

YOUR GUIDE TO BECOMING

A SUPPORTED LODGINGS HOST



stepbystep.org.uk/spare-room

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ABOUT US

Step by Step is a youth charity dedicated to empowering young people and preventing homelessness across Hampshire, Surrey, Dorset, Wiltshire, West Berkshire and West Sussex. We believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to realise their full potential, regardless of the challenges they face.

Our approach is not just about providing accommodation; it is about offering holistic support that addresses emotional wellbeing, life skills, education, and employment. Through our Be the Hero ethos, we recognise everyone involved in our mission as heroes – from young people overcoming adversity to the supporters, hosts, volunteers, and partners who stand behind them.



WHAT IS SUPPORTED LODGINGS?

Supported Lodgings is a transformative accommodation service that provides young people at risk of homelessness with a safe, stable, and nurturing place to live. It's more than just a room, it's the opportunity for a young person to rebuild their life in a supportive home environment, guided by a trusted adult.

In a Supported Lodgings placement, a young person lives with a host individual, couple, or family in their home. Hosts offer much more than a roof over a young person's head; they provide emotional support, encouragement, and crucial life skills like budgeting, cooking, and self-care. The goal is to help young people move towards independent and fulfilling futures.

Each placement is carefully matched and managed by Step by Step's dedicated Placement Coordinators, who provide regular check-ins, guidance, and professional support throughout the placement. Our hosts are never left to manage alone; we ensure they're trained, vetted, and supported every step of the way.



WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE NEED SUPPORTED LODGINGS?

Supported Lodgings accommodates young people aged 16–21 (and beyond where developmentally beneficial). They come from diverse backgrounds and often face significant challenges, such as:

- Family breakdown or neglect
- Time in care or transitioning as a care leaver
- Being an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child
- Mental health struggles or trauma
- Poverty or exclusion from education or work

Despite these difficulties, they are resilient, resourceful, and ready to move forward with support. What they need is someone to offer them stability and belief – a safe home and a second chance.

We take great care in finding the right fit — for both you and the young person:

- You'll never be matched without your full involvement
- We'll learn about your lifestyle, boundaries, and preferences
- The young person's needs, goals and personality are also carefully considered
- A dedicated Placement Coordinator introduces you and stays involved throughout the placement
- You'll have time to meet, ask questions and decide together if it feels right
- It's about finding the right connection, where trust can grow and everyone feels respected and supported.

LYDIA'S STORY



Lydia came to Step by Step after both her parents passed away. Devastated and alone, Lydia needed a stable place to live as well as a great deal of compassion and support.

Lydia was referred to our Supported Lodgings service and carefully matched with a host. At first, she was very nervous about living with her host, but after a few meetings to discuss her concerns, she felt ready to move in.

Lydia and her host went on to develop a fantastic relationship, characterised by honesty and openness. The trauma of losing her parents had left Lydia with mental health issues; her host would recognise when she was struggling, not sleeping or eating very much and offer her support.

When asked what she thought about living with her host, Lydia told us: "I like that things are consistent and normal. This feels like home."

With such a safe, caring environment to live in, Lydia soon began to thrive. She achieved excellent results at college and was able to find herself a job. She is now living in her own lovely flat, with her adorable cat Spoon.

Despite suffering significant bereavement at a very young age, Lydia has displayed incredible resilience and maintains a positive outlook on life. She still keeps in touch with her host and is involved in Step by Step's Speak Out group, where young people feed back changes and improvements that they feel would benefit their peers.

When asked how she's doing now, Lydia answered "I'm building a little life for myself, one that wouldn't have been possible without Step by Step."

You can hear Lydia's story in her own words **here**.



WHO CAN BE A HOST?

You don't need specialist qualifications or experience to become a Supported Lodgings host — just a spare room, a genuine interest in supporting young people, and the ability to provide a safe and welcoming home.

You can host if you:

- Are over 21 years old
- Have a spare, furnished room in your home
- Can offer a stable, caring environment
- Are willing to listen, guide, and encourage a young person
- Are happy to undergo safeguarding checks and training

We welcome people from all backgrounds and walks of life. You can be:

- Single, part of a couple, or a family
- Working full-time, part-time, self-employed or retired
- A homeowner or renting (with your landlord's permission)
- From any cultural background, faith, or identity

Hosting arrangements are matched carefully based on your lifestyle and preferences. Some placements last a few months, others longer — every placement is supported to ensure it works well for both the host and the young person.

WHY HOST WITH STEP BY STEP?

Choosing to host through Step by Step means joining the leading provider of Supported Lodgings in the UK. We are Ofsted-registered and have over 35 years' experience supporting young people at risk of homelessness.

Here's why hosts choose, and stay with, Step by Step:

We are a trusted provider. We support over 250 young people each year across six counties. Over 80% progress positively in these placements.

We offer full training and support. All of our hosts receive induction training, ongoing development, a dedicated Placement Coordinator, and 24/7 support.

We welcome you into a like-minded community. You'll be part of a welcoming host network with regular check-ins, resources and peer connections.

We provide our hosts with a weekly allowance. You will receive a non-taxable allowance to cover the cost of hosting. This does not usually affect benefits.

We allow you to have a meaningful impact on a young person's life. Your support gives a young person a safe home and the chance to move forward with their life.



THE JOURNEY TO BECOMING A HOST

1

INITIAL ENQUIRY

We will arrange a phone call with you to outline what being a host involves and answer any questions you have.

2

HOME VISIT

We will come round for a tour of your home, check that your spare room is suitable for a young person, and discuss Supported Lodgings in more detail.

3

INITIAL PAPERWORK

You will complete a form asking about you, your family, your lifestyle, experiences, and the reasons you would like to become a host. We also require you to complete an e-learning course.

4

DBS APPLICATION

We will require personal and professional references for you and, if relevant, your partner, as well as DBS checks for anyone over 18 living in your home.



5

HOST ASSESSMENT

We will assess your understanding of specific things and will provide further training if needed.

6

PANEL

The panel assesses the information gathered to date and 'sign off' hosts as being ready to offer Supported Lodgings.

7

MATCHING

We work carefully as a team to match the right young person to the host. You will then meet to discuss joint expectations and house rules.

8

ONGOING SUPPORT AND TRAINING

You will be allocated a Support Worker to work alongside you and the young person, and receive yearly training.



HEAR FROM OUR HOSTS



For Lorraine, becoming a Supported Lodgings host with Step by Step was a natural step. With her own children growing up and moving out, she found herself with space to spare and a desire for company at home. ***"I thought about foster care," she explains, "but it never felt quite right for me. Then I saw an advert for Supported Lodgings, and I thought, actually, I can do this."***

Lorraine has now been hosting young people for over five years. She works full-time and enjoys spending time in her caravan, often heading off for weekend breaks. Far from being a barrier, her lifestyle has worked well with the independence that Supported Lodgings encourages.

"You're not there to parent them," she says. "You're there to support them as they move towards independence. Sometimes that means helping them with cooking or laundry, but mostly it's just being there, guiding them to make good decisions and stay safe."

Lorraine has supported many young people, often those who have experienced trauma and face challenges with mental health or relationships. But she believes that empathy, structure, and trust can go a long way. ***"Every young person I've had has been lovely," she says. "They might struggle sometimes, but that's often because of what they've been through. They just need someone to care."***

When asked why she chose Supported Lodgings over renting privately to a lodger, Lorraine doesn't hesitate: ***"I want to make a difference. I don't just want someone to come in and do their own thing. I want them to feel supported, to have someone to talk to, and to help them move forward."***

For Ella and Richard, the decision to host came from a shared desire to do something useful with the space in their home, and to make a tangible difference in the lives of young people who needed safety and support. Ella explains, **"We were living in a large house, so we decided as we had two rooms and a bathroom upstairs that nobody was using, Supported Lodgings was a good idea."**



For Richard, one of the biggest surprises has been just how personal and rewarding the experience has become.

"The highlight for me has actually been the relationships that we have been able to have with these young people. I thought it wouldn't be very personal. We still know several of them. We still talk to them now and again."

Ella recalls the very first young person who came to stay with them, **"We got along just fine. He is a very sweet human being, very respectful. We were there when he had sad and difficult moments, and there were quite a few, but we were there to celebrate when he was able to achieve something."**

When asked what they would say to others who are thinking about becoming hosts, both Ella and Richard encourage taking the leap.

"I would say, do it. I don't think it's possible to advise on an individual basis. I think if you feel the urge and you see the need, just do it," Richard says simply.

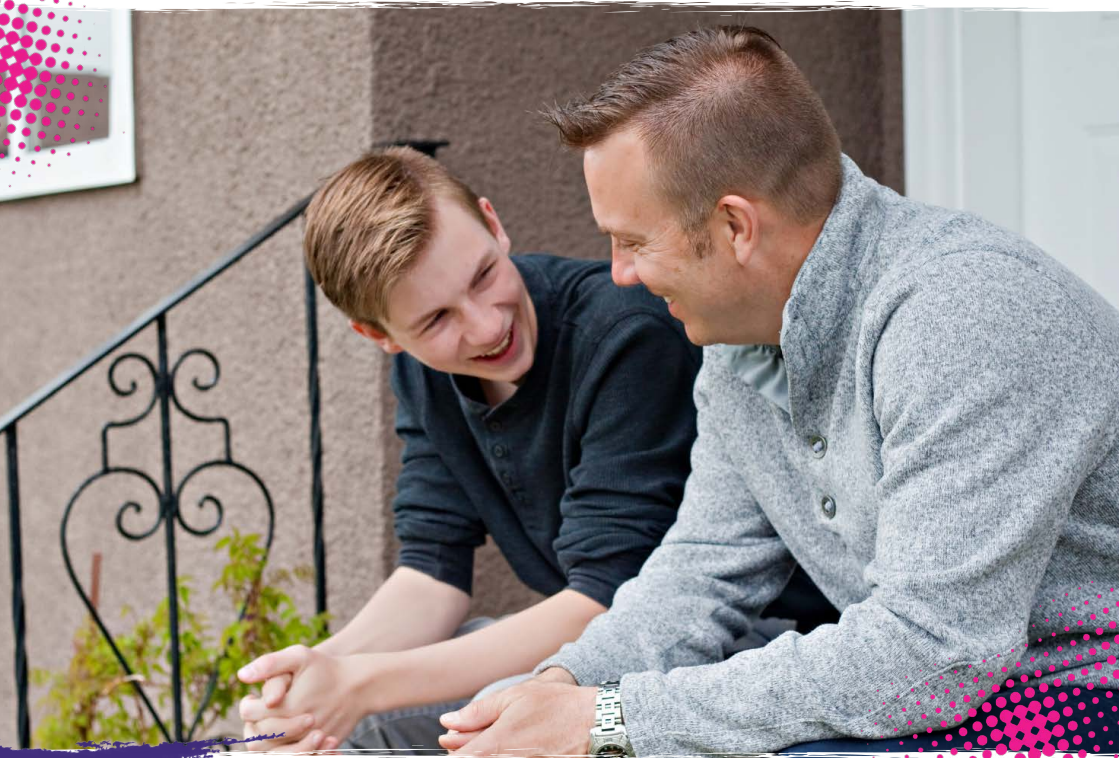
"Yes, you're not only sharing part of your house with this young person. You will share your life and your experience." Ella agrees. **"One thing that we have seen, regardless of moments of misunderstanding, is that they are grateful."**

CONTACT US

READY TO OPEN YOUR HEART AND HOME TO A YOUNG PERSON? GET IN TOUCH TODAY.

@ supportedlodgings@stepbystep.org.uk

 stepbystep.org.uk/spare-room



Young People. Hard Times. Bright Futures.

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