ensure the safety of all members of your household. The following is a basic guide:

Fire precautions:

- Install a smoke alarm on each floor of your home.

- The West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue service can undertake fire safety checks, offer a range of advice and can install smoke alarms free of charge.
- Where homes have attic bedrooms or only one exit, it is particularly important that a fire safety check is arranged.
- Exit routes should always be kept clear of prams, toys and other obstacles.
- When exit doors are locked (e.g. at night), keys must be easily accessible.
- Ensure that all members of the household know how to dial 999 and how to escape in the event of a fire.
- Ensure that everybody knows what to do if trapped by a fire: go into a room, shut the door, put a blanket at the bottom of the door and call for help through the window.
- Run through your fire escape plan regularly.
- Do not attempt to fight the fire yourself unless it can be dealt with quickly and at no personal risk.
- Ensure that fixed guards protect fires.
- Store spare gas cylinders for heaters out of doors.
- Do not use paraffin heaters or free standing fires.
- A cooker guard should be fitted if caring for small children and flexes to electrical appliances should be kept short and out of the reach of children.
- The Fire Service recommend that all households should have a British Standard (Kite Marked) fire blanket readily available.

Carbon Monoxide:

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas that is produced when any fossil fuel such as gas, coal, oil or wood is burnt without enough oxygen. You can't see it, smell it or taste it so you don't know when it is present.

A build-up of Carbon Monoxide can be extremely dangerous and can cause a variety of symptoms, or even death. It is preferable that Rent a Room providers have a CO detector fitted.

Gardens and outside play:

- Garden space and fences should be maintained in a safe condition and garden exits secured.
- Garden equipment and insecticides should be locked away when not in use.
- Garages and garden sheds often contain sharp tools or dangerous chemicals and should be sound and secure.
- Extreme caution must be exercised when using barbecues. These should never be left unattended.

Car Safety

Cars should be well maintained, regularly serviced, adequately insured, and covered by a current MOT certificate if the age of the car requires it. Car keys should not be accessible to young people and should always be stored safely and securely.

General Safety in the household

- Matches, lighters and sharp knives should be stored safely.
- Medicines, tablets and alcohol should also be securely.

First aid

Any accident or injury involving a young person must be reported as soon as possible to the young person's Social Worker / PA and your Support Worker, or the Emergency Duty Team if it occurs outside office hours.

It is advisable to keep a small First Aid box

Household and personal hygiene

There is an expectation that the household cleanliness is of an acceptable standard. Good hygiene standards prevent the spread of illness and infection.

A range of minor and major infections can be transmitted via blood and body fluids. Hygiene standards should be maintained for all young people eg cuts and sores on the hands should be kept covered with waterproof, adhesive dressings. Hands need to be washed thoroughly before and after carrying out first aid procedures or after contact with bodily fluids. Disposable gloves should be used when carrying out first aid procedures.

Good hand-washing is one of the easiest and best ways of preventing cross-infection. This practice should be followed by responsible adults, encouraging children and young people to do the same.

Accommodation, bedroom space and sharing

Perhaps the most obvious consideration when assessing the appropriateness of accommodation is the proposed sleeping arrangements for young people. All young people must have their own bed and the bedroom should be large enough to accommodate sufficient storage for the young person's personal possessions. It should also be large enough for the young person to retreat for some private time.

Household and motor insurance

Foster carers must ensure that they have adequate household and motor insurance and notify their insurers that they are Rent a Room providers.

Alcohol and Smoking

It is expected that Rent a Room providers alcohol intake does not exceed currently recommended safety limits of no more than 21 units of alcohol per week (and no more than four units in any one day) for men, and no more than 14 units of alcohol per week (and no more than three units in any one day) for women. One unit is equivalent of half a pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider, a small glass of wine or single pub measure of spirits.

Providers are expected to understand their responsibility for modelling the sensible use of alcohol at all times to children and young people.

Children and young people need support to be healthy and stay healthy. Rent a room providers should offer an environment that encourages improvements in the health and wellbeing of young people in their care.

Active Smoking:

About 500 children start smoking in the UK every day. Many children have their first cigarette at home and in one study, 22% of children said that they had first smoked with their parent figures. Children are twice as likely to smoke if their parent figures do. In contrast, children are seven times less at risk of smoking than their peers if their parent figures disapprove

Advice for Rent a Room providers who smoke:

- As a Rent a Room provider you are expected to have smoke detectors fitted
- Never smoke around children / young people or permit others to do so
- Keep your home smoke free. Smoke lingers in the air, so children / young people may be exposed to it even if they are not around whilst you are smoking.
- If you smoke, do so outside.
- Be mindful of safety issues e.g. keep all matches, lighters, cigarettes and tobacco products out of children's reach

Guidelines for Rent a room providers of young people who smoke:

Rent a Room providers are encouraged to have house rules which actively discourage smoking however, some young people do smoke. It may be helpful to have a house rule of "no smoking indoors". This may restrict smoking without making it a source of immediate conflict. If house rules on smoking exist then they must apply to everyone including visitors.

Pets

Pets can be important members of the household and can bring benefits for young people who grow up with them. There are however a number of health risks associated with household pets. They can also injure and cause emotional distress to children / young people unfamiliar with animals or who have had negative experiences of them.

Children / young people and animals can be unpredictable. Household pets are expected to be well looked after and children should be taught to behave responsibly towards animals.

Pets' housing, sleeping and toileting arrangements, routine and training must be carefully considered, and good hygiene standards observed. Rent a room providers need to be able to demonstrate that they have measures in place for the welfare of all concerned.

Television / Video viewing and content

Establishing house rules / guidance about viewing can be helpful here.

Be alert to the content young people are watching.

Internet and Social Media

Whether the young people in your care are experienced computer users or not they may need your involvement, oversight and guidance so that you can make sure their experience of the internet is educational and enjoyable while safeguarding them from potential risk.

Rent a Room providers need to be aware about the possible hazards and issues and how to deal with them, particularly considering how vulnerable young people can be in a 'digital world'.

For detailed advice on internet and social media e-safety, please refer to the *Social Networking Guidance and Social Media* document.

The following tips for providers are helpful in keeping young people safe:

- Regularly discuss the kind of websites that your young person visits.
- Advise young people to set their Social Network settings to private so that only chosen people can see who they are, their pictures and their updates
- Discuss what happens when images are shared online – remember, there is no control over where they go. Just because a photo is deleted on a mobile

- phone or social networking site doesn't mean it isn't stored somewhere else on the internet
- Reinforce the message that online relationships are no different from real world relationships. Young people should treat people online with the same respect as they would 'face to face' – so if you wouldn't say it, then don't send it

(Fostering Network 'Fostering in a Digital World' 2013)

Updated: February 2017

Recording Form - Incident / Accident in Rent a Room accommodation

Name of Rent a Room provider	
Address	
Supervising Social Worker	
Young person's Name	
Young person's Social Worker / PA	

Type of Recording (please tick)

Accident	
Incident	

Date of Incident / Accident:	
Time of Incident /	

Accident	
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Where did incident / accident take place?

Please give description of incident / accident (use continuation sheet if necessary)

Did the incident / accident require physical intervention? Yes [] No []

If yes, please describe what happened and if use of restraint was involved:

Did the incident / accident result in any injury to you or the young person?

Yes [] No []

If yes, please detail:

Did the incident / accident result in seeking medical advice? Yes [] No []

If yes, please detail:

Did anyone witness the incident / accident? Yes [] No []

If Yes, please give details / name / address etc.:

Were the Police called in regards to the incident / accident? Yes [] No []

If Yes, please give details:

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Signatures

Signed – Rent a Room provider	
Date	
Signed – Young Person	
Date	

What to do with this form:

Rent a Room provider: Please make this form/information available to your SSW as soon as possible – whether via email or telephone so it can be recorded by your SSW.

Rent a Room – Living Together Agreement

*If a young person is looked after aged 16/17 a Placement Plan will also be needed.

This document is an agreement between the Rent a Room Provider and the Young Person. It should be discussed agreed and signed at a pre-placement planning meeting. It contains three main areas: a) responsibilities of the parties to the agreement b) house rules for this placement c) an agreed Support Plan for the young person and how this is to be achieved.

Signed copies of this document should be retained by all parties.

Name of Young Person:

Name of Rent a Room Provider/s:
.....

Address: Postcode:
.....

The above named young person will become an Excluded Licensee resident at the above

address as from:.....

(An Excluded Licensee is excluded from the Protection from Eviction Act 1977)

1. Responsibilities of the Young Person:

- Engage in the support detailed in the Support Plan (below) in order to develop my independence skills
- Behave in a reasonable way, showing respect for my Rent a Room Provider, their property, neighbours and the local community
- Keep to any house rules set out in this agreement
- Pay any rent in full on the day it is due and as agreed with my Rent a Room Provider
- Maintain my room, furnishings and fittings in good order
- Contact my Personal Advisor / Social Worker if I would like to change this agreement or make a complaint
- Pay for any goods stolen or damaged by myself

2. Responsibilities of the Rent a Room Provider:

- **Provide one single fully furnished room** to be paid for by the Young Person via Earnings / Housing Benefit or by Leeds City Council Social Work Service (if under 18 yrs.)
- Provide heating, hot water lighting, food and support
- Inform the Personal Advisor / Social Worker and Housing Benefit Department if the young person ceases to reside at the accommodation in order to prevent overpayment of benefits
- Respect confidentiality at all times regarding personal details of the young person
- Ensure the accommodation is of a good standard and allow annual household health and safety checks to be carried out
- Inform the personal advisor / social worker as soon as possible of any significant incidents and if the placement is likely to be disrupted / end prematurely
- Ensure relevant staff are made aware if the young person is absent / missing from placement
- Ensure (in conjunction with Social Work staff) an appropriate Safe Care / Safeguarding plan is in place to manage any impact on other / younger children in the household
- Provide support (as detailed below in the Support Plan) in preparation for the young persons' independence
- Provide healthy and balanced meals.

3. Responsibilities of Leeds City Council Social Work Service:

- Provide assistance when fixing a suitable rent in line with local Housing Allowance Rates
 - Inform the Rent a Room provider of any likely risks and advise on risk management and safe care
 - Advise and assist the Young Person with Housing Benefit claims
 - Advise and assist the Young Person with any other benefit claims and financial matters in order to maximise income
 - Advise and assist the Young Person with any applications for moving on to other accommodation
 - Advise and suggest house rules (in addition or variance to below)
 - Visit at least every 8 weeks; with additional support available via email and/or telephone
 - Review the placement as part of the young persons' Transitions / Pathway Plan
-

4. House Rules (Addition to the Safer Caring Policy):

- 1: All parties must respect privacy and not enter each other's rooms without permission
- 2: The Young Person will be encouraged to inform the Rent a Room Provider if staying away overnight / weekends etc. and inform them of their whereabouts
- 3: The Young Person must discuss and agree with the Rent a Room Provider any visitors to the household
- 4: The Young Person should not be registering mobile phone contracts / credit cards / loan agreements at the providers address
- 5: The Supported Lodgings Provider and Young Person will discuss and agree household rules for smoking and alcohol consumption (18 plus)

Any other agreed rules for this household please detail below:

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Support Plan:

	Tasks:	Details of support to be provided:
1	Basic Living Skills: Cooking / Washing / Ironing etc.	

2	Budgeting / Money Management	
3	Employment / Education / Training	
4	Filling in forms / dealing with letters / correspondence, email	

5	Help with accessing other services / organisations / activities	
6	Developing Social Skills / Behaviour management	
7	Friends/family Contact	

8	Supervision / Monitoring of Health & Well Being	
9	'Moving On' arrangements	
10	Other (please add):	

Social Media Information

Facebook



The Global Social Media Impact Study 2013 found that teens have “lost interest” for Facebook — in part because their parents and other adults have taken over the domain and because their peers engage in too much “drama” on the site. But Facebook still remains the top social media site among young people, who say that their peers continue to stay on the site so they don’t miss anything happening there. Your child may keep a profile on Facebook, but may be much more active on newer platforms.



Twitter

Twitter basically anyone to communicate with anyone with messages of 140 characters or less. Although heavily used worldwide for reputable purposes, it shares its platform with people who spam, troll, abuse, bully and share inappropriate images and videos. It also allows for private messaging and has large degree of anonymity. It is popular with teenagers due to the ability to follow friends and people in the media in the same stream. Due to its popularity and mainstream uses, it is closely integrated into many mobile platforms, often pre-installed on new device.



Ask.fm

This app allows users to interact in a question-and-answer format — with friends, peers, and anonymous users alike. The app is rated ages 13+ and some young people have used the app for hurtful cyberbullying that has been linked to suicides. Some Derbyshire schools have sent home letters calling for students to stop using ask.fm because of its use in several cyberbullying incidents leading to attempted suicides, and its loose regulation and lack of monitoring. The site added a button where users can report abuse after nationwide pressure, but some parents feel it’s too little, too late.



Instagram

Facebook owns this hugely popular photo-sharing site, so you may be more familiar with it than with other photo-sharing apps. Users can add cool filters or create collages of their photos and share them across Facebook and other social media platforms. The app is rated 13+ and may be slightly tamer than Tumblr, but users can still find mature or inappropriate content and comments throughout the app (*there is a way to flag inappropriate content for review*). “Trolls” — or people making vicious, usually anonymous comments — are common. A user can change the

settings to block their location or certain followers, but many users are casual about their settings, connecting with people they don't know well or at all.



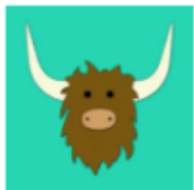
Tumblr

Many children and young teens are also active on this 17+ photo-sharing app. It can also be used for sharing videos and chatting. Users can easily access pornographic, violent, and inappropriate content. It should also be noted that users need to jump through hoops to set up privacy settings — and until then, all of a user's photo and content is public for all to see. Mental health experts say that Tumblr can be damaging to adolescents' mental health because it tends to glorify self-harm and eating disorders.



MySpace

MySpace was the predecessor to Facebook and numbers of subscribers have reduced dramatically since its heyday, but now teens are heading back to this network and it's a little more dangerous now that all of their parents are gone. If your child has a profile on MySpace then it's important to check what the privacy settings are and who has access to the information.



Yik Yak

The producers of Yik Yak call it “the anonymous social wall for anything and everything.” All users are anonymous (*registration requires no personal information, other than a user's location*), and their posts are called “Yaks” and show up in a live feed for other users — or “Yakkers” — in their area. The app's content-generation and moderation is entirely in the hands of its users (*who can “vote” posts up or down in the news feed; after two “down” votes, a Yak disappears*). The app is rated ages 17+ and targets college students, who can use it to spread the word about events or share their thoughts. But younger users are easily getting their hands on the app and using it to post hurtful comments and rumours about their peers.



Tinder

Tinder's developers describe the app as “the fun way to connect with new and interesting people around you.” But it's mainly used as a dating tool or an anonymous meet locator by adults, college students, and even younger children. The app is rated ages 17+ but Tinder's privacy policy allows teens as young as 13 to register (*the app connects with Facebook — which is also technically for ages 13+ — to pull in photos for users' Tinder profiles*). Tinder helps people find others in their geographic location and allows users to view

each other's' photos and start instant messaging once both people have "liked" one another. The geo-location features and anonymous nature of the app puts young people at risk for catfishing, sexual harassment, stalking, and worse.



Kik Messenger

Kik is a mobile app that people can use to text with friends at high speed and with more of a "face-to-face feel" than regular texting (users' profile pictures appear in a little bubble next to their text, and they can quickly text photos, sketches, or even pre-designed greeting cards to individuals or groups). The app is rated ages 17+, but there is no age verification so anyone can download it. Like some other instant messenger apps, Kik allows your child to connect with others using just a username (*rather than texting from their phone number*). Reviews in the App Store and Google Play store reveal that many people use Kik to meet strangers or for sexting.



Voxer

This walkie-talkie PTT (*push-to-talk*) app allows users to quickly exchange short voice messages. They can have chats going on with multiple people at a time and just have to tap the play button to hear any messages they receive. Although it largely has an adult following, it's becoming popular among teens who enjoy its hybrid style of texting and talking. Hurtful messages from cyberbullies can be even more biting when they're spoken and can be played repeatedly. Surprisingly, the app is rated ages 4+ in the App Store.



Snapchat

Snapchat is an app that allows users to send photos and videos that disappear from view within 10 seconds after they're received. It's rated ages 12+. Some young people are using the app to send risqué pics because they believe the images can't be saved and circulated. But it turns out that Snapchat pics don't completely disappear from a device, users can take a screenshot before an image vanishes in the app and other apps link to the Snapchat account and saves the pictures before it's opened in Snapchat.

Poke



Poke is Facebook's app that, similar to Snapchat, promises that photos sent will "self-destruct" within seconds after they're received. While Poke isn't nearly as popular as Snapchat, it is still gaining young users who can use it for sexting. Also like Snapchat, the images sent via Poke can be saved or viewed with certain workarounds. The App store rates it ages 4+ (but it is connected to Facebook, which is a 13+ site).



Vine

Vine is Twitter's mobile app that allows users to shoot and share short loops of video (*6 seconds or less*). It's rated 17+, but children and teens are still downloading it. As with any multimedia app, the content on Vine covers the spectrum. *"With the most basic creative searching, young people can find nudity, sex, drug use, offensive language, hardcore sexuality, and more,"* *"While there are plenty of fun videos, even adults might be shocked at some of the things they find."*



Whisper

This 17+ app's motto is: "Share Secrets, Express Yourself, Meet New People." Whisper lets users set up anonymous accounts to make their messages or confessions overlap an image or graphic (similar to e-postcards), which other users can then "like," share, or comment on. While it allows for creative expression, it can also take overly personal content viral. The app also shows a user's location. Although the app is geared toward older teens and adults, younger children are finding their way to it and there are reports of children being groomed and exploited.



Shots of Me

Justin Bieber has invested in this 12+ "selfie-only" photo-sharing app in part because he was attracted to its "anti-trolling" aspect; it does not have a comment section under photos posted on the app. Instead of a public comment area, the app has a direct-messaging feature where users can only send private messages to one another. The anti-trolling feature might also help ward off cyberbullying among teens who like to put meanness on display (but teens could still be nasty via private message). The app does show a user's location and how long ago a photo was added unless those features are managed in the app's settings. Shots of Me is currently available only for Apple devices.



Omegle

Omegle is an app for chatting with "random strangers." When you open Omega, it chooses a random stranger for you to chat with. After meeting the stranger you can choose to keep talking or find someone else. Omegle can be used by adults to sexually exploit young people.



Chatroulette

Chatroulette is an online chat website that pairs random people from around the world together for webcam-based conversations. Visitors to the website begin an online chat (text, audio, and video) with another visitor. At any point, either user may leave the current chat by initiating another random connection. There are many chatroulette alternative sites; Bazoocam, FunYo, Roulettechat, Quierochat, Dirtyroulette, Chatpig, Chatxroulette, Live Cam4, Manroulette, Tynychat, Facebuzz, Chatrad, Flipchat, Gaypage & Cam Girls, all child participation should be monitored.



Skype

13+, Skype is a computer programme and app, which lets you make audio and video calls to other users around the world. You can also send instant messages. The top 3 concerns: sexual content, strangers talking to you, and webcam risks. The top two reasons why children and young people liked Skype were: it's free, and it is great for socialising with friends and family.



Facetime

Facetime is Apple's video (& audio) calling app that comes built into all Apple devices, iPhones, iPads, iPod Touches and Macs. It is effectively the same as Skype, and is free between Apple devices. Video calls can be made between any two people that know each other's Apple ID (email or phone number). Therefore it is vital that young people only video call people they know and trust.



OovoO

13+, ooVoo is a video chat app. It lets you make video calls, voice calls and send texts to friends and family. You can also start a group video chat with up to 12 people. The default privacy settings are set to 'public', so you can talk to people you don't know, but they can be changed so that you can just talk to your friends. The top 3 concerns were: sexual content, talking to strangers and fake accounts. However the top reason why children and young people liked ooVoo was talking to random people.



iMessage

iMessage is Apple's instant messaging app that comes built into all Apple devices, iPhones, iPads, iPod Touches and Macs. It is effectively the same as texting, and is free between Apple devices. As with any instant messaging service students can send text, images and videos to people. And these can be forwarded on to other people. Young people can send and receive inappropriate images. They can also send and receive messages that bully others.



Facebook messenger

13+, Facebook Messenger is an app which allows users to communicate with their friends from either their Facebook account, or their phonebook. Users can instant message, create group chats, share photos and videos, record voice messages, have live video chats, or simply talk to their friends and family. The top 3 concerns are: talking to strangers, fake accounts, and lack of control over personal information.



Blackberry messenger (BBM)

BlackBerry's BBM is an instant messaging app. You have your own unique 4 digit PIN and other people can only add you as a contact using this. As well as instant messaging, you can have group chats, voice calls and share voice notes and pictures.



Whatsapp

16+, Whatsapp is an instant messaging app, which lets you send messages, images and videos to friends. You can have one to one and group conversations. It's considered young people's first choice app to send personal messages. The top concerns are: inappropriate content and talking to strangers. Young people like it, because it's free for anywhere in the world with data/internet access.



Moshi Monsters

13+ although popular for primary school age. Moshi Monsters is an online game where you can adopt and look after a pet monster. You can use your pet monster to make your way through different challenges and games. The top concerns are: talking to strangers and bullying.



MovieStar Planet

8+, MovieStarPlanet is an online game. You can create a famous movie star character to talk to others in the chat room, play games and watch videos. The top 3 concerns are: talking to strangers, sexual content and hacking.

For more information most of these apps can be found at:

<http://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

<http://grindlefordprimaryschool.co.uk/e-safety/popular-apps/>

Safe Care Plan – Foster Carer Household

Introduction

We need our looked after children to enjoy and experience as 'normal' a family life as possible and we want our foster carers to enjoy the rewards of fostering. But, and as you will recall from your preparation and assessment, fostering can sometimes be a 'Risky Business', therefore every foster carer household needs a Safe Care Plan.

The Local Authority expects foster carers to care for looked after children 'as their own' but looking after other people's children is not quite the same - it comes with additional responsibilities, restrictions and risks. The aim of a Safe Care plan is to protect foster carers, placed children and friends and family members from these risks.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to eliminate all risks completely. We must be 'realistic and proportionate' in our approach. Foster carers need to identify as many potential areas of risk as possible and then develop strategies in order to avoid, minimise and manage these. This Safe Care Plan template can help you formulate a plan suitable for your household and for children who are placed with you.

This Safe Care Plan:

- **requires completing in full before your first placement**
- **requires amending / updating when you are asked to consider and agree to a new placement**
- **needs revising when a specific child's information should cause you to consider if any changes are necessary**
- **needs revising if your household composition or circumstances change in any way**
- **should be reviewed at least annually with your Supervising Social Worker**

The Fostering Service has a duty to support its foster carers and this support will include regular supervision and professional development through training relevant to the tasks you are undertaking. Your Supervising Social Worker (SSW) must support and guide your development and will offer general advice on fostering and procedural matters but also enable your access to more specialist advice and support where necessary.

Equally, foster carers have a responsibility to take advantage the support and advice available to them including Supervisory Visits; Foster Carer Reviews; Support Groups and other groups and organisations offering support including the Leeds Foster Carer Association (LFCA) and Fostering Network membership. There is a core training course 'Safer Caring' provided, and a range of other mandatory and core training available which reference Safe Care and Safe Care planning.

YOUR SAFE CARE PLAN TEMPLATE

1. Names you use

Please think about what the children should call you; what feels right and comfortable for you and for them. We don't want them to be confused about relationships ...eg. you are not their 'Mum / Dad'. Also, there may be cultural or other reasons why a child shouldn't call adults by their first names ... a title such as 'aunty' for instance might work in those situations

2. Showing affection

All children need nurturing but this needs to be done in a way that is comfortable for them and for you and in ways that are not going to be misinterpreted by the child. Everyone needs kind and appropriate physical affection but no one should touch another's body without permission. Play fighting, wrestling etc can be a cover for abuse and easily misinterpreted, so is not appropriate. Think how you will meet their emotional needs and how you will help them feel safe and cared for.

3. Secrets

Please think about how you will promote open and appropriate communication with children you look after. Remember that they may previously have been pressurised into keeping 'secrets' by an abuser. Please remember that 'surprises' may also be difficult for some children to manage.

4. Language and Behaviour management

Consider how you will deal with offensive / inappropriate language and challenging behaviours. Remember that Leeds has a 'no smacking' policy and does not support punitive punishment based models of behaviour management or the physical restraint of children. We need to support and encourage the development of appropriate, safe behaviours in placed children.

(Nb. a number of training courses cover behaviour management strategies. Any form of 'incident' must be recorded and reported on an Incident / Accident report form. You may also wish to discuss with your SSW whether an *Individual Crisis Management Plan* is required)

5. The way you dress

Adults, children and young people should be appropriately clothed at all times. Think how you need to promote and actively achieve this and how you would need to explain 'appropriate dress' to a child or young person.

6. Education about Sex and Sexuality

Good and clear age appropriate sex education is important for all the family. Consider how you express and 'model' your intimate relationships and how this might affect or impact on the children you foster. Also consider who might be the most appropriate person to talk about sex and sexuality with a child / young person and where you might get further advice and support if needed.

7. In the Bathroom

Consider everyone's privacy and who is the most appropriate person to attend to the personal and intimate care needs of children. Are any of your household members more or less suited to this role for any child or for a specific child?

8. Bedrooms (Children)

Leeds does not generally support bedroom sharing on the grounds that everyone needs their own space and privacy. It might be a house rule that no-one enters another person's bedroom without knocking and you may also need to consider whether it is safer to have 'story time' in living rooms rather than in the child's bedroom. Also, think about arrangements when you are away from the household (eg on holiday) and if extra vigilance is required given changed bedroom arrangements e.g caravans / holiday accommodation etc.

(Any room sharing must be fully assessed as appropriate - taking into account children's ages, gender, profiles, behaviour and past experiences – these need to be authorised by your SSW's Team Manager)

9. Bedrooms (Foster Carers)

Consider your own privacy needs and how might you support a child/young person to respect the privacy of others in the household. Does your bedroom need to be out of bounds at all times or might it be okay for children to come into your bedroom at some agreed times?

10. Children's Play

Consider where it is safe for children to play. Are there potential problems with children playing unsupervised or behind closed doors? Consider how you will promote healthy / safe play.

11. Taking Photographs

Do you need permission? Where should you not take photos? Are there any other considerations – e.g. some children may have been photographed in negative circumstances previously. Consider how you will assist the child's needs to understand their life story and keep positive photographic memories. Looked after children's photos should never be published on Facebook or similar social media.

12. Alcohol

Always ensure general health & safety has been considered regarding alcohol storage. Also consider that some children may have had difficult previous experiences of parents/carers use of alcohol/substances and may have continuing fears about a carers use of them.

13. Medication

Who uses what and where is it kept? Is it prescription or 'over the counter?'
Record the administration of any medication to children (refer to Medication Policy for guidance).

14. Use of TV, computers, mobile / smart phones, social media and the internet

If children have access to a TV and / or Computer in their own room, how will you monitor age appropriate tv viewing and computer use, particularly the internet?
Given the range of phones and other devices available, children and young people need support and guidance on using them safely and securely, particularly internet and social media use e.g. Facebook. How might you assist them to obtain maximum benefit whilst minimising any risk to their well-being?

SEE DIGITAL FAMILY AGREEMENT.

(Technology is developing rapidly and is often an area of concern for carers. More detailed guidance on Safe Social Networking is available for carers and professionals. You may also want to consider using the Delegated Authority form to record any decisions made)

15. Use of cars / transport

The Department expects all foster carers to use appropriate car seats and restraints when transporting children (as per Car Seat Safety Regulation 2006). These are provided as essential fostering equipment but you will also need to consider whether any individual driver should travel alone with a specific child and/or where any child should sit in relation to the driver:

16. When you go out / babysitting arrangements

Foster Carers have delegated authority to decide who should babysit for them but it is important to choose a responsible adult to maximise Safe Caring as you are ultimately responsible for the child. Who do you have to babysit when you go out? How will you help them to understand your Safe Caring principles in order to keep everyone safe without compromising Confidentiality?

17. Visitors to your home

Who visits your home – adults and children? How do you greet / say goodbye to family and friends? Do friends or family sleepover and where will they sleep and how will fostering impact on this?

Will a looked after child be able to have visitors – to play, to tea, to stay overnight? How might this be managed by you for maximum benefit with minimum risk? Consider whether you have delegated authority to make this decision or whether you need to talk to the child's social worker.

18. Smoking

The Department has a stated aspiration for all fostering households to become smoke free and employs a No Smoking policy for those foster carers supporting placed children under five years of age. If you do smoke, do you allow anyone else to smoke in your house or around children? If so, what might you need to do differently?

Notes:

- Keep this completed Safe Care plan in your Child's Information file
 - You may be asked to share or discuss this plan with the child's social worker
 - This plan is reviewed at least annually with your SSW
 - Further copies of this document are available via your SSW
-
- For further advice on recording information, please refer to your 'Recording and Record Keeping Guidance' document or discuss with your SSW

Foster Carer Name/s:

.....

Address:

.....

Signed / Foster Carer/s:

.....

Supervising Social Worker Name:

.....

Signed / Supervising Social Worker

.....

Date:

Digital Family Agreement

The digital family agreement is a checklist that foster carers can use to direct discussions with all the children and young people in the home. It's designed to help foster carers establish guidelines and expectations around digital use and behaviour. Some fostering families are comfortable using it as a signed agreement. Others prefer to use it simply as a checklist to direct conversation. Either way, it's an ideal way to help foster carers find common ground about using digital technology in the home.

You can use this template as it is or amend it as required, for example, to reflect any specific concerns reflected in any risk assessments or adapting it for younger children.

Digital Family Agreement

We agree to follow these rules when we use the internet, mobile phones or games consoles.

We will keep ourselves and others safe by:

- Keeping all personal information such as home/school address, telephone numbers and passwords private.
- Not letting strangers know where I am by tagging photographs or identifying your location on apps such as Foursquare or Facebook.
- Only become friends with people on Facebook if I know them in the real world and promise to use the privacy settings in any services I use.
- Never arranging to meet somebody that I have met online in the real world without my foster carer's or parent's knowledge and permission.
- Telling my parents or foster carer if I feel uncomfortable about anything I have seen online or if someone is making me feel uncomfortable or scared online. I will block anyone who offends me or makes me feel awkward.
- Respecting other people online by only sending or posting friendly messages.
- Only downloading files from trustworthy and legal sources. If I am unsure, I will ask our foster carers/ parents. We understand that downloading music, games and films for free can sometimes be illegal and infringe copyright.
- Not opening messages or email from people that I don't know. I will also delete any unwanted email or spam messages without opening them.

- Asking a parent or foster carer before registering or signing up for things online, including competitions and social networking websites.
- Only buying products or services online once I have permission from our parents/foster carers. This includes in-app purchases such as power-ups, restricted levels, virtual money, special characters and boosts.

We will be good digital citizens by:

- Helping to stop cyber bullying if I know it is happening. I will let my parents or foster carers know.
- Only posting photos or videos online of friends, birth family and foster family after we have got permission to do so.
- Never sending unfriendly messages online.
- Asking a parent or foster carer before registering or signing up for things online, including competitions and social networking websites.
- Only downloading files online from reliable and legal sources and if unsure I will first check with our parent or foster carer. I understand that downloading music, games and films for free can be illegal.

We will think first and:

- Take care with my online activities. This especially applies to gaming in front of younger children.
- Not believe everything I read online is true and people might not be who they say they are.

We will have a healthy balance between the real and digital world by:

- Making sure we finish all our homework before we go online.
- Only going online for the agreed time.

We all agree to help our parents/foster carers understand that the internet can be a fun place and we will help them have fun, learn things online and teach them things about the internet, computers and other technology.

I accept that my internet access can be monitored, filtered or blocked to ensure that I am safe.

I accept my foster carer's Digital Family Agreement

Foster carers and parents agree that they will never say 'no' without explaining their reasons why.

Signed

Date

Signed

Date

Discipline / Sanctions

The Department has a policy of no physical chastisement of Children Looked After / Young People and Rent a Room providers must agree not to use corporal punishment or any measure of control, restraint, or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable.

Rent a Room providers will be aware that young people placed with them may have experienced undisclosed abuse or ill treatment and should be mindful of this when considering their approach to discipline and behaviour management. Rent a Room providers are advised to seek advice regarding disciplining issues via their support workers

Sanctions or removing privileges may be a useful way to encourage young people to improve their behaviour. As a Rent a Room provider you may have limited contact with the young person and due to their age it may have a limited effect.

We would advise that any issues that arise should be discussed with the young person in the first instance in a way that they understand. In some instances it may be necessary to have interpreters present so that the young person fully understands the issues and so that discussions to resolve the issues can take place.

As a Rent a Room provider you may have limited contact with the young person depending on their schedule and therefore we would encourage providers to contact their support workers to discuss ways to promote improved behaviour. It may be necessary to hold a meeting to formally update your Living Together Agreement if the issue persists.

Should any harm or injury to a person/people or damage to property be caused as a result of the behaviour of the young person then an Incident/Accident Form should be completed to record the particulars of what happened. The Rent a Room provider should make their support worker aware of what has happened as soon as possible and appropriate actions should be taken.

COURSE START DATE	COURSE END DATE	DURATION OF COURSE	TRAINING COURSE TITLE	VENUE	START TIME	FINISH TIME
11/01/2017	11/01/2017	Half day	CSE Level 2 - The Victims Voice (Condensed)	Tenants Hall	10:00	14:00
12/01/2017	12/01/2017	1 Day	Emergency First Aid for Residential & Foster Carers	JCCS	09:45	14:15
13/01/2017	13/01/2017	1 Day	Infant Mental Health	Enterprise House	09:30	16:30
17/01/2017	17/01/2017	1 Day	Introduction to working together to safeguard children & young people (CS)	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
18/01/2017	18/01/2017	1 Day	Intermediate Attachment	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
18/01/2017	18/01/2017	1 Day	Emergency First Aid for Residential & Foster Carers	JCCS	17:00	21:30
19/01/2017	19/01/2017	Half day	Restorative Practice Awareness	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
24/01/2017	24/01/2017	1 Day	How Best to meet the needs of Children Looked After from a BME background	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
24/01/2017	25/01/2017	2 x Half days	CSE - Not Just our Daughters (2 x Half day sessions)	Other	10:00	14:00
24/01/2017	25/01/2017	Half day	TCIF Refresher	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
26/01/2017	26/01/2017	1 Day	Emergency First Aid for Residential & Foster Carers	JCCS	09:45	14:15
26/01/2017	26/01/2017	Half day	Safer Caring	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
31/01/2017	31/01/2017	1 Day	Child Development 0-12	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
02/02/2017	02/02/2017	1 Day	E-safety Training	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00

03/02/2017 & 08/02/2017 & 09/02/2017	09/02/2017	3 Days	Makaton Foundation Training (3 sessions)	Enterprise House	09:45	14:00
07/02/2017	07/02/2017	Half day	Restorative Practice Awareness	Enterprise House	01:30	16:30
07/02/2017	07/02/2017	Half day	Equality & Diversity - CS	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
07/02/2017	07/02/2017	1 Day	Emergency First Aid for Residential & Foster Carers	JCCS	09:45	14:15
10/02/2017	10/02/2017	1 Day	Supporting the Education of CLA	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
21/02/2017	21/02/2017	1 Day	Moving children on	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
27/02/2017	27/02/2017	1 Day	Emergency First Aid for Residential & Foster Carers	JCCS	09:45	14:15
27/02/2017	27/02/2017	1 Day	Introduction to Attachment	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
28/02/2017	01/03/2017	2 Days	TCIF Refresher Disabilities	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
01/03/2017	01/03/2017	1 Day	CSE Level 2 - The Victims Voice	Tenants Hall	09:30	16:30
01/03/2017	01/03/2017	Half day	Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing in Young People	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
02/03/2017	02/03/2017	1 Day	Drug Awareness Training	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
07/03/2017	07/03/2017	1 Days	Child Development Adolescents	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
08/03/2017	08/03/2017	1 Day	Introduction to working together to safeguard children & young people (CS)	Enterprise House	13:00	16:30
08/03/2017	08/03/2017	1 Day	CSE - Not Just our Daughters	Other	09:30	16:30
14/03/2017	14/03/2017	1 Day	Reflecting on Child Development SEND	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
15/03/2017	15/03/2017	1 Day	Intermediate Attachment	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
15/03/2017	15/03/2017	Half day	Restorative Practice Awareness	Enterprise House	09:30	12:30
20/03/2017	21/03/2017	2 Days	TCIF Refresher	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00

23/03/2017	23/03/2017	1 Day	Record Keeping	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
24/03/2017	24/03/2017	1 Day	Emergency First Aid for Residential & Foster Carers	JCCS	09:45	14:15
28/03/2017	28/03/2017	1 Day	Healthy Self Esteem	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
29/03/2017	29/03/2017	1 Day	CSE Level 2 - The Victims Voice (Condensed)	Tenants Hall	09:30	16:30
29/03/2017	29/03/2017	Half day	Safer Caring	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
30/03/2017	31/03/2017	2 Days	Introduction to managing Challenging Behaviour	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
30/03/2017	30/03/2017	1 Day	Emergency First Aid for Residential & Foster Carers	JCCS	09:45	14:15
04/04/2017	04/04/2017	1 Day	Infant mental Health	Enterprise House	09:30	16:30
18/04/2017	18/04/2017	1 dAY	Child Development 0-12	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
18/04/2017	18/04/2017	Half day	Restorative Practice Awareness	Enterprise House	09:30	12:30
20/04/2017	20/04/2017	1 Day	Introduction to Attachment	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
21/04/2017	21/04/2017	1 Day	Promoting the health of Children in your care	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
26/04/2017	27/04/2017	2 Days	Total Respect	Other	09:30	16:30
26/04/2017	27/04/2017	2 Days	TCIF Refresher	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
27/04/2017	27/04/2017	Half day	Equality & Diversity - CS	Enterprise House	13:00	16:30

26/04/2017 & 03/05/2017 & 10/05/2017 & 17/05/2017 & 24/05/2017 & 07/06/2017	07/06/2017	Evening	TCIF Twilight Session (you must attend all 6 sessions)	Lazer Centre	18:00	21:00
04/05/2017	04/05/2017	1 Day	Introduction to working together to safeguard children & young people (CS)	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
10/05/2017	10/05/2017	1 Days	Child Development Adolescents	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
10/05/2017	11/05/2017	2 Days	Total Respect	Other	09:30	16:30
15/05/2017	15/05/2017	1 Day	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder	Enterprise House	10:00	14:30
16/05/2017	16/05/2017	1 Day	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder	Enterprise House	10:00	14:30
16/05/2017	16/05/2017	Half day	Restorative Practice Awareness	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
18/05/2017	18/05/2017	1 Day	E-safety Training	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
19/05/2017	19/05/2017	1 Day	Assessment Training	Enterprise House	09:30	16:30
23/05/2017	24/05/2017	2 Days	TCIF Refresher	Enterprise House	10:00	14:00
24/05/2017 & 25/05/2017 & 26/05/2017	26/05/2017	3 Days	Makaton Foundation Training	Enterprise House	09:45	14:00
25/05/2017	25/05/2017	Half day	Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing in Young People	Enterprise House	13:00	16:30

Placement in Rent a Room Policy

Leeds City Council Fostering Department

May 2016-2017

This policy sets out Leeds City Council's Rent a Room Scheme. It covers the recruitment, assessment, support and review of Rent a Room Providers as well as various issues affecting such providers. This chapter also details the procedural requirements concerning the scheme itself and the young people who will use it.

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1. **Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Government Guidance**
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8. **Training , Support and Supervision for Rent a Room Providers**
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10. **Accommodation**
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12. **Making a Placement**
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1. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Government Guidance

Guidance

- HS223 Rent a Room Scheme (2016)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rent-a-room-for-traders-hs223-self-assessment-helpsheet/dgh>
- Rent a Room is NOT under Fostering Regulations.

2. Aims of the Scheme

The scheme seeks:

- To enable looked after young people, aged 16 plus, to make as smooth a transition as possible from a care situation to independent living by offering a stepping stone of independent living with support, thus promoting positive planning and preparation for independence in line with the Pathway Plan for each young person.
- To enable the authority to provide suitable accommodation to young people aged 16 plus, who are identified as needing low level supported accommodation.

The scheme is designed to help young people mature and develop by enabling them to experience being part of a supportive living environment. It is anticipated that they can benefit from a level of freedom and responsibility whilst still sharing a home and time with an adult/ adults who are positive role model/models.

The scheme is not designed to replace the authorities Fostering or Supported Lodging Services, young people needing higher levels of support should be directed to these services.

3. The Target Group

Rent a Room is a resource for Looked after Young People (including UASC) and Care Leavers aged 16-21 (25 if in education or training) who are assessed via the Area Child Team as needing this resource.

All young people should be either 16 or 17 years old at the time of placement.

At the time of referral to the scheme, a young person must be assessed as being ready to begin to live independently with lower levels support and this scheme should be the most appropriate resource available to meet the young person's accommodation needs as identified within their Pathway Plan.

Rent a Room Placements are likely to be most suitable for young people who are willing and able to:

- Regulate their behaviour to comply with reasonable house rules and expectations;
- Engage with the carer/provider to gain the skills needed to successfully live independently in the future;

- Engage with education, training, work experience and/or employment, working towards achieving economic stability into adulthood;
- Engage with other agencies and professionals to address any issues that would stand in the way of them moving forward and securing the skills and resources needed to achieving stability and success in their lives.

Rent a Room is NOT suitable for those young people who for example have few boundaries to their behaviour, who would likely present a significant risk to others or who want/ need the freedom and anonymity of other settings.

4. What is Rent a Room

A young person will live with a family/ couple/single person sharing their home. The young person is a member of the household.

The young person is provided with safe and appropriate accommodation. The Rent a Room Providers co-operate in conjunction with others working with the young person promoting their practical development in keeping with their Care/ Pathway Plan.

5. Rent a Room Providers and What they Offer

5.1 Who can be a Rent a Room Provider?

We need providers who can offer some level practical support to young people. Rent a Room Providers can be married; single or in a relationship. Providers can be in employment or home based. Providers must be aged 21 years or over, can be a parent or have experience of working with young people in a variety of settings. Providers can be home owners or rent their homes.

We require Providers who need to be resident full time in the property but can continue to pursue their own lifestyle including work arrangements, social activities and holidays.

5.2 Qualities and skills of Rent a Room Providers

Rent a Room Providers may be very different from each other and come from many different walks of life. Each will have their skills and strengths but what providers will have in common is that they enjoy having young people around; have an understanding of the difficulties faced by looked after young people and care leavers and a desire to make a difference to their lives.

They will also need to be:

- Warm and caring
- Patient and tolerant
- Flexible in their approach and able to adapt to different and changing situations

- Have reasonable expectations of young people's capabilities and vulnerabilities, recognising their experiences
- Willing and able to work in partnership with Personal Advisors, Social Workers, Connexions, Housing Support Workers etc in line with the Pathway Plan
- Accepting that young people will make mistakes and often need a second or third chance to get it right!

5.3 What Rent a Room Providers offer to the Young Person

Practical Support:

- A fully furnished bedroom, including bedding, decorated to a high level.
- Access to a bathroom.
- Access to a washing machine.
- Access to food (and non-alcoholic drink), the Provider is not under any obligation to cook meals for the young person but must insure that there is sufficient food for three meals per day. The food should be appropriate to the needs of the young person and of sufficient quality and quantity.

6. Wider Expectations of the Rent a Room Provider Role / Task

Underpinning values

The following values will be integral in the Provider's attitude/interaction:

- Individuals are respected;
- Differences and diversity is valued;
- Equality is promoted;
- Discrimination is challenged;
- Confidentiality is maintained;
- Advice and feedback is provided in a constructive way to the young person in the placement.

Working as part of a Team

The Rent a Room Provider will be part of a team often involving a number of different professionals and agencies, working together to support the young person.

Maintaining contact with the professionals involved with the young person such as the Social Worker and/or Personal Adviser will be an aspect of the provider's role.

Providers are not required to provide any written feedback or attend meetings. Providers are expected to allow access to professionals when visiting young people living in their property.

7. Approval and Reviews of Rent a Room Providers

Assessment Process

An enquiry is made by a prospective provider, initially to the Recruitment Team within the Fostering Department. Basic information and background details will be taken in the form of an 'initial contact'.

If there is a clear reason why it is not appropriate to take the enquiry further this will be explained to prospective provider and confirmed in writing.

If the prospective provider meets minimum criteria then they shall be progressed to the 'home visit' stage.

If it is appropriate for a home visit; the nature of the home visit will be explained to the prospective provider and arrangements will be made to carry out this visit.

During the home visit, the following issues will be addressed:

- Expectations of Rent a Room Providers;
- Financial arrangements;
- An overview of the assessment process including what checks and references will be required;
- Any relevant information in relation to health (physical and emotional), any convictions and/ or involvement with the Police and/or Children's Social Care;
- An overview inspection of the property including viewing the room proposed for rent a room use, as well as the general condition of the accommodation and shared living spaces.

The completed home visit will be passed to the Manager/s of the Rent a Room Scheme with a recommendation from the Fostering Advisor as to whether to progress the application or not and the reasoning.

Following the home visit and the completion of a home visit report, a decision will be made by the Manager. If the decision is not to progress the application further the applicant will be contacted and informed of this. This will be confirmed in writing.

If the decision is to progress the application to the next stage, a letter will be sent inviting the prospective provider to complete an (enclosed) application form which will include permission for the Local Authority to undertake the necessary checks.

When the application form is returned, the assessment will be allocated and the necessary checks will be initiated.

The Assessment

The assessment is evidence based including statutory checks and personal references. The assessment will be undertaken by an Assessing Worker within the Fostering Department.

The assessment is not envisaged to last longer than 8 weeks.

It is expected that during the assessment potential rent a room providers will be able to offer evidence of, as well as telling us about their suitability for and ability to undertake the different aspects of the role/task.

If, during the assessment, the Assessing Worker and Team Manager do not believe that a positive recommendation can be made the prospective provider will be encouraged to withdraw from the assessment process. If the prospective provider refuses to withdraw then the department has the authority to end the assessment against their wishes.

Once the assessment is concluded, the Assessing Worker will make a recommendation as to whether the prospective provider should be approved as a **Rent a Room Provider** or not and the reasons for this. The assessment will be quality assured by the Team Manager and if he/she agrees with the recommendation will sign off the assessment.

If the assessment is positive, a recommendation should also be made as to the number of young people the applicant might offer accommodation to; this will normally be limited to one for tax purposes.

The concluded assessment will be forwarded to the Looked After Childrens Agency Decision Maker for ratification.

Following ratification, a profile of the Rent a Room Provider will be drawn up by the Assessing Worker detailing their particular strengths and skills and giving an overview of their family and living situation. This will be made available to the Placement Team and to referring Social Workers and Personal Advisors.

Review of Approval

Rent a Room Providers are not subject to Review.

Should there be concerns regarding the quality of the accommodation or suitability of the provider then the relevant Fostering Team Manager will investigate. The Fostering Team Manager has the authority to suspend a Rent a Room Provider.

If the Team Manager deems the accommodation or suitability of a provider to be insufficient then the Team Manager will complete a report recommending de-registration. This report will be sent to the Agency Decision Maker who will make the final decision. The Rent a Room Provider will have the ability to make a written representation to the Agency Decision Maker.

The decision of the Agency Decision Maker is final.

8. Training, Support and Supervision for Rent a Room Providers

Training

There is an expectation that all Rent a Room Providers attend the Fostering Departments preparatory course. This course must be completed before ratification.

Upon approval there is no further expectation regarding training and/or development.

Supervision

The Rent a Room Provider will have an allocated Support Worker from the Fostering Department. Their main focus will be offering guidance and support to the provider. They will help address any problems, and where appropriate act as the link between the provider and other agencies working with the young person. At times they may help to explore what other resources might be needed to make the placement successful.

Frequency and content of visits

The Support Worker will visit the Rent a Room Provider at least every **8** weeks. The frequency of visits will depend on a number of factors including the stability of the placement; the provider's experience; any challenges regarding the young person in placement etc.

Between planned visits, the Support Worker will provide advice/ support via phone or e mail, or via additional visits if needed. An unannounced visit to the provider will be made every twelve months.

Support Groups

Providers will be provided with access to regular teenager support groups, which will be held at varying times and venues. Providers do not have to attend although will be encouraged to.

As well as offering Providers the opportunity to meet, share information and receive support, the meetings will also provide a forum for training and information sharing sessions.

9. Finance

- Young Person / Young Adult

2016 - 2017

For the sake of this scheme the payments to the Providers will be called '*Rent a Room Allowance*' and will be paid at £127 p/w; broken down as follows:

- £62 rent
- £30 utilities
- £35 food

Rent a Room Providers will not be expected to give young people any finances, this will be arranged by their Social Worker/Personal Advisor and monies will be paid directly into the young person's bank account, totalling £40.00 p/w. This should be discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting/Living Together Agreement meeting.

An additional clothing payment of £200 P/A will be made to the young person by their Social Worker/Personal Advisor. This payment is based on an 'assessment of need' throughout the year (31st March – April 1st).

From the young person's 18th birthday the monies paid to the young person by their Social Worker/Personal Advisor will cease and should be replaced by the young person's welfare benefit claim (e.g. Income support or Jobseekers allowance).

In situations where young people aged 18 plus are working, and do not claim a means tested benefit they will be expected to use their earnings to replace the pocket money and clothing allowance.

Young people aged 18 plus are responsible for accommodation costs of £62.00 per week. For those young people who are on a low income, they may be entitled to Housing Benefit. This would be claimed by the young person but directed to the Fostering Department as an agent of the Rent a Room Provider. For those young people that are not entitled to full Housing Benefit, they would be expected to contribute the shortfall to the Fostering Department, through their earnings.

For those young people who are not entitled to any Housing Benefit, again due to their earnings/savings, they would be expected to make the full payment of £62.00 p/w (2016-2017) to the Fostering Department.

The rent element of the Rent a Room arrangement is set at £62.00 (2016/17). If a young person is not entitled to Housing Benefit due to excess income, then their contribution would be £62.00 per week. If a young person is entitled to Housing Benefit, however it is below £62.00, they would be expected to contribute the difference. For example if the Housing Benefit was £32.00, the young person would contribute £30.00.

Those young people aged 16 & 17 (who are looked after) would not be entitled to Housing Benefit and therefore the full maintenance allowance would be met by from the fostering financial budget.

Retainers (when no young people are in placement) would not be paid to any Rent a Room Provider.

Additional payments for Christmas (religious festival), birthday will be paid to the young person directly by their Social Worker/Personal Advisor and not by the Fostering Department via the Provider. They are set at £120

each. To provide a holiday to the young person they will be provided with £492.88, again directly from the Social Worker/Personal Advisor.

Rent a Room Providers are not entitled to the Leeds City Council corporate offer or additional household insurance cover.

- **Rent a Room Provider**

For those Providers who offer placements to looked after 16 plus', payments made to them under the UK governmental 'Rent a Room' Scheme.

For the tax year 2016 -2017, the annual Rent a Room tax free limit is £7,500. This reduces to half if someone else receives income from letting accommodation in the same property, such as a joint owner. The limit is the same even if you let accommodation for less than 12 months.

If your gross receipts from letting are not more than the Rent a Room limit of £7,500, you don't pay tax on your profit. If they are more than the limit, you may still be able to benefit under the Rent a Room Scheme.

Your gross receipts include:

- rental income (before expenses)
- any amounts you receive for meals, goods and services, such as cleaning or laundry
- any 'balancing charges'

You usually count your gross receipts for a tax year - that is, from 6 April one year to 5 April the next.

If your gross receipts are less than £7,500, you are automatically exempt from tax on that income.

If you take more than one person on rent a room (for a length of time) then you will enter the tax bracket e.g.

Person 1: £127 p/w – Stays 12 months = £6604p/a

Person 2: £127 P/W – Stays 6 months = £3302p/a

Total gross Income: £9906

Non-taxable income from rent a room: £7500

Taxable income: £2406

**IF YOU ARE IN RECEIPT OF ANY BENEFITS THAT RENT A ROOM CAN IMPACT – WE URGE YOU TO
SEEK BENEFITS ADVICE IN ADVANCE**

10. Accommodation

As part of the assessment process, a Health and Safety Checklist will be completed and updated on a yearly basis. This includes the requirement that the provider should have an initial home safety inspection from West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue, have a Smoke Alarm and Carbon Monoxide Detector fitted.

The whole of the shared parts of the accommodation should be clean, warm, comfortable and decorated to a reasonable standard.

Each young person should have a room of their own that is large enough to comfortably accommodate a bed and drawers and/ a wardrobe, as well as the young person and their belongings.

The young person's room should be furnished and should be in reasonable order/ condition.

The young person will have access to a kitchen, bathroom and laundry facilities.

11. Accessing the Scheme and Making a Referral

Referrals for the scheme can be made by the young person's Social Worker via Frameworki using the Placement Request Form.

Referrals should be sent to the Placement Team who will then liaise with the specific Fostering Team where the Rent a Room Service will be based.

12. Making a Placement

Placements will be made in a planned way enabling the best match of placement to be achieved and the provider and young person to be prepared for the move.

When a possible Rent a Room Placement has been identified for a young person as much information as possible will be shared with the provider about the young person's history, needs and functioning.

Information will be shared with the young person's Social Worker/Personal Advisor about the provider's experience, skills and living situation. Some of this information will be available on the Providers profile which will be available but the worker for the young person can speak directly to the Provider or meet them at this stage.

If both the Provider and the worker for the young person are happy to move to the next stage, appropriate information will then be shared with the young person about the provider and arrangements made for the young person to meet the provider.

Following this meeting, feedback will be sought from the young person and the Provider to determine if the placement can proceed.

At the point of placement written information regarding the young person should be provided to the Provider. For all looked after young people, this is the same information as would be provided to any other carer/placement.

For Young People aged 18 and over, this will be a copy of the Pathway Plan and any Risk Assessments.

For young people aged under 18 (looked after young people) a Placement Planning Meeting must take place within 72 hours of the young person moving into the placement. Where possible and/or appropriate, this meeting will take place in advance of the placement or on the day the placement commences.

For all looked after young people, this meeting will finalise the Placement Plan (Living Together Agreement will be completed).

For all looked after young people, the placement will be reviewed as part of the Looked After Review Process.

For young people aged 18 and over, the placement will be reviewed as part of the Pathway Planning Process.

13. Ending a Rent a Room Placement

Wherever possible, placements should end in a planned way in line with the planned length of placement and in keeping with the Pathway Planning for the young person.

If the Provider is considering bringing the placement to an end it is expected that they will discuss this in the first instance with their Support Worker. Depending on the circumstances a placement support meeting may be called to explore the situation and whether anything can be done to preserve the placement or whether it should be brought to an end in an agreed timescale.

A notice period of 28 days is a good practice guideline.