



# Brimming with Potential:

The case for supported lodgings

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November 2021

**Executive Summary &  
Recommendations**

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

*Supported lodgings host*

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

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

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

# Terminology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Foreword



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



**Tania Bright**  
CEO, Home for Good

# Executive Summary

## Key Messages:

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

## The Problem:

### A care system that is failing young people

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

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

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

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

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



## What is supported lodgings?



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

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

## Where is supported lodgings currently being used?

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

## What does supported lodgings have to offer?

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

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

# Executive Summary (continued)



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

*Care-experienced advocate*



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

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

## Expanding supported lodgings: Challenges to overcome



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

*Care-experienced young person*





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



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

*Supported lodgings host*



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

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

# Executive Summary (continued)

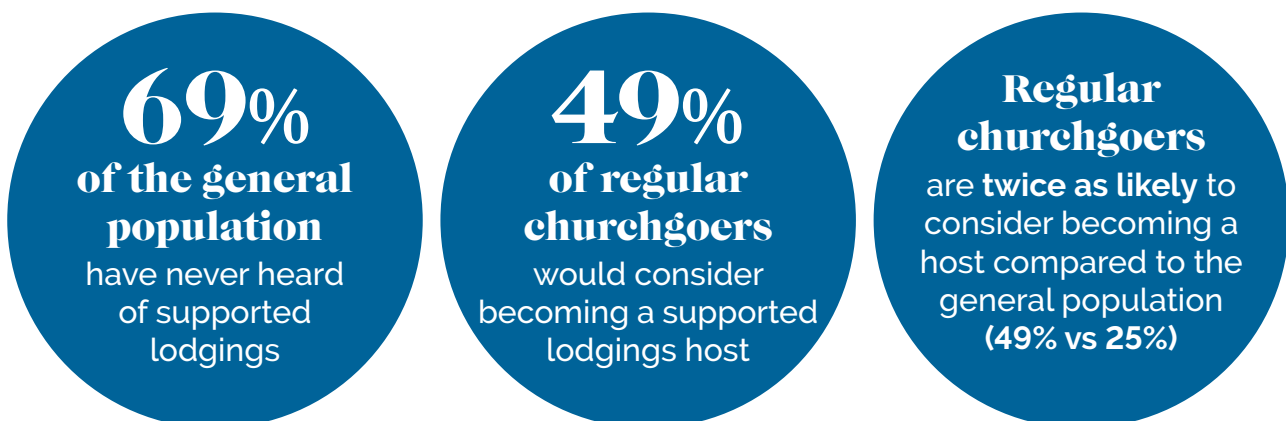
There is **huge financial variation** in how much hosts are paid. No research has been done so far to determine what the most effective payment levels are to make supported lodgings an appealing and financially viable option for hosts. While some geographical variation in the payments provided to supported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

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

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

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

## How can churches help meet the need?



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

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

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



# Executive Summary (continued)

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## Recommendations

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

### Recommendations to Government:

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

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

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

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## Recommendations to local authorities:

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

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

*For those already running a supported lodgings scheme:*

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

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## Recommendations to supported lodgings providers:

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

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## Recommendations to church leaders:

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



# Summary for Young People

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

## WHAT IS SUPPORTED LODGINGS?



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

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

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



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



## WHO NEEDS TO GET INVOLVED?

1

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

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



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

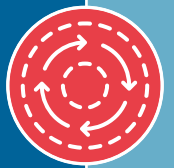
## THE NEED TO RAISE AWARENESS



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

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

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



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



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



2

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

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



3

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

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







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