



# Homestay Handbook

Guidance Notes on Hosting a Homestay Guest

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# Welcome & Introduction

The Homestay experience is very important. Staying in an English home is a fantastic opportunity for overseas students which they will probably remember for the rest of their lives. Thank you for helping our students in this way.

The purpose of this manual is to give some information, hints and tips which we hope will be useful as you prepare to receive your guest.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at any time.

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## 1. About your guest

Before the student's first visit, English Country Guardians will provide you with information about your guest. You will be told their interests and any relevant dietary/medical details. Where practical, we will organise for the student to meet you before they come to stay in your home.

## 2. Preparing for your guest

Please check the following:-

- a. Insurances.
  - i. Household Insurance – is it current? Have you checked the policy? If required, notify your insurer that you are having foreign students to stay.
  - ii. Car Insurance – are you suitably covered to drive your foreign student?  
  
*For your information, English Country Guardians holds Public Liability Insurance.*
- b. Home Safety
  - i. Smoke Detectors – check the battery
  - ii. Gas appliances –The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/2451) states gas appliances must be checked and serviced regularly by a registered gas service engineer. Has your gas equipment been checked? Do you have a certificate or proof of your last service check?
  - iii. Carbon monoxide alarms – do you have these by each gas appliance and are they working?
  - iv. Fire evacuation route – have you planned how you can escape in the event of a fire and where your family should assemble outside your property?
- c. First Aid
  - i. Is a kit available and stocked with
    - a. plasters
    - b. mild painkillers etc
- d. Internet –
  - i. Check if Wi-Fi signal strength is good in student rooms or arrange workspace to enable students to connect to internet when working.
  - ii. Agree any sharing arrangements with other family members
  - iii. Check if there are any limits on your system regarding amount of data that can be downloaded
  - iv. Establish how to turn Wi-Fi off. Students are often tempted to use the internet very late at night to contact family and friends who are in different time zones.

### 3. The Bedroom

This is the most important space for your student. It must be clean, tidy and as empty as possible. They will require:

- i. Regular single bed
- ii. Extra pillows & blankets – school bedrooms may be warmer than houses
- iii. Bedside light
- iv. Hanging space with hangers
- v. Adequate space for belongings
- vi. Waste paper bin
- vii. Towels
- viii. A mirror
- ix. Box of tissues
- x. Desk space for working.
  1. If it is not possible to put a desk in the bedroom, please arrange for a dedicated workspace elsewhere

### 4. Transport arrangements

You will be contacted prior to hosting to discuss the transport arrangements for your students. It is nice if you are able to collect your guest from school and transport them and their luggage back to your home. If possible, it is nice to return them to school at the end of their stay with you.

## 5. Introductions

Your home and lifestyle will probably be very different from their family home. This may be the first time your guest has been into an English home so things may be unfamiliar. They may have limited spoken English and may be very shy, especially at first.

Here are some suggestions of things to do on your first evening together:-

Give a tour of your home.

Show:-

- Communal areas of your home – make any private areas clear
- How the bath/shower operates
- How to open any difficult doors or windows
- How to pull curtains
- Where to put rubbish – including sanitary waste
- How to adjust room thermostats
- Fire escapes

Introduce:-

- Other family members
- Pets

Explain:-

- Household routine – time you get up, mealtimes, bedtimes
- Any house rules
- What to do with washing
- How to access the internet

Exchange:-

- Telephone numbers
- 

Discuss:-

- What time they like to go to bed and get up – agree a plan for the following morning (time to get up, time to use bathroom, whether older students would like to be woken, make own breakfast etc)
- What they like for breakfast
- Any food likes or dislikes
- What, if any, school work they need to complete during their stay
- Any practice (e.g sporting or music) that should be done
- Any planned activities

Encourage

- Guests to help with general running of household e.g laying and clearing tables, etc.
- Guest to help themselves to water if thirsty– show where glasses etc kept.
- Conversation.

## 6. Meals

You will need to provide 3 meals each day, with one main cooked dinner. Guests should also have access to appropriate drinks and snacks (e.g biscuits/cakes/fruit).

It is expected that the student is invited to take part in family mealtimes. They should not be asked to eat separately.

Boarding school food is varied so they will have experienced English dishes like roast dinners, fish and chips, as well as Chinese, Indian and Mexican food – but of course nothing tastes like home cooking!

Many students want to learn to cook. Shopping for the food, preparing it and finally eating it can all be part of the Homestay experience!

## 7. Free Time & Activities

Guests, especially older students, will enjoy the opportunity to have some free, unstructured time. They will need time to study and relax on their own. However, they should not spend all their leisure time in a separate space, but be treated as a member of the family.

To get the most from the Homestay experience, students should interact with you and enjoy a variety of experiences that are not available in school. Things we take as “normal” are often a foreign experience for the overseas boarding school student.

It might be easiest at the start of the Homestay to draw up a timetable with the student which includes both free time and time spent together.

Some suggested activities:-

- Walk to the local shops
- Supermarket shopping
- Boot fair/local events (e.g. fetes)
- Visit to relatives (e.g. grandparents)
- Trip to the garden centre – spot the different plants
- Board games – Monopoly, Jenga etc
- Watching TV together
- Crafts – e.g. homemade cards, teach knitting, crochet
- Share your hobby – e.g. golf, riding, swimming, tennis
- Learn their language!
- Share photographs (your guest should have photos of their home and family)

## 8. Culture Shock & Homesickness

Despite your efforts, your student may experience culture shock. This can lead to homesickness which can manifest itself in various ways. Students may feel:-

- sad, anxious or lonely.
- so depressed they cannot stop crying.
- physical symptoms, like stomach ache or headache.

Recommended “cures” are talking about their home; comforting and talking about their feelings; providing their familiar food; encouraging them to call parents or friends; keeping busy. Please do not hesitate to contact ECG if your student appears very homesick.

## 9. Outings & Excursions

Students will enjoy spontaneous outings e.g a trip to the shopping centre, going out for coffee locally. Host families may also take guests on longer excursions, cinema, National Trust house or garden. Please notify ECG of any proposed trips you would like to take with the student. It may be necessary to gain permission from the parents. Keep receipts and submit these with the expense form.

## 10. Finances

- You will be paid a daily rate for each student that you host. The daily rate is detailed in the Host Family Agreement.
- Students will have pocket money and will expect to pay incidental costs that occur during their stay.
- If students arrive without their own money, please check with ECG before subsidising any purchases.
- We will refund expenses reasonably incurred on the student’s behalf. You should not be out of pocket. Please submit the expense form and receipt at the end of the stay.
- The money will be paid directly into your bank account 2 weeks after your hosting session. Please ensure that you give us your correct bank details.

## 11. Inland Revenue

This is between you and the tax man. Please check clause 10.4 of the Host Family Agreement.

## 12. Avoiding confusion or embarrassment

English Country Guardians has established guidelines on the following topics to avoid any confusion or embarrassment. All students and parents are aware of these rules.

### a) Host Family House Rules

At your interview you were asked about your house rules.(e.g. remove outdoor shoes in the house). Please notify English Country Guardians of any rules you may have forgotten to

mention at this early stage. Please remind your student of your rules when they are with you.

### b) Laundry & Personal Hygiene

Students will expect you to discuss the arrangements for washing their clothes. Normally their clothes can be added to your wash cycle. Students will be expected to keep themselves clean and to wash their hair by taking baths or showers regularly.

### c) Guest is Unwell – medical treatment

You will be supplied with any relevant health information about your guest. If they are unwell during their visit, please call our office to discuss treatment. One dose of mild painkillers can be administered at your discretion. If you feel a further dose is required, consult ECG before giving further medication

**In an emergency, call your doctor before calling ECG.**

The student can be seen by your doctor. You will need to complete a form at the surgery stating their permanent address (school) and doctor. All students are registered with the GP associated with their school. You will be sent all this information before their visit.

### d) Religion & Culture

Host families are expected to respect a student's religion and culture. You will be notified if this involves any dietary requirements (e.g. do not serve a Muslim pork). During their stay a student may wish to attend a place of worship. We can advise you on the nearest place if necessary. You are requested to arrange for your student to attend; please contact ECG if this causes a problem for you.

Similarly, students are requested to respect your religion and acts of worship. (e.g. saying grace before a meal.) You can invite them to attend a place of worship with you, but cannot force them to go; please contact ECG if this causes a problem for you.

Where possible, students are placed with families of a similar religion.

### e) Accidental Damage

Should your guest cause any damage to your property –breakage, spillage, laundry soiling etc they should notify you immediately so the matter can be dealt with promptly. If you feel the level of damage is unacceptable, please notify ECG so we can discuss how to resolve the situation for you.

## f) Meeting friends

Students are allowed to visit friends **providing the following rules are met.**

1. Students supply the name and phone number of the friend's parents or guardian to their ECG Guardian
2. The ECG Guardian calls the phone number to verify all the arrangements and to establish the start and return times
3. That the arrangements are suitable for the host family
4. For students under 14 years of age, permission for visits has been given by the parents.

If the Guardian or host family is unhappy with any aspect of the arrangements, the student will not be allowed to meet with the friend.

**Please check with ECG if students ask to go out on visits alone.**

Before they leave, ensure that:-

- You have their mobile telephone number
- They have your name, address and telephone number
- You know where they are going
- You know who they are meeting
- You have agreed a time for their return
- You have agreed a way for them to re-enter your home (e.g issue keys)

Please exercise the same caution that you would with your own children. If you are uneasy with the arrangements, do not allow the student to leave until you have called ECG.

ECG reserves the right to refuse permission if they do not feel the meeting is appropriate, is unsafe or insufficient time has been given to perform the standard safeguarding checks:-

## g) Curfew

These return times have been given as a guideline to students. They have been reminded that you may work so will not want them home too late :-

11 – 14 years 9.00pm

15 – 16 years 9.30pm

17 – 18 years 10.00pm

If these times do not seem appropriate, discuss them with your student and negotiate times that suit you and your household. Contact ECG if you have any problems with this.

## h) Friends to stay at your house

Students often ask if their friend can stay in the same Homestay, even though the friend may have another guardian. To protect everyone, all guests must first register with English Country Guardians. Parents of both students will be consulted and a temporary

guardianship arrangement can be made. **Please do not accept any guest for an overnight stay without first contacting ECG.**

### i) London

Special rules relate to visiting London. Please consult with ECG before allowing your student to go on any trips.

### j) Smoking, Vaping, Drugs & Alcohol

Students are aware that school rules extend to Homestay on this issue. Under no circumstances should they smoke, vape, drink or use drugs while in your care. Please notify ECG if you suspect this behaviour and appropriate action will be taken.

## 13. Safeguarding & Child Protection

To safeguard the children in our care, ECG has important policies which can be found here: <https://www.english-country-guardians.co.uk/keeping-students-safe> Please read these policies carefully and pay particular attention to sections 4 & 5 in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy relating to Host Family and Student Contact. **If you suspect abuse, or a complaint is made by the student about any person with whom they have contact, please follow the guidance in the policy and report this immediately.**

All host families are required to undergo safeguarding training and update this each year. **ECG will notify you when the next training session will take place.**

### ii. Contact with Student Families and Schools

To avoid any embarrassment or confusion, the host family are asked not have any direct contact with the student's parents or schools. When necessary, English Country Guardians will relay any messages between these parties.

### iii. Internet & Phones

Boarding schools recommend that students do not sleep with electrical devices at night and urge parents to enforce similar rules during holidays. Students will not be surprised if you suggest they can leave devices outside their room at night. Switch off the Wi-Fi if your students is using the internet late at night. **Please notify English Country Guardians if you are concerned about any inappropriate use of the internet.**

### iv. Leaving students home alone

It may be necessary to leave students at home alone for a period of time. The law states that you should not leave a student alone if they will be at risk. **If you are unsure, please**

**discuss with English Country Guardians before leaving your student at home alone.** If you do leave them for a period of time, please ensure:-

- They have your phone number, details of where you are going and when you will be back. They also have the phone number of another local contact they can call upon if needed.
- You discuss what to do if the phone rings or someone calls at the door.
- That you have discussed any food and snack arrangements – and agreed what cooking if any is allowed.
- That they are happy and confident to be left alone.

## 14. And Finally...

We hope you will find Homestay a rewarding experience. You will meet new people and learn new things. Importantly, you will be giving a valuable experience to a young person visiting our country.

If you have any questions, worries or concerns at any time, just call us on

**01883 712782 or 07831 865530**

Designated Safeguarding Officer – Joanna Winstanley Tel 07831 865530

CEOP – [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000

We are available to support you 24 hours a day.

Our thanks for all your care.

## Appendix 1 – Policies

English Country Guardians is committed to the safety of students in our care.

Here are some key issues, what the terms mean and the policies and procedures that we operate to protect all members of English Country Guardians. We update our policies regularly in line with changes to UK legislation and best practices. To access the full and latest policy please use this link. <https://www.english-country-guardians.co.uk/keeping-students-safe>

Privacy Policy	In the UK we are required by law to protect the privacy of the personal and sensitive data of all members of ECG. How and why we use your data is explained in our <a href="#">Privacy Policy</a>
DBS certificate	All members of ECG undergo a police and government department check to ensure they do not have a criminal record that would make them unsuitable to work with children.
Safeguarding & Child Protection	Safeguarding means protecting children from abuse, preventing harm to children’s health and development and ensuring that they have safe and effective care.  Child Protection are the methods used to protect young people. Our <a href="#">Safeguarding &amp; Child Protection Policy</a> provides guidance for all members of ECG on how to keep students safe. All members also receive regular Safeguarding training.
Prevent (Anti Radicalisation)	“Prevent” relates to safeguarding people and communities from the threat of terrorism. ECG homestays provide a safe space for discussions, provide balanced political ideas and understand the duty to report any student they believe is at risk. <a href="#">Prevent Policy</a>
Anti Bullying Policy	All forms of bullying – physical, verbal, social or cyber bullying are unacceptable. Students, parents and host families must immediately notify ECG of if they suspect bullying so that action can be taken. <a href="#">Anti-Bullying Policy</a>
Whistleblowing	This means reporting information about, or an activity performed by, a member of ECG that is illegal, unethical or not appropriate within the framework of work conducted by ECG. <a href="#">Whistleblowing Policy</a>
Missing child policy	ECG maintains a very strict procedure before students are allowed to travel independently or to meet with friends or relatives. Should a student appear to go missing, the <a href="#">Missing Child Policy</a> outlines the procedures that ECG will follow.
Online-Safety	“Online safety” means protecting students from risks when they are communicating via the internet. The <a href="#">Online Safety Policy</a> outlines the preventative measures taken by ECG, explains possible online risks, how to recognise signs of abuse, and what ECG members should if online abuse is suspected.
Complaints Form	Please contact us immediately if you have any complaint. ECG will aim to resolve it immediately. The <a href="#">Complaints Policy</a> clearly outlines the procedure that will take place if the complaint is not dealt with informally.

We work closely with AEGIS to ensure that our procedures are robust.

## Appendix 2 – AEGIS & Legal Points

English Country Guardians is a fully accredited member of AEGIS. AEGIS is the association for inspecting UK Guardianship Organisations to ensure that we are legally compliant.

Please note the following points:-

1. Definition of responsibilities:

Guardianship Organisation	English Country Guardians is the Guardianship Organisation. We manage the relationship between parents, students and schools and homestay families. We are responsible for all communications between all parties.
Homestay	The host family is only responsible for looking after the student when they are staying in your home. Any issues must be referred to ECG who will support you at all times.

2. As a homestay host you are expected to accept the day-to-day responsibility for the care of the student.
3. You will be expected to provide the same level of care as a responsible parent (in loco parentis)
4. Corporal punishment is never permitted. You can only use lawful and reasonable means of control and restraint to maintain safety and good order in your home.
5. Students are not allowed to share beds. If bedrooms are shared, they can only share with the same sex. Bathrooms must have a lock. Students should have access to communal areas in the house including a kitchen area and the facility to store their own food in a refrigerator to ensure safe food storage.
6. Host families are allowed to host a maximum of 3 students at any one time.
7. Host families are not to take any other paying guests or run a bed and breakfast arrangement or Airbnb arrangement when looking after students from English Country Guardianship.
8. Under term 6.4 of the Host Family contract you must inform us straight away of any relevant changes to the number of adults over the age of 16 living at the accommodation, or any other change of circumstances, for example if someone living at the accommodation ceases to be employed or of any changes to the accommodation you provide.
9. A member of the ECG Team will conduct an annual reinspection of your home and will update you on any changes in legislation and will provide safeguarding training relevant to your role.
10. AEGIS conduct regular inspections of host families. They will provide advance notice of any planned visits and host families are requested to co-operate with facilitating the visit.

11. A students' school may request to inspect a homestay if a student needs to remain with a host family for more that 26 days as this is considered a private fostering arrangement.
12. In the event of a contagious pandemic, guidance will be given to you by ECG based on advice given by the government, AEGIS and the students' school.
13. The Host Family Contract details the responsibilities of both ECG and you, as a host family, in caring for students. Please note your Host Family Contract section 11 regarding Termination of the contract. Either party may terminate this Agreement at any time for any reason by providing written notice to the other.