

Host Family Handbook

Brighter Prospects Guardians act as Guardians to care for overseas students who are in full time education in England; as such we work closely with our students, their parents and their schools. Most of our students are at boarding schools which have occasional weekends and half-term holidays. During these periods the schools close and the students are required to stay with host families.

Host Family Guidelines

For an overseas student staying in a host family it may mean a change and adjustment to their lifestyle, and that can be the same for the host family also. The following information provides some guidelines for a host family when hosting an overseas student. We have learned that it is best to discuss the information contained within this handbook with the student at the beginning of their stay to avoid any problems rather than leaving it until a problem may occur.

Host family and Brighter Prospects responsibilities

During the times that you are hosting our students, your responsibility is to help Brighter Prospects Guardians to care for the students. Apart from providing room and board, you should treat the students as a family member and provide a quiet place for their study; as important however you should provide normal parental guidance appropriate to the student's age. Through-out the students stay with you, legal guardianship remains with Brighter Prospects Guardians, so whenever a situation arises where you are uncertain about the appropriate action to take, talk to us please. Any unexpected situations that might affect student safety such as a need to go to hospital or unexplained student absence must be reported to us immediately.

School Contact

Normally you do not need to be in direct contact with a student's school or attend school activities for the student. However if were to be needed, then it would be instigated by Brighter Prospects Guardians and agreed by yourselves as the host family. However please check the Students School web site for information about the School's policies on Child Protection and Internet use.

1. Getting ready

Your student's room should be ready before their arrival. The room should be fully furnished with a bed, a desk, chair and lamp and a wardrobe. It should be adequately heated.

You must ensure that all electrical appliances are safe and smoke alarms must be fitted.

It may be helpful to do some research into the country that your student is from so that you understand a little about the customs, food and lifestyle of their home country - it will be interesting and enable a better understanding between you.

One host families normally host a maximum of three students at the same time, with a maximum of two students sharing a room for short stay programs.

We suggest that you prepare the following for your student:

- a copy of some local maps and the local transport schedule for your area,
- a contact list with home, work and mobile numbers of family members,
- an extra house key if the student is over 16 years old.

2. Arrival

This might be the first time that the student has visited to English family, so some things may be different from their own home. They might feel a little anxious and tired when arriving at your home, so please provide a warm welcome. Also some of the students may have difficulty speaking English at first and so may not understand you fully at the beginning, so please be patient and friendly. Hospitality starts on arrival, and your kindness will greatly help the student gain confidence and settle in quickly, which will benefit everyone.

It may be a good idea to offer them a drink or something to eat, followed by showing them around your house, garden and their room, introducing them to other members of your family and any pets. (Note - please be aware that some of students may be worried by big dogs).

After the initial welcome, you can explain to the student the household arrangements in detail and take the opportunity to discuss any house rules for their visit.

3. Getting Settled

As host you should know at all times where your student is and be able to contact them if required, as such it is important to exchange your mobile and landline numbers with students immediately on their arrival.

Safety

Show the students how to use any electrical or gas appliances - make sure they know how to use them safely. And explain basic escape routes, access to the outside doors and the location of any necessary keys in the event of an emergency.

Meals

The student should be provided with breakfast, lunch and dinner each day they stay with you, except by prior arrangement.

- Breakfast -- could consist of cereals, toast, egg, tea or coffee. Some teenage students often get up late in the morning and so a late breakfast is not uncommon.
- Lunch -- could be light, perhaps salads, and sandwiches, with fruit or yoghurt.
- Dinner -- could consist of meat (chicken, fish or red meat), vegetables and a dessert. The student will be expected to eat their evening meal together with the family. We understand that every family has its own meal plan, and so it is a good idea to explain this to the student. Also you should indicate to the student what food and drink they can or cannot help themselves to at any time.

Please ask the student if there is any food they cannot eat, for example due to an allergy or religious reason. Check that the student has had enough to eat, as sometimes they may be too shy to say they are still hungry. Please do not take offence if the student does not seem they enjoy the food, they do not mean to be impolite but are perhaps not accustomed to English food yet. That normally comes over time.

The student should be asked to be punctual at meal times and to always contact the family if they expect to be late or to miss a meal.

Bedrooms

Each student should have their own room or share with someone of a similar age and same sex. The student should be provided with a comfortable bed with clean, warm bedding, a study desk or table with a reading light and a chair, and a wardrobe. Adequate heating should be provided in the student's room.

The student's privacy should be respected by all members of the host family and the student should reciprocate. The student should be advised to keep the room clean and tidy.

Bathroom & toilet

The student should have free access to the bathroom in the same way as the family but you should indicate to the student which bathroom to use if there is more than one in the home. You may have to agree a rota for baths or showers. Ask your student to leave the bathroom clean and tidy after use and make sure they understand how to use the facilities (e.g. shower). Female students should be informed of the arrangements for the disposal of sanitary towels.

Laundry

Bed linen and towels must be changed once a week. Please provide bath towels, although note some students will bring their own. You are expected to undertake light laundry weekly or to offer clearly explained facilities. Please explain to the student when you are likely to do their washing.

Telephone & Internet Access

Explain your telephone and computer rules to the students at the beginning of their stay (together with any other rules about cameras, mobile phones and webcams in the home). Most students will have their own mobile phones. Note it is your responsibility to collect any money owed by the student for telephone calls except by prior arrangement.

Most students need access to an internet connection (preferably wireless) to do their academic work and to stay in touch with their family and friends overseas. Please monitor the computer usage and put reasonable time limits on it depending on their age.

House Keys and Curfew

Teenage students under the age of 16 must not be given a key to your house, because a member of the family must be home when the student returns home. Adult students should be given a front door key.

Below is a guideline of coming home times, please indicate to the student what time they are expected to be home when staying with you. It is important that you make sure you know their whereabouts, how they are coming home and how you can contact them. Tell them to inform you if they miss the bus.

Age under 14: must be accompanied by an adult member of the family.

Age 14: home by 6pm

Age 15 to 16: home by 8pm

Age 17 to 18: home by 10pm

Visitors

The student should ask your permission before bringing friends into your home and they should ask where they can entertain them. Let the student know if you wish the friends to leave by a certain time.

5

Transport

You may be asked to pick up a student when they first arrive if you have a car and you may also be asked to make arrangements for their departure. Whenever you have a student in your car, make sure they wear their seatbelts at all times, no matter how short the trip is.

You should explain to the student the local public transport available and how to get to and come back from the nearest shopping centers and coach / train stations.

Medical Treatment

If the student feels unwell please take measures you would usually do with other family members. If you are not sure about the actions to take, please book an appointment at your local GPs surgery for them or take them to the nearest NHS Walk-in Center (details can be found on the NHS website). The student will already have been registered with the NHS by the school but please inform them any extra expense it might cause.

If the illness becomes more serious please take the student to your local A&E department at the nearest hospital immediately and contact Brighter Prospects Guardians on our emergency phone number 07778 819 969.

Insurance

Host families should have household insurance and car insurance covering accidental damage. Normal wear and tear should not be charged to students but they may be expected to pay for any damage they may have caused through carelessness. In cases of dispute, Brighter Prospects Guardians will be willing to arbitrate and should be contacted at an early stage, and before the student leaves. It is important that you inform your household contents policy insurers that you have a paying student in your home.

Culture differences & Homesickness

When students are in a new and different culture and speak little English, they can go through changes of mood and attitude before coming to terms with their new surroundings. They may find it difficult to cope and may even feel depressed for a while. These feelings can be caused by little things, such as unfamiliar food or differences in routine. But it usually passes quickly.

6

The use of 'please' and 'thank you' may not be common in some cultures. Please do not take offence if a student appears to be disrespectful, as they may simply not be aware of what is expected in terms of polite and impolite language. You can imagine yourself in the student's situation: they may feel more frustrated than you when they have not said/done things in a correct manner while their English is not good enough to communicate well. Please help them by indicating and encouraging your student to learn the appropriate good manners.

Providing a comfortable and welcoming home will help them to get away from culture change. If you have a homesick student who causes you concern, please contact Brighter Prospects Guardians for further support.

Child Protection

The Safety and Welfare of Children, or Child Protection, refers to the actions to protect children from physical, emotional or sexual abuse or negligence.

Brighter Prospects Guardians is committed to creating a caring and secure environment where our students can feel safe, respected and valued. To achieve our goal of protecting our students, we have a policy of trust, openness and clear communication between students, schools, our host families and Brighter Prospects Guardians. Ensuring our student's welfare is the top priority in everything that we do (please refer to our Child Protection Policy document).

To comply with the rules set out in Child Protection Policy document, as a host family you are responsible to protect the students you will host and will therefore be required to have current enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates (known formerly as CRB).

Some things are Not Negotiable

Please be aware that the following are forbidden to our students:

- A student may not stay away overnight unless specific permission has been given by Brighter Prospects Guardians who will have sought prior agreement from the student's parents. Any overnight stay therefore will need to have been planned ahead and cannot be agreed at short notice.
- Friends of students are not allowed to stay overnight with you unless Brighter Prospects Guardians has approved temporarily guardianship. Again this cannot be agreed at short notice.
- Students under 18 are not allowed to drink alcohol. Students over 18 they may do so with your agreement and under your supervision in the home e.g. at meal times.
- Drug use is forbidden at all times.

Dealing with Behavioral Issues

If your student is not following your house rules or is misbehaving in any way, we suggest you take the following steps:

- Speak to your student as soon as possible about the issue rather than leaving the issue to escalate or recur.
- Call a family meeting. Choose a quiet time to sit down with your student and outline which aspects of their behavior you are unhappy with and discuss ways in which it

should be changed. Sometimes students may be unaware and need clear guidance.

If the above steps fail and your student still is still not listening to you, please contact Brighter Prospects Guardians to discuss their behavior.

Payment

Once we agree to take you on as a host family, payment is made by Brighter Prospects Guardians by way of a bank transfer. In some cases students would like to pay money to the family directly, if so please provide them a receipt.

The room rate varies between cities and depends on the services provided, student's age, length of stay and number of students hosted at the same time. We will discuss the rate with you when we feel that there should be a change.

Expenses will be paid for travel and day trips provided prior agreement has been obtained.

Contacts

If you have any concerns about a student and need assistance, please contact Brighter Prospects Guardians and we will be happy to help and assist whenever necessary.

General enquiries

Arrival / departure information

Payment issues

Lost passports or wallets

Report breakages or damage

Discuss student bookings

Report misbehaviour

Emergencies

Including but not limited to:

-Problems with weekend student arrivals or departures, missing students, sickness or Accidents.

Mrs. Anya Stone: 01444 210 581 / 07778 819 969

General contact

By email: anya@brighter-prospects.com