



Regent Language Training guidelines to the recruitment of Host Families

Introduction

Regent Language Training has a legal duty of care to the students and the homestay host has certain legal rights and responsibilities in relation to that care. As part of our duty of care schools must do their best to ensure that they place students in accommodation which is safe, with suitable hosts. So, schools must make hosts aware of their legal responsibilities and check, as far as they can, that the hosts are acting within the law. Schools should also make hosts aware of their legal rights. The following information is given as general guidance only as outlined by English UK.

Discrimination and the placement of students

If homestay providers are sharing facilities with students they may refuse to host a student of a particular gender, religious group, from a particular ethnic group or of a particular nationality, although they should not publicise such discrimination. Schools may make it clear to hosts who express such preferences that this may limit the number of possible placements.

Schools equally may match students to hosts on the basis of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion or nationality, provided they are doing so because of students' needs, expectations and requests. Again, they must not publicise such discrimination and they should not discriminate in taking people onto their books as potential homestay hosts, provided they can meet the required criteria.

Size of Rooms

There are set standards including the size of bedrooms for a house in multiple occupation (see also below). These standards do not apply to homes letting out one or two rooms, but you may look at the recommendations as a guide: 70 sq. ft. for one adult, 110 sq. ft. for two adults, children of 10 and over counting as adults.

See www.communities.gov.uk/housing/

Fire Precautions, Health & Safety

Risk assessments

Hosts are **obliged** to make sure that the premises are safe: that they have assessed any risks and taken measures to minimise them. If hosts do not do this they may be considered liable in case of accident (and the organisation may be considered liable for recommending the premises without making sufficient checks).

Fire

See www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/aboutguides/

In particular search for 'Do you have paying guests?'

These guidelines are to help 'small businesses' meet the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. If hosts receive money for providing accommodation they have 'some level of control in premises and so must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire'.

Measures that the school can insist on and check as part of the contract with accommodation providers, as appropriate, include:

- .Smoke alarms
- .Carbon monoxide alarms
- .Fire extinguisher/fire blanket
- .Fire doors
- .Fire escapes

Schools are advised to consult your own local Fire Authority as to their requirements/ recommendations. The local fire service is often very helpful in providing advice that can be passed on to hosts.

Gas

All gas appliances **must** only be fitted and checked by a professional on the Gas Safe Register www.gassaferegister.co.uk/ . Schools must ask to see an annual Gas Safety Certificate.

No appliance should be used if it is known or suspected of being unsafe. The room where the gas appliance is located must have adequate ventilation - air inlets should not be blocked to prevent draughts, and flues and chimneys should not be obstructed.

7. Houses of Multiple Occupation

Schools should check that any accommodation they recommend or arrange is licensed as an HMO if it needs to be, because there are statutory health and safety requirements (e.g. about fire escapes, fire doors). This will not usually apply in homestays or even self-catering private homes where the students share facilities, but some 'private homes' with a large number of paying guests may be required to register with the local authority as an HMO.

Mandatory licensing of a house as being in multiple occupancy will only apply if the property is three or more storeys and occupied by four or more persons in addition to the resident landlord and members of his/her household. See www.communities.gov.uk/housing/ (and put 'multiple occupancy' in the search box). We would advise you to contact your local council for more details about local requirements.

Insurance

Hosts should be advised to inform their insurance company that they are letting rooms so that they are covered for any damage or liability in case of accident. The insurance company may insist that certain measures be taken (and may charge more). If an accident occurs to the student in the host's home, and it is considered to be the result of negligence on the part of the host, then a claim may be made against the host. It is therefore important that the host has the appropriate insurance cover and has carried out and acted upon risk assessments (e.g. in case of fire).

Neither hosts nor the school are responsible for the safety of students' property while in the home and students ought to have their own insurance cover. However, hosts should be encouraged to take out a standard householder's policy, which can cover the students' belongings in case of fire or theft. It is a measure of protection for both student and hosts if there is a lockable drawer or cupboard in the student's room.

Damage

Schools are not legally liable for damage caused by students. The student would normally be legally liable for this and hosts can attempt to recover costs for accidental damage caused by students, but not wear and tear. The charge should not be the full replacement cost, but the current (second-hand) value of the item, so that the host does not benefit as a result. However, it may be difficult to claim against the student and he/she may return home before settlement can be agreed. It is therefore important that hosts make certain that the correct type of insurance cover is taken out.

Where students are expected to stay for some time, a small returnable deposit can be asked for.

Wilful damage should be reported to the police so that an incident number is available to present to the insurance company

Tax

Local inspectors from the HM Revenue and Customs have right of access to any records of payments to hosts, as part of their investigation into benefits fraud. Hosts should therefore be made aware that

records of payments to them have to be made available to inspectors if schools are required to reveal them.

Income Tax

Rental room legislation applies to people letting furnished accommodation in their own home. Income from letting to students over the threshold of £4,250 is liable to taxation and must be declared. Hosts in receipt of benefits must declare income from renting and may find that as a consequence their benefits are reduced.

If they receive income which does not exceed £4,250 p.a. (true of October 2014) they are exempt from tax on that money. Those who receive gross annual rents in excess of £4250 can choose between:

- paying tax on the amount by which their gross rents exceed £4250 without any separate tax relief for allowable expenses; or,
- calculating their profit from letting (gross rents less actual expenses) and paying tax on that profit in the normal way.

Further information on renting a room is obtainable from the Inland Revenue leaflet Rent a Room, and it is recommended that schools make hosts aware of this. (See www.direct.gov.uk - put Rent a Room Scheme into the search box)

Capital Gains Tax

When a house is sold hosts are not liable for Capital Gains Tax so long as meals/services have been provided and the student shares rooms/ facilities with the host.

Tenure

Hosts are not risking the student's having security of tenure provided that food/services are being supplied. Bed-sit accommodation or furnished flats may be classed as holiday lets so long as the accommodation is let for only eight months of the year and normally, under these circumstances, security of tenure would not apply. If the school is arranging independent, self-catering accommodation for long-stay students (particularly in a self-contained unit) for more than eight months it is preferable for a short-term tenancy agreement to be made directly between the host and the student.

Mail & Students' Property

Hosts may not hold or destroy students' mail. It should be forwarded or returned to the Post Office marked 'Gone Away'. The host may return mail to the Post Office even if the student has left a forwarding address, though they may forward any mail to the student (perhaps via the school).

If property is left behind it may be held by the host or preferably by the organisation. A letter or email should be written to the student, or the student's parents, asking for instructions as to the disposal of the goods or payment in advance for the cost of postage or carriage. A large /valuable article such as a car is better handled by the Police. A charge may be made for luggage left for any lengthy period. A host may hold property belonging to a student against a disputed debt.

Drugs

If illegal drugs are kept or used by students in the host's house, the host is not committing an offence even if he/she is aware of this. But the host should tackle the student and contact the school for advice.

Care of under 18s/ Safeguarding

The prospective host (main carer) of students under the age of 18 (even if enrolled on an 'adult' course) must have a suitable check (DBS). It is good practice for other adults in the homestay to have DBS checks also, and in some situations they must be checked (see section on Fostering).

Fostering (e.g. homestay) and childcare

Local authorities place additional private fostering requirements on homestay providers accommodating under 16s, or students with disabilities under the age of 18, for 27 nights or more.

- The host and any member of their household over 16 will have to have enhanced DBS checks.

- The organisation needs to notify the local authority that a private fostering arrangement (booking) has been made.
- An officer from the local authority must visit the host within 7 working days.
- Within 42 working days, the local authority must make a decision about the suitability of the proposed arrangement
- The private fostering officer has a duty to support the child and the hosts ensuring the child's welfare; this should include visiting the child in the home.

Rules and Guidelines

Hosts should receive clear guidelines about their responsibilities in relation to under-18 students. However, they are not in loco parentis (except in the case of Private Fostering). Unless the school is providing tuition-only, it has a duty of care to these students and has overall responsibility for deciding the arrangements for their care (as described to, and agreed by their parents at the time of booking) and for ensuring that hosts know about and are conforming to these arrangements.

Data Protection

Schools should be aware that any information held on a database (paper or electronic) about hosts is subject to the Data Protection Act. This entitles hosts to demand access to any information referring to them and to know what use will be made of this information. Let your homestay hosts know on their contract that this information will be made available to students, agents and inspectors, and as required by HM Revenue and Customs.