

Welfare, Health and Safety Policy

Introduction

OPDS is committed to ensuring that students placed with host families are housed in rooms and buildings that are suitable for their stay and which meet strict safety standards.

Screening Host Families

OPDS exchanges a series of documents with the intended host family, to enable a DBS Certificate to be produced for each member of the household aged 16 or over.

Once these certificates are received, demonstrating suitability of the adults, OPDS arranges a meeting between a staff member and the host family.

Host Family Visit and Assessment

Before students are placed in a host family, a visit is arranged by a member of OPDS at which they will assess the suitability of the family and the accommodation to receive students.

Key documents are requested including current gas safety certificate, electrical safety certificate, home insurance policy and copies of these are retained on the host family file within the OPDS office. Renewals are requested as they become invalid, usually on an annual basis.

In assessing the suitability of the family and the accommodation, due consideration is given to the following:

- Whether adults will be present throughout the stay of the student or not. If there are periods when adults are not available this will preclude younger students from staying
- The facilities available in the home (bathrooms / toilets / shower rooms / kitchen / lounge / garden)
- The size of the bedroom(s) which will be allocated to the student(s).
- Whether the bedroom is shared with another student or not.
- Whether students from other agencies will be hosted at the same time or not.

Checks Made during Visit

The following checks will be carried out and appropriate recommendations made to the host family:

- That the host family has an evacuation procedure clearly specified in the event of an emergency. This may include escaping through windows instead of doors and, if so, precisely where any window keys are held if they are needed
- There is a basic first aid kit available to students in the event of an emergency and that students will be advised where this is kept
- There is a minimum of one operational smoke alarm per floor of the building
- There is an operational carbon monoxide alarm in every room where fuel burning equipment is placed.

Advice given to Host Families

The host family is reminded of its responsibility to the student. They are being received into a host family, not a hotel, and care is required to ensure the students receive the attention they deserve.

We recommend each family has a set of 'house rules' an example of which can be found at Appendix 1.

These rules should be drawn up by each family to reflect the different ways in which they run their lives.

OPDS Decision

At the end of the visit, the OPDS staff member informs the host family whether they are suitable, or not, to be a host family with reasons given where appropriate.

Where possible, practical and appropriate, the family will be advised to contact OPDS again once any shortcomings have been rectified, so another inspection can be carried out.

Follow Up

OPDS requests that any changes in a host family's circumstances be notified to OPDS as they happen, so that our files can be kept up to date.

We will seek to re-visit each family at least once annually to ensure compliance with this procedure.

Records are updated showing the date of each visit and any outstanding actions that need to be taken before students can be placed there again.

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Appendix 1

Sample of House Rules

Introduction

Welcome the student to your home and show them their room and the facilities they can use. Point out the fire escape and show them where the first aid kit is held, in case of an emergency. Advise them what to do and who to contact in an emergency, ensuring their safety is of paramount importance.

General Rules

These vary across all families, so that each can readily accept students into their home and family way of life. The OPDS / Host Family Agreement specifies what is expected of each party and reference should always be made to this.

Specific house rules may include some of the following:

- Advise them what time meals are served and what they can expect if they fail to appear
- Request a phone call from the student if they are going to be later home than expected and ask the reason why
- How and when to use the bathroom facilities and a reminder of the importance to leave the room as they find it. Some families have small children who may be asleep early, so the late use of showers etc may be inconvenient
- Make it clear that no electrical appliances are to be used without the express consent of the host and explain why. It could be dangerous, cause a fire and result in injury
- You may request that students turn off lights and close doors when they leave rooms
- We recommend that, if they open a window, they close it for security reasons, when they leave the house
- If they go out they must ensure they have your name, address, home number and mobile number in case they need to contact you when they are out
- If they go out, they must tell you where they are going and you should advise them what time you expect them to return, beyond which you will need to contact OPDS

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