

Welcome and introduction

Thank you for acting as a host family for Cotswold Guardians. Below are some guidelines to assist you in providing a welcoming stay for your overseas pupil. The majority of what is listed below is common-sense, and is naturally what you would do for any visitor; please do not feel that this is an attempt to “tell you how to do it”, rather it is a guide if you are nervous and want some more information! At any time during the student’s stay, please contact Anne. She will ring over the weekend to check that everything is OK and the student arrived safely.

Contact Details

There will be times that you need to contact us. We are always here to assist you with any questions or concerns that you may have. You can contact in the following ways:

| General enquiries | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Telephone | 01285 711789 |
| Email | anne@cotswold-guardians.co.uk |
| Emergencies 24/7 | |
| Telephone | 07733 333914 |
| Safeguarding concerns | |
| Designated safeguarding Lead Anne Sharp | 07733 333914 |
| Contact Details for the Local Safeguarding Partners- Gloucestershire | 01452 426263 |
| Contact Details for the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) Gloucestershire | 01452 426994 |

Anne will contact the student during their stay to touch base with them. I will also be in contact with you either by message or phone. **If at ANY time you have a question, want clarification on something or just want to discuss behaviour, do not hesitate to ring me.**

Prior to arrival

At the start of each term Anne will arrange who will be hosting the various students. A Homestay Form will be sent, listing the different exeat/half terms that the student is expected to require. Please can you confirm at this stage if you are available the weekends requested. Unfortunately they often change, particularly the exeat weekends, when the student may be invited to stay with a school friend. If this occurs Cotswold Guardians will inform you as soon as possible. A week before the exeat, the final completed form will be sent, with confirmed transport arrangements.

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When you have been sent the final form with the student's email/mobile on it, we suggest you contact them to introduce yourself. This is a good opportunity to ask the student if they need to do anything that weekend (ie shopping), and to ask them what sort of food they like/dislike.

Looking after and respecting the rights of the student

We host students aged between 11 and 18. Students of different ages may require different care. For example, younger students will require greater nurturing and supervision during their stay, whereas older students will be more independent and may be allowed to visit the local area on their own. Parental permissions may vary from student to student too. We will explain to you what we expect from you prior to placing any student with you.

One of the most mutually rewarding experiences of hosting an international student is learning about another culture. We ask that all homestays respect the students' own culture, values and background and be mindful that there will be some differences in the way students approach everyday life, such as when greeting others or whilst eating. Likewise, the students may have a different religious belief to the homestay. Again, we ask that you are respectful of any differences.

Some children will have a very limited command of English, this is one of the reasons why they are in the UK and are at a host family. Please talk clearly to them, and be aware that some cultures do not encourage chat – the mantra “be seen and not heard” is still very applicable. Also, it is natural for the students to be a bit shy; this is part of the fun and challenge of being a host family! Seeing a student blossom is one of the most rewarding elements of hosting!

The best way to treat them is like one of your children or a cousin who is staying – encourage them to join in watching the TV, playing games, going for walks, etc. If you expect your children to lay the table, empty the dishwasher etc, then please encourage them likewise. The idea is that the student gets an idea of life in an English home.

Loco Parentis

We expect our homestays to exercise the same levels of care as a responsible parent – in loco parentis. This means that you are accepting the day-to-day responsibility for the care of the student whilst they are staying with you.

Codes of conduct

CotswoldGuardians has a code of conduct for staff and homestays. Please take time to read through this document as it outlines how staff and homestays are expected to behave whilst working for the guardianship organisation.

Likewise we have a code of conduct for students. This outlines the expected standards of behaviour for our students. Please read through this as it will help you to understand our expectations.

Safeguarding

Cotswold Guardians is committed to safeguarding and child protection. We have comprehensive policies on safeguarding, prevent / anti-radicalisation, low level concerns, complaints, anti-bullying, missing student, online safety, data protection that provide further information and outline our procedures. These can be found on the company website. Please ensure that you have read and understood all our policies.

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You are required to undertake a basic certificated course on safeguarding. This should be refreshed every three years. We will also provide an annual safeguarding update. This will be via email.

We encourage students to talk to any trusted adult should they have any concerns. As a homestay, a student may consider you to be a trusted adult. There may be students who feel more comfortable speaking to other homestay family members about a concern they may have. You should therefore ensure that all members of your household are aware of what to do if a concern is shared with them. We have explained to students that any concerns they raise will be treated seriously. If a student comes to you or any homestay member to raise a concern, please ensure that it is dealt with in line with our published procedure (see safeguarding policy) and reported to our Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

Control

Homestays may only use reasonable, appropriate and lawful means of control to maintain safety. Under no circumstances should physical punishment ever be used.

Homesickness

When students arrive in the UK, they might be homesick.

Signs that they may be feeling homesick include:

- A strong desire to go home
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling sad
- Feeling anxious
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of confidence
- Feeling depressed
- Experiencing mood swings
- Feeling insecure
- Finding simple tasks difficult
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches and nausea

If your student is showing signs of homesickness, tell them not to worry as there are many people who can help them manage their feelings. Let them talk to you about their feelings, and remind them that they can always talk to their house parent, teacher, parent, guardian, or any member of guardian staff who will listen and will be able to support you and offer advice. It is best not to encourage them to frequently call home, as this can make the feelings worse. Keeping the student busy and interested in a variety of family activities and discussions may help them settle and feel happier. Please do let us know if you are concerned that your student is suffering with homesickness. We are here to support both you and the student.

How to comfort a student in distress

There may be occasions where your student is upset. For example, the student may be homesick (see above), unwell or experiencing pressure in their academic studies. In such incidences please do not comfort the student physically. It is inappropriate to hug a student as you may comfort your own child, however there are many things you can do to help:

- Listen to the student's concerns

- Offer comforting words and advice
- If you can speak the students' first language, this may help to calm the student
- Please do alert us to the problem and we will offer you support

Curfews and Bedtimes

We will inform you whether or not the student you are hosting has permission to go out alone. All students who are permitted to go out unaccompanied by their homestay must take their mobile phone (fully charged) with them and keep this switched on. Please make sure that they have your telephone number programmed into their phone. It is important that if students do go out unaccompanied, that they let you know where they are going and roughly know long they will be out. If for any reason they are delayed, students must contact you to keep you informed of their whereabouts.

Accommodation requirements

Homestays should ensure that they provide a comfortable living environment for students. We require our students to be provided with the following:

- A suitable bedroom and social area(s) which are well kept, clean and in good repair, with sufficient natural light.
- Suitable safeguards must be in place to ensure that students have sufficient privacy from other students. Parents should be made aware of students who may wish to share bedrooms and must give consent before the arrangement goes ahead.
- Where homestays are using a double bed, only one student is using this facility. Under no circumstances should students share a double bed.
- The rooms should have suitable heating and lighting and there should be access to sufficient supplies of hot water as required.
- Students should have access to a private space to study.
- Students should have access to appropriate hanging and drawer space for clothing.
- Students should have access to a bathroom with a lock on the door and either a shower or bath.
- Students should be treated as part of the family, and therefore have access to the communal rooms in the home. They should not have access to family member's bedrooms.

Please provide a towel and make sure they are familiar with the bathroom. If you have a busy household, it might be helpful to allocate them a time in the morning/evening when they know they will have access, rather than them getting embarrassed and not using it.

Please make us aware if any member of the homestay is a smoker, or if you have any pets. Students should have the right to opt for a non-smoking and/or non-pet homestay environment.

Please be aware of the need to ascertain the adequacy of your home insurance in respect of hosting international students. The insured (homeowner) should declare all facts to the insurer in order to a) obtain the right cover and b) obtain the right premium.

No more than three students should be placed with the same homestay at any one time, unless in exceptional circumstances. Please ensure that you inform us if you work with other guardianship organisations as we need to check that you are not accommodating more than three students in total when members of an AEGIS guardianship organisation are being hosted.

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When students under the age of 16 are in the care of a homestay, no students over the age of 20 should be hosted either by the guardianship organisation or another guardianship organisation working within the same homestay.

Homestays should not host any other paying guests or operate any form of bed and breakfast facility when hosting AEGIS students.

While there are no legal restrictions, homestays are expected to adhere to NSPCC advice on adult supervision and ensure that:

- Students aged 12 and under are not left home alone for a long period of time.
- Students aged 16 and under are not left home alone overnight.
- Students are not left home alone regardless of their age if they do not feel comfortable with this.

Meals and Snacks

We ask that homestays provide students with a full board provision of breakfast, lunch and dinner during their stay, taking account of any dietary needs. In addition, students should be provided with access to suitable drinks and snacks during their stay.

Laundry

Homestays are asked to provide students with suitable laundry facilities if they are resident for more than one night. In most cases the homestay would undertake to do the laundry for the student. Depending upon the age of the students, the homestay may give permission for them to do their own laundry if requested and agreed.

Use of the homestay's car for transport

Any cars used to transport student should be roadworthy with up-to-date tax, insurance, and MOT (where required). If you provide transport using your car for the students in your care, please be aware of the need for adequate comprehensive vehicle insurance and that you should inform your insurers that you will be using your car to provide transport to international students for which you may be paid or receive expenses.

Please ensure that all relevant laws relating to the use of child seats or booster seats for under 12s, when the student is below 135cm in height, and seat belts for over 12s or more than 135cm tall are discussed with students and adhered to.

Access to computers and the internet & safe use of the internet

It is most likely that your student will want to access the internet during their stay. We ask that they use their own devices and not the family computer. We have an online safety policy that outlines the main risks to be aware of and what you can do as a homestay to help keep students safe. Please take time to read this document.

Health and Safety in the Home

We expect all homestays to adhere to our health and safety guidelines:

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- A minimum of one smoke alarm should be installed on every storey.
- A carbon monoxide alarm to be installed in any room containing a gas, liquid or solid fuel burning appliance.
- An annual landlord gas safety check to be undertaken by a Gas Safe registered engineer and a copy of the certificate provided to the guardianship organisation.
- The homestay must ensure that the electrical system is safe, e.g. sockets and light fittings are secure and not overloaded and any appliances used by the student are safe.
- The homestay must discuss the possible evacuation routes from the property with students on a regular basis. If doors or windows are locked students must know where to find the key in the event of a fire.
- If fire extinguishers and fire blankets are provided, they must be suitably serviced.
- Where open fires are used, a suitable fire guard should be in place when the fire is lit.
- Any matches / lighters should be appropriately stored.
- A basic first aid kit should be available to include, plasters, sterile eye-pad, triangular bandage, safety pins, non-medicated wound dressing, disposable gloves, leaflet giving guidance on first aid.
- Any prescription medication and drugs should be kept safely especially when hosting young students.
- Alcohol should be appropriately stored.
- The homestay should have an awareness of basic food hygiene when preparing meals for students.

We will conduct an initial visit to check that your accommodation is suitable prior to you hosting a student. Thereafter we will visit at least once a year to undertake an annual check. Please let us know immediately if there are any changes in the accommodation you are offering. This includes informing us of any temporary building work that may take place when you are due to host students. Please refer to our separate Welfare, Health and Safety statement.

Changes in circumstances

You are required to inform the guardianship organisation about any changes to the homestay arrangements.

Expenses, payments and excursions

Cotswold Guardians ensures that any payments due to homestays are transacted promptly and in line with any contractual agreements in place. If you have any queries regarding this please do not hesitate to get in touch with Anne.

Many host families take the student out for a trip or two (depending on the workload of the student and other family commitments) – the cost of entry for the student, half the cost of the student's meal, treats (ie popcorn at the cinema) and mileage (@50p per mile) is an allowable expense. If it is to an expensive attraction, please confirm with Anne beforehand – ie theme park/activity day. Swimming/ice skating/museum/cinema etc do not need prior approval. If you know you will be taking them to swim, please let us know beforehand – we can then make sure the student brings a swimsuit with them! Students will often have their own pocket money – they should be encouraged to use it, rather than relying on you.

If they will need any particular clothing – such as wellies for walks/tennis racquet/warm clothes etc please let us know beforehand and it can be added to their form.

Parental consent is required before students are allowed to ride a horse, quad bike, trampoline etc

Your contract and cancelling the agreement

Host families can pause or cancel their contract at any time, if circumstances prevail. This needs to be done by a short email confirming this and all their details will be deleted.

If Cotswold Guardians deem to consider the host family not meeting the criteria, then the agreement between Cotswold Guardians and the host family will be terminated. This will be documented with a phone call followed by an email to the host family explaining why.

In serious situations Cotswold Guardians will take advice from Aegis and take appropriate action.

Data Protection

Please do not use any images of students in social media.

Your information is not shared with any third party (except prospective parents) without your prior consent.

Responsibilities during a pandemic

Pandemics can cause major disruption to travel and schooling. It is important in such events that Cotswold Guardians takes advice from the government, the UK Health Security Agency and the World Health Organisation. AEGIS also provides guidance for members to follow. This is regularly updated as a situation develops. Usually, in a pandemic it is important to restrict movement so as not to spread the disease further. That means boarding school students would usually remain at school. In the event of a pandemic Cotswold Guardians may not be able to offer homestay accommodation as this could place students, homestay families and the wider community at risk.

Cotswold Guardians will work with parents to find flights to home countries where required. We will work with schools to meet students' needs during a pandemic. This could be by helping to support students to learn remotely as directed by the school.

Cotswold Guardians will work with parents and schools to find suitable quarantine accommodation for students where required.