



# Homestay Host Handbook

2025

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# Introduction

## Welcome to the rewarding role of a Homestay Host!

As a homestay host, you play a pivotal role in providing not just a place to stay but a warm, safe, and enriching environment that will make a lasting impact on students' lives and create memories that will stay with them forever.

This guide is designed to make your hosting experience smooth, rewarding, and enjoyable. It provides practical advice, clear guidelines, and important information to help you meet the highest standards of care and compliance.

## How to Use This Guide

The guide is divided into sections that cover all aspects of hosting, from preparing your home and welcoming your student to understanding safeguarding requirements and handling emergencies. Sections are accompanied by frequently asked questions to provide quick answers to common queries, and we hope you can use this guide as a reference throughout your hosting journey.

## We're Here to Help

If you ever have any questions, concerns, or need extra support, the team at PLUS is just a phone call or email away. Don't hesitate to contact us at any time—we're here to ensure your hosting experience is as fulfilling and stress-free as possible.

Thank you for opening your home and your heart to international students. Your role as a host makes a real difference in their lives, helping them feel welcome and supported as they explore a new culture.

## The British Council Code of Practice for Homestay Hosts

- ✓ **Support English Practice** Encourage your student to speak English as much as possible while in your home to help them improve their language skills.
- ✓ **Make Students Feel at Home** Welcome your student as part of your family, treating them with care and inclusion, rather than as just a paying guest.
- ✓ **Provide a Comfortable Room** Ensure the student's bedroom is clean, comfortable, and meets the British Council's standards for space, furniture, and lighting.
- ✓ **Create a Study-Friendly Environment** Provide a quiet and supportive home environment where the student can focus on their English studies.
- ✓ **Prioritise Safety and Well-Being** Ensure your student's safety, security, and overall welfare throughout their stay.
- ✓ **Offer Healthy and Balanced Meals** Provide meals that are varied, nutritious, and appropriate to the student's needs and preferences, where reasonable.
- ✓ **Weekly laundry** Provide 1 load of laundry per week (or access to washing facilities), along with a change of bedding and towels.
- ✓ **Stay Connected** Work closely with PLUS to address any issues or concerns the student may have during their stay.
- ✓ **Respect Cultural Differences** Be sensitive to your student's cultural background show them understanding and respect.

# Safety Guidelines

Maintaining a safe home is crucial for students and your household.

## Fire Safety

- Show students the best exit routes in case of fire on their day of arrival.
- Install smoke alarms on every floor and carbon monoxide detectors in areas with fuel-burning appliances.
- Complete an annual fire risk assessment and keep a fire extinguisher or fire blanket in the kitchen. Make sure exits remain free from obstructions in case of a fire.

## Gas Safety

- All gas appliances must be serviced by a registered professional annually, and a valid Gas Safety Certificate must be maintained.
- Provide PLUS with a copy of the certificate when requested.

## FAQs

### **Q: What safety rules do I need to follow as a homestay host?**

Ensure compliance with fire, gas, and electrical safety regulations. Provide a safe and secure environment and conduct a safety briefing with the student on their first day.

### **Q: Who is responsible for any damage caused by my student guest?**

Students are responsible for damages they cause. However, having home insurance is recommended to cover any issues.

### **Q: What happens if there is an emergency with my student guest?**

Contact PLUS's emergency line (020 7042 9436 Extension 2001) immediately. For medical emergencies, call 999 or take the student to A&E and inform PLUS as soon as possible.

## Welfare and Well-Being

Students often face challenges adjusting to a new culture and being away from their families. Your care can make all the difference.

### Homesickness and Mental Health

- Encourage students to call home and engage in activities to keep busy.
- Be patient as students adapt to British/Irish customs, which may differ greatly from their own.
- Encourage open communication and check in regularly about how they're feeling.
- Be observant for signs of stress or anxiety. Contact the PLUS Safeguarding Lead (020 7042 9436 Extension 2004; [safeguarding@plus-ed.com](mailto:safeguarding@plus-ed.com)) if you have any concerns at all.

### Illness and Accidents:

- Inform PLUS immediately of any absence from school due to illness or other serious medical issues. Help students access medical care by finding a GP, pharmacy, or urgent treatment centre if needed.
- Do not offer or administer medicines directly—students should follow professional medical advice.
- Students from the EU and Switzerland can still use a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) to access necessary healthcare during their visit.
- Treatment in A&E departments, walk-in urgent treatment centres, and GP surgeries is free for all visitors, regardless of nationality. Students from outside the EU will have to pay for other, non-urgent treatment.

### FAQs

**Q: What should I do if I have concerns about my student's welfare?**

Contact the PLUS Safeguarding Lead (020 7042 9436 Extension 2004; [safeguarding@plus-ed.com](mailto:safeguarding@plus-ed.com)) immediately if you notice signs of homesickness, stress, illness, or anything concerning.

# Cultural Sensitivity and Interaction

Cultural exchange is a key part of hosting. Understanding and respecting differences can lead to a richer experience for everyone.

## Language

- Encourage your student to speak English as much as possible. Speak clearly and slowly, especially if their language skills are low.
- Start conversations yourself—many students may feel too shy to begin talking but will appreciate your effort to engage them.
- Encourage your student to take advantage of social opportunities, such as school-organised events, excursions, or local activities

## Customs

- Share your own traditions while being mindful of the student's dietary, religious, or cultural practices.
- Show interest in learning about their customs, and celebrate the opportunity for mutual understanding.
- Help students observe non-verbal communication, such as body language, and explain any cultural differences they may not be aware of.

## FAQs

### **Q: How should I treat my student guests?**

Treat them as temporary members of your household. Make them feel welcome, involve them in daily activities, and communicate any house rules clearly.

### **Q: How can I help my student feel more confident with their English?**

Encourage them to talk about their experiences and reactions to daily life in England. Reassure them that it's ok to make mistakes, and it is part of learning, and praise their efforts to help build confidence.

## Room Requirements

Providing a comfortable and private space helps students feel secure and focused..

### What to Provide

- **A single room:** Ensure it is clean, well-maintained, and equipped with:
  - A comfortable bed with clean, season-appropriate bedding. Bunk beds are acceptable for students under the age 16 only.
  - A desk or table, chair, and adequate lighting for studying.
  - Proper heating, curtains or blinds, and (free) Wi-Fi access.
  - A wardrobe, drawers, or other storage for personal items.
- **Shared Spaces:** Students should also have access to common areas, such as the living room and dining area, as part of the household.

### Hosting Multiple Students

- No more than two students may share a room.
- Students who speak the same first language should not be hosted in the same household unless all parties (students, parents, agents, or schools) agree to this in advance.
- No more than four students can be hosted at the same time in a household, including shared rooms.
- Students under 18 cannot stay in the same house as students aged 18 or over. This is to ensure age-appropriate environments and comply with safeguarding guidelines.

### FAQs

**Q: What if the room doesn't have a desk/table to study?**

Make sure you can provide a quiet area elsewhere in the house to study.

**Q: What is the policy for providing keys to students?**

Adult students (18+) should be given a house key. For younger students, ensure safe and practical access.



# Meals

Meals are an important part of the homestay experience and are a chance to socialise. You can choose which Meal Plans you are willing to offer, and PLUS will match you with suitable students. Most under 18s require half board, but in some cases may request full board.

## Meal Plans

- **Self-Catering:** You should provide storage space in the kitchen and access to kitchen facilities for cooking, in line with your household rules and schedule.
- **Bed & Breakfast:** The host provides a light continental breakfast (e.g., toast, jam, cereal, fruit juice, and tea/coffee) but does not need to prepare or serve it. You can allow light kitchen use (toaster, microwave, kettle) if you wish.
- **Half Board:** The host provides a continental breakfast and (two-course) dinner. Dinner should be served and is usually shared with the host family. Snacks do not need to be included, but offering storage for these is usually appreciated.
- **Full Board:** The host provides a continental breakfast, a packed lunch, and dinner. The host should ensure the packed lunch includes essentials like a sandwich, fruit, a snack (e.g., crisps or biscuit), and a drink.

## FAQs

### Q: What should I include in a dinner?

A balanced main course might include pasta, rice, or potatoes, meat, vegetarian options, and a dessert. Meals should be enjoyed together with the host family.

### Q: How should I handle special dietary requirements?

PLUS will always contact you before the student arrives to understand any dietary needs, such as allergies, vegetarianism, or religious restrictions and see if you are willing to cater to these. If you're unsure about a requirement, we are happy to offer advice and support.

## Other Facilities

Providing access to essential household facilities ensures students feel at home and supported during their stay.

### Bathroom Access

- Ensure students have daily access to a clean bathroom with hot and cold water for showers or baths.
- Explain any household rules, such as tidying up after use or sanitary item disposal.
- Provide clean bath towels and hand towels weekly.

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### Laundry

- Offer one load of laundry per week, or provide arrangements for students to do their own washing.
- If students are expected to do their own laundry, show them how to operate your washing machine/dryer, and provide detergent.
- Provide clean bed linen every week.

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### Internet and Communication

- Provide students with Wi-Fi access for academic and personal use throughout their stay. Students cannot be charged extra for this.
- Students are told to avoid excessive streaming or downloading that could disrupt your internet service. Be clear about any restrictions, such as parental controls, that you have in place.

# Welcoming Your Student

A warm welcome helps your student feel at ease and sets the foundation for a successful homestay experience.

## Arrival Day Checklist

- Be ready to greet them and make them feel at home.
- Show the student their bedroom, bathroom, and common areas like the kitchen and living room, and explain how to use household appliances, such as the shower.
- Discuss rules about meal times, curfews (if applicable), expectations for tidying up, and use of shared spaces.
- Exchange phone numbers.
- Show the student the fire exits and explain your fire safety plan.
- Help them understand the local area, public transport, and how to get to school.

## Curfew Guidelines

- **Under 14s:** Must be at the accommodation by 19:00. Not allowed out after dinner.
- **14-17-year-olds:** Allowed out after dinner **if given written permission from parents** and supervised; must be back at accommodation no later than 22:30.
- **Over 18s:** No curfew applies, but students are encouraged to communicate their plans and respect household routines.

## FAQs

### Q: What should I do if my student doesn't arrive at the expected time?

Students are encouraged to contact you in case of delays, but if you do not receive any contact from them, get in touch with PLUS as soon as possible.

### Q: How do I handle students who regularly stay out late?

If a student is not adhering to the curfew guidelines, remind them of the agreed rules. If the issue persists, inform PLUS who can provide further support.

# Household and Visitors

It's important to have clear expectations for other members of your household, as well as other visitors.

## Household Members

- **Over 18s:** All household members aged 18 or over must hold a valid enhanced DBS (in England and Wales) or PVG (in Scotland) to comply with safeguarding regulations, and complete a Child Protection Declaration.
- **Under 18s:** Ensure younger members of your household are respectful of the student's privacy and belongings.

## Visitors

- **Student's Visitors:** Students must ask your permission before inviting any guests to your home, and you have the right to refuse this if you do not feel comfortable. Overnight guests are not allowed unless explicitly approved by PLUS.
- **Host's Visitors:** Friends or family members visiting your home should respect the student's private space. Never allow your guests to enter the student's room without consent.

## FAQs

**Q: Can I have guests stay overnight while I have a student staying with me?**

Yes, but you must notify PLUS and ensure this does not disrupt the student's stay. You must never leave a guest unattended at your home with a student.

## Payments and Financial Guidance

We value our hosts and aim to ensure a transparent and smooth payment process. This section outlines how payments are handled what to expect.

### Payment Process

- Once a booking is confirmed, you will receive a confirmation email and booking details via the PLUS portal. Accept the booking on the portal to finalise the booking.
- Payments are processed within one week of the student's arrival. If you notice any discrepancies or overpayments, contact PLUS immediately for resolution.
- If a student tells you that they wish to extend their stay, contact PLUS as soon as possible to ensure correct payment arrangements.
- If a student leaves for an extended period (e.g., more than a week) but leaves belongings behind, you may receive 50% of the usual payment as a room retention fee. Inform PLUS as soon as you can so that this can be arranged.

### Cancellations and No-Shows

- If a student cancels with less than a week's notice or fails to arrive, PLUS will first try to find you a replacement so that you do not lose out but, if a replacement cannot be found, you will receive £50 compensation.
- If you need to cancel a booking, please let us know as early as possible. While we understand that sometimes a cancellation is unavoidable, please be aware that repeated cancellations may result in termination of your hosting contract.

### Tax and Earnings

- The Rent a Room Scheme allows you to earn up to £7,500 per year tax-free by letting out furnished accommodation in your home. More information is available at: [www.gov.uk/rent-room-in-your-home/the-rent-a-room-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/rent-room-in-your-home/the-rent-a-room-scheme)

# Data Protection and GDPR

Your personal data is important, and PLUS is committed to handling it securely and responsibly in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

## Key Principles

- **Why We Collect Data:** We use your personal information for essential operational purposes such as bookings, payments, and ensuring compliance with legal requirements.
- **How We Use Data:** Information may be used for creating booking confirmation forms, processing payments, facilitating criminal records checks, and communicating with you about new bookings or updates.
- **Who We Share Data With:** Personal data may be shared with relevant third parties, such as payment processors, local authorities, and DBS or PVG checking agencies, but only when necessary for operational or legal reasons.

## Your Rights

You have the right to:

- Access the personal data we hold about you.
- Request corrections to any inaccuracies.
- Request deletion of your data, subject to legal and operational requirements.

For any concerns or requests regarding your personal data, please contact PLUS at [plus@plus-ed.com](mailto:plus@plus-ed.com).

## What Should I Do If...?

➤ **My Student Has Lost Their Key**

Students are expected to cover the cost of a replacement key. Ensure keys do not have your address attached for security reasons.

➤ **My Student Wants to Cook in the Kitchen**

If the student does not have a Self-Catering Meal Plan, then it is completely up to you, as it is your home and your kitchen. Many students enjoy preparing meals from their home country to share with their host families, but you should only agree if you feel comfortable with them using your equipment.

➤ **My Student Refuses to Follow House Rules**

Address the issue directly and calmly. Explain why the rules are in place. If you would like someone from PLUS to speak to them/their parents, do not hesitate to contact us.

➤ **I Need to Leave Town Unexpectedly**

Notify PLUS as soon as possible. We will discuss alternative arrangements, if there isn't another responsible adult from your household to supervise. Never leave a student at your home unaccompanied overnight.

➤ **I'm Concerned About My Student's Well-Being**

Keep an open dialogue with the student and monitor any changes in behaviour. Contact PLUS Safeguarding Lead immediately if you notice signs of distress or if the student confides serious concerns.

➤ **My Student Often Eats Out and Never Eats My Food**

First of all, do not be offended. There may be a number of reasons why the student hasn't eaten with you; they might just be enjoying a lot of fast food if they are away from their parents for the first time. Discuss food preferences with your student and if the issue persists, contact PLUS for advice.

➤ **My Student Doesn't Understand Me**

Speak slowly and use simple language. Avoid slang or any idiomatic phrases. It sometimes helps to writing things down or, if that doesn't help, you can use tools such as Google Translate.

➤ **My Student Has a Complaint**

Listen to their concerns respectfully. If necessary, contact PLUS and we will try to mediate and resolve the issue.

# Emergency Contacts

## Non-Urgent Enquiries

020 7730 2223

**Office hours:** Monday-Friday 9:00-17:00

[host@plus-ed.com](mailto:host@plus-ed.com)

## Out-of-Hours Emergencies

020 7042 9436 Extension 2001

## Designated Safeguarding Lead

James Bell

020 7042 9436 Extension 2004 (available 24/7)

[safeguarding@plus-ed.com](mailto:safeguarding@plus-ed.com)