

# A Better Way Home

Community Hosting to Prevent Youth Homelessness



“ It is knowing that you  
can talk to someone;  
that someone cares...  
It is about feeling safe.

”

Amaya, 17

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## About End Youth Homelessness Cymru

End Youth Homelessness Cymru is a coalition, led by [Llamau](#), determined to end youth homelessness; a mission we believe is both vital and achievable.

We cannot do this alone, but by building a national movement and working with partners, we aim to create the systemic and cultural change necessary to prevent and end youth homelessness in Wales.

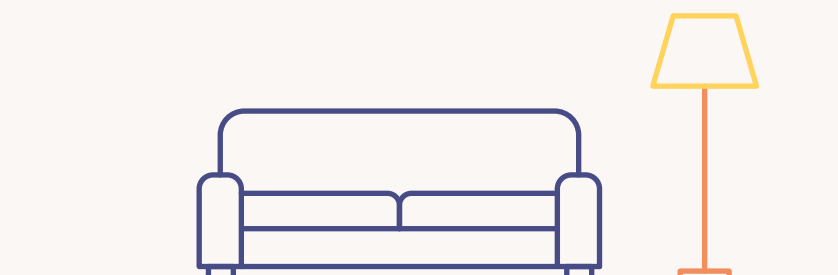
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## Executive Summary

Community Hosting schemes provide young people with a room of their own in the home of an approved and trained private household, with support provided by a specialist organisation to both the 'host' household and young person.

Community Hosting uses existing resources within communities to provide a relatively quick way to increase the supply of emergency and temporary accommodation, as there is no need to build new accommodation or reallocate housing stock. The report examines three models of Community Hosting as a way of preventing homelessness in Wales.

Firstly, **Supported Lodgings**: this model involves a young person staying with a host for an extended period, normally from six months to two years. Secondly, **Enhanced Supported Lodgings**, a less common model, which aims to house young people considered to have more complex support needs in the homes of hosts who are experienced in such provision. Thirdly, **emergency forms of Community Hosting**, including Nightstop, which are designed to provide short-stay accommodation in hosts' homes, normally between one night to a few weeks.

### Tailored and Individualised Support for Young People

Based on conversations with providers, hosts and young people we found Community Hosting to be an effective model of housing for young people who need a more nurturing environment. What made medium-term placements special was the tailored individualised support offered to young people by a host and a specialist organisation. Young people told us they enjoyed learning independent living skills in a safe, family environment. Hosts explained they gained a sense of achievement from helping young people with independent living skills and providing a foundation for their future. The providers of the service also provided specialist support to young people. This combined support had helped young people achieve education, employment and training outcomes and to successfully live independently. Although Enhanced Community Hosting was only operating in one local authority, similar positive outcomes for young people housed in this model were described.

## Emergency Community Hosting

We found that there were three key advantages of Emergency Community Hosting. Firstly, it offers a safe place for young people to stay, that provides a break from their family to give space to address issues that are making it hard to stay at home. When combined with mediation, it offers an effective approach to helping young people to return home (where safe and appropriate to do so). Secondly, it provided a safe space for young person's support and housing needs to be assessed and thirdly a young person could see if they liked living in Community Hosting and could stay in the model on a longer-term basis.

## What Works: Dedicated Community Hosting Workers

More established local authority and third sector providers of Community Hosting schemes explained that having a *dedicated* Community Hosting worker is essential; the role cannot and should not be tagged on to another job. In our interviews, hosts explained that they knew they were part of a bigger team and they felt valued by their 'absolutely amazing' worker. Providers explained repeatedly how getting the right person in the role had turned the service around.

## Current Provision of Community Hosting in Wales

Results of our survey show that current provision of Community Hosting is patchy across Wales. It is generally provided by social services rather than housing departments. This means that in some local authorities the model is only available to care leavers rather than all the young people who could benefit from a nurturing family environment. Our recommendations address this issue, noting that Welsh Government should ensure that there is sufficient resource in place across local authorities for dedicated workers to be made available everywhere in Wales.

## Recommendations

Based upon the input of stakeholders including young people, hosts and staff members of both local authority and third sector providers, we present below a set of recommendations to further develop Community Hosting as a resource to prevent youth homelessness in Wales. These recommendations are intended to increase the extent of provision of this useful approach to youth homelessness prevention, in conjunction with key stakeholders, and to enhance the sharing and development of good practice in Community Hosting.

### Recommendation 1

**Welsh Government** should facilitate the establishment of a **national Community Hosting network** for local authorities and the third sector.

*We recognise that there have been sporadic meetings of some local authority and third sector partners to this end, but this should be formalised and supported by Welsh Government to ensure that Community Hosting is recognised, and accessible, across the country as a valuable element of the overall strategy to end youth homelessness.*

This report suggests that this network should consider reviewing and sharing practice on:

- ways of ensuring hosts feel valued (including pay-levels)
- the production of a universal set of quality standards for Community Hosting
- training resources for hosts, co-designed with young people. Young people were particularly keen that hosts receive training in mental health issues.

### Recommendation 2

**Welsh Government** should fund an advertising campaign designed to increase the numbers and diversity of hosts, with input from the national network to reflect need at a local level.



### Recommendation 3

The national Community Hosting network should consider whether they can offer a **space for hosts to come together as a peer network** to share good practice, tips and experiences.

### Recommendation 4

Welsh Government should ensure that every local authority is sufficiently well resourced to deliver Community Hosting with **dedicated Community Hosting staff** members, whether local authority or third sector, to manage the increase in placements alongside this campaign.

### Recommendation 5

Local Authority Fostering Teams should actively recommend Foster Care applicants whose lifestyle is better suited to Community Hosting to the appropriate department in their local authority to enhance recruitment of hosts.

### Recommendation 6

**Local authority homelessness departments should proactively offer Community Hosting as an option for young people**, where available, in line with Welsh Government guidance to end the use of unsuitable and harmful emergency accommodation.

*At present the service is often delivered via social services departments but needs to be considered as part of all Local Authorities' Youth Homelessness Strategies. Community Hosting offers a useful source of support and accommodation for all young people at risk of homelessness, regardless of 'looked-after' status.*

## Background and Context

This report aims to inform the future provision of Community Hosting as one of the ways of preventing youth homelessness in Wales. Three forms of community hosting are examined:

Firstly, **Supported Lodgings**: this model involves a young person staying with a host for an extended period (although still temporary), normally from six months to two years.

Secondly, **Enhanced Supported Lodgings**, a less common model, which aims to house young people considered to have more complex support needs in the homes of hosts who are experienced in meeting these needs.

Thirdly, **Emergency Community Hosting**, including Nightstop, which is designed to provide short-stay accommodation in hosts' homes, normally between one night to a few weeks.

End Youth Homelessness Cymru is committed to amplifying the voices of young people who have experienced homelessness and their voices inform this report. We asked Kaidan, aged 17, who is living in Supported Lodgings, whether he felt it was a good option for preventing youth homelessness. He commented:

“

(We can end youth homelessness) by putting the money into training for Supported Lodgings to get more people in... There are not enough (Supported Lodgings placements) down here... so many people are having to move really far away because there are not enough spaces around. It would really do people favours. I don't think some people understand how easy it is. It is no sweat especially if they have got a great placement like myself.

Kaidan, 17

”

## Community Hosting Terminology

Reflecting the sporadic nature of its delivery, differing terminology is used across the country when referring to the various elements that make up community hosting. For the purposes of this report:

- **Provider** means the local authority or third sector organisation that runs the Community Hosting scheme.
- The term **host** means the householder in the community, the person with a spare room, that the young person lives with. The host is approved, trained and supported by the provider to support a young person to live in their home. The young person is also supported by the provider.

All the young people we spoke to for the research have stayed in Community Hosting and are referred to by pseudonyms. Likewise, where we have used the names of hosts or workers we agreed to change these, so that they felt confident to speak to us openly. The terms **scheme, service or placement** variously describe community hosting services but it is important to recognise that these are references to young people's *homes*. Finally, the term **community hosting** itself is a catch-all; most people, when discussing the model, use the term Supported Lodgings, but the spirit of this study suggests that it is important to use a wider term to describe the various approaches beyond traditional Supported Lodgings.

Community Hosting is a very well-established model in some local authorities, in Wales and beyond. For example, Cardiff Council have been delivering Supported Lodgings for 18 years. In England, Depaul UK have been running the Nightstop service, an emergency form of Community Hosting, for 33 years. Community Hosting has not, however, received much by way of critical analysis of its effectiveness in Wales, hence the decision to focus on the various iterations of the model for this paper. It is also a model which is not universally available to young people at risk of homelessness in Wales, despite some local authorities' continued reliance on B&B accommodation, which is often more expensive and much less well suited as a form of accommodation for young people. Some local authorities offer community hosting only to those in their care, others not at all. This sporadic approach across Wales is another reason for the focus on the model in this report: Community Hosting will not, in and of itself, end youth homelessness, but it is an approach which merits further consideration and, given our findings on its effectiveness, it is one which every young person who needs it should be able to access, regardless of local authority or whether they are care experienced.

Community Hosting will not suit all young people; some young people will want the independence offered by other housing models.<sup>1</sup> However, many young people experiencing homelessness still need a nurturing home environment, with the type of informal support that the hosts we spoke to for this report provide. Community Hosting providers fed back that the service was a stepping-stone for some young people when it is not yet appropriate for them to go into independent or semi-independent living. Research suggests we need varied accommodation choices for young people to meet the varied needs of young people.<sup>2</sup>

Supported Lodgings is a model which was highlighted within EYHC's report, [Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks...](#) as a valuable approach to preventing homelessness amongst care-experienced young people, particularly when contrasted with some existing forms

of temporary accommodation. Such a view is supported by recent research in Scotland that found that it had a role to play in replacing use of 'unsuitable' and even 'harmful' emergency and temporary accommodation, in particular bed and breakfast (B&B), night shelters and unsuitable mixed age supported accommodation.<sup>3</sup> The comment below is from a host who works in supported housing and is aware of the emergency accommodation available to young people in her area.

We know that an undersupply of housing, particularly that built with single, young people in mind, is a key contributor to young people's vulnerability to homelessness. Community Hosting uses existing resources within communities to provide a relatively quick way to increase the supply of emergency and temporary accommodation as there is no need to build new accommodation or reallocate housing stock.

“

If you put a young person in Bed & Breakfast with all the paedophiles and drug addicts, it is costing them £50 a night to keep them there and it doesn't make sense. They have got to be out of the door at 10 o'clock in the morning. What is all that about? When they could be offering the money to Supported Lodgings providers then they have got a lovely house and a lovely room. They have their own room and 24 hour support basically.

Supported Lodgings host, south Wales ”

”

1 Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

2 Francis, C. Chan, J. and Drennan-Lang, G (2018) Supported Lodgings Business Case. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

3 Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland: 6.

## Community Hosting within the Roadmap to Ending Youth Homelessness in Wales

In early 2021, EYHC released '[A Roadmap to Ending Youth Homelessness in Wales](#)' which examines the systems and services needed to end youth homelessness. The Roadmap puts a youth lens on the recommendations of the Homelessness Action Group and uses the same framework to explain the different types of interventions needed at specific times to prevent homelessness.<sup>4</sup> In order to eradicate homelessness we need to move resources upstream, towards the universal prevention and targeted prevention components of the framework, but we will also continue to need crisis prevention, emergency prevention and recovery

prevention interventions for those whose homelessness was not prevented earlier.<sup>5</sup> Community hosting provision forms a key part of this overarching framework of preventative interventions. Medium-term community hosting, such as Supported Lodgings and Enhanced Supported Lodgings, is a form of recovery prevention. Emergency Community Hosting including emergency Supported Lodgings and Nightstop is a form of emergency prevention aimed at preventing young people from sofa-surfing, rough sleeping or having to stay in unsuitable emergency accommodation.



4 Fitzpatrick, S. Mackie, P. Wood, J. (2021) Advancing a Five-Level Typology of Homelessness Prevention Manuscript submitted for publication.

5 As 4 Fitzpatrick et al. (2021).

## Methodology – Who We Spoke To

The first stage of the research was to undertake a contextualised literature review to inform the research design and survey questions. The research design was presented to the 'EYHC Community Hosting Working Group' for comment. EYHC peer researchers co-designed the interview schedule, information sheet and consent forms for young people.

The second stage of the research was data collection. An online mapping survey was sent to a contact in housing in each of the twenty-two Welsh local authorities in January 2021. EYHC then conducted semi-structured interviews from February 2021 until April 2021. We received data on Community Hosting services in fifteen local authorities in Wales. We also interviewed five members of the strategic and operational staff

from youth homelessness organisation Llamau, which runs various Community Hosting schemes across south Wales. Interviews were also conducted with four organisations delivering Community Hosting in England and Scotland.

We spoke with seven young people in total: we interviewed four young people who were currently involved in Community Hosting and conducted a focus group with three young people who had recent experience of Community Hosting but had since moved on. While they described some positive experiences they had felt it was not the most appropriate model for them e.g. one of them felt ready to live more independently. Current Provision of Community Hosting in Wales

## Findings

Supported Lodgings schemes are being provided either internally by social services or housing, or a third sector organisation in fifteen of Wales' twenty two local authorities.<sup>6</sup>

Llamau operate Supported Lodgings in seven local authorities, Local Solutions run it in two local authorities, Barnardo's Cymru in one local authority, and in the remaining five local authorities they operate the service internally.

Llamau operate an Enhanced Supported Lodgings service in Carmarthenshire. In Powys, the local authority run service provides a higher payment for Supported Lodgings hosts to support young people with more complex needs.

Two local authorities, Cardiff Council and Pembrokeshire, deliver Emergency Supported Lodgings internally. Llamau operate Emergency Supported Lodgings in Carmarthenshire and the Vale of Glamorgan, as well as looking to develop more emergency provision in other areas with an existing Supported Lodgings service. Nightstop is run in Conwy and Flintshire by third sector partner Local Solutions.

## Young People's Feedback on Community Hosting and Outcomes

Research suggests that what is special about Community Hosting is the unique structure of the support offered to the young people, where professional and specialist support is combined with more informal support within a family environment offered by the host.<sup>7</sup> In our interviews young people spoke of having a great 'support bubble' of feeling safe, loved and living somewhere that felt like home. This combined and individualised support aims to enable young people to achieve a number of positive outcomes

including, emotional wellbeing and confidence, independent living skills and employment, education and training.<sup>8</sup>

“

I feel loved and supported. That is the main thing isn't it... I feel because I live with a family, and I am a family person myself, I feel included. I feel like I am part of something.

Loren, 17

”

<sup>6</sup> For detailed information pertaining to survey responses, see Appendix A

<sup>7</sup> Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

<sup>8</sup> As 7, Watts and Blenkinsopp, 2018.

Young people told us their placements were a living space where they were able to be independent but where they could develop skills and confidence and be supported to attend education, employment or training. The focus of Supported Lodgings schemes is to support young people to develop the skills that they need to live independently. Three of the four young people we interviewed who were staying in Supported Lodgings had been able to stay within their local community. This had meant that two of them were able to remain in school or college and avoid

disruption of their education. The third young person was not attending any employment, education or training but her host was teaching her independent living skills (cooking, for example). All three valued the opportunity to be able to stay close to their friends. The fourth young person had moved away from his friends but he thought that was a good thing. He had been supported to access training during his placement. The four young people interviewed were all overwhelmingly positive about their ongoing experiences of Community Hosting. They commented:

“

I think I have got it a lot better than most kids in care. I think if more hosts did things like (my hosts) did I think a lot more kids would be a lot more happier... I have got such a great support bubble now. It is really good.

Kaidan, 17

”

“

It feels like home. It is not home but it does feel like home. I feel it has given me quite a lot of independence as well. Because when I was living at home I was arguing with my parents quite a lot. I have got more independent now when I am living here. She is my guardian, she cares for me but there are still things I have to do for myself so that's good for me.

Madeline, 18

”

“

It is knowing that you can talk to someone; that someone cares... It is about feeling safe. I do feel safe here because it is just safe isn't it? We've got cameras, we have got lights outside. Even when I go outside the lights light up. He makes sure I am safe here.

Amaya, 17

”



## Outcomes

As well as being an accommodation option there were also good outcomes for young people staying in Community Hosting, especially continued engagement in education, training or employment. Research has found Community Hosting is associated with a variety of positive outcomes for young people, including being in paid work when they leave their placement and better management of harmful substance use.<sup>9</sup> The hosts and providers we spoke to described young people being able to continue their A-levels, go to university, join the military or start apprenticeships. In some cases they felt young people would not have had these opportunities without Community Hosting. The perspective expressed below is from a Supported Lodgings provider about the progression of some of the young people she supported:

“

Last year we had a young person who hadn't been with foster carers and had gone straight in at 16 years of age into Supported Lodgings. She is now studying at University. We've got the young person who's now joined the Royal Navy. Got one who's now in his second year in the army having the time of his life and we have got young people as well who are living independently. Not coming to the attention of any great shakes or anything but managing their own little homes.

”

Local authority, west Wales

<sup>9</sup> Littlewood, M. Bramley, G. Fitzpatrick, S. Wood, J. (2017) Eradicating Homelessness in Scotland's Four Largest Cities: Providing an Evidence Base and Guiding a Funding Framework. Edinburgh: Herriot Watt University.

## Understanding the Young People's Journeys

We also held a focus group with three young people with previous experience of Community Hosting, who reported some mixed experiences. One of the young people had felt ready to live independently and now has her own tenancy. Two of them were still currently homeless and they were both sofa surfing. One of them was still in contact with her host even though it had been an emergency placement. Generally, they felt that hosts did not always understand their behaviour (for instance, why they would want to stay in their bedroom when they had just been kicked out of home, or why they got angry sometimes). Practitioners agreed and said hosts should be consistently trained to offer a trauma informed service.

Despite this, there was evidence of hosts supporting young people in a trauma informed way. For example, one host who specialised in autism and ADHD said “sometimes you need to sit back and think: it is about them and not me”.

The young people told us the thing they would particularly like to change about Community Hosting was more mental health training. They felt the training should involve role-play and should be co-designed by young people. Research has found that hosts particularly valued decision-making scenarios in training, which helped them identify issues that may arise in placements.<sup>10</sup>

The young people commented:

“

They need training on mental health. They need training on how to approach us and how to speak to us in a way we understand. Because I was in one placement and I've got difficulties in explaining how I feel at times or what's going on in my mind. I think there should be a group of young people, maybe a role-play type of thing on how we (might) act. Just to say 'it would be better to approach the young person this way' or 'you might want to approach that a different way'. The training would be role-play and they would be learning how to help young people

Katie, 18

”

The importance of co-design came up in interviews with providers as well, with one third-sector provider in south-west Wales suggesting young people should be involved in the co-design of services. Research suggests that potential hosts value hearing from young people about issues such as how they benefit from their placements; to understand what being a host involves and whether the role is right for them.<sup>11</sup> Such feedback helps hosts to understand young people's expectations of a Community Hosting service. This also gives providers the opportunity to see how hosts relate to young people.

<sup>10</sup> Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

<sup>11</sup> Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

## Supported Lodgings

Originally developed for care leavers, the Supported Lodgings model is also used to accommodate homeless young people in some local authorities.<sup>12</sup> As with all Community Hosting approaches, Supported Lodgings schemes provide young people with a room of their own in the home of an approved and trained private household, with support to the 'host' household(er) and young person provided by a specialist organisation.<sup>13</sup>

Supported Lodgings placements are intended to provide medium-term accommodation – participants typically noted that their placements were intended to provide housing for between six months and two years. The host helps the young person with practical skills to help them develop their confidence and ability to live independently. Professional support is available to support the placement and help with any support needs the young person might have.

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12 Littlewood, M. Bramley, G. Fitzpatrick, S. Wood, J. (2017) Eradicating Homelessness in Scotland's Four Largest Cities: Providing an Evidence Base and Guiding a Funding Framework. Edinburgh: Herriot Watt University.

13 Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

## Supported Lodgings Hosts – Characteristics, Motivations and Support Offered

Most providers felt there was not a typical host. They told us that they had many different people from different occupations who had had different experiences. While there were some hosts who were social workers, nurses or had a social care background, there were also hosts who worked in tourism, call centres and sales. A third sector provider in west Wales explained that this was the ideal as by having a “range of different people they are able to support a full range of young people, if we have the same type of person supporting not all young people would fit in these places”. There was strong consensus between providers and hosts themselves that hosts ideally needed to have certain key characteristics. They included;

- A welcoming and warm personality;
- Patience; tolerance;
- A non-judgemental, compassionate outlook;
- A kind, encouraging and understanding nature;
- always be honest;
- Good communication skills and a willingness to always listen, because the young people are not used to being listened to;
- be willing to listen rather than flying off the handle;
- be willing to accept someone as part of a family;
- a good sense of humour.
- experience of bringing up their own kids or some other insight into how young people function.

The young people agreed with the hosts that they wanted to feel welcomed, be made to feel like part of the family, feel safe, be listened to and have someone on their side that looked after their best interests.

“

As soon as I met her I knew I was going to be happy here. She greeted me with a nice big smile and it was a very welcoming place.

Madeline, 18

”

“

They need to be good at talking, communication skills. Seem like they care and show that they actually care. It is knowing that you can talk to someone that someone cares and trust that they won't tell anyone. Feeling safe, I do feel safe here because it is just safe isn't it. We've got cameras we have got lights outside. Even when I go outside the lights light up. He makes sure I am safe here.

Amaya, 17

”

## Supported Lodgings Hosts' Motivations

Three of the hosts told us they wanted to be Supported Lodgings hosts because they had themselves experienced a difficult time when they were young, having left home when they were aged just 16 or 17. Three of the hosts we interviewed had a close family member who had experienced homelessness. For different reasons they had not been able to help them. They wanted to prevent other young people going through the traumatic experience of homelessness. Two of the hosts were social workers and one was a support worker. They valued being able to be more involved in a young person's transition to independent living rather than just supporting them for part of their journey.

“ Sometimes (in work) I would be reviewing young people leaving the care system and I would just say 'for God's sake' because sometimes young people were just hanging there and I felt frustrated that I couldn't get in there and do something practical for them. I do have a sense of achievement in terms of doing something practical for them. I hope this will give them a foundation for whatever they go on to, (that they) feel that they have got a home here and that there is someone who cares for them and wants them to do well in life. Even though I am not related to them and didn't know them a year ago they are important to me.

Jill, Supported Lodgings Host ”

## Relationships: Led By the Young Person

In interviews hosts distinguished between those young people who needed and wanted a more nurturing relationship and those who just wanted somewhere to stay. Hosts seemed to balance professional distance where necessary and more of a nurturing role where the young person indicated that this was what they needed and wanted. Most importantly, hosts acknowledged the need for the relationship to be led by the young person. Hosts explained:

“ Don't take it for granted that they want a parent, they don't, they have already got parents. It is about understanding and I think training is important in that.

Paul, Supported Lodgings Host ”

“ They like the little things, like going out for Sunday dinner or going to the hairdressers together, but I think they are important as well for them to feel they are part of this household; they are not just lodging here. You need that sort of emotional relationship with them.

Jill, Supported Lodgings Host ”

We also found evidence of ongoing relationships between hosts and young people after placements had ended. Research suggests that many providers are in contact with young people after the placement had ended, meaning they have ongoing relationships and someone they can turn to.<sup>14</sup> In most cases, hosts were continuing to contact and, in some cases, support young people who had stayed with them. One host commented:

“ (One of my young women) is now in university. She was finishing her A-levels (when she stayed with me). She is always contacting me. It is lovely to have that contact with her - she likes to keep that contact. It is totally up to the young person. I love the fact that they can stay in contact, that they can always come back and visit. I think it is really important for someone who is hosting to extend that and it doesn't just end because you leave or move on.

Judy, Supported Lodgings Host ”

## Independent Living Skills

Providers explained that Supported Lodgings is not just about providing accommodation, it also provides young people with the opportunity to develop independent living skills. In Supported Lodgings, young people are supported to learn or develop independent living skills and put them into practice in a supportive, informal environment. The host is there to provide the young person with the emotional and practical support they need to live independently. This support helps the young person develop their capacity for independent living and helps them prepare for their first tenancy.<sup>15</sup>

The Supported Lodgings model is about supporting young people to develop independent living skills and motivating them to move to the next step. A local authority in south-east Wales explained ‘That is what Supported Lodgings is it is being able to develop these skills. To develop the cooking and the money management, which is just so hard’. The same local authority asks hosts to teach young people five basic meals. They found being specific around teaching independent living skills helpful. Hosts spoke of helping young people develop cooking skills, DIY skills, budgeting skills and gardening skills.

14 Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

15 Francis, C. Chan, J. and Drennan-Lang, G (2018) Supported Lodgings Business Case. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

The first observation, below, is from a host who helps young people develop their financial capabilities and the second illustrates that Supported Lodgings is a supportive environment to develop independent living skills:

“

That's what I do. I give them a pad and a notebook and tell them to write all their bills down per month and then I say 'that's how much money you need per month before you do anything'. If they are on a limited income they know how to stretch it to cover those bills, those being the most important to keep the roof over their head and things like that. So I am always making them aware. When they have got their own place they are aware 'I've got all these to pay

Paul, Supported Lodgings Host

”

“

I think when you take people like this who have those backgrounds and they haven't had the best start in life. I do a lot of cooking (with them), I do, because they love cooking and they have for the first time a feeling of being home, of having a home and that is really rewarding.

Sam, Supported Lodgings Host

”

## Supported Lodgings Quality Standards and Shared Practice

In England, youth homelessness charity, Depaul UK have put together a 'Supported Lodgings Quality Framework' and supporting resources because they have recognised that Supported Lodgings does not have the structure around it that it needs. Providers in Wales told us that similar work here, to develop a Wales-wide agreed definition of Supported Lodgings and a set of service standards would be useful. They felt that there is a lack of shared understanding of what Supported Lodgings is which contributes to the fact that it is not always used in a planned way, rather as a knee-jerk reaction to homelessness. One provider told us they would benefit from having a shared set of minimum standards for a Supported Lodgings host. A local authority in north-east Wales said they would benefit from seeing what training other providers give to their hosts. They commented:

“

I would like to see what resources other providers use for their hosts to do sessions with young people. I would like to know if there is something that certain LA's use that is really positive? I have developed a little book with cooking / cleaning / recipe/ budget guide etc. but I am wondering if there is something better out there.

Local Authority, north-east Wales

”



## Enhanced Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings schemes can accommodate young people with a variety of support needs including those with multiple and complex needs, with some schemes being specifically designed for young people with multiple or complex needs.<sup>16</sup>

Littlewood et al. (2017) explains that there is the potential to explore how schemes can be adapted for young people with complex needs through specialist host training and premium payments much as has been done in the context of intensive fostering.<sup>17</sup> Risk assessment is a fundamental element of the development of such a service and the fact that the placements are in people's homes is a key consideration which may mean that there is a lower risk appetite when considering placements in Supported Lodgings in some authorities.

Watts and Blenkinsopp (2018) suggests that some groups of young people present too high a risk for most Supported Lodgings placements, for example those with a history of violence, sexual offences and/ or arson.<sup>18</sup> An enhanced model, where hosts have significant experience of dealing with young people who might be considered to present a higher risk, is therefore something which has been developed and used on a small scale basis in Wales. A local authority and third sector provider commented:



Enhanced Supported Lodgings is what is particularly needed because a lot of our young people would like to go into a household. There also aren't enough householders for Supported Lodgings for our young people in north Wales.

Local authority, north-east Wales



There is value in enhanced provision and there would be a significant cohort of suitable young people in a more enhanced one that would be more realisable – it comes down to assessment and assessment of risk to make sure it is appropriate.

Third sector provider south-east Wales



16 Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

17 Littlewood, M. Bramley, G. Fitzpatrick, S. Wood, J. (2017) Eradicating Homelessness in Scotland's Four Largest Cities: Providing an Evidence Base and Guiding a Funding Framework. Edinburgh: Herriot Watt University.

18 Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.



## Case Study: Llamau's Enhanced Supported Lodgings Service

Llamau runs a Supported Lodgings scheme and an Enhanced Supported Lodgings scheme in Carmarthenshire. The difference between these approaches is that the expected needs of the young people in the enhanced provision are higher. Llamau refer to hosts that provide Enhanced Supported Lodgings placements as 'super hosts'. There is a whole team approach to the delivery of the service and everyone supports each other to support the young person in a family environment. The young person is given a designated support worker and the host is also given support in order to best meet the needs of the young person. Super hosts provide an enhanced level of support for young people who may have higher support needs for example because of mental health needs.

One of Llamau's super hosts explained that she provides specialist placements for young people with mental health issues and conditions like ADHD and autism. She worked in mental health services and often advocates for young people, to help them access mental health support and services. She described a good outcome as seeing a young person move on and knowing they are stabilised, telling us that nine times out of ten young people move out and successfully live independently, getting either a job or some support to get into employment.

## Suitability for Community Hosting

We asked local authorities and third sector providers for their thoughts on the risks attached to placing young people into Enhanced Supported Lodgings. Some providers thought some young people would just be too risky to place in someone's home. Others felt that rather than just writing a young person off as "too high risk", felt an assessment should be made based on the knowledge, training and experience of hosts. One provider explained when a Community Hosting scheme becomes more established the more likely they are to be able to work with greater risks. For example, when hosts become more experienced, and when hosting scheme workers know they are able to assess the risks for individuals it allows for some very successful placements of young people who may carry some of the risks mentioned.

The providers who said some young people would be "too high risk" to place in a Community Hosting setting indicated that the following experiences would rule a young person out from such a setting:

- Chaotic drug use
- History of offending
- Fire starting and arson
- Assaults and previous physical aggression
- Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

- Risk of county lines or Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- Young people who regularly self-harm
- Young people who are considered a suicide risk

Comments from providers who felt some young people would just be too risky to place in someone's home included:

“

There is a group where this is never going to be appropriate. I have referrals where people have been in a hostel and they are threatening people with knives, throwing furniture at the staff. You couldn't put (someone like) that in someone's home. You've got young people who have made multiple suicide attempts and to say to that host 'you could wake up and the young person could be in their spare bedroom and ended their lives'.... I do think there are hosts who already do this type of thing, where they take on CSE issues and we work with them to train them for what to look out for, but there is probably a threshold where I think we couldn't put them in someone's home.

Local Authority, south-east Wales

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## Challenges Developing Enhanced Schemes

Some third sector and local authority providers felt there was potential to develop Enhanced Supported Lodgings services in their areas of operation but that there were barriers to doing so. These challenges included:

- Lack of clarity as to the characteristics of the young people at whom the service is aimed.
- Concern that available hosts' spaces might go to waste while they waited for a higher risk young person, meaning another young person might miss out on the opportunity of a placement.
- Two local authority providers had run an enhanced service in the past and noted that they had found the recruitment of hosts willing to take more high-risk young people difficult. One of them suggested this might be because hosts were not paid enough money.
- Another provider suggested that householders needed to be paid more to take young people with greater support needs.

## Emergency Community Hosting Placements

Community Hosting can be used as a form of emergency accommodation as well as an early-stage, preventative intervention to reduce the risk of crisis.<sup>19</sup> Short-term Supported Lodgings can help prevent youth homelessness by providing a break for young people after a family relationship or placement breakdown.

Much better outcomes can be achieved by placing a young person in a supportive family environment rather than unsuitable and potentially harmful emergency accommodation such as B&Bs and mixed age hostels.<sup>20</sup> Emergency Community Hosting could be used as a viable and more safe and secure alternative than B&Bs. As one host commented:

One host that provided emergency placements in Supported Lodgings recognised the need to provide family mediation alongside an emergency placement with a goal of ensuring a stable return to the family home where safe and appropriate. A Nightstop service provider told us that quite a few young people return home.

“

If you put a young person in Bed & Breakfast with all the paedophiles and drug addicts and that it is costing them £50 a night to keep them there and it doesn't make sense. They have got to be out of the door at 10 o'clock in the morning. What is all that about? When they could be offering the money to Supported Lodgings providers then they have got a lovely house and a lovely room. They have their own room and 24 hour support basically.

Supported Lodgings Host,  
south Wales

”

“

I think that family mediation is really important. A lot of the young people that stay with us get kicked out because of normal teenage behaviour. We had a young person come in because she self-harmed one day and (her parents) said 'I can't cope with that'. That was when she needed the support the most and yet she was out. I think there should be a little bit more work to mend that relationship rather than move them on.

Paul, Supported Lodgings Host

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<sup>19</sup> Francis, C. Chan, J. and Drennan-Lang, G (2018) Supported Lodgings Business Case. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

<sup>20</sup> Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

“

We have quite a few that return home. The first thing I do is work out whether there is a possibility of them going home or not. If there is a possibility I will try to speak to the parents and try and have a little meeting either on the phone or in person. We will see if we can try and work something out that way and if it is bigger than that I will refer them for mediation support.

Third sector provider UK, Nightstop ”

There is also the potential for emergency placements to grow into longer-term placements. Jill described how Madeline had started staying with her in an emergency after her placement had broken down and now she is a long-term placement:

“

Madeline came here in an emergency, so her placement had broken down with the other supported provider. So, I was just given her background, you know her age, that she was going to be in college and stuff and generally there weren't any additional needs for her other than the placement had broken down. Then she came on the same day... It was only meant to be a temporary kind of an emergency placement for her to start with. I am happy with her being here, she is happy here, and it has grown into a long term placement and she is going to be going into the first year of her new course in September.

Jill, Supported Lodgings Host ”

### Case Study: Llamau Emergency Placements

In the Vale of Glamorgan, Llamau provides emergency holding beds on the weekend as part of the Supported Lodgings service. They pay hosts a retainer to be available for the weekend: £50 for a regular weekend, £75 for a 3-day weekend and £100 for a 4-day weekend. Llamau explained the retainer is enough

for providers to be contactable and accessible for the whole weekend as a 'just-in-case' measure, but often there is not a need to place a young person. They explained the emergency holding beds work effectively to provide young people with safe and secure emergency accommodation.

## Nightstop

Nightstop is a same-night emergency accommodation service that links young people in crisis with trained volunteer hosts who accommodate them in their own home. Nightstop has been running for 33 years, having been first established, and latterly franchised, by Depaul UK. Three local authorities in north Wales use Nightstop. We spoke to two of them. Conwy told us that they use the service because it gives a young person some stability, so they can assess what further support the young person needs rather than moving them into a shared living environment. Flintshire explained that they use Nightstop in an emergency and then most young people transfer over to Supported Lodgings.

Depaul directly run six Nightstop services. Nightstop volunteer hosts are fully trained and vetted. The vetting process includes an enhanced DBS check, and a health and safety check of the applicant's home, before they are accepted onto the programme.<sup>21</sup> The training package for volunteers includes sessions focussing on safeguarding, professional boundaries and how to respond to practical scenarios. An evaluation of the Nightstop service found the short-term changes for young people through using the service included improved personal care, reduced risk of harm, improved sleep, increased access to healthy and nutritious food and an increased ability to stay warm and dry.<sup>22</sup>

Depaul UK have franchised the Nightstop model because they believe it works best when it is rooted in the local community and local organisations are the best organisations to be running the service. Speaking to us for this report, a representative from Depaul UK stressed the importance of how the service is described to young people, with a clear explanation of why they are being offered the service and what to expect when staying with the host. Depaul UK have put together host profiles that they share with the young person to provide some insight for the young person as to who they'll be staying with. The typical stay for a young person is eight or nine nights on average but they say it shouldn't be more than three weeks because it is a short-term intervention, and a more permanent housing solution needs to be found for the young person. Depaul UK told us that anyone thinking of setting up a service should speak to them for help: they have developed a comprehensive pack of information on running Nightstop, from pet risk assessments, through to the hosts' training, so that it is easy for a local authority or third sector organisation to get it off the ground quickly.

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<sup>21</sup> McCoy, S. & Kempton, O. (2020) More than bednights: An evaluation of the Nightstop service. London: DePaul UK.

<sup>22</sup> As <sup>21</sup> McCoy, & Kempton (2020).

### Third Sector Organisation: Delivering Nightstop

The Rock Trust a youth homelessness charity in Scotland delivers Nightstop they noted that they get great support from Depaul. As well as the training from Depaul, hosts get inducted in the organisation and have extra training including on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), child development and LGBTQ+ issues.

“

It is not a permanent solution and I think you have to be clear about that. The primary reason (for using it) is for people to do interventions like mediation so they can go home. It is also used for young people whose temporary accommodation, well none of it is suitable, for example if there is only bed and breakfast available to them and they are waiting for a place to come up in a hostel then Nightstop would be suitable.

Third sector provider UK, Nightstop

”

They give a young person a phone so they can call on-call services, a new pair of pyjamas and toiletries. Young people often don't have extra clothes and toiletries if they have been sofa surfing for a while. They also told us how important it was to get a dedicated worker to run the service, providing their own experience of how employing a dedicated worker had turned their service around. They stressed that Community Hosting has massive potential and that they felt that local authorities should make it a priority for homeless young people aged 16 -19, rather than automatically going down the B&B route or using mixed age emergency accommodation. Their representative had worked hard to develop relationships with referral agencies, including agreeing to fill in the paperwork and develop the service. She commented:

“

It took me a year to get the housing officers on board. I asked the manager if I could go in and speak at team meetings. I asked them if I could come in and sit with the homelessness team a couple of times a week. After a while the referrals started coming through, the outcomes were really great and I got some great case studies to present at the next team meeting.

Third sector provider UK, Nightstop

”

## Costs of Services and Dedicated Community Hosting Workers

Third sector and local authority providers of Community Hosting schemes explained the model was an effective one for young people who needed a more nurturing environment. They also described how cost effective the model was. Research from Shelter Scotland explains it costs £84,060 in staff costs to set up a small Supported Lodgings scheme this includes the time of an operations manager, service manager, placement officer and support worker.<sup>23</sup> Depaul UK told us with Nightstop 'essentially for £60k you can provide 250 nights of safe accommodation. Therefore, the evidence suggests Community Hosting is not only a highly effective model of housing and support for young people it is also an affordable one.

All the hosts in this study had a dedicated named project/scheme worker who was available within office hours. There was also out of office support for all hosts. Hosts spoke extremely positively of their relationship with project/scheme workers and considered the support they provided to be 'exceptional'. Hosts said their workers were 'excellent', 'absolutely fantastic' and 'absolutely amazing'. They knew they were part of a bigger team and they felt valued.

“ (My Supported Lodgings worker) is absolutely fantastic I have got to be honest, if I have a question or something like that then she will ring me back straight away. You do get a lot of support and training. ”

Sam, Supported Lodgings Host

“ I just feel really valued and even on Christmas Eve there was a knock on the door and it was (my worker) with a box of chocolates! She said 'It is just something I like to do - I go round to my hosts'. She is so lovely. She will always check-in. She is great with supervision. She is so supportive. She is such a lovely person. ”

Judy, Supported Lodgings Host

Third sector and local authority providers alike spoke about the importance of a dedicated worker and not having it tagged on to another person's role. Three different Community Hosting providers described how the right worker had turned their scheme around. A third sector provider explained how having dedicated development workers made sense, for although there is an initial cost outlay, you are spending to save. One local authority commented: "Set it up as a properly resourced and standalone service. Don't try to tack it on to someone else's role we have seen that, and it is hard. You need to give it the respect it needs".

<sup>23</sup> Francis, C. Chan, J. and Drennan-Lang, G (2018) Supported Lodgings Business Case. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.



## Recruiting More Hosts

If it is decided that there is a need to scale up Community Hosting in Wales more hosts will be needed. Providers and hosts alike recognised the need to recruit more hosts. When hosts were asked for suggestions of how to scale up Community Hosting some noted that the model just wasn't advertised enough to bring in the additional hosts required to expand availability:

“ You just need more hosts. I feel strongly that this is a model that works well for young people that need a stable background. So, we need many more hosts. There needs to be emphasis on local families supporting local youngsters as most young people want to remain within their communities.

Judy, Supported Lodgings Host ”

Providers noted that it was often word of mouth, via current hosts, that was the most effective way of recruiting hosts. Other methods they had tried included advertising on social media, including Facebook and Twitter, radio and newspaper ads. One local authority even went door to door to spread the word. Some local authorities had linked in with the fostering team and if the assessing officer felt like them becoming a Supported Lodgings host might be more appropriate they were referred through to the appropriate team.

There are key distinctions between those considered suitable for fostering and those for whom supported lodgings might work best. Supported Lodgings hosts are empowering a young person to live independently, and unlike fostering they can work full time as well as being a host.

Smaller and newer Supported Lodgings schemes constantly needed to invest in host recruitment while larger and established schemes do not seem to, reflecting our findings that recruitment is often done through word of mouth from existing hosts.<sup>24</sup> As the comment below illustrates, recruiting hosts in a pandemic has also been problematic:

“ It's not the right time at the moment, so it's really difficult to gauge because advertising to recruit more hosts has been done during the pandemic. It's hard to see whether or not that's having the effect on it or whether this is what we would get anyway.

Third sector provider, west Wales ”

24 Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.



Participants from local authorities and Supported Lodgings hosts felt there needed to be an advertising campaign explaining what Supported Lodgings is, which is overarching for the whole of Wales. A participant from a local authority explained that developing public understanding of the model to a comparable point to fostering is needed to get recruitment to the level that it needs to reach. After seeing a film on the [Nightstop service](#), a form of Emergency Community Hosting run by Depaul, he felt a similar campaign could help promote Supported Lodgings:

“ I thought we just need that on TVs, on videos, you know? Everywhere. Showing us what Supported Lodgings is. Once people know what Supported Lodgings is we, as smaller areas, can say: 'you know what Supported Lodgings is; this is our team; phone us'... it is about just people understanding what it is.

Local authority, south-east Wales ”

“ Speaking to one of our hosts he historically rented out his room to lodgers after watching a film on homelessness. That's what (prompted) him to become a Supported Lodgings host... but that is rare.

Third sector provider, west Wales ”

Supported Lodgings hosts also made the comparison with fostering and the need for an increased understanding of what Supported Lodgings is within communities:

“ Fostering had a really difficult time and it still does to a degree but I think they pulled their socks up a little bit and kind of started going out and engaging with the community. They started going out and doing these big fairs where they have the big banners and stuff like that.

Jill, Supported Lodgings Host ”

## Community Hosting: Referral Routes and Recruitment

Some Community Hosting schemes in Wales had been set up for care experienced young people, instead of all young people for whom they might be an appropriate model of housing and support. Our findings reflect research which found that despite a clear need for such provision for to be made available to a wider demographic, the way schemes are structured could act as a barrier to expansion.<sup>25</sup> The referral criteria for schemes in Wales is listed in Appendix a.

“ We can only take referrals for care experienced young people which can limit the scheme a lot. I would love it to be more housing related. ”

Supported Lodgings Provider, west Wales

Providers of more established Supported Lodgings services told us that schemes had become successful because they worked in partnership with homelessness departments to refer young people. Participants explained that it was important that the model was carefully explained to young people, so they knew what to expect and could feel comfortable staying in hosts' homes (a common theme with the points made by Depaul UK). The model seemed to work well in local authorities where there was good communication between, or co-location of housing, social services and third sector organisation.

“ It is about having realistic conversations with the young person and listening to their thoughts and feelings and going through the different accommodation options with them. Making sure they do want to live in a family environment. ”

Local authority, south-east Wales

“ The referrers need to understand how important Community Hosting is and make it a priority. When you get a young person aged 16 – 19, the younger age group, they need to look at that option seriously. I think they should consider Community Hosting for every young person and ask them if they want it. ”

Third sector provider, UK

<sup>25</sup> Francis, C. Chan, J. and Drennan-Lang, G (2018) Supported Lodgings Business Case. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

## Linking with Fostering for Recruitment

Research has found many hosts had either originally considered fostering or had retired from fostering, so linking in with local authority fostering teams would be valuable for identifying potential hosts.<sup>26</sup> In all, five of the nine hosts we spoke to had either considered fostering, or been foster carers. Two had applied to be foster carers but the local authority thought they would be more suited to being Supported Lodgings hosts. Sam told us:

“ I used to be a foster carer... it is really (limiting)... You can't work. It is a 24-hour a day job really. ”  
Sam

Some local authorities had linked in with their fostering team and people who were not suitable for fostering were put forward for Community Hosting. The first comment below is from a Supported Lodgings host who originally considered fostering and the second observation is from a local authority representative who linked in with their fostering team:

“ I wanted to do it but it was never the right time and I put out feelers to find out a bit more about it because I thought about going into fostering and I thought 'oh no that is too much of a commitment, too much of a thing'. Then I saw something about Supported Lodgings through work. I didn't want to do fostering because obviously my own job is very busy. I didn't have the energy to deal with that but young people are a little bit more independent; they just need you in the background really to prop them up and to say 'let's have a think about that' rather than them being completely independent really. ”

Jill, Supported Lodgings Host

“ It's not as in-depth as becoming a foster carer, you can work full time while being a supported lodgings provider so we have just started linking in with fostering team. So they can pass on any referrals that they feel may be more suitable for Supported Lodgings. ”

Local authority, west Wales

<sup>26</sup> Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

## Fees Paid to Hosts

We found a lack of consistency in terms of the fees paid to hosts and no standardisation of fees within Wales. The lowest weekly payment for Supported Lodgings was £120 and the highest was £200. Both these services were run by local authorities. The lowest weekly payment a third sector organisation paid was £140 (including a £20 contribution from the young person); the highest was £160 (including a £20 contribution from the young person). The average payment of the 14 Supported Lodgings services, including the contribution from young people, was £152.31 a week. One respondent from a local authority housing department did not know the weekly fee paid to hosts as it was run by social services rather than housing. In Carmarthenshire Enhanced Supported Hosts were paid £250, consisting of £230 from Llamau and a £20 contribution from the young person. Powys told us they did not have an enhanced service but they normally paid hosts £150 and they paid £200 per week to hosts for supporting young people with more complex needs. Ten Supported Lodgings schemes, including one enhanced scheme, asked for a small contribution from young people. This was usually £20 but in Neath Port Talbot it was £15.

Some hosts fed back that there needed to be more money paid, but not too much more– they told us some young people are constantly showering, leaving lights on, washing clothes, breaking things and constantly eating. They would like to be paid more to reflect these additional costs, but were concerned that if rates were put up too high then this might attract people

to become hosts for the ‘wrong reasons’. It tended to be the more experienced hosts that felt they should be paid more. One host commented that the cost of living had gone up and there had never been a pay increase or an increase in rent since she started. Comments from hosts included:

“ Personally, I think there should be money but my concern is if it is good money people might do it for the wrong reasons...It is not a great amount of money for the time we put into it.

Paul, Supported Lodgings Host ”

“ I personally don't do it for the money because I work part time as well but I think for what you do, the time that you give. I spend a lot of time with them I take them shopping and stuff like that, you do get paid peanuts.

Sam, Supported Lodgings Host ”

Research suggests the importance of investing in hosts and making them feel valued is crucial for their commitment and retention.<sup>27</sup> A local authority in south-east Wales told us it is a model that needs to be explored more, as it is a very positive alternative to emergency accommodation for young people but that the payment needs to reflect the levels of responsibility that hosts undertake and make it a viable

27 Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

option for them financially. One host commented:

“ When you do get those really challenging (young people), I don't think you get the credit for that and maybe that's something else and people do stop doing it because you have a hell of a battle on your hands. Maybe it doesn't get recognised and maybe people think 'why am I doing this? What is the point?' ”

Jan, Supported Lodgings Host

Hosts and providers also felt the low levels of pay could be a barrier to recruiting new hosts to Community Hosting schemes. A local authority in north Wales explained that they find recruitment of hosts difficult and that payment is a factor because some people will choose to foster as it pays better. A third sector provider suggested that payment “needs to be standardised” as “different areas get paid different things”. Research suggests word of mouth is the most successful way of recruiting hosts but where providers payments are low this can have a detrimental influence on ‘word of mouth’ recruitment.<sup>28</sup>

## The Application Process

The application process to become a Supporting Lodgings host is understandably thorough. There were some small differences between providers but generally, the process follows a similar pattern: after an initial enquiry comes in potential hosts fill in an application form. Some providers have a lengthy application form, which they say helps them know that the applicant is serious, and others have a more standard form to find out key information such as where they work, their address, why they want to become a host and what they feel they can offer a young person. Then the provider starts the assessment, which lasts around three months.

During the assessment process, the provider meets the potential host

four or five times and go through the different areas of the assessment. They ask why they want to become a host, what motivated them and what they can offer young people. There are also risk assessments around the house. Next, there are risk assessments of the potential host, other people who live in the house and potentially regular visitors. The potential host is DBS checked; they write to their doctor and get a personal and professional reference. Then they go to a panel. The composition of the panel varies depending on the provider but it can include the Supported Lodgings worker, a manager of the service, a social worker, and a young person. If the panel approves the host then the induction and training can start.

<sup>28</sup> Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

## Host Training and Peer Support

All the providers of Supported Lodgings provided a training programme for their hosts. Providers told us that a fundamental part of the training was understanding what the role of a host was and what it wasn't. Research suggests that a number of core areas should be focussed on for training, including "safeguarding; health including sexual health, mental health and self-harm; responding to and communicating with young people; life skills, finance and budgeting; drugs and alcohol; problem solving skills, conflict and crisis management; and education, employment and training".<sup>29</sup> In addition, hosts could benefit from the training available to the provider's staff. Some hosts we spoke to saw the training interlinked with the support they received; they felt they had enough training but also answered 'if I

have a major issue, which is very rare, I can contact someone for advice'. There were also specific courses, for hosts who may be supporting specific groups, such as asylum seekers.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, training has moved online. Hosts spoke about pre-pandemic training as being a valuable opportunity to meet other hosts. Hosts valued the peer support during the training if they had worries and had found it cathartic if they needed a moan. They told us that they had appreciated the support and knowing that other people were doing the same thing as they were. Providers had done a good job matching new hosts with more experienced hosts so they could have some peer support. Hosts spoke of wanting to share experiences and practical things, such as what to cook for tea.

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## The Matching Process

Research tells us the main factor to consider in the matching and the moving-in process is that it progresses at a pace that the young person is comfortable with.<sup>30</sup> For some young people this needs to be slow and steady, but for others the matching process can happen more quickly. Providers all seemed to follow a similar process. They told us if it is a short-term or emergency placement they generally couldn't go through the longer matching process when, sometimes over as long a period as a month, the young

person and the host meet weekly; they go to the host's home a few times. They get to know each other and see if they might click. Matching young people to the right household is fundamental in order to achieve successful schemes and placements. Bad matches can lead to a placement breaking down. A diverse group of hosts helps to ensure that hosts and young people can be matched effectively.

Research suggests good matching

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29 Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

30 Sewel, K. (2016) Evaluation of Barnardo's supported lodgings services. Essex: Barnardo's.

is dependent not only on having diverse hosts but also on providers of schemes having a good knowledge of hosts' specific household set ups: the expertise and experience of individual hosts; understanding the time and commitment each host can offer and the host's capacity to offer opportunities to each individual young person.<sup>31</sup> One dedicated Supported Lodgings worker explained how the matching process works; although she sits within a wider team, she takes hosts through the assessment process which in turn helps with matching. She commented:

Hosts also recognised the importance of the matching process but they were more concerned that young people were matched with other young people in the household. One Supported Lodgings host commented: "I will be the one who will do the assessment with the hosts. I will take them to panel. I will then continue to supervise them so before they get to be Supported Lodgings hosts I spend about three months getting to know them. Knowing their family knowing their background. Everything about them so, when I get a referral I can say 'that's great: that's Karen, or that's Lisa and John'.

“

Exactly, the whole matching process has got to work. That is the recipe that works basically. You are not going to be able to have one that is quite moody and likes to be on his own when you have got one who is quite extrovert. It just doesn't work and I know it doesn't work. I have had Howell since the beginning of August. I know his personality. So we would do a meet and greet where I would meet the young person I would get some background around them and stuff and I would know instantly whether it was going to be a good match or not.

Sam, Supported Lodgings Host

”

“

I have got an extended little family going on. I always make sure that the matching is really good because if the matching is not right there is not going to be any family in the house, is there?

Sam, Supported Lodgings Host

”

<sup>31</sup> As 30 Sewel (2016).



## Supporting Specific Groups of Young People

### LGBTQ+ Young People

As discussed in [EYHC's Out on the Streets](#) report, young people can be rejected when they reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity to their families and this can result in homelessness. Research has found that it is important for LGBTQ+ young people to move into supportive placements where hosts are aware and comfortable with a young person's sexual orientation and/ or gender identity.<sup>32</sup> In England the Albert Kennedy Trust (AKT) match young people with a mentor as well as a host in their Community Hosting scheme. They ask young people what they want to get from mentoring and then show them profiles based on what young people tell them. When they have a pre-placement meeting with the young person they talk to them about how they are going to be supported in the placement. They explain how the host, AKT support staff and mentor will support them. The mentor will support young people with employability, social aspects, family, financial capability, registering with a GP and moving on to more sustainable housing.

### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Local Authorities told us that there will be an increase of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) particularly in the city areas and we will need to come up with innovative solutions to manage things regionally, suggesting that it will be easier to support them if we take a regional approach. Best practice for social workers in Wales suggests Supported Lodgings can provide a suitable model of housing and support for UASC.<sup>33</sup> For 16 and 17 year olds it is a suitable environment where they will value their independence and have the opportunity to learn and speak English with their hosts.<sup>34</sup> A more rural provider of Supported Lodgings told us people of the same culture are few and far between in their area, so this could lead to some young people feeling isolated. A local authority with a more diverse population told us that they sometimes have young people who want to meet with members of their own communities but they have more access to diverse communities. One solution to this could be the approach the AKT takes in Supported Lodgings, whereby the young person has both a host and a mentor. A network of mentors could be developed to be matched with young people.

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32 Francis, C. Chan, J. and Drennan-Long, G (2018) Supported Lodgings Business Case. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

33 Children's Legal Centre (2019). A Best Practice Guide for Social Workers in Wales supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

34 As 33 Children's Legal Centre (2019).



One local authority told us how enthusiastic one of her hosts was working with UASC.

“

We have currently got two unaccompanied asylum seekers. We have got two providers – I wouldn't say they specialise, but they enjoy working with young unaccompanied asylum seekers. They like to get involved with the legislation and things like that. Two of them at the moment are in a placement together, the host then will teach them. She basically teaches foreign students, so she will teach them English and things like that. They need to be quite intensive placements for the unaccompanied asylum seekers. We've found they need a lot of support.

Local Authority, south-west Wales ”

### Young People Known to the Criminal Justice System

The 'EYHC Community Hosting Working Group' discussed how young people coming out of the criminal justice system could be supported in community hosting. Again, they recommended a regional approach as there may not be enough demand in each local authority. Conversely, one provider of Supported Lodgings explained that we have to be careful when assessing prison leavers acknowledging maybe sometimes they do have additional needs, but they may just need the support and involvement that other young people need. The first statement is from a provider talking about one of her hosts who is happy to take young people from the CJS.

“My longest serving host she has been doing it for over 30 years and she is fab. The type of person who you could ring up with this referral she has taken young people from remand centres and from prisons. She says ‘if he is good enough for the queen he is good enough for me’”  
– Local Authority, south-east Wales.

### Person Specific Placements

Research on Supported Lodgings in Scotland suggested it would be useful to explore the role of Supported Lodgings to formalise the role for friends, parents, or family friends for young people who are at risk or experiencing homelessness if appropriate.<sup>35</sup> Three local authorities we spoke to mentioned that they use person specific placements for some young people who want to leave care and stay with family members such as grandparents or siblings or former foster carers. This means they become a person specific host in the scheme to support that young person. Two further local authorities said they would consider person specific placements as a homelessness prevention measure.

35 Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

## Conclusion

If there is to be an end to youth homelessness in Wales a variety of housing options to meet the needs of all young people will be required. Community Hosting uses existing resources within communities to provide a relatively quick way of increasing the supply of emergency and temporary accommodation. Community Hosting is a well-established model that has proven effective in a range of different contexts. Community Hosting can be used to prevent young people from staying in unsuitable and even unsafe emergency and temporary accommodation such as B&Bs and mixed aged hostels.

Emergency Community Hosting provides safe housing in an emergency where young people can be assessed and it can be combined with mediation and if safe young people can return home. It also gives young people the opportunity to try Community Hosting and if they like it, their placement can become a longer term one.

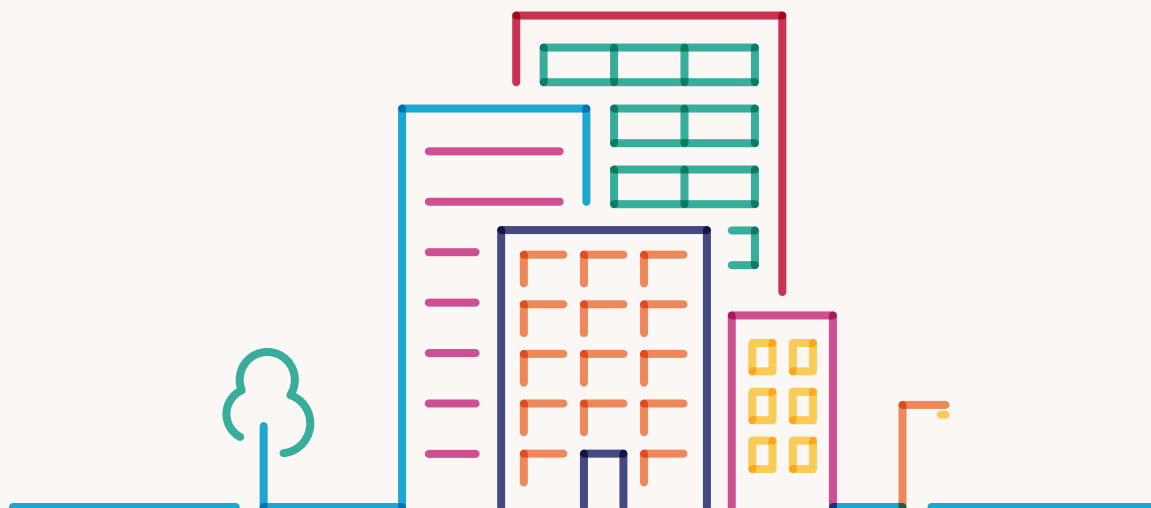
The focus of medium-term Community Hosting schemes is to support young people to develop the skills they need to live independently. The model provides young people with a nurturing home environment. Young people told us they felt safe, loved and lived somewhere that felt like home. We also found medium-term options supported the development of wider social networks and informal networks for young people, they felt part of their local community. Our research suggests the combined and tailored

support, from a host and a specialist organisation, enables young people to develop independent living skills in a supportive family environment helping young people to develop the skills to live independently. Providers and hosts also spoke of young people progressing into apprenticeships, to university, the military and training they often felt that young people would not have achieved these positive outcomes if they had not been living in Community Hosting.

The Community Hosting providers and hosts we spoke to were enthusiastic about the model and its effectiveness to not only prevent homelessness but for young people to have opportunities to flourish. However, they also suggested there needed to be improvements. Providers asked for a hub or a community of practice of where they could share ideas and good practice. The hosts we spoke to were very clearly not doing it for the money but they also wanted to feel valued. Hosts felt the low levels of payment were a disincentive for recruiting more hosts, but they also recognised the need to recruit the right people who were not motivated by financial gain. The biggest frustration of hosts seemed to be that Community Hosting was not used more widely. Hosts told us that it is a model that works well, which allows young people to be accommodated and supported in their local community and ask why it is not more widespread. As Kaiden aged, 17 commented:

“ (We can end youth homelessness) by putting the money into training for Supported Lodgings to get more people in. There are not enough (Supported Lodgings placements) down here... so many people (are) having to move really far away because there are not enough spaces around. ”

Kaidan, 17



## Appendices A: Current Provision of Community Hosting in Wales

LA Area	Type of Community Hosting	Operated By	Referral Criteria	Fees Paid to Hosts (not including young person's contribution)	Young Person's Contribution	Number of Hosts/Placements
Blaenau Gwent	Supported Lodgings	Llamau	Care leavers and young people with additional needs	£120	£20	1-5
Cardiff	Supported Lodgings & Emergency Supported Lodgings	Internally Children's Services	16-18 main group but can go up to 21	£169	£20	24 hosts potential for 30 placements
Carmarthenshire	Supported Lodgings and Enhanced Supported Lodgings	Llamau	Young people from social services or from homelessness route	£130 Standard £230 Enhanced	Standard £20 Enhanced £20	1 x emergency, 2 x enhanced & 10 x Supported Lodgings
Caerphilly	Supported Lodgings and planning to launch emergency Supported Lodgings	Llamau	Aged 16-25 and in housing need (referrals from Housing and Children's Services)	£120	£20	4
Conwy	Supported Lodgings & Nightstop	Local Solutions	Supported Lodgings: Young people aged 16-24 Nightstop: Young people aged 16-25	£20 per night Nightstop £135 per week Supported Lodgings		6-10 Supported Lodgings 6-10 Nightstop
Flintshire	Supported Lodgings & Nightstop	Local Solutions	Any young person can access	£20 per night Nightstop £147 per week Supported Lodgings	Small contribution from the young person for Supported Lodgings	6-10 Supported Lodgings 1-5 Nightstop
Neath Port Talbot	Supported Lodgings	Llamau	YPA Route16 (Care Experienced)	£146.35	£15	4
Newport	Supported Lodgings and planning to launch emergency Supported Lodgings	Llamau	Aged 16-25 and in housing need (referrals from Housing and Children's Services)	£120	£20	4

LA Area	Type of Community Hosting	Operated By	Referral Criteria	Fees Paid to Hosts (not including young person's contribution)	Young Person's Contribution	Number of Hosts/Placements
Pembrokeshire	Supported Lodgings including emergency provision	Internal sits within Family Placement Team	Care leavers aged 16-21 and any homeless young person aged under 18	£200 per week		14
Powys	Supported Lodgings	Internal	Care leavers aged 16-25	£150 per week £200 per week for complex needs		1-5
Rhondda Cynon Taff	Supported Lodgings	Internal Children's Services	Care leavers	Not known		6-10
Swansea	Supported Lodgings	Barnardo's Cymru	Young people aged 16 – 21	£120 a week		10
Torfaen	Recently set up Supported Lodgings	Llamau	Aged 16-25 and in housing need (referrals from Housing and Children's Services)	£120	£20	One under assessment
Vale of Glamorgan	Supported lodgings including emergency provision	Llamau	Young people aged 16 – 21	£140	£20	14 Providers Potential for 21/22 placements Emergency Community Hosting is available.
Wrexham	Supported Lodgings	Internally	Care Leavers	£140	£20 (for food)	11-15 Placements

