

# Supported Lodgings

**Exploring the feasibility of long-term  
community hosting as a response to youth  
homelessness in Scotland**

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# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

Supported Lodgings schemes provide young people with a room of their own in the home of a vetted and trained private household, with support to the 'host' household(er) and young person provided by a specialist organisation. They are one form of 'community hosting' model, that utilise community assets to provide young people in need of accommodation with a home and support. Increasing interest in community hosting across the UK reflects interest in new and better forms of housing and support solutions in the context of challenging housing market contexts and sometimes unsuitable existing temporary and/or supported accommodation options for those in housing need. It also reflects increasing awareness of the community resources – housing/space, time and willingness – available to better meet these needs.

While levels of statutory youth homelessness have been falling in recent years in Scotland, 16-24 year olds remain heavily over-represented in the homeless population. It is estimated that young people face a two to three times higher risk of having recently experienced homelessness than the general population. During 2016/17, 1,755 temporary accommodation placements for 16-24 year olds were into hostel accommodation, with a further 670 into Bed and Breakfast accommodation in Scotland. This is despite persistent concerns about the quality and appropriateness of much of this accommodation, and its potentially harmful impacts on young people in particular.

Ending rough sleeping and homelessness – and providing better responses to it in the meantime – is a central policy concern in Scotland at present. While there is strong evidence and increasing consensus that Rapid Rehousing and Housing First are the appropriate response for adults experiencing homelessness, it is less clear how emerging understandings of the value of 'ordinary' accommodation and non-institutional environments should inform youth homelessness policy and practice. This is a timely opportunity to reconsider the accommodation options available to young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

It is in this context, that this report considers the potential for Supported Lodgings to play an increased role in responses to youth homelessness in Scotland. Drawing on insights from existing practice and research literature, and primary qualitative research with sector experts across England and Scotland, existing and potential Supported Lodgings 'hosts', and young people with experience of homelessness themselves, it explores the opportunities and challenges associated with scaling Supported Lodgings in Scotland with a view to informing policy and practice development at local and national levels.

The key findings of the study are as follows.

## How it works

Supported Lodgings are a well-established form of provision in some parts of England and (for care leavers) in Scotland, but there is no standard shape to such schemes at present. The available practice literature and existing providers point to a series of core and unique components that characterise the model, as well as some key points of variation:

- Supported Lodgings schemes offer one kind of supported accommodation option for young people, including those leaving care, at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. Some schemes also cater for young parents with babies. Supported Lodgings schemes tend to accommodate 16-25 year olds, though many focus on 'younger young people' (16-18 years or 16-21 years). Schemes are run directly by local authorities or by independent third sector organisations.

- Supported Lodgings can cater for young people with a wide range of support needs, including those with multiple and complex needs. Some schemes are specifically designed for young people with multiple and complex needs. Some 'high risk' groups of young people – those with a history of violence towards others, sexual offenses and/or arson – are not usually considered suitable for Supported Lodgings placements.
- Host households can be an individual, couple or family with children; younger or older households; those in employment or not (e.g. retired); and can be renters or owner occupiers. Having a diverse range of hosts (with different backgrounds, skills, characteristics, households circumstances and in different location) is seen to strengthen schemes (by enhancing options during the matching process) and facilitate more tailored and suitable placements for young people. While smaller/newer schemes report needing to constantly invest in host recruitment, more established and larger scale schemes do not appear to struggle to recruit hosts, something often achieved via word of mouth.
- All adult members of prospective host households undergo criminal record and safeguarding checks, and schemes also explore their motivations for becoming hosts, seeking primarily those with strong altruistic intent rather than those seeking financial gain. Prospective hosts' homes are also checked for suitability and safety. Vetted hosts have access to a training programme covering areas including safeguarding; health and mental health; communication, problem solving and conflict management skills; life skills, finance and budgeting; drugs and alcohol; and education, employment and training. Existing hosts see particular value in 'peer support' opportunities to meet each other and hear from young people who live or have lived in placements as part of their training and ongoing development.
- Good matching of young people with host households is a core component of successful schemes and placements and requires scheme staff having good knowledge of host's household set-up and circumstances; skills, expertise and experience; time and capacity to support young people; and the young person's circumstances, preferences and priorities. Appropriate information sharing with hosts regarding young people's background, behaviour and support needs is critical for facilitating sustainable placements.
- A key and unique feature of Supported Lodgings is the nature of the support available to young people, combining professional and specialist support from the provider agency and the more informal, day-to-day, and 'within-home' support provided by the host. This blended and personalised support seeks to support young people to achieve a range of outcomes, spanning emotional wellbeing and confidence, basic life skills and household management, employment, education and training, and move-on accommodation, and can facilitate a strengths-based orientation in support provision.
- Placements tend to last from six months to two years, but can be shorter-term. The longer-term housing outcomes of Supported Lodgings placements depends in considerable part on the availability of a pathway of housing options for young people in the local area, but also on schemes having a planned and supported approach to move-on, including ideally continued support from and contact with the support agency and host.
- Hosts have access to ongoing support during placements: first, a system of regular supervisions or 'placement reviews' with a 'host co-ordinator', and second, an 'on call' system of support. Responsiveness to challenges during placements by scheme staff is important to sustaining placements and keeping hosts involved in the scheme.
- Supported Lodgings schemes have four cost components, covering scheme set-up, on-going operating and staffing costs, rent, and support costs (these last two components are paid to the host). How these costs are met varies both by scheme and depending on the age/circumstances of individual young people. For 18-24 years olds funding is

primarily secured via Housing Benefit/Universal Credit (rent element) and local authority budgets (support/infrastructure). Some established schemes in England benefited from central government funding in the 2000s to meet set-up costs. A modest weekly household contribution (£5 to £30) is paid directly to the host by the young person.

- Supported Lodgings hosts are generally classified as self-employed and are responsible for declaring their income for tax and benefit purposes, and informing their insurance and mortgage company, or landlord, as required. Increases in insurance premiums can occur and are usually fairly small and borne by the host.

## **Outcomes and experiences**

Existing evidence on the effectiveness of Support Lodgings is limited, but promising and further reinforced by the primary research conducted as part of this study.

- Analysis of Supporting People data suggests that young people in Supported Lodgings in England in 2007/08 achieved better outcomes than young people in other forms of provision (supported housing, Foyer-based accommodation and support, and floating support) across most indicators, with particularly positive outcomes in the domains of learning and work, participating in social activity, and maintaining contact with family and friends.
- Supported Lodgings provision was instrumental in ending the use of Bed and Breakfast as a form of temporary accommodation provision for young people in some areas in England in the 2000s.
- A recent qualitative evaluation of Barnardo's Supported Lodgings services suggests that the model achieves positive outcomes across a number of areas, including young people's development of practical skills; emotional wellbeing and skills; accessing and engaging with other services; employment and education; and housing outcomes.
- Wider research highlighting the advantages of foster over residential care for looked after children; raising concerns about the suitability of much congregate/communal accommodation for young people experiencing homelessness; and highlighting the value of 'ordinary' home-like environments as an effective response to homelessness also lend support to the evidential basis for Supported Lodgings. The model offers some of the benefits of 'normal housing' situations that have proved central to the success of Housing First programmes for adults with complex needs, while offering flexible and personalised support 'on site' to young people and combatting the isolation of moving into an independent tenancy 'too early'.
- Key informants with experience of Supported Lodgings schemes identified the blended support offered by hosts and support workers while young people reside in 'ordinary' home environments as providing a uniquely positive and supportive environment within which those young people are able to find security and stability, gain confidence and skills, and pursue wider ambitions. It was acknowledged that Supported Lodgings would not be the preferred or most appropriate option for all young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Young people who were currently or had recently lived in Supported Lodgings reported primarily positive experiences, describing this form of supported accommodation as providing a 'bridge' or 'stepping stone' to adulthood, enabling them to gain the skills, confidence and self-belief to live independently, and combining flexible and reasonable 'ground rules' with increasing freedom. Young people's experiences underline the importance of adequate host training, good matching processes, and maintaining clear expectations of hosts' role in supporting young people throughout placements.
- Existing Supported Lodgings hosts reported positive experiences of their role, seeing it as beneficial to the young people they accommodated and supported and extremely

personally rewarding. Their experiences emphasise the importance of adequate support provision within Supported Lodgings schemes, in particular where young people have high support needs or behavioural issues, and especially where these were not apparent at the time the placement began. Hosts also underlined the challenges young people staying with them had faced accessing appropriate professional mental health care, something which made some reluctant to accommodate this group in future.

- Most hosts were motivated to host for primarily altruistic reasons, and saw good communication skills, kindness, respect and open-mindedness as required host attributes. While most saw the remuneration they received as fair, there were concerns that lower income households might be less willing or able to host given income-levels. It was felt that accommodating young people with higher support needs/behavioural issues should be associated with greater support and respite opportunities and higher support payments.

### **Expanding Supported Lodgings in Scotland**

There was a high degree of support among sector experts in Scotland for Supported Lodgings as an accommodation model for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, but also a clear sense of the barriers present and enablers required to scale this form of provision.

- Supported Lodgings' non-institutional, home-like and family-based design was seen by sector experts as potentially able to offer personalised and flexible support to young people and to facilitate and enable a range of positive outcomes for this group spanning mental health and wellbeing, life-skills, education and employment.
- There was particular positivity about the potential role of Supported Lodgings in replacing – and facilitating the scaling-down of – unsuitable and even harmful temporary accommodation options, in particular Bed and Breakfast and also some hostel and supported accommodation.
- The Supported Lodgings model was also seen to potentially: be conducive to young people's engagement with employment (depending on the specific funding mechanisms involved in specific schemes); facilitate more effective homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment; and help diversify accommodation options and increase choice for young people facing homelessness.

Three central – but surmountable – challenges were identified by sector experts as relevant to any attempt to scale Supported Lodgings provision in Scotland, these being:

- How such provision would sit alongside the existing legislative framework on homelessness. Scottish Government and Scottish Housing Regulator clarification about the 'place' of Supported Lodgings within local authorities' homeless duties could resolve this barrier;
- Cultural and attitudinal barriers among those working in the homelessness sector. Awareness raising and information provision and campaigns targeting key audiences could address this challenge, particularly concerning the specifics of how (and how successfully) existing Supported Lodgings schemes work and how risk and safeguarding concerns are managed; and
- Crucially, the availability of funding to set-up schemes and fund them on an ongoing basis. Commitment of 'pump-priming' funds from Scottish Government to pilot Supported Lodgings in the Scottish context, demonstrate proof of concept and negotiate access to more secure funding streams could address this. The funding challenge was acknowledged to be particularly onerous in the context of highly strained local authority budgets and expected changes to how supported accommodation is funded. Some



sector experts saw Supported Lodgings as a means of responding to these challenges, rather than as prevented by them.

The young people with experiences of homelessness in three diverse areas of Scotland involved in this study had mixed views on Supported Lodgings:

- The largest proportion of those participating in the study had mixed feelings about this accommodation option, not necessarily seeing it as a choice they would make now, but as an option they may have considered in the past, or as particularly well-suited to some specific groups of young people. Of the remaining young people, around half were clear that they would not wish to stay in a Supported Lodgings placement, with the other half seeing it as a highly desirable option that they wish had been available when they were in housing need.
- All young people who participated in the research saw Supported Lodgings as a far better alternative accommodation option than hostels or Bed and Breakfasts, which were viewed with fear and trepidation. Supported Lodgings could play a particularly important role in areas heavily reliant on such forms of temporary accommodation.
- Some key informants doubted that there would be demand for Supported Lodgings among young people. This study's findings suggest that there is existing latent demand that could be increased by improved familiarity with the option and tailoring schemes around young people's preferences and anxieties.
- Particularly important for young people was that 'house rules' would not be overly restrictive; that external support – beyond the host – was provided; that established relationships with existing and trusted support workers could continue; that matching processes allowed young people to meet a host a number of times before moving into their home; that matches could reflect the diversity of young people's needs and preferences; and that adequate support in moving on from placements was available.

This study suggests that there is a potential pool of willing host householders with spare rooms in Scotland who are strongly motivated to help young people by providing accommodation and support, and who were not perturbed by discussions about the practicalities of Supported Lodgings schemes and the potential support needs of young people that might be placed with them:

- Households including adults with some prior involvement or commitment to the broad set of issues relating to youth development and homelessness may be particularly willing to become a Supported Lodgings hosts.
- Householders saw the following factors as crucial to their willingness to become a Supported Lodgings host: the provision of clear information about what being a host involves prior to sign-up; risk assessment and information sharing regarding the support needs and histories of young people referred to hosts; adequate training and support to hosts on an on-going basis, with a particular focus on equipping hosts to deal with mental health issues; and fair remuneration that covers the costs of being a host (including 'less visible' costs), that does not disadvantage lower income households from participating, but avoids attracting people simply seeking financial gain.

## **Conclusion**

There is a strong case to pursue Supported Lodgings as a significant element of the response to youth homelessness in Scotland. The model leverages community assets (spare rooms and altruism) and specialist support provision to provide young people with safe and 'normal' accommodation within which they can pursue their ambition, address a wide range of support needs, and achieve multiple 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes, from self-confidence, to basic living skills, and employment and education opportunities. It further

enables young people to avoid the risks and harms associated with other kinds of congregate accommodation for homeless people; avoids the isolation, loneliness and tenancy breakdown that some young people can experience if they move into independent housing 'too early' or with insufficient support made available to them; and lends itself to the provision of personalised, flexible, robust and asset-based support.

Supported Lodgings thus offers a well-established, tried and tested means of addressing a series of challenges related to youth homelessness, housing and temporary and supported accommodation provision in Scotland that is strongly supported by those working in the sector and goes with the grain of current policy and service development in this area.

Key to scaling Supported Lodgings in Scotland is its recognition and promotion as a desirable form of supported accommodation by Scottish Government, clarification regarding where Supported Lodgings 'fits' within the statutory homelessness framework and local authorities' duties to homeless households, and the availability of funding to pilot Supported Lodgings schemes in Scotland. Central and local government, as well as philanthropic and grant funding organisations should consider providing support for the development and testing of Supported Lodgings schemes. Youth homelessness organisations should seek to develop Supported Lodgings schemes to complement existing wider services and local authorities consider the role of Supported Lodgings in pursuing the recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group. Housing association, local authority and private landlords, and mortgage lenders, could usefully be encouraged and enabled to support their tenants and mortgagees to take up opportunities to become Supported Lodgings hosts. Finally, the current strong appetite to help tackle homelessness among the general public visible in Scotland in recent years might usefully be channelled towards Supported Lodgings host recruitment drives.



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## Acronyms

B&B	Bed and Breakfast accommodation
CRESR	Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HA	Housing Association
HARSAG	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group
I-SPHERE	Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LA	Local authority
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
NACCOM	No Accommodation Network
NCAS	National Care Advisory Service
TA	Temporary accommodation
UK	United Kingdom
US/USA	United States of America



16-24 year olds  
still make up  
over a **quarter**  
**of statutory**  
**homeless**  
**households** in  
Scotland.



# 1. Introduction

Supported Lodgings schemes provide young people with a room of their own in the home of a vetted and trained private household, with support to the 'host' household(er) and young person provided by a specialist organisation. They are one form of 'community hosting' model, that utilise community assets to provide young people in need of accommodation with a home and support.

Increasing interest in various forms of community hosting across the UK tracks a number of wider trends, in particular an acknowledgement of the housing and support needs of some groups, including (but not limited to) young people at risk of homelessness, and a recognition of the community resources available in terms of housing, time and willingness to provide support (Insley, 2011; Sewel, 2016; NACCOM, 2017; Todd and Williams, 2013). A further driver has been concerns about the suitability of accommodation options available to those in housing need, in particular forms of 'congregate' accommodation (e.g. hostels or Bed and Breakfast accommodation) and an emerging confidence in the value of non-institutional accommodation in 'normal' homes as a preferable alternative (Holmes, 2008; Watts et al, 2015; Fitzpatrick and Watts, 2016; Mackie et al, 2017).

This report considers the potential for Supported Lodgings to play an increased role in responses to youth homelessness in Scotland. Drawing on insights from youth homelessness experts and existing Supported Lodgings providers across England and Scotland, as well as existing and potential 'hosts', and young people with experience of homelessness themselves, it explores the opportunities and challenges associated with scaling Supported Lodgings in Scotland with a view to informing policy and practice development at local and national levels.

This first introductory chapter sets the context for rest of the report, broadening the lens to place Supported Lodgings schemes in the wider context of 'community hosting' models, before focusing in on the development of Supported Lodgings in the UK and then providing an overview of the current context relevant to a consideration of youth homelessness in Scotland. A description of the aims and methods of this study follows, with the final section providing an overview of the structure of the rest of the report.

## 1.1 Community Hosting

Supported Lodgings schemes are best understood in the wider context of a spectrum of 'community hosting' housing options. These include Nightstop, Support Lodgings, Shared Lives, Homeshare and hosting schemes targeting unaccompanied asylum seeking youth or migrants with no access to public funds. Community hosting models share in common a commitment to providing accommodation for those needing it in the homes of existing households. Beyond this core component, they vary substantially on a number of key dimensions.

Community hosting models seek to provide accommodation for a range of **target groups**, with some focusing broadly on those needing affordable accommodation (e.g. Homeshare), and others focusing more narrowly on: specific groups of young people, like care leavers or those experiencing homelessness (e.g. Nightstop and Supported Lodgings); people of any age but with specific and sometimes very high support needs (Shared Lives); or migrant groups, including asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with no recourse to public funds (NACCOM, 2017). Homeshare schemes aim to meet the needs of two distinct groups – those with a spare room in need of support, and those seeking affordable accommodation.

The **length of time** for which community hosting models aim to provide accommodation also varies, ranging from short-term emergency placements (e.g. Nightstop) to potentially longer stays of several months or years (e.g. Supported Lodgings). Shared Lives offers potentially much longer accommodation and support for those unable to live on their own, as an alternative to, for instance, living in a care home, with Homeshare arrangements lasting as long as the arrangement continues to provide mutual benefit for both parties.

**Table 1.1 Summary of community hosting models**

Name	Description
Nightstop	Nightstop provides emergency accommodation for 1 night to several weeks for 16-25 year olds experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the homes of vetted and trained community hosts. Young people are provided with an evening meal, a bedroom, a chance to wash clothes, breakfast and a packed lunch. If staying for more than 1 night, young people leave the host's accommodation during the day. Hosts are volunteers, and can claim a small allowance to cover out of pocket expenses.
Supported Lodgings	Supported Lodgings offer longer-term placements, typically 6 months to 2 years, in vetted and trained private households' homes, with support provided by an external organisation. Supported Lodgings schemes are most well known as a form of provision for young people leaving care, sometimes as a means to extend foster placements. Hosts are usually considered self-employed, and receive a weekly payment in exchange for their provision of accommodation and support.
Shared Lives	Shares Lives offers day visits, respite, short-term, long-term (transitional) or very long-term (up to several decades) arrangements where guests live with and are cared for by carers in the carers own home. Traditionally, a community-based alternative to residential care, carers share their homes, social networks, meals, holidays etc. with guests, who have a range of needs including learning disabilities, mental health issues, support needs associated with older age and physical impairment. Hosts receive income for rent and the support and care they provide to guests.
Destitute migrant hosting	These hosting schemes offer rooms in someone's house to migrant groups in need of accommodation, typically refused asylum seekers, refugees awaiting access to benefits and/or settled accommodation, and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. Such schemes sometimes involve a small financial contribution being made to hosts, though there can be complications around this given 'Right to Rent' rules (especially where the host is a tenant not owner occupier).



Name	Description
Homeshare	Homeshare matches unrelated individuals to share a home for mutual benefit, typically an older householder with a spare room and in need of some form of support, and someone in need of low cost accommodation who can provide that support (e.g. help with shopping, cooking, cleaning, companionship, but not personal care). Host and guest pay Homeshare schemes a weekly fee to cover the costs of running the scheme.

Community hosting models also vary in relation to the **level (and direction) of support provided**. Most community hosting models involve the provision of support to the person living in the host's home, both by the host themselves and by an external specialist organisation. The nature and extent of that support varies between and within different schemes. Generally, Nightstop hosts provide lower levels of support limited to the provision of a meal and welcoming place to stay for a short period of time. Supported Lodgings hosts tend to provide higher levels of support to the young people staying with them, in particular in relation to budgeting, cooking and wider 'life skills', and sometimes cater for young people with multiple and complex support needs. Shared Lives offers those living in people's homes with sometimes very intensive levels of support to address a range of physical or mental health needs, or learning difficulties. Homeshare turns the direction of support on its head, with the 'guest' (often a younger person) providing the householder (often an older person) with an agreed amount of support in exchange for a place to stay.

There are substantial variations in how community hosting models are **funded** and what they cost. As will be discussed further below in relation to Supported Lodgings specifically, there are three key cost components, relating to scheme infrastructure, rent, and support. Infrastructure costs covering staffing, administration, recruitment, and training, tend to be met through a mix of grant and local authority (LA) funding. Rental costs are often met by Housing Benefit (or increasingly the housing cost element of Universal Credit, but sometimes via LA children's or adult services, health or housing budgets or grant funding. Support costs will tend to be covered by LA budgets, either via adult or children's services or housing-related support (formerly 'Supporting People') budgets. In the case of Shared Lives, support/care costs are funded via a combination of social care funding and Carer's Allowance. Homeshare is funded differently to other forms of community hosting, in that both host householder and guest pay a fee to the Homeshare scheme provider – in lieu of support costs and rent respectively – to cover the costs of running the scheme.

Finally, the **kinds of organisations** providing community hosting schemes varies. Supported Lodgings and Shared Lives are sometimes run by local authorities themselves, and sometimes by third sector organisations/independent providers (Shared Lives Plus, 2017, 2018; Sewel, 2016; Cumbria County Council, no date). Nightstop schemes are provided by independent organisations accredited by the national network Nightstop UK. Homeshare schemes tend to be delivered by charities or private organisations, usually alongside other services like Shared Lives, domiciliary care or other community, development or consultancy services (Homeshare UK, 2017). Schemes catering for destitute migrants of various kinds tend to be operated by voluntary organisations (NACCOM, 2017; Positive Action in Housing, 2017), though Glasgow City Council now runs a scheme in partnership with faith/charitable organisations for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (most of whom are 16/17 years old) (Millar, 2016).

Community hosting schemes currently operate across the UK. There are a total of 30 accredited Nightstop schemes which accommodated almost 1,400 young people in 2016, though only 2 schemes operate in Scotland at present (in Edinburgh and Glasgow)<sup>1</sup>. There are 122 Shared Lives Schemes in England, catering for almost 12,000 people, with 14 schemes in Scotland supporting 380 people, with provision in both England and Scotland growing in recent years (Shared Lives Plus, 2017, 2018). Twenty-two Homeshare schemes operate the UK, with provision increasing overall but scarce in Scotland (Homeshare UK, 2017). The overall scale of Supported Lodgings schemes and community hosting for various migrant groups is less clear in the absence of an overall network or umbrella organisation tracking trends in provision, though see NACCOM (2017) for a recent summary of some destitute migrant hosting projects. Supported Lodgings schemes are commonly used for care leavers, with one large scale provider Barnardo's running 14 schemes across England, Scotland and Wales (Sewel, 2016), and other independent providers and local authorities running a range of other schemes. A survey of English local authorities undertaken by Homeless Link in 2015 suggested that Supported Lodgings schemes operated in around 70% of responding authorities at that time<sup>2</sup> (Homeless Link, 2015). Their most recent survey indicates that Supported Lodgings provision has been stable in the past year (Homeless Link, 2018).

## 1.2 The Development of Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings schemes were developed in the 1990s and early 2000s by local authorities across England and Scotland seeking to meet their expanding duties to young people leaving local authority care, in particular 16/17 year olds (Holmes, 2008; Beckett et al, 2010), sometimes as a 'stand-alone' scheme that care leavers would move into from various care settings, and sometimes to facilitate the extension of existing foster placements (NCAS, 2009).

Care leaver focused Supported Lodgings provision remains across England and Scotland. In Scotland, such schemes are provided by local authorities directly<sup>3</sup>, as well as independent organisations like Barnardo's (Beckett et al, 2010). Some of these schemes cater for young homeless people as well as care leavers, albeit at a small scale and depending on available funding. Staf (a membership organisation for frontline practitioners working with care experienced young people) run a quarterly forum for Supported Lodgings providers working in this area<sup>4</sup>. Supported Lodgings schemes in Scotland are regulated by the Care Inspectorate as an Adult Placement Service. Internationally, some states in the United States (US) also employ Supported Lodgings like schemes (often known as 'Host Homes') to extend foster care (Dworsky et al, 2012; Gaughen, 2013).

In 2006, a further impetus for extending Supported Lodgings provision was provided in England by the then government's focus on preventing and tackling youth homelessness, and specifically, ending the use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation for 16/17 year olds for periods of more than 6 weeks. Investment in four new Supported Lodgings schemes catering for young people experiencing homelessness formed a core part of the strategy to achieve these aims, and prompted the development of schemes focusing on a wider group of young people than care leavers (Holmes, 2008). 'Host Homes' schemes akin to Supported Lodgings are also used as a response to youth homelessness in some parts of

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.nightstop.org.uk/about-us> (as at 22nd April 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Note that only around 75 (of 326) of authorities responded to the relevant question.

<sup>3</sup> Desk research informing this study suggests that over half of Scottish LAs provide Supported Lodgings for care leavers.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.staf.scot/supported-lodgings-focus-group/>



the US and Canada (Gaetz, 2014b; Abramovich and Shelton, 2017; Gaetz and DeJ, 2017; Washington State Department of Commerce, 2017).

With homelessness policy devolved to Scotland and the policy focus north of the border firmly on expanding the legal entitlements of all those experiencing homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012), no such impetus for Supported Lodgings occurred in the 2000s. Supported Lodgings provision thus remains almost exclusively focused on care leavers, rather than the wider youth homelessness population here, albeit that there has been intermittent interest in extending provision to this group (Becket et al, 2010).

Most recently, the role of Supported Lodgings in responding to homelessness has been considered by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) convened by the Housing Minister in late 2017, with the aim of ending rough sleeping and homelessness and transforming the nature of temporary accommodation (TA) (HARSAG, 2018). One emerging focus of the Action Group at the time of writing has been to shift TA provision away from B&B and hostel accommodation and towards mainstream furnished tenancies, with Supported Lodgings seen to have a potential role as one accommodation option for young people (HARSAG, 2018).

### **1.3 The Scottish Context**

Despite a recent UK Government U-turn reversing controversial planned cuts to housing allowances for some young people (DWP, 2018), those unable to stay in the family home continue to face considerable challenges accessing affordable accommodation. Relevant here are higher rates of unemployment among young people (Scottish Government, 2018b), the lower level of housing and social security benefits to which those out of work or on a low income are entitled (Stephens and Blenkinsopp, 2015), reluctance among private landlords to let to young people and/or those on low incomes (Pattison and Reeve, 2017; Watts and Stephenson, 2017), and high and growing rents in many areas (Scottish Government, 2017b).

Youth homelessness can severely impede young people's ability to participate in employment, education and training; undermine and weaken their social support networks; and jeopardise their physical and mental health (Vasiliou, 2006; Quilgars et al, 2008; Tabner, 2013; Watts et al, 2015). Moreover, there are longstanding concerns about the detrimental impact that staying in unsuitable forms of temporary or supported accommodation when homeless can have on young people, including that such stays hinder young people's opportunities to address their support needs, maintain healthy lifestyles, and/or develop independent living skills (Stone, 2010; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007; Benjaminsen, 2013); expose them to negative peer pressure, bullying and risk of exploitation (Vasiliou, 2006; Stone, 2010); and that the high costs of such accommodation create a 'poverty trap' and strong work disincentivise effects, given the rate of benefit withdrawal as income increases (Quilgars et al, 2008; YMCA, 2015).

Those experiencing homelessness in Scotland, including young people, benefit from the strong statutory entitlements (Fitzpatrick et al, 2015). Since 2012, almost all homeless people in Scotland, regardless of age, have been entitled to settled housing via their local authority and to temporary accommodation while that duty is being discharged (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012). Only individuals not eligible for assistance under homelessness legislation (for instance due to their immigration status) or who have been found intentionally homeless are excluded from this 'full rehousing duty', and may still be entitled to temporary accommodation for a period of time. 'Statutory homelessness' refers to those owed the full rehousing duty under homelessness legislation.

During 2016/17, over 7,000 16-24 year olds were assessed as homeless (see table 1.2), of which 70% were single person households, and a further 18% single parents (Scottish Government, 2017c). Youth homelessness has been falling over time in Scotland, and has fallen by half since its peak of over 15,000 in 2009/10. This fall is likely to reflect the implementation of a 'housing options' model of homelessness prevention (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012; 2015; Watts et al, 2015), which has also led to falls in levels of homelessness across Great Britain and among all age groups (Fitzpatrick, Pawson et al, 2016).

**Table 1.2 Statutory youth homelessness in Scotland 2008/09-2016/17**

Year	Applications assessed as homeless	Applications assessed as homeless, age 16-24	Applications assessed as homeless, age 16-24 (%)
2008/09	41,595	14,867	36
2009/10	43,370	15,503	36
2010/11	41,527	14,522	35
2011/12	35,381	12,138	34
2012/13	32,111	9,946	31
2013/14	29,805	8,697	29
2014/15	29,720	8,544	29
2015/16	28,723	8,055	28
2016/17	27,202	7,213	27

*Source: Scottish Government Youth Homelessness Analysis 2016/17*

Despite these falls, 16-24 year olds still make up over a quarter of statutory homeless households in Scotland, far higher than would be expected given that this age group make up only 16% of the adult population. These figures reflect large scale survey evidence from across the UK showing young people face a two to three times higher risk of having recently experienced homelessness than the general population (Fitzpatrick et al, 2013; Fitzpatrick et al, 2015), something likely to reflect young people's high likelihood of experiencing poverty (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2017), higher unemployment levels, lower wages, and entitlements to lower levels of social security benefits (Watts et al, 2015).

National trends in youth homelessness mask considerable variation across Scotland. Rates of statutory youth homelessness are particularly high (over 15 per 1,000 young people) in South Ayrshire, Angus, Orkney, West Lothian, East Lothian Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire. Other authorities see high absolute levels of youth homelessness, exceeding 300 cases a year, with levels highest in Glasgow (840), Edinburgh (720), Fife (546), North Lanarkshire (436), South Lanarkshire (385), Aberdeen (330), West Lothian (313) (Scottish Government, 2017c).

There have been some concerns, though considerably less acute in Scotland given its wide legal safety net (Watts et al, 2015), that not all young people experiencing homelessness in the UK are counted within statutory homelessness statistics (for example see Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee, 2014). Various attempts have thus been made to enumerate overall youth homelessness, most recently by Clarke et al (2015) who estimated the total number of young people in touch with homelessness services by

combining statutory data with an estimate of non-statutory youth homelessness based on hostel accommodation bed spaces, administrative data and 40 local authority case studies across the four UK nations. They estimated that in the year to September 2014 just over 12,000 young people used homelessness services in Scotland (see also Quilgars et al, 2008, 2011).

In 2013, Scotland extended the statutory homelessness safety net by introducing a duty on local authorities to assess the housing support needs of statutorily homeless households and to ensure that housing support services are provided to those assessed as having support needs (Scottish Government, 2013). Statutory homelessness data suggest that 58% of young homeless people have no support needs, with 32% having one support need, and a further 10% having two or more (Scottish Government, 2017c). Of those with at least one support need, the most common relates to basic housing management and independent living skills (66%), with a smaller proportion (37%) having support needs related to a mental health problem, 10% to a drug or alcohol dependency and a smaller proportion still reporting support needs around learning disabilities (8%), medical conditions (8%) or physical disabilities (3%).

Most households owed the rehousing duty under homelessness legislation by their local authority spend some time in temporary accommodation. The expansion of the groups owed the full rehousing duty in Scotland (via the removal of the priority need category, see Fitzpatrick et al, 2012, 2015), led to rapid growth in the numbers of households in TA. Numbers doubled between 2003 and 2010, staying at around 10-11,000 households since then, but with a slow increasing trend evident from 2012/13 to 2016/17 (Littlewood et al, 2018).

Tables 1.3a and b show trends in TA placements for 16-17 and 18-24 year olds over this time period. Comparing the data in table 1.3a to table 1.2, we can see that while levels of statutory youth homelessness have decreased by 27% since 2012/13, the number of 16-24 year olds in TA has decreased by only 16%, suggesting a backlog of young people are residing in TA and facing move-on challenges (Littlewood et al, 2018).

We also see that the most common form of TA placement for this age group (50% of placements to 16-24 year olds in 2016/17) is in mainstream local authority or housing association stock (usually 'temporary furnished flats'). While this is the type of TA for which sector experts have fewest concerns around quality, the cost of temporary furnished flats – and associated 'poverty trap' and work disincentive effects – are seen to be highly problematic (Littlewood et al, 2018).

The second most commonly used type of TA, accounting for 30% of placements to 16-24 year olds in 2016/17, is hostels. A considerably higher proportion of placements for 16/17 year olds are into hostels compared to 18-24 year olds. Reflecting longer-term trends for all age groups, there has been a 15% increase in the proportion of TA placements into hostels involving young people between 2012/13 and 2016/17. The nature and quality of hostels is likely to vary considerably depending on whether it is an all age/mixed hostel or youth specific, who the provider is, commissioning practice and the level of support provided within the hostel, but there are concerns about the suitability of some hostels for young people, particularly larger and mixed-age facilities (Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee, 2014; Littlewood et al, 2018; Scottish Parliament Local Government and Communities Committee, 2018).

**Table 1.3a TA placements occupied by applicants aged 16-24 whose case was closed during 16/17 (number)**

Financial year of case closure										
Age group	2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015		2015/2016		2016/2017	
	16-17	18-24	16-17	18-24	16-17	18-24	16-17	18-24	16-17	18-24
LA/HA stock	400	2,185	330	2,060	325	1,935	290	1,820	275	1,885
Hostel	365	1,165	355	1,105	435	1,330	410	1,375	380	1,375
B&B	240	1,005	200	890	185	760	120	635	100	570
Other <sup>1</sup>	135	755	130	650	115	690	100	740	100	655
Total applicants taking up TA <sup>2</sup>	865	4,110	730	3,665	765	3,605	655	3,515	635	3,530
Total recorded TA placements	1,140	5,110	1,015	4,705	1,060	4,715	920	4,570	855	4,485

**Table 1.3b TA placements occupied by applicants aged 16-24 whose case was closed during 16/17 (percent)**

Financial year of case closure										
Age group	2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015		2015/2016		2016/2017	
	16-17	18-24	16-17	18-24	16-17	18-24	16-17	18-24	16-17	18-24
LA/HA stock	35.1	42.8	32.5	43.8	30.7	41.0	31.5	39.8	32.2	42.0
Hostel	32.0	22.8	35.0	23.5	41.0	28.2	44.6	30.1	44.4	30.7
B&B	21.1	19.7	19.7	18.9	17.5	16.1	13.0	13.9	11.7	12.7
Other <sup>1</sup>	11.8	14.8	12.8	13.8	10.8	14.6	10.9	16.2	11.7	14.6

Notes: 1. Includes Women's Refuge, Private Sector Lease and Other LA placement. 2. Multiple accommodation types can be selected by applicants.

Source: HL1 master data set as at 23rd May 2017, provided by Scottish Government analysts. The table only includes applicants who have been assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness. All figures are rounded for disclosure purposes.

Despite concerns about the impact of B&B on young people (see above), over 10% of placements for both 16-17 and 18-24s are into such accommodation (see also Harleigh-Bell, 2014). Though this represents a considerable decline on the proportion and number of B&B placements for this age group compared to 2012/13, during 2016, 670 B&B placements were still made to this age group. According to the Scottish Government's own analysis of youth homelessness, 1 in 10 young homeless people whose case closed during 2016/17

had been placed in B&B accommodation at some point, though the length of these stays in B&B is not clear, and likely to vary between LA areas (see Littlewood et al, 2018).

Considerable attention is now being paid to how temporary accommodation can be transformed and improved in Scotland, and more generally how rough sleeping and homelessness can be ended entirely (Scottish Government, 2017a; HARSAG, 2018). Effectively preventing and resolving youth homelessness – and in ways that ensure that today’s young people do not become the homeless adults of the future – should be a central component in achieving these objectives. Ongoing uncertainty and planned reforms to how temporary and supported accommodation will be funded provide further impetus to a reconsideration of ‘what works’ in terms of accommodation options for young people experiencing homelessness (see DCLG/DWP, 2017; Littlewood et al, 2018). While there is overwhelmingly strong evidence and increasing consensus that Housing First and Rapid-Rehousing are the appropriate response for adults with multiple needs experiencing chronic homelessness, it is less clear how emerging understandings of the value of ‘ordinary’ accommodation and non-institutional environments should inform youth homelessness policy and practice, with evidence on the relative effectiveness and long-term impacts of youth homelessness accommodation models sorely lacking (Watts et al, 2015; Fitzpatrick and Watts, 2016).

This challenging wider context and window for policy change provides a timely backdrop for a reconsideration of accommodation options available to young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Scotland.

## 1.4 Research Aims and Methods

It is in this context that the present study aims to explore the potential opportunities and challenges associated with Supported Lodgings, should it be more widely adopted as part of the response to youth homelessness in Scotland. It does so from the perspective of three key groups: youth homelessness and Supported Lodgings experts; host households providing homes and support to young people; and young people with experience of homelessness and/or Supported Lodgings placements. More specifically, the study involved the following four stages of fieldwork.

**Stage 1: a rapid review of available literature** on Supported Lodgings. This focused on academic and ‘grey’ literature (research, guidance and other documents from government, local authority or voluntary sector organisations), focusing primarily on England and Scotland<sup>5</sup> and published since 2000.

**Stage 2:** a total of 15 **expert key informants** took part in qualitative phone or face-to-face interviews (11) or small focus groups (2) between January and March 2018. Participants spanned two main groups. First, 6 participants were based in England and involved in the provision of existing Supported Lodgings schemes (5 voluntary sector, 1 local authority). These interviews explored: the practicalities of how existing schemes run; the challenges of running Supported Lodgings schemes (funding, recruitment, support, etc.); views on what would enable the expansion of Supported Lodgings provision in Scotland; barriers to such expansion; and the outcomes achieved by Supported Lodgings schemes.

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<sup>5</sup> Though see references to Host Homes programmes in the USA and Canada above.

Second, 9 participants were based in Scotland, 4 from the statutory sector (spanning local and national level) and 5 from the voluntary sector. Main areas of expertise among Scotland-based key informants were: youth homelessness service provision (4); local authority homelessness provision (3), including one local authority manager considering setting up a Supported Lodgings scheme for young people experiencing homelessness; national level expertise in statutory homelessness (2); and care leaver focused Supported Lodgings provision (2) (some participants had more than one core area of expertise). These interviews explored people's views on: why Supported Lodgings schemes catering for homeless youth do not currently operate in Scotland; the potential role of such schemes in responding effectively to youth homelessness in the future; advantages and disadvantages of such a model; and enablers/barriers to scaling such provision.

**Stage 3:** individual qualitative phone interviews were undertaken with **host householders (6)** and **young people who were currently or had recently stayed in Supported Lodgings placements (7)**, across both England and Scotland. Interviews took place during March and April 2018 and participants were accessed via Supported Lodgings scheme providers who took part in stage 2 of the fieldwork, as well as wider youth homelessness, local authority, and Supported Lodgings networks known to the research team.

Of the 7 young people with experience of Supported Lodgings placements, 3 were in Scotland and 4 in England, 4 were female and 3 male, and they ranged from age 17 to 22 at time of interview. They had all first accessed Supported Lodgings when aged 16-18, and despite efforts to access 'only homeless' young people for participation, 6 of the young people interviewed had been looked after by their local authority, with the remaining one participant first being supported by Social Work when they were over 16 following an LA homelessness assessment. The length of Supported Lodgings placements young people had experienced ranged from 8 months to 2 years, though one participant had stayed in a Supported Lodgings placement for over 5 years. They were accessed via 5 different Supported Lodgings providers in geographically diverse locations, 3 in Scotland and 2 in England. Interviews with young people who had stayed in Supported Lodgings placements covered: their experience of accessing Supported Lodgings; meeting/being matched with the host; staying with them, and where relevant moving on from the Supported Lodgings placement; as well as their broader assessment of the impact the stay had had on them, and their thoughts about how it compared to other accommodation options that might have been open to them.

Of the hosts with current or recent experience of having young people come to live with them under Supported Lodgings schemes, 3 were in England and 3 in Scotland. All were female, and they had been hosts for periods ranging from 2.5 to 12 years. They had hosted young people across the full 16-25 age spectrum for periods ranging from 3 months to 7 years, with an average period of around 2 years. Most of the hosts accommodated one young person at a time, but two had capacity to provide a home for 2 young people at a time. Hosts had accommodated young people coming to Supported Lodgings via a number of routes, including LA social work (as looked after children, asylum seekers or trafficked young people) and (in England) homelessness services. Interviews with hosts focused on: their motivations for becoming a host; their experience of signing up as a host; the training and support they had received as a host; their experiences having young people come and live with them; and their views on the impact of placements on themselves and their family, as well as the young people who came to stay with them.

**Stage 4:** the final stage of fieldwork consisted of a series of focus groups and individual interviews to explore **the views of householders with spare rooms and young**



**people with experience of homelessness** in Scotland. This work took place across 3 Scottish local authority areas between February and April 2018. These areas – Edinburgh, Dundee, and Dumfries and Galloway – were selected to explore views about Supported Lodgings in a range of geographical contexts, including a major city, a smaller city and a rural area.

This stage of fieldwork involved 15 potential Supported Lodgings host householders who have a spare room and expressed an initial interest in discussing a new ‘spare room scheme’ that would help provide housing for young people at risk of homelessness. Participants were recruited using two main methods: a number of organisations involved in stages 1 and 2 of the study promoted the opportunity to participate via their networks and volunteer mailing lists, and focus group times, locations and dates were also publicised via the social media accounts of I-SPHERE, Shelter Scotland, the research team and their networks. A brief description of Supported Lodgings was provided to participants at the recruitment stage, with more information given at the beginning of the focus group/interview. A total of 10 participants took part in focus groups in Edinburgh, 3 in Dundee and 2 in Dumfries and Galloway (who took part via individual interviews). Hosts were of varying ages and household types, ranging from single people to couples, and younger people in their late twenties/early thirties to much older people near or in retirement. More women than men took part in these focus groups, and most (though not all) participants had some experience either working or volunteering in the areas of homelessness, social care, mental health, or youth services. A number of participants had been involved in similar schemes, for instance as respite foster providers, Shared Lives providers or Nightstop hosts. These focus groups/interviews focused on: participants initial reactions to the idea of Supported Lodgings and whether they would consider being involved in a scheme; their thoughts on various aspects of the practicalities of how schemes run (including training, support, and remuneration); their view on providing support to young people living with them; the kinds of young people they would be willing or unwilling to accommodate; and the impact they thought being a host might have on them, their family and the young people who lived in Supported Lodgings placements.

Focus groups were also undertaken with a total of 20 young people with experience of homelessness. Ten young people participated in two focus groups in Edinburgh, 7 in a focus group in Dundee, and 3 in a focus group in Dumfries and Galloway. Participants were recruited via local youth homelessness services and accommodation providers, and all received a £15 high street voucher to thank them for their time. Those who took part ranged from age 16 to 25, with one additional participant age 30 also taking part in one of the focus groups. There were 12 male and 8 female participants who, in all but one case self-described as having experienced homelessness prior to their current accommodation. The young people who took part had experienced sofa surfing, stays in B&B and adult hostels, and sleeping rough. Their current accommodation included supported accommodation and independent flats in both the private and social rented sector, with one young man residing in an adult hostel at the time of the focus group. Discussions covered: young people’s initial reaction to the idea of living in a Supported Lodgings placement; how they thought it compared to the kinds of accommodation they had stayed in in the past; what they thought of various practical aspects of provision (matching, support, length of stay); and whether they would (have) consider(ed) staying with a host.

Interviews and focus groups conducted across all stages of the study were digitally recorded with the informed consent of the participant(s), transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company, and analysed by theme using NVivo 11 pro



(qualitative analysis software package) by the research team. Anonymised attributions or pseudonyms are used to label quotations in this report.

## **1.5 Structure of Report**

This opening chapter has sought to provide the background for this report's examination of Supported Lodgings as an accommodation and support option for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Scotland, by: placing the model in the context of other 'community hosting' models; summarising the development of Supported Lodgings in the UK; providing an overview of the Scottish context of youth homelessness provision and temporary/supported accommodation; and describing the study's aims and methods.

Chapter 2 draws on existing literature on Supported Lodgings and key informant perspectives to explore how schemes work in practice, and identify key challenges in offering such provision, as well as the key components seen to undergird successful schemes.

Chapter 3 focuses on the outcomes associated with Supported Lodgings schemes, drawing on existing research, key informant perspectives, and the views of young people and hosts who have lived in and provided placements respectively.

Chapter 4 moves on to explicitly consider the potential of Support Lodgings as part of Scotland's youth homelessness response. It analyses the findings of interviews with youth homelessness sector experts in Scotland, exploring their views on the potential contribution Supported Lodgings schemes could make, the barriers and challenges they see as standing in the way of introducing and scaling such provision, and the 'enablers' they identify as potentially supporting such service development. The chapter closes by considering the views of young people with experience of homelessness and potential host households in Edinburgh, Dundee and Dumfries and Galloway.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the studies findings and comes to an overall verdict about the potential role of Supported Lodgings in Scotland and the feasibility of introducing and scaling such provision.



Having a **diverse range of hosts** is seen to strengthen schemes by enhancing options during the matching process.

## 2. Supported Lodgings in Practice

This chapter draws on available literature and key informant interviews to describe how Supported Lodgings works in practice. It covers who Supported Lodgings is for and how referrals are made; how hosts are recruited, assessed and trained; how matching hosts and young people and the move-in process is managed; the support available to young people residing in placements, how long they tend to stay and how they move-on; the support provided to hosts; how schemes are funded and what they cost; and the impact of being a host on household's finances.

### 2.1 Target Group and Referrals

Supported Lodgings schemes offer one kind of supported accommodation option for several (overlapping) groups of young people:

- those leaving care (sometimes formally part of 'staying put' arrangements to allow young people to stay with foster families or as a move-on option from other care placements) (Cumbria County Council, no date; Scottish Government, 2013; Sewel, 2016);
- young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness (in England) (Holmes, 2008; Lancashire County Council, 2014; Watts et al, 2015; Sewel, 2016); and more recently,
- unaccompanied asylum seeking young people (e.g. in Glasgow, see Millar, 2016).

Some schemes also cater for young parents with babies (Cumbria County Council, no date), which may have relevance in Scotland given that almost a fifth of statutorily homeless young people are single parents (see chapter 2). One provider described the aims of these kind of placements as follows:

"[with] mums and baby placements... the providers [hosts] are supporting them with the baby. We've got two of those where... [there's] an annex... the provider lives in the house but then they go and check them and help them bathe and all those sorts of things. What we're trying to reduce is that cycle of looked after children becoming looked after"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Supported Lodgings schemes tend to accommodate young people aged 16-25, although many schemes focus on 'younger young people' (16-18 year olds or 16-21s) (Holmes, 2008; Lancashire County Council, 2014). Several providers who participated in this study and are commissioned to provide Supported Lodgings placements to 16-18 or 16-21 year olds saw the model as having value for older age groups and wanted to convince commissioners to increase age limits currently in place.

Existing literature on Supported Lodgings suggests that it can cater for young people with a wide range of and levels of intensity/complexity of support needs, but that Supported Lodgings is not suitable for *all* young people. Analysis of 2007/08 Supporting People data suggests that a mix of young people with a range of support needs were accommodated in Supported Lodgings (Holmes, 2008). Young people entering Supported Lodgings were more likely to require help with mental health needs than was the case for those entering other kinds of supported accommodation, though less likely to need help managing substance misuse issues. Combining these results with consultation with providers in England and a review of existing literature, Holmes concluded that Supported Lodgings are:

“most suitable for young people who are willing and able to: engage to some degree with individuals (particularly their host) and with... education... regulate their behaviour to accommodate house rules... turn a desire for a sustainable and satisfying adult life into activities which will promote this outcome... and [may be less suitable for] young people who are not able or willing to relate to a host, or are unwilling to compromise on chaotic or anti-social lifestyles. However, Support Lodgings Schemes can and do house and support young people with a wide variety of support needs, many of whom would find it harder to achieve their aims in other forms of supported housing” (p.21).

According to Supported Lodgings providers in Lancashire:

“not all young people are suited to a Supported Lodgings placement and it should be a resource offered to young people who understand that they will be living in the home of another adult/s and there will be expectations around boundaries and respect”

Lancashire County Council, 2014, p.5

In the view of Lancashire County Council, it is levels of *risk* rather than the intensity of complexity of young people’s *needs* that are key to providers in considering who is/isn’t suitable for a placement (Lancashire County Council, 2014). Though the report offers no account of the kinds of risks that can lead to exclusions from schemes, these are likely to include a history of violence towards others, sexual offenses and/or arson.

Barnardo’s evaluation of Supported Lodgings schemes highlights that young people with low and high and complex needs have been successfully accommodated in placements, and indeed highlights that seven Barnardo’s schemes are designed specifically for young people with particularly complex needs (Sewel, 2016). The evaluation suggests that Supported Lodgings schemes are better able to cater for young people with diverse and higher support needs where they have access to a diverse pool of hosts, living in a variety of circumstances and with a range of skills. The evaluation also emphasises the importance of information sharing between referral agencies, schemes and hosts about potential risks, challenging behaviours and triggers for behavioural issues among young people. This was seen to be central in guarding against placement breakdown.

Key informants who contributed to this study echoed these themes, in general seeing risk assessment as a key role of Supported Lodgings providers, and acknowledging that some young people are “*too high risk to be put in a home*” (Key informant, England, voluntary sector), but seeing Supported Lodgings as a suitable model for young people with a range of support needs, including high and complex needs:

“Supported Lodgings can cater for young people with higher or more complex needs] with the right hosts; but I also feel strongly that we need to – if we’re going to be doing that with those with higher needs and complex needs – there needs to be a specific scheme set up: payment to recognise that; because at the moment, the payment that hosts get, does not recognise the high level of risk”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“you have to be careful... we do police check all the young people that come through and... do a thorough risk assessment as well before we place them... we need to make sure that it’s safe for both parties.”



Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“I think if you got the right hosts... people with a lot of experience, a lot of training, if you were looking for higher support needs, young people to go in, to a Supported Lodgings placement. The same as they do with foster care”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Key informants were eager that placements didn't 'set young people up to fail', but felt this could be avoided by ensuring that hosts were appropriately trained and supported, that young people had access to the support they need, that risk assessments were thorough, and that procedures were in place to deal with challenges or problems within placements.

While participants tended to see Supported Lodgings as a model suitable for a wide range of young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, a feeling was expressed that it had particular value for less 'streetwise' young people who were likely to be intimidated by congregate forms of temporary or supported accommodation:

“it's the young people who come in to the sector really scared... not necessarily young but very vulnerable... through age... circumstance or naivety or just not being streetwise... they almost need that family environment... they're just petrified of a B&B or of a hostel and they're not ready for independent [living] – and I know that whole thing about being tenancy-ready. But they'd need an awful lot of support in a tenancy, pretty much 24 hour, to get them to that point because they've not had that support in the family home to get them to a point where they can look after themselves”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

This study also provided a means of exploring the potential of Supported Lodgings in more rural areas. Findings in this regard were mixed. One key informant managed a large and successful Supported Lodgings schemes operating across a large rural area in the north of England. The scheme demanded slightly higher staffing to facilitate the higher distances across which support workers were operating, but no additional challenges were highlighted. Another key informant was less positive, seeing population density as a helpful facilitator of schemes. This theme was also addressed by householders who participated in focus groups in Scotland to explore Supported Lodgings (discussed further in chapter 4), and in which there was a general feeling that Supported Lodgings could work in rural areas with decent public transport networks, and offer young people the opportunity to stay “*close to home*” (Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway) and nearer their existing social networks as opposed to being forced to relocate to bigger towns and cities.

Existing literature on Supported Lodgings emphasises the importance of effective referral pathways. That referring agencies – primarily local authority housing/homelessness teams – are aware of schemes operating in their area, which young people might be suitable for Supported Lodgings, how referrals are made, what level of referral information is required by schemes, and know enough about Supported Lodgings to allay any immediate fears or anxieties expressed by young people was seen to be crucial (Beckett et al, 2010; NCAS et al, 2011b; Sewel, 2016). Poor referral systems or declining capacity in referring organisations were identified as a risk for schemes (for instance see Lancashire County Council, 2014). One English provider described an effective referral pathway with their local authority housing department as follows:

“Our housing are absolutely fine. We have a local protocol in place with them about how we identify a young person as somebody in our Supported Lodgings and then all the rates and all the documents are in place”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

## 2.2 Host Recruitment, Assessment, and Training

Supported lodgings host households can be an individual, couple or family with children. This can range from younger to older households, and those in employment or not (e.g. retired). Having a diverse range of hosts is seen to strengthen schemes by enhancing options during the matching process and ultimately facilitating more tailored and suitable placements for young people (NCAS et al, 2011b; Sewel, 2016). Ideally, a pool of hosts would include those with different household circumstances, skills, backgrounds (including ethnic and cultural backgrounds), characteristics (including sexuality and religion), and living in different locations.

Groups that were seen to be particularly likely to become hosts included: former foster carers, those with an interest in fostering but due to other commitments (e.g. work) unable to take up fostering, friends and relatives of existing/former hosts, and those with a professional or volunteering experience in homelessness, housing, health, social care and/or youth services. The key uniting characteristic of all hosts is that they:

“feel that they have the capacity and a room that they feel that they could use to look after a young person and make sure that they were safe”

Key informant, England, statutory sector

Supported Lodgings schemes reported having active hosts across all housing tenures (owner occupiers with/without mortgage, private and social housing renters), noting that landlords and mortgage providers can require notification before hosts sign up to the scheme. The biggest challenges associated with tenure were provisions in lending agreements with mortgage providers and stipulations in Housing Association tenancies, but providers reported that it was very rare for hosts to be precluded from proceeding for these reasons:

“they know that they're coming with support of an organisation and to be honest, that is where our brand comes in. They do trust [large provider] and as soon as we say what we're doing and why we're doing it, most [private] landlords are absolutely fine. We've only had one say no over the years; the rest have all said yes”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“we do have [hosts from] a mix of tenures... I am aware there are a few mortgage companies that would require the host to notify them before signing up to the scheme. Sometimes it is more about the terms and conditions set in the lending agreement... So we normally would advise hosts applying to ensure they speak to their mortgage lenders... A more common issue is hosts on social rents, especially those renting from Housing Associations. A number... include as part of their terms and condition[s] the requirement for hosts to seek their consent before taking in a lodger or even prohibits it. Having said that, none has ever been denied consent from my experience though the thought of the

requirement kind of discourages potential hosts from applying in my view as we don't seem to get a lot of interest from that subset"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Tenure-related barriers to becoming a host are lowest for owner occupiers without a mortgage. Owners with a mortgage, private tenants and local authority tenants are likely to require the permission of their lender or landlord, which in the experience of key informants in this study is generally forthcoming and facilitated by the reputation and brand of the provider agency. Housing Association tenants appear to face the highest – but not necessarily insurmountable – barriers due to the specific permissions that tend to be required by their tenancy agreements. It may be that partnership and negotiation with local Housing Associations in areas of Scotland that seek to establish schemes in the future could ease these challenges.

Supported Lodgings schemes use a range of methods to attract and recruit hosts, including attending local/community events, advertising on: radio, mainstream and social media, and organisational websites. Most effective, however, was seen to be 'word of mouth' recruitment via existing hosts (see also Sewel, 2016). According to Holmes' (2008) review, host recruitment is a "*resource-hungry*" (p.6) activity. Some providers who participated in this study agreed that recruitment was an on-going challenge:

"Host recruitment is one of the biggest challenges... because you rely on people giving up their spare room... you cannot not stop recruiting; because at any given time, you can have a host say: 'I need a break,' or 'My children have come back home,' or 'The room is not available any longer,' or 'I want to leave because of personal reasons,' or whatever."

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"It's constant really and [we use] a variety of ways [to recruit hosts]. We might go to events, we might do a radio talk and things on Facebook, the [organisation]'s website. It's always dripping. A lot of our referrals to be fair have come from word of mouth from other providers and that is our biggest way of getting people in. They connect with people that they know and it goes down the line."

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Other schemes, however, did not have to invest significant resources in recruitment, perhaps reflecting their greater scale, history and/or profile in the local community:

We don't actually recruit at present, we haven't recruited, they've all come word of mouth, and that says a huge amount about the service itself that we're not actually having to look to recruit people. People are saying they would like to do it."

Key informant, England, statutory sector

"Once we recruit hosts and we have experienced hosts then talking to potential hosts, we've actually found we get quite a good rate of people signing up. So I think there is something about once you know how it works and what works and what those people look like that – you know, I think that breaks down some of the barriers."



Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Supported Lodgings schemes commented that they experience a 'drop off' between initial enquiries about becoming a host and the numbers pursuing the opportunity, seeing this as an important 'filtering stage' to make sure prospective hosts understand the role, their responsibilities, the needs of young people and that hosts are entering the scheme with the 'right' motivations. While the remuneration hosts receive was seen to be important, it was strongly felt that a core motivation for becoming a host needs to be a desire to help and support young people (see also Sewel, 2016). Assessment processes tended to have at least some (and sometimes a detailed) focus on understanding host motivations and ensuring that they 'fit' with the scheme and wider organisation's values and ethos:

"we do have a drop off and we do have a ratio between about four enquiries to one success, but that's okay, we need to make sure that we have the right people with the right qualities. We don't want people just doing it because they want to make money. It just won't work because these young people aren't easy"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Holmes (2008) also highlighted competition with fostering services as a potential challenge for Supported Lodgings providers, not least given the higher rates of remuneration available to foster carers. The report notes, however (as did schemes participating in this study), that Supported Lodgings tends to appeal to a different group of people (e.g. those not wishing to provide as much support or time as fostering requires) and that *"none of the schemes reviewed were restricted by a shortage of approved hosts"* (p.6).

A number of Supported Lodgings schemes involved in this study commented on the recruitment-related benefits of joint working with existing services in the area, including Nightstop and Shared Lives services. One statutory sector scheme in England, for instance, worked closely with Shared Lives and Staying Put services, meaning that hosts could 'transition' from one service to another depending on their circumstances and preferences. Two participating Supported Lodgings schemes were run by organisations also delivering Nightstop, something that gave flexibility in recruiting hosts and a 'route in' for those wanting or needing some experience before housing a young person for a longer period:

"what we're finding is that we just advertise for hosts whether it be for one night or whether it be for longer-term and we'll talk to the hosts about it... whether they want somebody in their house long-term or whether they just want to do... a couple of nights a week. Sometimes the hosts want to get a bit more experience, so we'd say, 'Why don't you do Nightstop first rather than going straight into Supported Lodgings?'... that tends to work... we also have Supported Lodgings hosts who have got another spare room, so they might do Nightstop and Supported Lodgings so, yes, it works quite well"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"We've got a lot of hosts who are happy to do Nightstop as well as Supported Lodgings... We'll make a referral and a young person would go into a host as a Nightstop; but then it's deemed that the young person needs longer term... so that very often will turn into a Supported Lodgings [placement]"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Once a prospective candidate has decided they want to pursue becoming a host, a process of checks and vetting begins, covering all adult members of the host household and the hosts' property. Household member vetting always involves a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (in England) or Disclosure Scotland (in Scotland) check, with schemes also running local authority children's services checks, seeking character references, running checks with prospective hosts' GPs, either as standard or in particular cases. The assessment also involves 'getting to know' hosts, including their skills and hobbies, to aid in matching hosts and young people, and to identify any specific training needs they may have. Many schemes reported using 'panels', including representatives from social care, children's services and other key stakeholders, as a final stage in the host assessment, although one had moved away from this process as it had made recruiting hosts more challenging, with (in their opinion) little benefit (see quotation below). Property/home checks focus on the suitability of the property, including gas safety checks, with property modifications sometimes required before placements can proceed<sup>6</sup>. Many of the schemes involved in this study reported using assessment processes similar to, albeit slightly 'lighter touch' than, fostering services:

"They all have to go through an assessment to make sure that they're all DBS checked and that they're appropriate... [like] the guidelines of our fostering service... not as at length... but still we do hold panels... for our hosts to make sure that they're appropriate for the care of young people"

Key informant, England, statutory sector

"our recruitment process is quite in-depth... our recruitment process is very similar to the format which is the fostering recruitment. Although we're not fostering... we are quite thorough... the recruitment of host[s] is very, very critical"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"Once they've recruited or once they've come to us and said, 'Yes, we're interested in being a provider,' they then have to fill in an initial interest document which says why they want to do it and what they want to get from it. That's to do with our basis and values, so that they're doing it for the right reasons... Then our Supported Lodgings worker would go out and see them... so it's quite in depth about making sure that they've thought about it, the impact, making sure if there's family members, they're all DBS – depending on age, etc., risk assessments are done, anything that needs to be adapted in the house is done and then they go to panel. If the panel agree, then that's when they can then be placed"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"Once we are satisfied, we will then sign what we call a service level agreement with them. I am aware that some peer services would then put them through a panel... and when we started we were doing panel[s]... we found that it was counter-productive, because it was not leading to us... increasing the quality of the hosts... or helping us increase the number of the hosts. If anything it was working against us and yet there is nowhere [a] panel sits statutorily."

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<sup>6</sup> See Cumbria County Council (no date) for a set of minimum standards for Homestay/Supported Lodgings placements.

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Supported Lodgings schemes all have some form of training programme for their hosts, although practice varies regarding whether and the extent to which training is: compulsory or optional; happens in advance of hosting young people or during people's time as hosts; is on paper/online or in person; and is formal and uniform across hosts or bespoke, targeted and tailored at the needs of particular hosts or arising issues:

"we send out a training programme – and we encourage hosts to attend the training, and some attend before the placement. We don't say to them that they need to do training before, because... when we place a young person, the young person has a support worker... they get extensive support. We have a training programme specifically for hosts which we do on a Saturday.... you can do it before, and you can get the gist of it; but you get the full element of the training when you've become a host."

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"[hosts] have to do a whole training module, so there's ten modules of training... and then, they have to do [a series of] learning packages as well on data protection, safeguarding, health and safety, etc."

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"For many years we used to do some training as frequently as possible, but that has slowed down a lot because I found out that... targeted training is more productive... we have a matrix that we use to tease out the competency of the host during the assessment and we look at the matrix and say, 'we think this area he or she might need support or training', then we target the training on a one-to-one [basis] to that host"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"Training... is a couple of half-day sessions"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Existing guidance suggests a number of core areas of focus for host 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 (see Cumbria County Council, no date; NCAS et al, 2011a). Barnardo's evaluation of schemes identified demand among hosts for further training on the themes of attachment and child development, new psychoactive substances and online safety (Sewel, 2016). Echoing the current focus on the importance of psychologically or trauma-informed services, one provider described the need to both train and continue to work with hosts to achieve the right culture and ethos of provision:

"that ethos and culture of third, second, fourth chance [is important]. Sometimes, young people just take a while to settle in and depending on their journey of what they've had. That attachment and that trauma and that adolescent brain development is kicking in, so

making sure that your providers [hosts] are trained in all that, so that they understand that actually, sometimes a young person might push back, but they're not pushing back at you... you have to work through with the provider... you're the adult, you're the provider. It's talking through and having very clear supervision every four weeks for those providers about reflection time and support for them."

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

It is seen to be important that training requirements take into account the need to balance the provision of appropriate training with limits on hosts' time and capacity to take part in training, particularly face-to-face, with some advocated 'blended' online and face-to-face training for this reason (NCAS et al, 2011b; Sewel, 2016). In line with existing guidance (NCAS et al, 2011b; Sewel, 2016), key informants in this study saw particular value providing hosts with opportunities to meet each other and hear from young people who live or have lived in placements as part of their training and ongoing development:

"what I find very useful is bringing the hosts together to share experiences. There is no training that can in a million years impact better learning to hosts than that and that's what we do"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

The value of such 'peer support' opportunities was emphasised strongly by the existing hosts interviewed as part of this study (see chapter 3).

## 2.3 Matching and Moving In

Matching young people with the right host household is seen to be a core component of successful schemes and placements, with key informants emphasising that 'bad matches' can lead to placement breakdown, and (as above) emphasising the value of a diverse pool of hosts in enabling effective matching. According to Sewel (2016), good matching requires scheme staff having good knowledge of host's household set-up and circumstances; skills, expertise and experience; time and capacity to support young people, as well as a full picture of the specific needs of each young person being placed. One of our key informants agreed:

"there's lots of elements to matching, so where the young person might be in education, employment or training or how easy it is to get from A to B, where their birth family is, what the make-up and what their risk factors are... we have some where the Supported Lodgings providers have annexes, so they're not actually in the home but they're getting support a bit long-arm. That might be a place where, if you're a bit more ready but not quite ready, you might move into that...it's really making sure that you've got as much information about that young person as possible to make that right placement... If you have got a really needy young person, you wouldn't put them with a family that both partners work and have got three kids, because it won't work. You'd put them with a provider that's probably retired and has got more time to spend with the young person. Each provider will give different skills and different home environments for these young people, and it's making sure that you're aware of the qualities that your providers have got to meet the needs of the young people that are coming through."

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Key informants emphasised that some hosts have “real skills and experience with a particular type of young person and not... another” (Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector). Another elaborated:

“it's built around the young person... and it's also the ability of the provider... the beauty that we have is that... it's not [just] that we just understand the kids needs but we understand the needs of our carers and what their strengths are or weaknesses are as well, so it makes it easier to place young people and have more of a success rate if you actually understand them.”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

An important part of the matching and placement process involves young people meeting the prospective host and (usually on a separate, later occasion) seeing the house and meeting other household members. This process can be very fast, particularly where accommodation is needed quickly, or can take several weeks or months. Ideally, it would unfold “*at the young person's pace*” (Sewel, 2016, p.8). Supported Lodgings schemes commented that they *could* place young people very quickly if needed, but preferred to take time:

“Obviously, if they've come in as an emergency placement, there is no time. Apart from understanding the limited information we have about them and then finding them a placement, that's all that can be done. If it's a longer-term... then the best practice model that we have is that they go and meet the provider, just a meeting of two or three hours to say hello, et cetera. Then they would go on a weekend visit to check that they all get on and that it's working and then, they would move in after that”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Some used Nightstop provision in the area to enable them to manage longer-term placements “*in a calm manner*” (Key informant, England, statutory sector). Also crucial is information sharing with hosts regarding young people's background, behaviour and support needs, with insufficient information sharing a key factor placing arrangements at risk of breakdown (Sewel, 2016).

In the later stages of the matching process, young people and hosts are supported to set the ground rules for placements. Young people normally sign a license agreement (excluded licence agreement) giving them permission to occupy the property and laying down the conditions of their residence, with the host signing as landlord and the provider agency sometimes a signatory on this agreement too. In the case of one service participating in this study, the scheme acted as the landlord for the host room. An additional set of ‘ground rules’ or ‘house rules’ are also agreed, with good practice guidance suggesting that clarity over ‘definite’ and ‘negotiable’ rules can be helpful, with young people finding the opportunity to negotiate empowering and positive (NCAS et al, 2011b; Sewel, 2016). Issues during placements are dealt with via the support systems in place within each scheme (see below), with key informants emphasising the need for services to be ‘responsive’, either by re-establishing boundaries and ground rules with the young person or asking the host to be flexible or manage issues differently:

“if there are teething problems, sometimes we have to go and say to the host: 'Look, we feel you have to be a bit flexible here.'... some of the issues may be around time that the young person comes home, or they're not engaging in education... or behaviour. Those things don't necessarily end the placement, because we try to nip it in the bud, right from

the beginning... A few days ago, we had one where the host had requested for a placement disruption meeting. So I quickly organised it within 24 hours... that is the difference between you losing a host and keeping them"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

## 2.4 Support for Young People

A key and unique feature of Supported Lodgings was seen to be the nature of the support available to young people, combining professional and specialist support from the provider agency, usually via a key worker who meets the young person at regular intervals (e.g. weekly), and the more informal, day-to-day, and 'within-home' support provided by the host.

The nature and balance of the support provided by the host and key worker was reported to vary between and within schemes, depending on the scheme's philosophy and funding, the needs of the young person, and capabilities and capacity of the host. The general pattern, however, is for workers to focus on 'hard' and longer-term outcomes around education, employment and training, volunteering and community engagement, and for hosts to focus on life skills and household management and 'being there' for young people:

"the one-to-one that the young person will get with the host... it's not like with a project where you have a support worker who goes and then you see them another time. You have the direct attention of the host: life skills development and everything in a home setting; it's an advantage for the young person."

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"the provider's [host's] role is more to support within a home environment to make sure that they have a good, healthy diet where possible. That they learn how to use washing machines, that they learn... fire safety and things like, where's the water stopcock"

Key informant, England, statutory sector

"the young person would see the... support worker every week... to get the young person into education or employment, so they'll be doing job searches and things like that... we do volunteering opportunities with them as well, so we've been working with the [local authority's] older persons worker... she identifies people who might be isolated, who can't do jobs around the house for themselves, so we've been doing decorating and gardening projects for them"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

This blend of different kinds of support from multiple sources appears to provide a framework for personalised and strengths-based support for young people (see Fitzpatrick and Watts, 2016 and chapter 4). One key informant commented that Supported Lodgings facilitates *"looking at what they [young people] are good at and what they enjoy and then pushing that forward and our carers [hosts] are really good at doing that"* (Key informant, England, statutory sector). That being said, as in the quote above, it was emphasised that the host role is limited to that which is consistent with



them sticking to “*their normal routine and normal duties: if they work, they should be able to go to work*” (Key informant, England, voluntary sector).

Given this mode of blended support, effective communication and coordination between those involved was seen to be very important:

“clear communication between the Supported Lodgings staff and the providers. Making sure that your keyworker... who is supporting the young person is linked in that triangle and that, there is only one plan for that young person. Whether it's a pathway plan, if it's a Supported Lodgings plan, whatever it is, that everybody is clear on who is doing what... [when that doesn't happen] the young person gets frustrated and the placement breaks down and actually, it's nothing to do with the young person, it was due to the professionals not talking. Communication is definitely key”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“being very clear about what that support is and what it's not. I think that needs to be quite transparent and what the expectations are of the lodging providers [hosts], the support providers and the individual or individuals. So, yes, clarity on that”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

One provider made the point, echoing Sewel's findings, that ‘sequenced support’ can work well for young people moving into placements, first prioritising “*stability, readiness to change, and a focus on immediate needs*” (Sewel, 2016, p.15) before addressing longer-term outcomes:

“When the young person moves into Supported Lodgings, we try to give them very intensive support; just to make sure they're settled – sometimes it takes a while for a lot of young people to settle. The first priority is for them to be stable, settled in the home, and just enjoy the Supported Lodgings; but there's also ongoing support – they have a support worker, [who] keeps supporting them.”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

One young person with experience of homelessness in Scotland who took part in a focus group about Supported Lodgings (see chapter 4) expressed a similar view that support should focus initially on ‘building confidence’ and later on ‘hard outcomes’ like training and employment:

“I don't think it's the first thing you should do when they first come into the home, but it should be a part of it”

Male young person, Dumfries and Galloway

## 2.5 Length of Stay and Moving On

Supported Lodgings placements tend to last from six months to two years, but can sometimes be shorter-term emergency placements (Holmes, 2008; NCAS et al, 2011b). Key informants from existing schemes reported providing emergency placements for as little as 24 hours while young



people are assessed under homelessness legislation by the local authority, with most accommodating young people for 6 to 18 months, and some for even longer:

“The 24-hour placement is where young people are presenting as homeless and they go and stay in a Supported Lodgings placement for 24 hours or up to three days before they get moved on... Say, they turn up at 4:30 on a Friday, they might go in there for the weekend while they look for a better placement for the Supported Lodgings or supported accommodation, and it's normally while they assess their need and if they actually need to be returned back home or not.”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“The average... I'd say, is between two and three years. Some of them we can't move, because they're so happy.”

Key informant, England, statutory sector

One scheme involved in this study reported sometimes using a retainer fee of £25 a night to keep emergency Supported Lodgings placements open, but this was not common practice.

Sewel's (2016) evaluation of Barnardo's Supported Lodgings schemes suggests that 'readiness' to move on should be the most important influence on the timing of placements ending, though notes other drivers including young people wanting to move on (perhaps prematurely in the view of the service and/or host); housing market factors/housing availability; and placement funding. Tightened commissioning practice also appears to be a factor influencing supported accommodation in Scotland, with several Scottish key informants in this study commenting that local authorities “*have tried to push back*” on the length of supported accommodation placements, from a previous standard of up to two years towards much shorter periods of six months:

“We've tried to argue to keep it that long, because when they pushed all the adult stuff to six months we were saying well, actually, you get a young person who's 16 who's straight out of home... it will take more than six months to get them to the stage where they feel ready”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

The limited housing options facing young people and calls to expand affordable, stable and decent quality accommodation for this group (including, but not only, *vulnerable* young people) has been a key theme in research and policy for some time (Heath, 2008; Terry, 2011; Clapham et al, 2012; Barnardo's 2014), and the success of Supported Lodgings move-on is likely to depend in large part on the availability of a pathway of housing options for young people in the local area (NCAS et al, 2011b; Clapham et al, 2012; Barnardo's 2014; St Basils, 2015). St Basils Positive Pathway model (St Basils, 2015) has been used extensively in English (but not Scottish) local authorities to inform the development of such housing pathways, albeit that the financial constraints facing local authorities have limited their ability to develop and sustain this work (Green et al, 2017). The most common move on options cited by participants in this study were independent or shared tenancies, alternative supported accommodation, or accommodation linked to higher education/university courses.

Supported Lodgings literature and practice guides support a planned and supported approach to moving young people on from placements, and emphasise the value of the personal relationship

with the host during this transition (NCAS et al, 2011b; Sewel, 2016). The practical and emotional support hosts can offer includes helping young people pack and move, keeping in touch, having young people back to visit for a meal, and keeping a spare key to their new home (NCAS et al, 2011b). One provider in England emphasised that move on accommodation can be sought in areas near the placement to support this kind of ongoing relationship:

“if [a young person is] in our Supported Lodgings in – I don't know, [City] they then move into a tenancy within [same City] so that they can still stay in touch with their provider [host]. It's not just suddenly you're gone and that's it... I don't think in supported accommodation, they can be so flexible because they've got another eight young people watching. If they are flexible with them, they have to be flexible with them all, so I think it's much more young people focused and led”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

One area for practice improvement identified by the Sewel (2016) evaluation concerned how hosts should approach and manage young people coming towards the end of their placement. The research found that some hosts reduce support to young people as placements near an end, feeling that this *“more realistically reflects what independence will entail post-move-on”* (p.90), but Sewel advises that it is not yet clear what constitutes effective practice in this regard, calling for hosts to receive more guidance.

A number of existing provider agencies involved in this study reported offering continued support to young people post-placement to ease the transition. Ongoing support from both the provider agency and host, combined with efforts where possible to accommodate young people near existing social networks, would help allay the concerns of one Scottish key informant that young people may feel isolated after leaving a placement:

“say the placement's going well – which is obviously what you'd want – what happens in the long-term when the young person does get offered their own tenancy? There may be some problems there, in the fact that the young person may be saying, things are going great for me. I've been here for a few months and these people have been really supportive to me, and I've never had that in my life, and all of a sudden I'm getting offered this flat, some scheme in an outlying area of [City]. They're going to feel isolated. That would be one concern that I would possibly have.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Another Scotland-based key informant noted the importance of finances to cover [fairly modest] moving costs, decoration and furnishing of new tenancies, and commented that while care leavers have access to funds for this purpose, such resources may be harder to secure if Supported Lodgings were expanded to non-care leaver groups:

“it makes a difference [when the young person is a care leaver]... those young people would have access to Section 29 [assistance from local authority in moving on from care]. So, things like furniture is not a worry for them and that supported carer [host] is acting like, a sort of, corporate parent, in terms of anything a parent would do. Helping you set up, helping you decorate... They seem like small, inconsequential things, but I don't think they are. Money is definitely part of it.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Any development of Supported Lodgings schemes for young people experiencing homelessness should therefore consider how small ‘personal budgets’ might be made available to young people moving into independent tenancies.

Key informants reported that some schemes sometimes use retainer fees to keep placements open for young people while they are at university, in particular where the placement is still considered the young person’s home. This practice seems to be fairly rare, considered on “*a very individual basis*” (Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector), and to be associated with the higher and longer-term funding available to local authorities in supporting care leavers.

## 2.6 Support for Hosts

Supported Lodgings schemes have in place a system of on-going support for hosts to draw on during placements. In most cases, this support system had two key components: first, a system of regular supervisions or ‘placement reviews’ for hosts with a ‘host co-ordinator’, ranging from monthly to two weekly (see Sewel, 2016), and second, an ‘on call’ system of support. Key informants saw 24/7 on call support for hosts as ‘100% essential’, albeit noting that hosts tend not to need to use out-of-hours support frequently, especially those who are more experienced:

“Yes, I do [think 24/7 support is essential]. I think it's there for the hosts so that they don't feel alone or... it's just back-up and support for them. So I think it's important”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“They've got a 24-hour support. We've got an on-call... We don't really get phone calls now from hosts; we used to in the early days, but not so much now with hosts ringing us for everything: they will only really ring us if there's a need”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

One voluntary sector run Supported Lodgings scheme used the emergency duty team within the local authority’s social work department, rather than running the 24/7 on call support ‘in house’. Another scheme was not funded to give 24/7 support, but informally the service manager was always available by phone. The availability of such support, even if it was rarely taken up, emerged as of fundamental importance to both existing and possible future hosts, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

## 2.7 Funding and Costs

There is no standard funding mechanism for Supported Lodgings. How schemes and placements are funded varies by local authority, provider, and depending on the young person being accommodated. Four core cost components are required to facilitate Supported Lodgings schemes: **set-up** (covering initial scheme set-up); **infrastructure** (covering on-going operating and staffing costs); **rent** (paid to the host for the accommodation provided); and **support** (paid to the host for the support provided). A fifth and modest **household contribution** element (ranging from around £5 to £30 a week) is usually paid directly to the host by the young person to cover bills and sometimes food costs.

The simplest funding model applies in cases where the young person is a 16/17 year old care leaver entitled to leaving care support. In these cases, children's services cover the rent and support elements of the placement and young people pay the household contribution using their allowance or earnings. Payments to hosts are broadly in the region of £150 to £260 a week according to Scottish key informants involved in provision who participated in this study, but can be substantially higher than this if the young person has high support needs. In these circumstances, intense-support placements can be seen as a cost-effective alternative to residential forms of accommodation. One provider in England explained:

"we have our standard rate of £185 per week or £235 if they're complex, but we have some young people in our Supported Lodgings, where we pay £750 a week because if they weren't in those placements, they'd be in £4,000 a week placements with mental health provision. We've got very experienced nurses that are our Supported Lodgings providers [hosts]. We are very lucky about the calibre of people who come forward... so we've got some very complex young people in our beds."

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Placements funded in this way have the advantage of not being funded via means-tested housing allowances, and thus avoid work-disincentive effects (see below). If young people enter work, they may be required to contribute a rental element to the host.

For young people aged 18 and over, the funding set-up is different in a number of ways. In terms of the rent element, this will be paid via Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, or if the young person is working, by them. There is considerable divergence in the rate at which this rent element is paid, ranging from the Local Housing Allowance Shared Accommodation Rate, to much higher levels under 'exemption' rules defining the level of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit paid towards supported accommodation rents. What level of rent is paid seems to relate to the 'path dependence' of how schemes were set up, and relationships and negotiation with local revenue and benefits teams:

"the Housing Benefit side of things is difficult. If you're setting up... something new within a local authority they always want to push back and say, 'No, it's Local Housing Allowance only.' We... argue the fact that we're exempt accommodation, so we can charge slightly more rent, basically. We have had to appeal in the past... It's a lengthy process but we've managed to get through it"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

"They [the host] get £65 which we claim from Housing Benefit... that's the amount [of Housing Benefit] that we've always charged, to be fair, but it varies within different districts and that's the challenging bit"

Key informant, England, statutory sector

"For over 18's, it's [Housing Benefit] used for all of them.... if they're a care leaver, they get the enhanced single room rate. That's legally what they're able to get. If they're a non-care leaver, then again, it would be dependent on the local authority. They would either get the standard Housing Benefit or they'll get the Housing Benefit with this enhanced rate on, but

it often depends on the needs of the young person and what they can prove for an audit purpose”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Practice also varies in relation to whether Housing Benefit or Universal Credit gets paid directly to the carer, or to the scheme, who then ‘bundle’ rent and support costs together in one regular lump sum payment to the host. Universal Credit roll-out has raised the issue of payments getting paid directly to the young person: schemes have been “*very worried*”, seeing direct payments, if applied to Supported Lodgings placements, as a “*threat to the scheme... [that could] potentially kill off a project*” (Key informant, England, voluntary sector). All the schemes involved in this study and affected by the Universal Credit roll-out to date reported having managed – albeit with some negotiation and “*lots of toing and froing*” (Key informant, England, voluntary sector) – for the housing cost element of Universal Credit to be paid direct to either the scheme or the host in virtue of the vulnerability of the young claimant.

The underlying picture painted by key informants who participated in this study is that “*Supported Lodgings isn’t really understood*” by the UK’s housing allowance and social security system (Key informant, England, voluntary sector). This generates work for schemes that could be avoided if clearer guidance were developed on how this element of Supported Lodgings schemes should be funded. This is likely to reflect that a significant share of schemes cater for 16/17 year old care leavers, not reliant on housing allowances to pay rent. The supported accommodation review currently underway by Westminster Government (DCLG/DWP, 2017), and the potential for this funding to be devolved to Scotland could provide an opportunity to streamline the funding of Supported Lodgings, though any such move should take care to preserve the flexibility of Supported Lodgings (see below) that enables it to be tailored to young people with varying levels of support needs and in different circumstances.

One particularly consequential aspect of this variation in rent levels under schemes concerns the impact on young people’s ability to seek and enter paid work. The poverty-trap and work-disincentive effects of the high rents in supported and temporary accommodation are well documented (Quilgars et al, 2008; Watts et al, 2015; Littlewood et al, 2018), and the *in some cases* low rent levels involved in Supported Lodgings provision could provide an opportunity to design an affordable accommodation option for young people ‘on the edge’ of employment. On the other hand, key informants operating schemes in high rent areas also emphasised the importance of hosts being fairly remunerated. While this wasn’t seen to mean that the rent component should match market room rent levels (reflecting that host motivations are strongly altruistic), large discrepancies between market and Supported Lodgings placement rents were seen to weaken hosts willingness to stay within the scheme.

There is also enormous variation in both the level and source of the support cost element that goes to hosts. Supported Lodgings schemes cited this support funding coming from an array of local authority budgets, sometimes in combination, including public health, housing, social care, children’s services, Staying Put, and Supporting People. The funding to cover these support payments were often secured via a commissioned local authority contract, but some services also provided placements on a spot purchase basis. The level of support payments varies substantially, within and between schemes. As is the case for schemes specifically targeting care leavers, some schemes vary support payments depending on the level of young people’s support needs, a ‘fluidity’ seen to be a key strength of the Supported Lodgings model as compared to more rigid supported accommodation project funding (see also Holmes, 2008). Schemes involved in this study reported support element payments to hosts of between £35 and £80 per week, albeit that the higher end of that spectrum seemed to be more common:

“they'd use their Housing Benefit to pay for the rent element of it and then, they would normally top up about £60 to £70 a week using their public health and support fund money”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“£80 support we pay the carer.... that's a moveable feast... we look at the young person and then we build the package around the young person ... because everyone's different... so [we can] do an add-on of paying an extra element for that young person [if they need more support]... That [support money] comes... [from] the Staying Put budget and the Supporting People budget.”

Key informant, England, statutory sector

The context of “*increasingly diminishing*” local authority budgets was highlighted as “*a challenge*” for schemes in securing support costs (Key informant, England, voluntary sector), but the greatest challenge identified was securing infrastructure and staffing costs, which tend to be funded via local authority budgets, income from grants and fundraising or some combination of these:

“there's always lack of funding, so we have to do a lot of fundraising to meet our costs because funding's not there. It's not there, year-on-year... It's the infrastructure, that's the tough bit... [the local authority] do pay some of it. They pay through the contracts but it's not enough [so we top up via] fundraising events and... grants”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“we are funded by Supporting People for the management of the scheme; so that funding which is quite lean, pays for my salary, [other team member's] salary, all the management, the recruitment of the host – all the management of the scheme. Now, we have got one floating support worker – well, he's part of our team – but that's been seconded to us from another pot of funding. Now, without that, we wouldn't really be able to operate... That's a floating support fund, which is a Supporting People funding as well.”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

As well as highlighting some challenges securing such infrastructure funding, key informants were clear that sufficient funding of this kind was essential to the successful function and quality of schemes:

“You need to have really well-supported carers [hosts] in there. It's not a straightforward task you're asking folk to take on. You need to have a workforce that can support the young person and a separate workforce that supports the carers. You need to be able to have access to those other bits, in terms of how you then support [young people] to move on and all of that. You need to have proper assessments done. You need to have training in place, for carers... There needs to be a dynamic relationship with carers. So, for it to be done well, there are some costs attached. They're not astronomical, but there are some costs attached to it... It shouldn't be done, on the cheap”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector



Two Supported Lodgings schemes involved in the study offered placements to local authorities on a spot purchase basis at *“a slightly higher rate, just to bring in more money”* (Key informant, England, voluntary sector). Another elaborated that this helped them cover staffing costs:

“Although we've got an agreement – a contract with them – we haven't got a funding pot that would pay specifically for salaries; it all comes out of spot purchases. With spot purchase there is a plus and a minus: the plus is you can actually have a charge that will cover all your staffing and come out with a little bit of a surplus. The minus is, if you don't get referrals, you're then in a minus, and then you're left with that situation with staffing that you've got no funding to pay.”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Most of the services involved in this study had been in operation for some time, with the challenge of securing set-up costs behind them. According to Holmes (2008) set-up costs primarily relate to the development of inter-agency partnerships, setting up core operating documentation, and recruiting hosts. A key driver behind the growth in youth homelessness-focused Supported Lodgings schemes in England in the 2000s was government investment in homelessness prevention in general and youth homelessness specifically (Holmes, 2008). One scheme involved in this study recounted their origins as lying in this period, and linked to the Labour government's priority to reduce youth homelessness and the use of B&Bs as temporary accommodation. A national pilot funded 50% of the scheme costs at the outset, matched by local authority funding, with the scheme able to secure 100% local authority funding (albeit at a time of less budget constraint) after demonstrating success during the one-year pilot. This agency concurred with the findings of Holmes (2008) that schemes need a set-up period of around 6 months before they can operate at capacity. These findings suggest that government pilot funding can facilitate the set-up and longevity of Supported Lodgings schemes.

Key informants involved in this study had a range of views regarding the overall costs and ‘value for money’ of Supported Lodgings. This is likely to reflect in part the enormous variety in sources and levels of funding and costs described in this section. Ranging from the Shared Accommodation Rate plus £35 per week support costs at the extreme low end, to much higher rental cost component and up to several hundred pounds weekly support costs per placement at the extreme high end. A number of providers commented that the cost of placements was substantially lower than the equivalent cost of supported accommodation in the local area, with one adding that the outcomes were also considerably better, a position receiving some (though not definitive) support from existing evidence (see below and chapter 4):

“The outcomes we achieve to the money spent is I think, it's 46% cheaper than supported accommodation... That's our auditing that we know how much unit costs [the local authority] pay for supported accommodation to how much unit costs we pay, multiplied by outcomes and move on, then we know that we're 46% cheaper... The placement itself is cheaper, so most of the accommodation in supported accommodation would be £250 a week”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Existing evidence does not provide definitive conclusions on the costs of Supported Lodgings versus other forms of temporary or supported accommodation. Beckett et al (2010) suggest that Supported Lodgings offer potentially significant cost savings compared to other supported accommodation options (as in Edinburgh at 2009). Holmes (2008) avoids drawing overall conclusions on the cost of Supported Lodgings, but notes a number of points. First, according to

data on the costs of housing-related support services collected by Housemark and Sitra, the proportion of costs allocated to direct costs is higher for Supported Lodgings than other services (likely reflecting host-related costs) and the proportion of costs attributed to overheads relatively low. Second, the set-up of Supported Lodgings schemes accrues a number of distinct financial benefits, including: that there is no requirement for capital/building investment or property maintenance costs (they are entirely covered by the host-payment (see also Cumbria County Council, no date); that they may achieve cost savings in relation to other forms of accommodation by minimising the psychological impact of homelessness and exposure to damaging lifestyles; and that Supported Lodgings schemes are likely to benefit from efficiencies and economies of scale over time (see also Becket et al, 2010).

## 2.8 Impact on Host Finances

Supported Lodgings hosts are responsible for declaring their income for tax and benefit purposes, and informing their insurance and mortgage company, or landlord, as required (see above). In general, Supported Lodgings hosts are classified as self-employed, though one key informant was aware of a local authority scheme for care leavers in Scotland that directly employed hosts, with tax dealt with through the payroll system (something seen to be preferable for hosts). Supported Lodgings hosts do not benefit from the tax exemption rules that apply to foster carers' income<sup>7</sup>, but do benefit from the 'rent a room' scheme which allows for £7,500 tax free income a year for those accommodating a lodger in their main home. Several schemes reported providing some minimal level of help facilitating hosts' tax returns:

"it comes under the rent-a-room scheme so, yes, we give them... Yes, we'll give them a statement of what we've paid them through the year and it's up to them to declare it"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

[if host income goes above tax free rent a room scheme threshold] then they have to pay tax... we give them a leaflet and they sign it and that goes on their file. None of their tax has anything to do with [organisation running Supported Lodgings scheme]. They make that themselves, so that's their job as a self-employed provider, because they're all employed as providers, so they're like a landlord"

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Some provider organisations went further, and reported some success in securing preferential treatment for hosts in relation to tax liability:

"we liaised with... the tax office for Scotland. We explained to them that we had these good people coming forward for altruistic reasons, offering up a spare room for young people who have either been in care or become homeless, and we would expect that they would view it not as a business, not as being self-employed, but almost as a charitable gesture. We got a good response. At various times, people were told, 'You should always keep a note of what you do.'... Clearly, we wouldn't want the people doing it to be out of pocket. The tax office was really good"

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

“they're in an informal agreement that Supported Lodgings can be tax deductible but it's not written anywhere”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

Some key informants highlighted tax liability as an issue in recruiting or keeping hosts, and suggested that rules applying to foster carers be extended to hosts:

“with 20 per cent of the people, it [the need to file a tax return] does [put off prospective hosts], but then actually, they weren't right for the job anyway because if that puts you off, then you're not going to deal with a care leaver!”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“one of the things that a lot of our hosts are put off with – say, in fostering, it's tax exemption; in ‘Staying Put’ it's tax exemption; but with ‘Supported Lodgings’, because it's a support and it's not commissioned as a care option, then hosts will then have to go – become self-employed: declare it for tax. That puts off – and it's so minimal, the money that they get is so minimal – and the expense that they have within their own home accommodating a young person by having to replace things...”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

The impact on insurance premiums was noted but is a far less significant issue. Schemes reported a minor impact on premiums (around £90 a year) that was usually borne by the host, though in case of Supported Lodgings schemes for higher risk groups, could be borne by the provider organisation.

## 2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on available practice literature and key informant interviews, to explore and describe how schemes work. There is no standard shape to Supported Lodgings schemes. Key points of variation relate to whether they are run ‘in house’ by local authorities or by independent third sector organisations; whether they run alongside or separately from emergency Nightstop schemes; which group of young people they seek to accommodate and support; how they are funded; and the level of payments that hosts receive. Supported Lodgings schemes do, however, share a series of core and unique components:

- the recruitment, vetting and training of a (preferably) diverse pool of householders with a spare room and willingness to provide a level of support to a young person in need of accommodation;
- the matching and managed introduction of hosts to young people in need of accommodation and support, leading to placements which usually last for six months to two years;
- the provision of ongoing support to hosts to continue developing their skills and in response to challenges or problems experienced during placements;
- the provision of a unique form of ‘blended support’ to the young person from the host and scheme support workers combined, with a view to achieving a range of outcomes, from basic life skills and household management, to ‘soft outcomes’ relating to emotional wellbeing and

confidence, and 'hard outcomes' around education, employment and training, and move-on accommodation.

Far from being an 'innovative' and risky form of supported accommodation, Supported Lodgings are tried and tested. They offer a unique structure of accommodation and support by housing young people in 'normal' homes, with wrap-around support provided by both professionals and trained hosts. A sizable community of practice is involved in the provision, management and development of Supported Lodgings schemes from which considerable expertise and learning can be derived in attempts to extend provision further.

Reflecting the status of Supported Lodgings as a well-established model, the next chapter combines key informant, hosts and young people's perspectives with available research and evaluation evidence to consider experiences of and the outcomes associated with Supported Lodgings.



Young people  
in Supported  
Lodgings  
achieved **better  
outcomes.**



## 3. Outcomes and Experiences of Supported Lodgings

This chapter begins with a review of existing evidence on the effectiveness of Supported Lodgings. Subsequent sections consider the impact of and outcomes associated with Supported Lodgings from three perspectives: that of sector experts involved in existing provision; that of young people currently or recently residing in Supported Lodgings placements; and that of current or recent Supported Lodgings hosts.

### 3.1 Existing Evidence on Supported Lodgings

Much of the literature on Supported Lodgings consists of practice guides (Barnardo's Springboard, no date; Cumbria County Council, no date; NCAS et al, 2011b) or documents on the broader theme of youth homelessness citing Supported Lodgings (or 'Host Homes') as an alternative (and promising) accommodation model (Gaetz, 2014b; Watts et al, 2015; Fitzpatrick and Watts, 2016). Only a small number of sources look in detail at the impact of Supported Lodgings on the young people housed in them. Two particularly important exceptions are Holmes' (2008) report for Department for Communities and Local Government exploring Supported Lodgings services in 17 local authority areas in England and the outcomes of placements using Supporting People data, and Barnardo's recent evaluation of 11 of their own Supported Lodgings schemes across England, Wales and Scotland (Sewel, 2016).

Holmes (2008) review of Supported Lodgings provision in England indicated that in 2007/08 around 2% of 16-17 year olds receiving housing-related support were residing in Supported Lodgings (1% of 16-24 year olds), but with the proportion of this younger age group in Supported Lodgings rising to 30% in areas with well-established providers. Supported Lodgings provision was also reported to have been key to the elimination of B&B accommodation for young people in a number of local authorities. Using 2007/08 Support People data, Holmes' reports the findings of analysis of the outcomes achieved by young people residing in Supported Lodgings placements compared to those receiving three other types of provision – supported housing, Foyer-based accommodation and support, and floating support, albeit with the caveat that the sample sizes for young people in placements were small. Young people in Supported Lodgings achieved better outcomes than young people in all other forms of provision across most indicators, with particularly positive outcomes in the domains of learning and work, participating in social activity and maintaining contact with family and friends. Holmes' analysis suggests that for the young people for whom the relevant support need was applicable, a higher proportion of young people in Supported Lodgings:

- achieved a qualification than those in other service types (56% compared to 49% across the four service types);
- established contact with family and friends (83% compared to 68%);
- avoided or minimised harm from others (81% compared to 74%);
- better managed substance misuse (59% compared to 48%).

Supported Lodgings outperformed *all* other service types across 7 out of 9 outcome domains, equalling the performance of floating support in terms of the percentage of young people better managing their mental health. Supported Lodgings was outperformed by floating support in relation to maintaining accommodation and avoiding eviction (though achieving much better outcomes in this regard than supported housing and foyers).



In 2016, Barnardo's published an evaluation of their Supported Lodgings services catering for a mix of young people leaving care and who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The evaluation is based on a documentary analysis of service policies and procedures; a survey of 7 staff from Supported Lodgings services; and qualitative interviews with 11 service staff, 14 young people and 20 Supported Lodgings providers (or 'hosts'). Drawing on staff, provider ('host') and young people's contributions, the evaluation points to Supported Lodgings achieving positive outcomes across a number of areas, including:

- **Development of practical skills:** household and daily living tasks (food shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry), money management, gatekeeping skills, and understanding housing options, tenancy rights and obligations;
- **Improved emotional wellbeing and development of emotional skills:** feelings of personal wellbeing, behavioural/emotional self-regulation, social and communication skills, addressing support needs around mental and physical health and drug and alcohol use, and reconnection with family;
- **Accessing and engaging with other services** e.g. healthcare, accommodation, education and employment, financial, advice and advocacy, sports and leisure, and mental health services and facilities;
- **Employment and educational outcomes:** better engagement and achievement, increased ambitions and aspirations, and enhanced access to volunteering and employment opportunities/networks;
- **Others:** improved housing situation (safe and secure accommodation), and (where relevant) learning parenting tips/skills.

It is worth noting that a growing body of research suggests that achieving some of the 'soft' non-cognitive capabilities listed above (improved wellbeing and emotional, social and communication skills) can be key to achieving longer term 'hard' outcomes around employment and education (see McNeil et al, 2012). In the context of Supported Lodgings provision, these emotional benefits were seen to accrue from:

"living in a safe and stable environment, and having someone to talk to, someone who believes in them, and someone who encourages them... support[s] them when they face challenges or make mistakes, helping them to relax, to open up, and to learn and share experiences in the company of positive role models who they can relate to"

Sewel, 2016, p.56

While offering no direct evidence on the impacts of and outcomes associated with Supported Lodgings, Beckett et al's (2010) Feasibility study of Support Lodgings in Scotland is of particular relevance here. The Scottish Churches Housing Action report sought to assess Supported Lodgings as a cost-effective and suitable type of supported accommodation for 16-25 year olds experiencing homelessness, via consultation with adults who had experienced youth homelessness in the past (3), potential hosts (4), Edinburgh-based youth homelessness organisations (6) and existing Supported Lodgings schemes working with care leavers in Scotland (unknown number). The report concluded that Supported Lodgings schemes aimed at young homeless people have a role to play in youth homelessness provision and should operate similarly to those already targeting care leavers in Scotland. The authors made a series of recommendations, including: that Supported Lodgings be developed as a new type of temporary accommodation; that such schemes focus on helping young people move towards independent living, with placements lasting up to 2 years; that referral agencies are trained to increase demand for placements; that additional allowances are considered for hosts accommodating young people with particular/higher support needs; that guidelines/standards on the quality of the hosts property are produced; and that peer support approaches involving existing hosts and young people are embedded within schemes.

Other research has also supported the further development of Supported Lodgings as a response to youth homelessness. A 2015 review of youth homelessness policy and practice in the UK (Watts et al, 2015), involving 26 key informants from across the UK identified strong support for non-institutional ‘community hosting’ models, including Supported Lodgings. Drawing on the findings of this 2015 report and an updated review of international evidence, and noting the lack of robust evidence comparing the efficacy of accommodation options for young people experiencing homelessness, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommended:

“that government and charitable funders should invest in demonstration projects and robust evaluation studies of promising ‘non-institutional’ interventions for homeless and other vulnerable young people, including Housing First, Nightstop, Supported Lodgings, and family mediation”

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016, p.234

A wider body of research also provides cautious grounds for the hypothesis that Supported Lodgings could play an important role in responding effectively to youth homelessness. First, it is worth highlighting that Supported Lodgings developed primarily as a means to extend foster placement for those leaving local authority care (see above). There has been a clear shift to foster placements as the most common form of care over the last 30 years (Berridge et al, 2012; Scottish Government, 2018a), informed by evidence of the advantages of fostering over living in residential care for young people (Berridge, 1997; Berridge et al, 2012). It is reasonable to expect that the advantages of living in a home-like environment extend to young people for a period after they leave care, as well as to those young people experiencing homelessness when young, but who have no previous care experience.

Second, there is a longstanding evidence base from the UK and beyond regarding the potential negative impacts on young people of staying in unsuitable and or ‘low-support’ congregate, ‘institutional’ models of temporary or supported accommodation, including:

- Compromising young people’s ability to address support needs, maintain healthy lifestyles, and develop independent living skills (Stone, 2010; Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin, 2007; Benjaminsen, 2013). As Busch-Geertsema and Sahlin comment, hostel living “requires a special competence which is quite different from living independently” (p.77);
- In relation to exposure to harms of various kinds including negative peer pressure, bullying and exploitation (Vasiliou, 2006; Stone, 2010; McCoy, 2018). A recent survey of over 700 young people in contact with youth homelessness services (McCoy, 2018) found that young people were much less likely to report experiencing harm when staying ‘with a community member’ (e.g. in Nightstop or Supported Lodgings) than when in any other form of temporary living arrangement. Only 13% of those who had stayed in such accommodation reported experiencing one or more of five different kinds of harm when in that accommodation, compared to a range of 29-35% of those who had stayed in a homelessness accommodation project (though small sample sizes should be borne in mind in interpreting these result);
- Relating to the high costs of such accommodation, which create a ‘poverty trap’ and strong work dis-incentivise effects, given the rate of benefit withdrawal as income increases (Quilgars et al, 2008; YMCA, 2015).

It could therefore be argued that Supported Lodgings not only offer a means of escape from the potential psychological and physical harms associated with the worst forms of congregate-accommodation models, but also that they offer a home-like context conducive (rather than detrimental) to the development of the skills required to manage a household and live

independently. The possibility that schemes may also require a lower-rent than hostels and support accommodation amplifies the model's potential benefits.

Third, the value of 'ordinary' home-like environments as an effective response to homelessness has also been demonstrated by the overwhelmingly strong evidence base comparing the outcomes of Housing First programmes to standard homelessness provision (i.e. staircase models of provision involving extensive use of hostels) (see Johnsen and Texeira, 2010 and Mackie et al, 2017 for a summary). While initial evidence on the effectiveness of Housing First for Youth is promising (Benjaminsen, 2013; Gaetz, 2014a; Kozloff et al, 2016), it is far from definitive, with concerns that some young people are more likely to feel isolated in independent tenancies. Supported Lodgings may be thought to offer some of the benefits of 'normal housing' situations that have proved so valuable for adults utilising Housing First programmes, while offering flexible and personalised support 'on site' to young people and combatting the isolation of moving into an independent tenancy 'too early'.

### 3.2 Key Informant Perspectives

Key informants involved in the provision of Supported Lodgings schemes were overwhelmingly positive regarding the impacts of the model. While it is to be expected that those delivering a specific service model would speak highly of it, the insights below are shared in addition to the 'hard evidence' reviewed above, as well as young people and hosts' views shared below, not least in order to consider the *mechanisms* via which Supported Lodgings might achieve positive outcomes.

Two linked components of the model were identified as fundamental to Supported Lodgings' perceived advantages. The first relates to the provision of accommodation and support in an **ordinary home environment**, rather than in either independent tenancies or group-living/congregate accommodation:

"if you look at the care system and you look at the outcomes for children and young people who are fostered and/or adopted [versus in] group care and you see the difference in outcomes and what's healthier, the same thing applies for young people who become homeless. It's like actually big institutions are often just more damaging... I don't think it's any different when they're 16. That doesn't really change."

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

"just that stickability – our supported carers [hosts] are really, really good at that, managing young people who come in drunk, who go off and don't come back or don't text. The kind of things that adolescents do... Supported care [lodgings] is much better than some of our group living situations, in terms of sticking with young people and working through that – for some young people, it's a phase. Supported carers [hosts] are much better... [at] not letting them go, is my sense of it. As opposed to them either being in their own tenancy, even with support and/or in supported accommodation for that kind of behaviour, genuinely, it impacts on other people, so you might be asked to leave or you might have to move on because, in a group living situation, you can't manage that kind of behaviour and challenge."

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

While placements in ordinary homes were felt to be a very positive option for most young people, it was acknowledged that they would not suit all young people:

"I've worked in residential and things like that and I saw a lot of things that I wouldn't think were beneficial for a young person, lots of learnt behaviour and things that happen, but some young people find that they are so angry with what they've gone through that they don't actually want to be in a family environment, because that gives them memories of what they didn't have, if that makes sense"

Key informant, England, statutory sector

The second key component relates to the uniquely **robust and 'blended' nature of the support** provided by key workers and hosts combined. According to key informants, this model provides a personalised, strengths-based and 'sticky' (see above) form of support for young people:

"I think just having that one-to-one relationship and young people coming back home to Supported Lodgings, where there's an adult in the house, who they can talk to and them not feeling isolated. Yes, so I would say that that's the bonus of Supported Lodgings"

Key informant, England, statutory sector

"there's a better wraparound of the support than you have in a semi-independent placement [supported accommodation], for example, because here you've got a three-way support, or interaction. Young person and the host, the host and the [provider organisation] or the support worker, and then the young person and the support worker. If you think of it as like having three [strands]... it's more robust and more solid... the host focuses on... life skill support around cooking, just some common-sense advice, working them up to go to college, motivation, someone to talk to at any time... the support worker is there to support the young person to achieve serious hard outcomes... so it provides a kind of very, very robust support system"

Key informant, England, statutory sector

Key informants particularly highlighted Supported Lodgings potential to achieve good outcomes around mental wellbeing, life-skills, and employment and education. In relation to wellbeing, the value of 'normal' housing was emphasised as a way of overcoming issues relating to stigma and rejection:

"the institutionalisation of the provision is completely out of the window. It's completely nullified. From that point of view, a young person almost to a great... extent, becomes more accepted. Remember, a number of [the] root causes of their issues are rejection... and when you put him in a semi-independent [accommodation] it's more or less institutionalised, so there is also a rejection from them, they're 'Oh, look at where I'm placed ...', you know, but when they are in a homely [environment], they feel a bit more accepted"

Key informant, England, statutory sector

Echoing themes from the evidence review above, some key informants emphasised the substantial gains they felt were associated with keeping young people 'out of the homelessness system', and particularly out of congregate accommodation:

“The outcome of that is definitely more positive than hostels, because they're not surrounded by their peers, at that experiment stage. Actually, they're in that safe environment. There's so many different networks that they can make in big supported accommodation placements that they wouldn't get to experience in a Supported Lodgings placement.”

Key informant, England, statutory sector

Key informants involved in the provision of Supported Lodgings for care leavers noted the ‘ontological security’ (a sense of security, stability and rootedness) that could be achieved by Supported Lodgings, especially where young people were able to stay in touch with hosts post-placement, something available literature suggests happens commonly (see Sewel, 2016; NCAS et al, 2011b).

A wide array of life skills was seen to be achieved by the Supported Lodgings model, ranging from simple ‘taken-for-granted’ household tasks that young people might not know how to do, to more advanced life skills like tenancy sustainment:

“the young person maybe hasn't had a particularly positive experience... so it's learning how to cook, it's how to do all the practical stuff”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

“Our housing [department]... see it as a very positive thing, it means for two years that, the young people aren't trying to get tenancies and normally, if they do get tenancies at the end of the Supported Lodgings, they are surviving in them rather than them breaking down”

Key informant, England, statutory sector

Key informants also saw Supported Lodgings as achieving good employment and education outcomes. Several scheme managers reported that very high proportions of the young people accommodated are in education (at college or university). Multiple mechanisms appear to be in play here, and it should also be borne in mind that many schemes especially cater for younger young people (16-17 year olds and 18-21s) who are more likely than ‘older young people’ do be in education. Furthermore, any positive employment-related effects, particularly as compared to other youth homelessness accommodation models, reflect the distinct funding arrangements that apply. Two aspects of the funding regime are relevant here: first, that some schemes (those working with 16-17 year old care leavers) are funded outwith the means-tested benefit system, meaning that the ‘poverty trap’ associated with benefit withdrawal as earned income rises does not apply; second, and as described in chapter 2, rent levels in placements appear to run at lower levels than those that apply in other forms of supported accommodation (and sometimes track the Shared Accommodation Rate), meaning that accommodation in Supported Lodgings may be affordable to young people even in low paid work. One key informant made this point explicitly:

“hostel Housing Benefit I think is quite expensive. So it's more... difficult for a young person to be able to continue in employment because they're paying high amounts of rent. They do get some Housing Benefit contribution, but they will have to pay quite a lot and... So I would say that young people are encouraged not to work while they're in that situation.”

Key informant, England, statutory sector



Those involved in the provision of Supported Lodgings, however, did point to a number of other relevant mechanisms that may help secure more positive education and employment outcomes for young people in such placements. Key among them, once again, was the influence of living “*in a home environment... one-to-one*” with a host (Key informant, England, statutory sector):

“The outcomes for young people are that a lot of our young people in supported care [lodgings]... are in employment [or] training. There's a resilience around that because, it's like straightforward things like, if you're in your own... tenancy... you might not manage to get yourself up out of your bed. If you're in a supported carers' [host's] household, where that person has invested in what you're doing and 'where have you been? Did you go today? Why did you not go today? I'll take you in tomorrow.' My sense of our young people in supported carers (lodgings) placements is that they're more likely to be stable; they're more likely to be in employment and training and following higher education.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

The role of Supported Lodgings placements in providing stability for young people and a foundation from which to focus on education or employment aspirations (with support) was also seen to be relevant:

“I think it's because young people have a stability – particularly the longer-term ones: we know that they've got somewhere; it's going to be home for the next two years, or one and a half years. Again, having the stability of having somebody there supporting them – as well as the extensive support that my support worker will do with the young person”

Key informant, England, statutory sector

This key informant also explained that they seek to match young people with hosts living nearby any existing commitments (e.g. college) to ensure continuity, something that is harder to achieve when young people are placed in other forms of supported accommodation. Finally, some schemes very strongly prioritised achieving education and employment outcomes for the young people they worked with, with one provider presenting this as ‘non-negotiable’:

“We have the motto that, if you're in Supported Lodgings, you have to be in some form of education, employment or training, so it isn't a choice. If you're in, you have to be doing something... young people don't have the choice not to be and I think that, the people who are in those homes want to help those young people and you can't get better outcomes for young people than people who are caring and passionate and will go the extra mile”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

What is not clear from this study is the extent to which all schemes place such a premium on education and employment outcomes, although there was a strong consensus across the key informant sample that Supported Lodgings is “the place to be, if you want to go to college, go to university, get yourself in employment”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector



### 3.3 Young People's Views and Experiences

Most of the 7 young people who were currently or had recently stayed in Supported Lodgings placements and took part in this study reported overall positive experiences of the model. Echoing the perspectives of the key informants discussed above, what young people tended to value most was that the environment was 'homely' and they felt relaxed and at ease living there:

"When I went in [to the host's home]...[I thought] this woman was very homely. All her things were there, all her DVDs, everything was there... after a while I felt very safe. It was such a homely environment. I felt like, it doesn't feel like a hostel, it doesn't feel like a care home. It feels like a house that I can go into and warm-up on a cold day or watch movies when I want to. It felt very, very homely. Very, very safe. Very good vibes."

Becca, young person, England

One participant emphasised that accessing Supported Lodgings had enabled her to find appropriate accommodation that didn't disrupt her established routine, and in particular, education:

"For me it's the best environment for me because number one, where it is, it's located [near] to a college and stuff like that, so I can continue with my normal life without a lot of disruption."

Jess, young person, England

Particularly valued aspects of the home environment included that young people had their own private space (i.e. their room) and felt comfortable using the shared spaces in the house (the kitchen and living room). Also highly valued was the independence young people felt they had in Supported Lodgings placements, with most reporting being comfortable with the 'house rules' in place, which balanced clear and appropriate boundaries with flexibility, and opportunities to learn life-skills:

"House rules weren't strict, strict, but there were rules and boundaries...it's rules that anybody should have in their own house, if they've got somebody they don't know 100 per cent coming to stay with them. Of course, you're going to want to have rules set"

Mhari, young person, Scotland

"Most importantly... I have a lot of independence, and I can come and go as I please, and I have a house key and stuff like that, but I know I have something to fall back on, a bit of a safety net still there. It's a really nice bridging to adulthood, full adulthood is what I really like, and it gets you set-up really well. Certain things, I have to do my own washing and stuff like that. Then there's certain stuff [the host] does, but I can do if I want to. It's just a really good environment for teaching you, and making sure you do have the skills."

Jess, young person, England

Others seemed to have experienced "*very relaxed*" placements, with Aaron (young person, Scotland) explaining that he could "*do whatever I want within reason, as long as it's not absolutely*

*stupid*". While Aaron had valued this, Kirsty had had a more negative experience given the relative 'lax' disposition of her host. She had experienced the placement as *too flexible*, reflecting that she had (in her own words) 'taken advantage' of the new freedoms on offer:

"she [the host] let me do my own thing. She would still expect me to clean my room and keep the house tidy and do my dishes and respect her privacy and stuff. I still had to do all that but with regard to going out and stuff she left me to do my own thing which was quite nice... I think my problem as well because I was going from a lot of rules, no freedom to then having to do whatever I wanted I kind of took advantage of that and that's when I started, I dropped school when I lived there, I was going out until three, four in the morning and I was sleeping during the day. I mean she was really nice, she didn't have rules and stuff but it got to the point where I was kind of taking advantage of that and I was really abusing the power of having that freedom"

Kirsty, young person, Scotland

This scenario led the young woman to ask to move to supported accommodation, which she felt offered more appropriate and clearer boundaries for her at that point in her life.

By and large however, young people reported placements as a living environment which combined a growing sense of independence with an ability to develop skills and confidence and achieve their wider ambitions:

"That feeling of living independently, but semi-independently. You were expected to do – it sounds really silly – your own washing, and all that stuff, but at the same time, all you had to do was pay money for your bills and your things are paid for. Things like that. That semi-independent living was really good to me. Its made me become a better person, in the world, because I was very young when I went into Supported Lodgings. I was 16, and I left just before I turned 18, so, through that time, it taught me a lot of things, but mainly to start being more independent than I was before."

Becca, young person, England

"Just how much confidence it has given myself into being able to be who I want to be in life, and not doubting myself that I can't do things, and just made me a better person, because it has shown me what goals I want to do in life, and what I want to achieve... From my experience I would say it was very well rounded... the support and the help that you were given, compared to maybe being in a homeless unit, and not having that amount of support... Like if there were more Supported Lodgings people out there, it would help other young people to follow dreams that they should be following. Instead of feeling helpless, and not being able to do nothing for themselves, and feeling like they don't have anybody"

Mhari, young person, Scotland

"I think it's taught me a lot about who my friends actually are, and who are not so much friends. It's strengthened my relationship with my boyfriend of two years as well. It's just had a really positive impact on my life, being where I am now rather than any other environment I've been in...I have a stronger drive. I've always had this drive, but it's been strengthened for me to actually have a future, and it'll be a really good future for myself, especially because... I've been through the mill, as a lot of people have put it. It's driven

[me] to be independent and own a home or have a family, have a really good job... This sort of environment is for you to establish [yourself], make sure you know how to cook, clean and stuff like that.”

Jess, young person, England

The low income young people were living on while in placements was a theme that arose in interviews, sometimes related to difficulties accessing maintenance funds from their social worker. Becca (young person, England) described facing trade-offs between paying for travel to go to college and visit friends, and afford basics like shampoo. These financial challenges meant that young people sometimes struggled to pay their ‘digs’ (household contribution, see chapter 2). Although their hosts were reported to be flexible on receiving these payments, this did not diminish the stress felt by the young person having to negotiate delays:

“There were a few weeks where at one point I think I owed [the host] £90, so that's three weeks' worth of rent.... [She] was completely understanding because obviously it wasn't my fault. It was more me worried about it because I don't like having that, 'I need to pay [host] and I can't.'”

Jess, young person, England

Kirsty (young person, Scotland), on the other hand, felt that the contribution she was expected to make to the host was too small and felt bad about this:

“How much they pay for running their house, to what you're paying just to stay a week. £20 doesn't cover much these days, so it does, it makes a huge difference”

Kirsty, young person, Scotland

These perspectives might be interpreted as suggesting that Supported Lodgings provide an environment where young people can learn budgeting skills, but in a low risk context where hosts are flexible and understanding and support workers are available to help resolve financial difficulties. In her evaluation of Barnardo's Support Lodgings schemes, Sewel (2016) found that hosts often didn't take a household contribution from young people, even if it was part of the scheme set up, suggesting that hosts should be reminded of the importance of this process in getting young people used to making regular payments. The finding of this study also highlight, however, the unacceptably low income that young people were sometimes forced to live on (see Blenkinsopp, 2018; Fitzpatrick, Bramley et al, 2016; Stephens and Blenkinsopp, 2015), and thus the potential value of host forbearance, which might in any case be argued to more closely reflect the situation of young people able to continue living in the family home. Key to facilitating such a flexible and home-like environment, however, which balances developing young people's 'life skills' with ensuring they can afford 'the basics', is ensuring that hosts are fairly remunerated via rent and support payments.

When living in Supported Lodgings, young people made use of the host and professional support on offer in different ways, some relying more on their hosts, others more on their support workers. Sometimes, this reflecting a particularly strong relationship with one or the other, but in other cases it seemed to reflect scheme set-up. Despite having a good relationship with the host, this young person commented that they would have valued more formal support during their placement:

"I think that there should be a wee bit more input from social workers, as well. I think they should, instead of when you get moved into Supported Lodgings, they don't come out as often. I think they should come out a wee bit often, and frequent, just to keep an eye on how the young person's feeling, and just keep a wee bit close to the young person so they feel more secure."

Mhari, young person, Scotland

By the same token, three of the young people had instead relied more heavily on the support of their social workers and support workers, and commented that they would have valued greater day-to-day support from their hosts to help them learn about independent living or simply for day-to-day practical and emotional support:

"I didn't really know how to cook; I don't really know how to cook now! No, she [host] didn't teach me how to cook or do any of that. I was quite independent, so I cooked as much as I can but it was quick things like noodles or like pasta or something like that... Definitely [knowing how to cook] that would've come in handy right now as well [in own tenancy]"

Kirsty, young person, Scotland

Matty described his current placement with a host as involving *no* support at all from his experience, and appears instead to be a straightforward lodging arrangement, though apparently organised via a scheme:

"No, nothing really, [I get] no [support from the host]...It's because I haven't really been offered, and I haven't asked, so I just don't really mind whatever...Yes [I would find it useful], if I get a bit of help sometimes...like there've been times when I feel so ill, I feel like there's no one around to help... I still had to go cook, and buy food, and do everything myself even though I was so ill. So, there was times like that yes. Times like that it would be good if someone's around to help."

Matty, young person, England

These varying experiences of support in placements underline, first, that ensuring strong support from *both* host and support worker is key to achieving the 'blended' support structure that key informants felt underpinned the model's strength (see above). Second, they suggest that clear expectations should be laid down and revisited with hosts regarding the nature and extent of the support they are expected to provide, and the boundaries and rules that should be in place, with opportunities for reviewing support built into placements, and an emphasis on clear and on-going communication between the young person, host and support worker. Having such mechanisms in place may have helped prevent the more negative experiences described by Kirsty and Matty.

Core to most young people's experience of Supported Lodgings was the opportunity to build a good relationship with their host. Four of the young people involved in this study reported particularly positive relationships with their hosts, who had made them feel comfortable within the home and helped them learn various household-related tasks:

"She [host] was trying to make me feel way more comfortable with her, and she taught me how to do the washing, loads of stuff. She taught me how to cook. A lot of things that she taught me within the first two or three months, I carried on progressing with it as the months

went on. I don't think I was the perfect person to have, because there were times when I'd cause a bit of trouble or do things that she didn't like."

Becca, young person, England

Reflecting the wider literature's emphasis on the importance of the matching process, two young people recounted difficult experiences – albeit in previous foster care rather than Supported Lodgings – because they had been placed with 'unsuitable matches'. In one case, the host was a vegetarian and placed restrictions on the young person's eating habits. In another, the young person felt the placement didn't work out because the host, unlike him, was quite religious, and didn't like that he did not attend church regularly. These experiences corroborate the very strong emphasis placed on the importance of good matching, as well as robust mechanisms of host recruitment and training, by key informants and scheme providers.

Young people emphasised the anxiety that could be attached to first meeting hosts and the difference that a 'good match' and particular set of host dispositions could make:

"it's all about matching the young person to the personality of the person that they would be living with... Getting to know them before they just move in. Even if it's a couple of viewings with them, or meeting up with the social worker, or going to the house to view the house and things. I think, as well, for the young person to maybe decide where they want to go could play a big part in their comfort, as well, in helping settle them down"

Mhari, young person, Scotland

"It was a little bit daunting really because I mean you're meeting this person to move into their house so it was a little bit weird is the only word I can really describe. Yes, I met her and she seemed really lovely. She was yes, really kind, she was very clean! It was nice, she was very gentle with me, she wasn't like forceful which was nice...I settled in quite quickly actually because she was easy to get along with and she worked a lot so I settled in pretty well."

Kirsty, young person, Scotland

Kirsty, and several other young people interviewed, had benefited from schemes efforts to match them with a host and introduce them gradually:

"We spoke about who the property owner was, what she did and what was expected of me, basically just a run-down of the whole thing. Then we had a meeting, I met with the lady and then I think the next meeting I went for dinner and then the meeting after that I stayed over for one night to see how it went with school and catching a bus to school and how that all panned out. Then it was pretty much just moving in after that. I did have a couple of meetings with her before I moved in."

Kirsty, young person, Scotland

However, in most cases, the young people needed urgent re-housing at the point that a placement was considered, meaning that a full matching and gradual introduction process was not possible:

"They just said, 'There's a place you can stay in [this] area,' and that, 'You're going tomorrow night.' I was like, 'Okay,' and I went."

Becca, young person, England

In these cases, young people had been anxious about moving in and reflected that they would have valued meeting their hosts on several occasions before the placement started.

"I think it is a better idea if you go and meet them, see them who they are and stuff before you go"

Matty, young person, England

In Matty's case, a rushed placement and bad match ultimately led to his first Supported Lodgings accommodation breaking down when the host asked him to leave after 8 months. In most cases, however, a necessarily rushed placement had not jeopardised the success of the Supported Lodgings, with young people settling in with the help of the host fairly quickly. Nevertheless, from a scheme management point of view, these experiences underline that pre-crisis interventions should be sought where possible. Furthermore, the downsides of emergency placements could have been alleviated, for instance, by making use of emergency Nightstop provision while seeking to give young people more time to meet the household that they would be staying with for a longer period.

It is also worth highlighting that two of the young people involved in this study had known their hosts well before taking up a placement with them. In one case the placement was a continuation of a foster placement, and in another the young person's former support worker became their host. In these cases, the young person reported little anxiety at the beginning of the placement. There may, therefore, be utility in exploring whether a Supported Lodgings set-up could be used to formalise and support the role of 'significant others' already in the lives of young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness (friends' parents, family friends, support workers etc.) where appropriate.

While it is not possible to draw any conclusions on the outcomes of schemes on young people from this small number of interviews, they lend some support to the existing evidence base's positive conclusions in this area. Of the seven young people interviewed, two were still living in Supported Lodgings placements. All the remaining five were now living in more independent accommodation, either in their own or in shared flats. Three of those interviewed were currently at University whilst one was in full-time college. Two were studying part-time at college and also working, whilst one had been through college and was now working in her chosen career in the care sector. Overall, six of the seven young people interviewed described their time in Supported Lodgings as an extremely positive experience, that left them well-equipped for moving on:

"When I moved out, yes, I had a full-time job, I had an income, things like that. I was able to cook. I was able to clean for myself, keep myself clean, but mentally living on your own is completely different to having somebody there 24/7...but I knew, myself, I was ready."

Mhari, Scotland

### 3.4 Hosts Views and Experiences

The six Supported Lodgings hosts interviewed as part of this study viewed their experiences in this role very positively, albeit that it had come with a range of challenges discussed further below.



Despite inevitable stresses and the negotiation of various issues that had arisen during placements, they all felt that the positives of being a host outweighed the negatives, and found the experience extremely rewarding:

“definitely positive. I don't think I'd do it if it wasn't!... I just think it's a privilege getting to know the young people, and to see them through what can be quite a difficult, confusing and frightening experience for them, and just seeing them come out the other end, or see them on to the next stage in their lives, sort of thing.”

Female host, England

“I'm just really proud and happy to be a part of this, part of her life... I'm really, really happy to be a part of it, and the day that she moves on I will be very happy for her to know that she's able to do that confidently and can do that with pride, and her education behind her and all of that... it's a very rewarding thing to do, honestly...I think we need more host families to be able to do that”

Female host, England

As well as finding it personally rewarding, hosts also saw Supported Lodgings as being a positive option for the young people they'd accommodated:

“I think it's a brilliant thing, I really do. I think it's a brilliant thing and I think, I wish more authorities had it and it was more available ...I know young people who have had to leave home and go through the system... and I see young people going through homelessness and become – and a lot of the cases it is because they are put into a flat, far too young, they can't cope, they haven't the experience of doing it, they've no backup, they've no support and in a lot of cases they have no life skills and to me that's just actually setting them up to fail.”

Female host, Scotland

These comments reflect that the hosts interviewed had been attracted to being hosts for primarily altruistic reasons. During their interviews, hosts described wanting “*to help young people*” (Female host, England) as their main motivation. For some this was motivated by their own difficult experiences as a young person:

“Just to help a young person to be honest. Coming from where I was when I was 16 and the options that were available to me; this was not even talked about... I was 16 and had a baby and I was placed in the local authority, the council, and given a property and I was left alone. With this support, you're hands on with them, you get to know them, their families, you get to know what they're like, you give them support with their banking and benefits and all the doctors – you're hands on, you're more involved.”

Female host, England

Another talked about being able to “*give back the care her daughter had been given earlier in her life... [and] felt that...[they] could help in that area [housing young people]*” (Female host, England). For others it was described as a “*natural fit*” (Female host, England) given past experience working

with young people. Another host described feeling that they had “*space in their lives to support somebody else*” (Female host, Scotland) and were therefore happy to convert a foster placement into Supported Lodgings. The remuneration received to cover the cost of the young person living in their home was not a primary motivator for any of the hosts (see below). These hosts had been recruited via various means: four were already involved in the care of young people through fostering, support work of respite care, while the other two had responded to newspaper advertisements.

These hosts’ experiences of specific placements and schemes are instructive in informing the development of new schemes. Here we focus on their experiences in relation to referrals and matching; day to day experiences of living with a young person in their home; support and training; and remuneration.

Hosts were all completely comfortable with the safeguarding checks involved in the host sign-up process. The placements of one of the hosts we spoke to was a continuation of very long-term fostering arrangement. Another host had known the young person for many years as a support worker, and subsequently became their host. While this represented a very different prospect than a Supported Lodgings arrangement between ‘strangers’, the host was clear on the significance of the move from already knowing someone (even very well), to actually living with them. As the young person’s support worker they had done “*fun things*” together, and the placement marked a shift to a different kind of relationship which involved (in her words) “*nagging*” about “*mundane*” (Female host, Scotland) issues, with associated strains. For the remaining four hosts who were matched with ‘unknown’ young people, matching processes had varied, but all “*worked*” (Female host, England) and led to long-term successful placements. The matching and introduction process varied substantially depending on the urgency of the situation, sometimes narrowly focused on risk-assessment and the availability of the placement, but where possible focused on a more gradual introduction:

“It depends on the young person's situation. It could be, they've had to come away from wherever they are quite quick. Sometimes it could take a month, like, they're maybe coming for tea a few times, then maybe a few sleepovers, just to make sure the young person feels comfortable in the environment that they're moving into.”

Female host, Scotland

Another host provided Nightstop and Supported Lodgings placements for young people, often responding to emergency requests (as described in this quote), which in some cases were converted into a longer-term arrangement:

“I don't think I've ever really had a match of a... It usually goes like this, 'We've got somebody coming, a potential young person that needs somewhere tonight. Can you take them?' I say, 'Yes.' They say, 'Okay, this is their risk-checker. They'll be coming to you at four o'clock', you know! I don't get much chance to say anything more than that!”

Female host, England

This host had had a young person from another local authority area come to stay under the Nightstop scheme, who felt isolated away from friends. Such placements, however, represented a short-term solution, with longer-term placements more carefully matched to the young person’s needs. One host highlighted a recent measure that their Supported Lodgings scheme had taken to improve the matching processes, involving an online ‘family page’ where young people could

browse host households before meeting them. Another host thought this would be a useful addition to their scheme:

“see if they made up a portfolio and they had a picture of themselves and just explained a bit about themselves and their family history and maybe... ‘I’ve got two children of my own, they’re grown up, I’ve got this number of children staying at home’, or whatever. ‘My interests are this, my job...’ etc., to let them know a wee bit about the person.”

Female host, Scotland

Offering a window onto the hosts life and likes, with photographs of themselves and their families and home, was thought to be a useful tool in putting young people at ease during this stage of the process.

Hosts foregrounded ordinary and mundane, but extremely important, experiences and achievements of young people in their accounts of what successful placements do and should look like. Good communication, kindness, respect and open-mindedness were seen as key facilitators and necessary host attributes. Young people feeling at home and at ease, liking their bedroom, and being cared for by a welcoming host were seen as fundamental for the Supported Lodgings model:

“Homely, yes. If a young person feels at ease in your house, then things work really easy. Having a nice bedroom, letting them put their own things in, treating them just like your own kids.”

Female host, Scotland

“I’d say they [the host] need to be a kind and caring person and it’d need to be a person that was doing it for the right reason, not purely financially. I’m not saying finance doesn’t come into, of course it does but it would need to be somebody that wants to share part of their life with somebody else, who wants that person to feel that it’s their home.”

Female host, Scotland

In this context, the setting and negotiation of ‘house rules’ is clearly a key component of Supported Lodgings placements, balancing the need for young people to feel at home and to fit in with the hosts reasonable expectations. As described in chapter 2, hosts have some flexibility in setting these ground rules, but common features related to the time young people needed to be home by at night; letting the host know where they were; how many guests the young person could bring back to the house at one time; clearing up after themselves in communal spaces; and not smoking or having drugs in the house. Host varied in how rigidly they interpreted house rules, but invariably there was some level of flexibility during placements:

“I stick to them! [house rules] ...Sometimes I have to change them, depending on the young person that comes in, just slightly...Actually, I’m quite laid back...That’s the rules I had with my two [kids], so, it’s kind of stuck.”

Female host, Scotland

Hosts saw the young person's room as their own domain. As long as the fabric of the house was unaffected, they were happy for them to treat the space as their own – it was their 'home' in effect:

"I don't have a big issue around keeping their rooms tidy. I encourage them, I give them the opportunities to, but I say to them, 'Well, actually, this is your room.'"

Female host, England

"The only way I can go into that space, [is] if I'm invited into it and I've got to give [them] privacy. [They] ha[ve] got to feel just the same that I have..."

Female host, Scotland

Whether the cooking was done by the host or young person depended on the scheme and funding arrangements (for examples of variation see Sewel, 2016, p. 101). Regardless of these arrangements, all six hosts involved in this study were happy to show young people how to cook, use the washing machine and budget for cooking and their everyday essentials if the young person needed and accepted this support:

"It depends on the person so I always look at – I don't just throw myself in and take over because I'm saying to them, 'In two years' time you probably will have your own place so this is where you're going to learn everything and if you need support I'm going to be here to help you and show you.'"

Female host, England

Where placements were shorter (e.g. 3 months or so) this life skills development was more challenging, as discussed by this host who offered Nightstop and Supported Lodgings placements ranging from 3 months to 2 years:

"I feel that these young people, they've got to quickly be independent, because they're only with me for a few months, so they need to be doing these sort of things themselves. I will help them with their cooking, and shopping, and washing, and things like that, but I like them to do it themselves. When they come for Nightstop, obviously I'm doing the cooking for them, but once they're here and they've got – this is the other issue – if they've got their benefits, or they're getting paid, or whatever, and they've got money, then they're buying for themselves, they're cooking for themselves, yes."

Female host, England

By and large, the support and training received by hosts was seen to be of a good standard, accessible, relevant and timely. In line with good practice guidance, hosts reported having a range of training available to them, on health and safety, anger management and aggression, sexual health and mental health. Training on this latter theme was seen to be particularly crucial (see below). Hosts had undertaken such training both prior to their first placement starting, and on an ongoing/refresher basis. Ongoing professional support from the Supported Lodgings scheme staff was important in the management of placements:

"[it's] easy access so that you don't feel bad emailing them or phoning them up... [they're] willing to listen. Just over the years, with our other son and placements, it's quite good having a service that's quite impartial. They're not going to judge you when you want to talk about something. Family and friends can often have opinions. You're more detached when you're talking to professionals that are trained to listen and guide appropriately."

Female host, Scotland

Echoing key informant perspectives that 24/7 support is essential, most hosts had access to such an 'on call' system, although the majority had not used it. One had recently had to make use of the out of hours support for the first time, and reported that it worked well. While most hosts were positive about the support structure surrounding placements, one had access to very little support, which had left both her and the young person living with her feeling 'in limbo' and unable to access the help they needed. More broadly, hosts reported the difficulties they faced ensuring that the young people living with them had access to appropriate professional mental health care (beyond scheme support workers), with experiences in this area leading one host (quoted below) to feel reluctant about hosting young people with mental health problems in the future:

"Mental health is a big issue here. Social workers are absolutely amazing with the young people. It's trying to get the help outwith social work that's the problem... I've been trying for a whole year, and social work, to try and get this sorted, get an assessment for a young person that's 19...and I really struggle with it. Really, really struggling."

Female host, Scotland

"things are becoming...harder for these youngsters. Their backgrounds, their mental [health] issues, all these things are highlighted so much now that they need that support and you need the support if you're hosting them. I don't know if – if they said to me that they were going to give me somebody that had a bit of a mental [health] issue whether I would host them, because the simple fact is that I don't have the support in that respect."

Female host, England

These comments underline that young people's experiences and wellbeing within placements (as in other forms of supported accommodation) depends to some significant degree on wider landscapes of provision, but also suggests that new schemes should seek to embed mental health related training for staff and hosts, and access to appropriate supports, in the initial design and set-up.

It was clear that hosts valued 'peer support' opportunities particularly highly, finding the ability to 'compare notes' (metaphorically), ask 'stupid' questions, and share stories extremely helpful:

"Every individual young person is different and has different problems and different challenges and... I would say that's one of the best things about the scheme, is we had a support group whereby we could go and we could meet other people who were supported carers [hosts] as well. That, I would say is very, very useful; that made a big difference to me at the beginning because I met other people that were doing it."

Female host, Scotland

"I like the meetings where we meet up for Christmas and during the summer and then you get to get other host parents together and that is so encouraging. You get the stories, you get the encouragement, what works, what they've done in place and what didn't work and how they've resolved it; that's very good. I think just not being frightened to ask a question. It could be the silliest question ever, but if you ask it then you know, and building relationships with the team which is brilliant, absolutely brilliant. If you've got that you won't hesitate to ask. You've got to build up a relationship and think you're not bothering anyone."

Female host, England

A further aspect of host support (especially for longer placements) was respite, enabling hosts to go on holiday, for example. Preferred and common options here included the young person's family members taking them for a short break, young people going to stay with their own friends, and where neither of these options were possible, social workers or support workers organising respite care. Key informants involved in this study identified further options, including the young person staying home alone if this was appropriate and agreeable to the host. Respite arrangements had worked well for all but one host. In this case, the young person who moved in with them was diagnosed with autism during the placement, meaning that the standard and intensity of respite provision required was high. This had been extremely hard to source in practice, with the host eventually being provided with a personal allowance with which to organise respite themselves, but at a level she deemed insufficient. This scenario had left her feeling that had she known what she was signing up for, she may not have agreed to the placement:

"because [the young person has] got additional needs he can't be left, so he needs somebody in the house 24 hours if he's in, so it's very restrictive on me and although...they [social work] told me when he came and lived here that I would be entitled to six weeks respite a year. So, the first year that I asked for the respite they said, yes, well, you are entitled to the respite but we don't actually have anybody. But all these things were told after they got you on board. In hindsight, if all the things had sort of came at the same time or I had known the things previous to it, it may have made a difference in me joining the scheme... So she [social worker] then said to me, 'Well, you can get the respite care but we don't have any carers and you would need to try and find somebody', and the allowance is £35 a day... And that's a sleepover; that's 24/7..."

Female host, Scotland

This clearly inadequate situation highlights the importance of hosts receiving the support to which they are entitled and can reasonably expect and for opportunities to review placements where young people's needs are substantially higher than anticipated at the outset. Despite this, there were examples of hosts accommodating young people with high needs and problematic behaviours, and facing associated – and in rare cases fairly extreme – challenges, but feeling able and supported to do so. This experienced host, for example, had accommodated and supported two young men who committed offenses during their placements:

"we had a hard drive went missing and we discovered that the lad had sold it at Cash Converters! He had the receipt with the serial number of it on the receipt in his room, so we knew that he'd done this. We did manage to get it back, but the police had to be called and he had to leave. Then, recently, we had a lad who was involved with drugs, and he ended up robbing a woman at the cash dispenser down the road. We worked out that it was him and he was arrested on the doorstep, but he was a nice lad, and I felt sorry for him in many ways, because he'd just got himself in such a mess with drugs, but this is, as I say, why,



and I think the previous lad that had taken the hard drive, I think the same issue there. It was drugs.”

Female host, England

These challenges were successfully dealt with because the host was very experienced and also because of the timely support from social workers and supporting agencies. They also highlight how hosts may change their views on which young people they are willing to support, with this host now cautious of supporting those young people who have had a connection with substance use, not least as the last incident had impacted on her neighbours.

The hosts interviewed were by and large satisfied with the remuneration they received for providing a placement, either because they exceeded or totally covered out of pocket expenses: *“I would say it's a good amount...definitely not too much!...I would say it's about right for the time that I take. Yes, it covers... everything”* (Female host, England). That being said, and reflecting that their motivations were fundamentally altruistic, rather than income-driven, it was clear that any financial gains were modest, and that hosts sometimes faced initial set-up costs as well as ongoing higher household bills:

“I don't think it's anything extra but I think it does cover it [the costs of being a host]. In saying that, I lived alone beforehand... I lost my sole occupier, my council tax went up... my gas and electric went up. Also, I personally didn't have a landline and internet facilities either and that was one of his stipulations before he moved in, that the person must have internet facilities and that, so that was another expense every month that I wouldn't have had. So, if you're adding it all up... but I've only got my own income and my own outgoings, I don't need to worry about how it affects other people and I knew that I had enough to live on.”

Female host, Scotland

Several interviewees felt that these factors may put lower income households off hosting, even if they had the space and the inclination to accommodate and support a young person. A number of hosts additionally suggested that supporting young people with higher and more complex needs should be associated with a higher support-related income<sup>8</sup>:

“It wasn't that we were doing it as a job. Yes, you didn't want to be out of [pocket]... I do think if we had [someone] far more challenging than [young person's name] ever was then yes, you might want a better financial reward for it.”

Female host, Scotland

“I think maybe what it should be is if the young person needs additional support there should be additional money and if the young person... is a drug user it could be somebody coming out of hospital etc., So everybody's circumstances are different, and I think there should be a basic amount and then there should be a kind of sliding scale after that depending on what the person needs.”

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<sup>8</sup> Some supported lodgings schemes involved in this study reported variable rates for hosts depending on the young person's needs, whereas others had fixed funding levels.

Female host, Scotland

Hosts had negotiated a range of difficulties around young people's ability to pay their 'digs' money, reflecting a combination of the (sometimes very) low income and (potentially) limited budgeting skills. Hosts report that some young people found it difficult to manage their money and that early in placements it was a normal part of the process to assist in helping them budget:

"I think some of them [young people] get worried about not paying it. Some of them avoid paying it... It's never become a big thing, and usually [the support agency] will work with them and me if there is an issue, but, generally, if they genuinely haven't got the money to pay me, I'm not going to make it an issue, or make them run up a bill at this point in time. It's just not the right point in time, but, equally, when they are more settled in their finances, then it's good for them to start. It's the way that they learn to budget, and then I do try and be a bit more strict with them, I think!"

Female host, England

Two hosts had had enduring or repeated issues receiving digs money from the young people staying with them, one due to the young man's autism and high support needs, and the other due to the young person's low income (possible combined with limited budgeting skills). In both cases the hosts had shown long-term and flexible forbearance, while highlighting that the situation was not ideal from their point of view (impacting on their own finances), but also showing sympathy for the circumstances of the young person and wanting to help, extending in one case to lending the young person money:

"There is a little bit of an issue...in the respect of she's always running out [of money], and when she's running out I'm always having to support her... So if she can't get her social worker or the social worker can't sort out anything for her she's stranded... it must be very difficult for her to even ask me for something on that level because it's personal, isn't it? You're not asking me to help you...cook an egg or something... this is more like asking me for my money, you know what I mean?"

Female host, England

A more acute financial challenge faced one host when the young person had difficulties receiving benefit payments to cover the rent. This had caused considerable stress:

"I've had non-payment of Housing Benefit for about six months which was quite stressful for me because that was no income. That was really, really stressful and I had a social worker which was brilliant, but when it turned over to Universal Credit it just went messy and the young person wasn't signing on on-time and he was always late. The claim kept stopping and Housing Benefit wasn't going through..."

Female host, England

Some of the schemes involved in this study received benefit payments on behalf of the host, amalgamating them with support money before making a combined onward payment. In this set-up, the scheme itself, rather than the host, carried the financial risk associated with benefit issues, albeit with attendant challenges in managing non-recouped financial outlays.

Five out of the six hosts we spoke to had no issues associated with declaring their Supported Lodgings income for tax purposes. One had not been told that they would need to do so, which had led to minor frustration when she had found out: though her Supported Lodgings related income did not reach a taxable threshold, she had decided to employ an accountant to file her tax return (for a fee). Clear communication about such issues prior to sign-up would have avoided this issue.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Existing evidence on the effectiveness of Support Lodgings is limited, but promising. Available qualitative research suggests that providers, hosts and the young people who have lived in Supported Lodgings placements are positive about the model's capacity to achieve good outcomes across a range of domains including life skills development, increased self-confidence and wellbeing, and employment, education and training. Quantitative analyses using survey or administrative data to compare the experiences of young people in Supported Lodgings (or other community hosting placements) to those receiving alternative forms of accommodation and support also reach positive conclusions, indicating (albeit with the caveat of small sample sizes) that young people come to *less harm* in community hosting environments than congregate-living environments, and achieve *better outcomes* in Supported Lodgings than in supported housing across *all* measured domains, and better outcomes than floating support in 7 out of 9 measured domains. The high potential value of Supported Lodgings is further reinforced by considerable evidence on the range of negative impacts living in congregate environments can have on young people. Finally, the overwhelming evidence-based attesting to the effectiveness of Housing First provides some cautious grounds for having confidence in the value of the Supported Lodgings model. Supported Lodgings shares two key components of the Housing First model, in that it provides wrap-around, personalised and flexible support in an 'ordinary' home setting. Supported Lodgings, however, provides this to young people in the context of an existing household, overcoming the concern that some young people can feel isolated or 'out of their depth' in independent tenancies.

These findings are supported by the results of the present study. Key informants described the home-like environment provided by Supported Lodgings, combined with the blended support offered by hosts and support workers, as providing a uniquely positive and supportive environment within which young people are able to find security and stability, gain confidence and skills, and pursue wider ambitions. Young people who were currently or had recently lived in Supported Lodgings reported primarily positive experiences, describing Supported Lodgings as providing a 'bridge' or 'stepping stone' to adulthood, enabling them to gain the skills, confidence and self-belief to live independently. The negative experiences described by two young people appeared to reflect that the placements they had experienced did not fit the scheme design described by key informants or the practice literature, and underline the importance of adequate training, clear expectations, and the ongoing review and monitoring of placements to ensure young people are receiving the support they need, issues also highlighted by one of the hosts involved in the study. Generally, hosts reported positive experiences of being a host, seeing it as beneficial to the young people they'd accommodated and supported, fairly remunerated, and highly personally rewarding.



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the key  
barriers for  
me is funding  
for staffing...  
**infrastructure  
funding**; without  
that you cannot  
operate.

## 4. Expanding Supported Lodgings provision in Scotland

This chapter considers the potential of Supported Lodgings as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland. It does so by exploring the perspectives of first, key informants with expertise in homelessness, youth homelessness and Supported Lodgings; second, young people with experiences of homelessness; and third, 'potential host householders' with spare rooms who took part in focus groups to discuss the Supported Lodgings model.

### 4.1 Potential contribution

Most of the Scotland based key informants (9) involved in this study were familiar to some degree with the Supported Lodgings model. For some this reflected their awareness of Supported Lodgings (often known as 'supported carers' in Scotland) in the context of local authorities' obligations to looked after children and under 'Staying Put' arrangements. Others associated Supported Lodgings with the Nightstop model, which now operates in a small number of Scottish local authorities (see chapter 1). Participants were by and large familiar with the broad principles underpinning Supported Lodgings (that young people live in the home of a private household, with support), rather than the operational detail of schemes, reflecting that such schemes are not a feature of youth homelessness provision in Scotland and that the institutional and funding mechanisms underpinning Supported Lodgings for care leavers are unique.

All participants saw potential for the Supported Lodgings model to enhance responses to youth homelessness in Scotland. Though nationally levels of statutory youth homelessness appear to be going down in Scotland overall (see chapter 1), some key informants were observing contrary trends locally or for specific groups of young people (e.g. 16-17 year olds). This had led several local authorities to consider new interventions targeting young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The primary potential contribution of Supported Lodgings, however, related not to trends in the scale of youth homelessness, but to the current accommodation options available to young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Reflecting broader views in the sector about the unsuitability of B&B and hostel accommodation in most (though perhaps not all) circumstances (Littlewood et al, 2018), key informants emphasised the specific problems associated with accommodating young people in such forms of temporary accommodation. This was especially the case in relation to B&B accommodation, which still accounts for over 10% of young people's temporary accommodation placements nationally (see chapter 1). These key informants capture the strong desire in the sector to move away from such provision:

"if we could find a healthier, more supportive model than B&Bs, I think the sector would bite our hands off"

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

"the very fact that we're using bed and breakfast, everybody would look at that logically and say, that, obviously, there are not enough options available or we wouldn't be doing that... Certainly, housing options, in order to resolve homelessness, will be limited for young people, based on how much money they can attract... So I guess, coldly and logically, you would say, no, there are not enough services available in [Scottish city] or we wouldn't be putting people in a bed and breakfast... We've got enormous challenges here and anything that can help us, we're willing to do"



Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

“the intention about not having young people being exposed to fairly adult homelessness services, it's a good thing. Because once people are caught up in the homelessness service, then other things can happen which are not the intention... but they just can happen just because if you have young people with older adults then... there can be a bit of a read across. So there's a protection-type aspect in there I think... the classic one for us would be unsuitable accommodation, so that would be mainly bed and breakfast. There are reports, and I know local authorities don't intend this to happen but when you have young people in the same bed and breakfast as older drug users and stuff like that, which can lead to risk and/or harm... I think it's that mixing that's the difficulty there, mixing in large numbers.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Supported Lodgings was also seen as a preferred alternative to congregate hostel-type temporary and supported accommodation, which account for a third of temporary accommodation placements for young people. All-age congregate accommodation was universally seen as a high-risk option for young people. Living in such environments was seen to put young people at risk of poor mental health, reduced wellbeing, isolation, and exposure to negative peer effects, all issues which the Supported Lodgings model was viewed as having the potential to overcome:

“on occasions that we don't have any option but to put young people into adult hostel accommodation, as I say, it doesn't sit well with us. In the past, we have had young people go into that environment and their life has significantly deteriorated. They go in there, and there's a greater chance for them to be tempted by drug and alcohol use. They may get in with the wrong crowd. We've seen some young people go off the rails that way. If these Nightstop or Supported Lodgings models are in place, then hopefully a young person will be able to be in a more supportive environment, and not be around these temptations that present themselves in an adult hostel”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Similar, albeit less acute, concerns extended to youth-specific forms of congregate supported accommodation:

“one of the concerns that we've had a long time for young people and even within our current [youth homelessness] schemes is feelings of isolation that they will experience. So even where it's like combined living, so that you've got 21 or 30 folk living on one site, people can still feel lonely. The mental health would be a key aspect of it and the fact that they're within a family environment or a closer environment, you know, a supportive environment, I think would lessen the chances of that isolation and therefore mental health issues. That's been a recurring theme for us”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

“there definitely is a demand... [Supported Lodgings would] be beneficial, because [supported accommodation project for young people]... the accommodation we've got there, is great, but again, it's not for every young person. Some of our young people suffer



depression, anxiety. Even being in that environment... they can find it quite intimidating. Staff try their best to keep an eye on young people, but there is... A lot of the young people maybe go in there and go down the wrong paths as well, and go in with the wrong crowd, so if they were in with someone where they're able to get that bit more support, especially general social/emotional support from someone, that would be really beneficial to them in the long-term."

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Adding to these perspectives and echoing the views of those involved in existing Supported Lodgings provision, this key informant highlighted the fundamental advantages of the model – as compared to other youth homelessness accommodation models – being the provision of non-institutional, 'family-based' accommodation to young people in a manner that fosters the individualisation and personalisation of support:

"the key features, for me, in terms of our response to young people, is that it's not institutional, it's family based... and it's much more able to be individualised response to young people. So, it's a substitute family, where we know, all the evidence tells us, in terms of vulnerable young people, that you have better outcomes, by definition, because it is substitute family based. It's much more an individualised, personalised response to the kind of needs of individual young people, as they present. Those are the kind of core features, for me, in terms of what would differentiate it from something like supported accommodation or supported tenancies... I think the advantages are that you're much more likely to get a relationship-based approach to supporting young, vulnerable people. You're much more likely to have young people feeling valued, feeling supported and able to fulfil their potential."

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Such a home-like environment was seen not only to offer potential escape from the risks of other forms of accommodation, but also as a more positive, stable and 'nurturing' environment for young people to pursue opportunities and ambitions, not least in relation to life skills, education, and employment. While most key informants supported the move towards a presumption in favour of individual tenancies as the best response to homelessness in Scotland (e.g. see HARSAG, 2018; Evans, forthcoming), they did continue to see an important role for 'intermediate' options for young people in particular, with Supported Lodgings seen as one potentially desirable such option:

"(Supported Lodgings) could be seen as a stepping stone for some young person who's not quite ready for living on their own to give some training, some knowledge, independent living skills... It's a good stepping stone. I just think it will allow them to probably manage a tenancy in terms of giving them skills and budgeting, cooking... maintain their own bedroom as such whilst living in the wider host's accommodation."

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Sector experts saw the supportive environment of Supported Lodgings as having considerable utility in fostering and enabling young people's engagement with education:

"a key theme would be interrupted education and therefore emerging from education with little or no qualifications, with a poor experience of education and therefore a more difficult platform in which to move forward... I think being in that, a more supportive environment..."

that does provide a much more positive opportunity to move forward into education and training and employment.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

“nothing against the hostels, the staff try their hardest in there, but if a young person was in a more supportive environment, obviously their needs are going to be met a bit more, and they would hopefully have that bit more stability to be looking for employment, or enter further education. Even just the general social and emotional support makes a difference as well. A lot of the young people you’ve met, they’ve never had a stable environment, or people who they can rely on and chat openly about things. Put them in a hostel, sometimes they go in a wee room and that’s them, until they get their own tenancy. If they were in this supported accommodation [Supported Lodgings], whether that be a couple, an individual, or a family, I think it would give them a bit more stability, and nurture them a bit more.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

As this key informant suggests, there was also some hope that Supported Lodgings would provide an environment more conducive to young people’s engagement with employment. This potential must be understood against the background of key informants’ broader account of the severe limits of current youth homelessness provision in enabling young people to sustain or enter work. Rather, supported and temporary accommodation are widely seen to create enormous barriers to employment, due to high rental costs combined with steep benefit tapers (see also Watts et al, 2015; Littlewood et al, 2018):

“there are built-in disincentives within our current arrangements. So we are successful in helping people engage in education and training and some into employment. The management of the benefits system doesn’t necessarily help that process and our ability to provide some variance in, say, rents that would help mitigate some of those disincentives... I think if we are serious about alleviating this and providing real, positive routes out of homelessness or at being at risk of homelessness, the impact of involvement in education and training on them has to be central to how we configure this. So work it around that rather than work it around the benefits system.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

“one of the things that I think we... have been incredibly poor at, in the past, and something we need to get much better at, is we need to start linking housing options work with employability. Because, I think people’s options, in [Scottish city], are incredibly limited, at the moment, especially for young people. So if people are going to be in temporary accommodation, in any form, whether it be Supported Lodgings or any form for 12 to 18 months, before they can secure a tenancy, we should be making sure that... they are in a better position at the end of it.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

The extent to which Supported Lodgings can in fact address the ‘poverty trap’ and work disincentive effects usually associated with other accommodation options depends, however, on the specific

funding mechanisms involved and specifically on (1) whether Supported Lodgings is part-funded via means tested Housing Benefit/Universal Credit and (2) the rent level:

“I guess if Supported Lodgings is going to be funded the same way supported accommodation is, then you end up with the same problem which is the poverty trap, which I think is a thing that's attractive about Supported Lodgings... if you can make it an affordable rent young people who are in work can then be in Supported Lodgings rather than in supported accommodation... You want the rent part to be affordable whereas for supported accommodation, because you have a high turnover and you're often managing people who are quite complex in their needs, you need to have the extra housing maintenance payments. In Supported Lodgings we wouldn't expect to have that, so the rent really should be affordable.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Changes to the funding of supported accommodation (DCLG/DWP, 2017) – which is expected to un-link it from the means-tested social security system – may drastically change this landscape, and have the potential to weaken or eliminate the work-disincentive effects of living in such accommodation.

Key informants also identified wider potential benefits from pursuing the Supported Lodgings model, including as a way of diversifying the offer of accommodation types available to young people and enhancing capacity and flexibility within the homelessness and supported/temporary accommodation system. One participant focused on what he perceived as the narrowing of accommodation options and the importance of young people having choices about the kinds of accommodation they move into:

“that's something for me that's missing in the system that people are forced into different pathways, whether that's individual tenancies or whatever, but there's no choice being allowed within the system now. So, I mean, anything that's going to bring back a level of choice for people, I think would be welcome”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Another focused on the role of Supported Lodgings as a form of homelessness prevention, providing a ‘stop-gap’ for young people who may be facing resolvable issues in the family home:

“most [young people who present as homeless] actually go on to resolve their homelessness, i.e. they go back to their family house or they reconnect with the relationship that's broken down... Supported Lodgings might be able to give that respite element for young people to allow mediation to maybe be put into place, allow us to work with the young person and also the family and carers if it's about boundaries, put a working agreement in place... if we could get the relationship repaired or healed for the young person to return or even reinstate the relationship with their parents I think that's a huge success of the project in itself”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Commenting from a social work perspective, another key informant emphasised the value of Supported Lodgings in offering a positive ‘route back’ into supported accommodation for young

people who have moved into independent tenancies but where that has not worked out, a role that could be just as useful for non-care leaver young people:

“sometimes you have to let young people make decisions that are possibly not going to be in their best interests, and then have the capacity to take them back into the fold... I know, absolutely, that if we did not have that option [Support Carers scheme], then we would have had lots of young people going into tenancies, not coping, and then being in [temporary accommodation depending on] what availability there might have been”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Another focused on the limited options local authorities have in allocating suitable temporary accommodation to young people presenting as homeless, and saw Supported Lodgings as providing a welcome addition to the current option of supported accommodation placements (if available) or bed and breakfast:

“our options for a young person coming in, either bed and breakfast or supported accommodation unit... we would put young people, based on their age, in supported accommodation, as an alternative to bed and breakfast, but not taking into account their vulnerabilities or, actually, their requirement for support. So what we may be doing is, putting a young person who has very, very little support needs, other than their age and the fact that they are homeless, into a unit where you have a real range of needs in there, as well. So is that the most stable environment for them or would it be better for them to be in a really stable environment where they were in Supported Lodgings, for example?... I can absolutely see it being an option for people.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

This was seen to be of particular value in the context of broader challenges of housing availability, with several key informants seeing Supported Lodgings offering a win-win in providing ‘extra’ accommodation for young people and absorbing neither existing mainstream housing stock, nor existing supported accommodation spaces. Another key informant went one step further, suggesting Supported Lodgings provision could potentially play a role in tackling under-occupation, as well as isolation and loneliness among older households:

“We’ve got older people that are living in under-occupied accommodation as such so we’re trying to see if there is anything we could do through there with Supported Lodgings. I don’t know, I think that might not be as easy as I’ve described it, but again, it’s another avenue that we could look at because it would address the isolation issue with our older population, but also the under-occupation within their accommodation.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Indeed, this participant, who is considering setting up a scheme in their local authority pointed to the multi-faceted contributions that the model could make across a range of strategic objectives spanning homelessness reduction, tenancy sustainment, affordability, ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness, family relationships and more:

“reduced homelessness, reduction in failed and abandoned tenancies, it’s a more affordable option for some young people, it could increase skills or confidence, it could

strengthen relationships with some families which have broken down so that they don't lose that relationship altogether. It could help with crisis avoidance... [avoid us] putting young people in emergency accommodation which sometimes could be inappropriate... older people and tackling isolation, so in a wider perspective I think there's loads and loads of benefits in there"

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Another key informant, also commenting from a commissioning perspective, zeroed-in more specifically on the potential contribution of Supported Lodgings to homelessness reduction, tenancy sustainment and driving down the costs of temporary accommodation:

"If we can evidence the stability and if we can evidence the fact that it makes the tenancy sustainability and the likelihood to present as homeless again, in the future, less and we're not spending costs on bed and breakfast, for example, so we're freeing up supported accommodation spaces... I think there is a really strong argument to be made... [and] If it's been successful elsewhere, I can't see why it wouldn't be successful here."

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Despite the myriad advantages key informants saw Supported Lodgings as potentially contributing to, they were also clear about the challenges and barriers associated with any attempt to scale Supported Lodgings in Scotland.

## 4.2 Barriers and Challenges

Before considering the barriers and challenges associated with introducing Supported Lodgings youth homelessness provision in Scotland, it is worth pausing to consider why – unlike in England – such provision for this group does not currently exist at any notable scale. A number of factors appear to be relevant here. Most crucially, as described in chapter 1, expanding provision of Supported Lodgings for young people in England was an explicit aim of the 2006 New Labour administration, as part of broader efforts to drive down B&B use and more effectively respond to youth homelessness. These objectives came with associated funding commitments supporting four new schemes, as well as clear government endorsement and support for the model. Some of the England-based schemes who participated in this study were initially set up via this funding stream, with funding in the first year met by central government and the local authority on a 50:50 basis before a transition to fully locally and housing benefit funded delivery subsequently. The absence of such government support in Scotland is thus likely to be a fundamental factor explaining the current landscape of youth homelessness provision north of the border. Key informants who participated in this study pointed to a range of other relevant factors, however, to explain why Supported Lodgings has and remains absent in the Scottish youth homelessness context. Some of these point to practical, cultural and/or legal barriers and challenges that may need to be navigated in attempts to bring the model to Scotland.

The legislative context in Scotland, as compared to that pertaining in England, appears to have mitigated the need for the development of alternative accommodation models for young people, like Supported Lodgings, to date. Two key legal differences between England and Scotland are relevant here. First, whereas in England under 18-year olds cannot enter into a tenancy<sup>9</sup>, in Scotland, 16-17 year olds are able to do so, meaning that those experiencing or at risk of

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<sup>9</sup> See [http://england.shelter.org.uk/legal/housing\\_options/young\\_people\\_and\\_care\\_leavers/tenancies\\_for\\_minors](http://england.shelter.org.uk/legal/housing_options/young_people_and_care_leavers/tenancies_for_minors)

homelessness have (legally speaking) broader housing options than those south of the border. The lack of ability to move into an independent tenancy at a young age in England may well have contributed to the impetus to develop Supported Lodgings in that context. On the other hand, one Scotland based key informant with expertise in Supported Lodgings for care leavers, explained that the option for this group to enter their own tenancy at 16 – something seen to be often fraught with risks – had led them to focus on developing “a range of options” “to try and encourage them to remain in care”, one of which was Supported Lodgings (Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector).

Second, and perhaps more crucial, England’s statutory safety net for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness is substantially weaker than that pertaining in Scotland. Whereas young people in Scotland, if deemed unintentionally homeless, would be entitled to the full rehousing duty – that is, settled accommodation (usually in the social rented sector) and temporary accommodation in the interim – in England many young people would be excluded from these entitlements by the ‘priority need’ criterion<sup>10</sup>. The existence of an established and legally enforceable set of entitlements for young people via the wider legal safety net has meant that the need for innovative accommodation options for this group has not been as strong in Scotland as in England. Key informants certainly saw Scotland’s homelessness legislation as an important factor explaining the absence of Supported Lodgings provision:

“in England... you can see why there would be growth of other different types of things... because you don't have that first option with the homelessness legislation. So if you're a single person, you're not getting anything under the homelessness legislation in England... whereas in [Scotland\*] then there are pretty strong rights... everybody has the right to temporary accommodation and the majority of people have the right to settled accommodation”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

The statutory homelessness entitlements that pertain in Scotland have not only potentially weakened the impetus to develop Supported Lodgings but also raise the challenge, considered in the next section, of how Support Lodgings would ‘fit’ into local authorities existing homelessness duties and services. Another key informant felt that the lesser impact of austerity and welfare reform in Scotland to date – given mitigation measures taken by the Scottish Government – had stemmed the need for service innovation that had been seen elsewhere, meaning that Scotland are now “*playing catch-up*” (Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector).

These legal and policy differences may in part explain why the impetus to address youth homelessness seen in England in the mid 2000s – and associated and subsequent development and growth of Supported Lodgings provision – was not seen in Scotland. Nevertheless, and as discussed above in this chapter, many in the sector now see a strong case for the introduction of Supported Lodgings to diversify options, create choice, avoid use of unsuitable temporary accommodation and provide a ‘stepping stone’ for young people who may want or need it.

Key informants also identified possible cultural and attitudinal barriers to Supported Lodgings in Scotland, on the part of both young people and professionals in the sector. In the case of young people, a number of sector experts described young people as having a desire and expectation (linked to their statutory entitlements) for an independent tenancy, albeit after a period in ‘traditional’ temporary accommodation. This resonates with prior research identifying the importance of ‘cultures of sharing’ to foster these types of accommodation, and the absence or weakness of such

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<sup>10</sup> See Watts et al (2015) for an overview, though note that in April 2018 the Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in England. While the priority need criteria remains with respect to rehousing duties, all those at risk of or experiencing homelessness are now entitled to homelessness relief and prevention by their local authority (see Fitzpatrick et al, 2018).



cultures in some parts of the UK, particularly in Scotland and outside of London, and among non-student groups (Batty et al, 2015; Sanders and Dobie, 2015; Watts et al, 2015). Some key informants were thus of the view that a potentially significant proportion of young people would not be open to the idea of Supported Lodgings:

"I think part of it is actually cultural... in Scotland until the last few years you've been able to go to the council and get your housing assessment and get a tenancy within a certain amount of time. So there's been choice and down south [in England]... there isn't a lot of choice. Either housing is unaffordable or unobtainable, so actually Supported Lodgings is quite an obvious way to go. Making use, I guess, of spare rooms .... [but in Scotland] culturally for a young person at a certain age that [traditional temporary accommodation] might be more appealing to them. Getting a bit of freedom and staying in a Travelodge rather than going into a family environment... so I think that's the difference in Scotland, because we've got different legislation, and young people know it.... there are young people who'll say 'my big brother got a flat after living in a B&B for two months' or whatever and yes, it's just not the reality any more, and I don't think we've told people that."

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

"one of the things that we've struggled with, in [Scottish city], is people's perceptions or people's willingness to resolve their homelessness by sharing... I don't know if that's nationwide or particular to [Scottish city], but people's expectation is that they'll get their own house, so that's a struggle for us ... So for young people who have, already, perhaps not got the social skills, if you like, to interact [with] people and they're already experiencing homelessness because they can't maintain relationships with other people or services. To ask them to then go and stay with a stranger, a stranger to them, I'm not sure there is a demand for it"

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

"I would've thought some [young people] would welcome it [the opportunity to live in Supported Lodgings]. Others, I think, would crave for that independent living and the freedom that that would bring but not necessarily understanding the responsibilities that that would bring either"

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

By and large, key informants tended to see this set of cultural or attitudinal challenges as something to be addressed, rather than an insurmountable barrier. One suggested that Supported Lodgings might be a feasible move-on option from traditional temporary and supported accommodation, rather than something used 'on the day' of crisis:

"I don't know how many young people, if you spoke to them coldly about it – if you present as homeless today, would you like to go and stay with this family, strangers? I'm not sure if they would take it on the day, but if you got them into supported accommodation and used it as a move on option... where they'd learn to trust the workers, for example, in there. I think that might be a better route into it."

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Another key informant working in youth homelessness services in one Scottish city saw Supported Lodgings as something that might initially be seen as alien and undesirable, but saw an open conversation about available alternatives and the advantages of such a placement as potentially winning young people over:

"I spoke to a couple of young people... and they were like, 'Oh, I wouldn't go and live with a stranger,' and stuff like that. That was their initial reaction. We should break it down with them, say, these are the options. One of the [temporary accommodation] options in [Scottish city]... It's a bit notorious, you know? Say, you've got the option of going here or you've got the option of going to this family or this individual, and it's going to be a bit more supported-based, nice environment and stuff, then I think the younger person would probably see the merits in that scheme"

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Indeed, this was the experience in practice of the Supported Lodgings schemes in operation in England, which anticipated and worked with the fears and concerns some young people had about Supported Lodgings via introductions to the scheme and placement visits pre move-in. These fears also endorse the findings of other research and the present study (see chapter 2) that emergency Supported Lodgings placements can be more challenging than those set-up via careful matching over a slightly longer time period (potentially in tandem with a Nightstop scheme). These concerns aside, it is worth noting that existing Supported Lodgings schemes catering for both care leavers in Scotland and England, and young homeless people in England, did not report lack of demand from young people as a challenge. On the contrary, schemes tend to report "*buoyant demand*" (Holmes, 2008, p.23). A statutory sector key informant commenting on demand for Supported Carers for care leavers in a major Scottish city explained, for instance:

"when you talk to young people, it's really popular – Supported Carers are really popular with young people. We very rarely have vacancies and we, quite often, it's what the young people will ask for. Notwithstanding, you also have that significant minority who just want their own flat, because that's what you do when you're 16."

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

A parallel set of cultural and attitudinal barriers were identified among those working in the youth homelessness sector, particularly on the part of commissioners. There were two primary reasons for a perceived uncertainty about or reluctance to pursue Supported Lodgings. First was simply lack of familiarity with the specifics of how Supported Lodgings work in practice and are commissioned and managed:

"I think it's lack of familiarity with it and, therefore, [people are] not necessarily completely convinced that it would work."

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

"I think commissioners... they're not quite sure what they're commissioning, they're not quite sure how they can manage the volume when it's based around volunteers coming forward rather than it being professional placements... and there is a fear. There's a fear of responsibility... And not being able to guarantee the beds. It's that actually if the

commissioner wants to commission 20 beds, can we guarantee that through Supported Lodgings?”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Second were concerns around risks and safeguarding:

“They would be concerned around putting vulnerable people into people's homes and that the risks that come both ways on that one, both for the hosts and for the individual. I think people... are just a bit risk averse around some of that stuff for how it comes back to bite them really”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

“there's probably a cultural thing across staffing as well... some of the fear, I suppose, around placing young people in family homes... people think why would anybody want to rent a room or give their room or support a young – you know, a homeless person? So the first thought is nobody would go for it. So I think it's almost that negative thinking. No one will go for it, and then when you find people are going for it then the next question is why are they going for it, how dangerous is this, who must they be to want to do this?... I think in the care-experienced world, they're used to fostering, they're used to family placements, so it's the norm. But within homelessness, the sector's not used to that, so I think there's definitely a barrier there around understanding or knowledge within the sector”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Such scepticism about the motives of individuals willing to host young people was also expressed in response to social media posts advertising focus groups. This may have been influenced by the fact that the ‘Sex for Rent’ scandal (Flynn, 2018) hit the headlines during the time of our fieldwork.

Turning back to sector attitudes towards Supported Lodgings, it's certainly the case that many of the Scottish local authority key informants who participated in this study had many questions about the specifics of how Supported Lodgings works and these risks are avoided. As demonstrated in Chapter 2 and the available practice literature, existing schemes in England, and Scotland (catering for care leavers), have established systems in place for managing these issues. While these concerns thus represent valid challenges traversed in the setup of new schemes, they do not appear to represent insurmountable barriers to the introduction of Supported Lodgings schemes. It might be added that the safeguarding and capacity concerns voiced in relation to Supported Lodgings pertain, albeit in different ways, to traditional temporary and supported accommodation options.

A more fundamental factor underpinning the current absence of Supported Lodgings in Scotland to date, and a barrier to its future introduction and growth, concerns how such schemes would be funded. Indeed, key informant comments made clear that this was the key barrier to be surmounted in bringing Supported Lodgings to Scotland, according higher priority and status than the barriers or challenges discussed above, which were generally thought to be resolvable given time and committed staff, both of which would be facilitated by a sufficient and stable funding stream:

“I think if you have the funding it can be done... the most obvious barrier is the funding one”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

“To make it bigger and expand it would mean budgets – make the funding to do it. I don't think there's any – there's nothing stopping it from growing, it's having the funding there to do it and that's the top and bottom of it really”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

“Finances, because Supported Lodgings requires patience and investment, so that's key... When you have the money and the right people, those are the two important [things]”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

As seen in chapter 2, there is no single simple blueprint for how schemes are funded. Schemes targeting youth homelessness tend to be funded via a mix of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit for the rental element and local authority funding for the support and infrastructure element, with some schemes also making use of grant funding. While the technicalities of securing Housing Benefit/Universal Credit for the rent component could be challenging (and there were concerns about the impacts of direct payments under Universal Credit, see chapter 2), the bigger barrier identified in both England and Scotland was securing local authority funding for support and infrastructure costs at a time when overall General Fund and specific support, homelessness and housing budgets are highly constrained:

“the key barriers for me is funding for staffing... infrastructure funding; without that you cannot operate... It's so critical that the young person and the host is supported... that's critical.”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“a number of housing department don't have this budget for this sort of money... the leverage to [be] doing that is just increasingly diminishing for housing departments budget-wise. So that's a challenge, so if Scottish government are keen to make this work, they need to look at all these challenges... [at the] money [available] for their local authorities to be able to commission providers”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

“I think funding needs to be committed because, I think, existing funding is probably already committed so I think if we want to do it, I think it needs to be pump-primed, so it would become an alternative model to some of the existing models that we've got.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

“there's a financial constraint as well in terms of finding a budget to pay hosts. I understand that Housing Benefit may support the accommodation element in terms of the room rate and whatnot. There needs to be a bit of finance behind it to make sure that there's a structure in place, that the hosts ... [have] got the appropriate training and support”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

There was a sense expressed by some key informants that local authority procurement teams were currently narrowly focused on cost-saving, at the expense of innovation or collaboration in the sector. Nevertheless, the strength of ‘spend to save’ arguments was emphasised by Scottish key informants, who saw commissioners and local authority leadership as willing to consider and support interventions where a ‘watertight’ case could be made in relation to homelessness prevention and cost-savings:

“we are just limited to (the) General Fund and that has been heavily reduced as a result of all the budget saving. So again, it's about finding how much it's going to cost, but I think based on speaking to my colleagues and having a look at the models down in England... I think it will be a spend to save in terms of reducing youth homelessness, failed or abandoned tenancies, it will increase young people[s]... confidence, their skills. So I think, yes, there will be budget required, but I think at the end product it will invest to get a really good outcome for some young people.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

“I think senior officials, certainly, in our experience are open to innovative solutions that have long-term impact in relation to the public purse. I think if you can demonstrate that early intervention prevention and here's the solution, so there's a lot of rhetoric around the Christie Commission but there aren't that many solutions. If you can present a solution that will demonstrate that this will prevent future homelessness for this vulnerable group, I think that's a persuasive argument for chief execs of local authorities. At the end of the day that means they're not going to be a burden on the public purse.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

As discussed further in the next section, initial ‘pump-priming’ to set-up schemes and test the outcomes they can achieve was seen to be a key enabler of the successful introduction of Supported Lodgings to Scotland. While there was considerably hope – and limited evidence from available research (see chapter 3) – that Supported Lodgings can provide such cost-savings, some key informants also emphasised the need to be “*realistic about cost*” (Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector) and ensure that schemes are “*properly resourced*” (Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector).

Welfare reforms affecting the level of Housing Benefit that young people can claim and the introduction of Universal Credit were identified as challenges to both scaling and safeguarding provision. Existing schemes noted that “*the level of rent that we claim from Housing Benefit has dropped significantly*” (Key informant, England, voluntary sector) and Scottish key informants acknowledged that attempts to introduce Supported Lodgings would inevitably “*bash-up against a benefits system which is not designed for homeless young people*” (Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector). Nevertheless, there was also a very cautious sense that the current context holds opportunities as well as challenges, in that the impacts of austerity and welfare reform were creating some impetus for reflection and innovation, and that expected changes to how supported accommodation is funded *may* provide opportunities for the development of Supported Lodgings in Scotland, albeit with concerns about the level of funding that will be available under the new funding regime:

"I think the changes [to how support accommodation is funded] could be helpful in that that potentially is then devolved to Scotland. So I think that gets a tick. I think the scale of the monies that might be devolved won't be particularly high but, I guess, it depends what strings are attached to them"

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

"it feels a bit like everything's a bit uncertain, but then that could bring an opportunity because if we can come up with a way of delivering Supported Lodgings which makes it an affordable thing for a young person to live in so you're not relying on a high level of Housing Benefit like you are in supported accommodation, then actually it would be no bad thing to decommission supported accommodation and have Supported Lodgings instead"

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

The next section builds on this discussion of the barriers to scaling Supported Lodgings in Scotland to identify key 'enablers' that would help achieve this aim.

### 4.3 Enablers

A series of actions that would facilitate and enable Supported Lodgings provision in Scotland flow directly from the discussion above.

An important first step would be clarification by Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator on how and where Support Lodgings provision would sit in relation to Scotland's robust legal safety net for homeless households, and specifically whether a placement could be used to discharge local authorities temporary and/or settled accommodation duties under the homelessness legislation. Within the parameters of Scotland's current homelessness legislation, discharge of the 'full rehousing duty' is limited to settled accommodation in the social, and sometimes private, rented sector. The broad consensus among key informants was that Supported Lodgings was best conceived of and delivered as a form of temporary or 'interim' accommodation, used either to meet local authorities temporary accommodation duties to young people (as an alternative to hostels, B&Bs or available supported accommodation), or as an 'interim' option where settled accommodation is not appropriate due to the applicants housing-related support needs (Scottish Executive, 2005; Littlewood et al, 2018). There remains a lack of certainty on how these options would work in practice and be viewed by the regulator:

"I would need to get clarification from the regulator in terms of how they view it. Would they see it as temporary accommodation? I don't know... If it's done appropriately I think it could be used as temporary accommodation because it's supported, it's short-term until we get another stepping stone tool; permanent or settled accommodation... I don't think you could discharge duty in it because it's not permanent accommodation... So I think it is just an interim... to allow the young person to either rekindle relationships back home with their parents or carers or give them that additional skills and support to allow them to move on to mainstream accommodation"

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector



“it's quite clear in the legislation as to how you discharge your duty... You can understand why that's what people would pick up when you're writing legislation because it's quite easy to say it's a Scottish Secure Tenancy or a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy in certain circumstances or a tenancy in the private rented... It's easy to hold onto that. When you're talking about a bit more differentiated models, then that's not straightforward to write into legislation. So one fix is to change that bit of the legislation... [or] I think it would be about using the regs [regulations], using the interim regs, I think that's the easiest way... It clearly lays out why duty hasn't been discharged in the technical way and, therefore, gives local authorities a bit more ability to use different approaches to this. Because it's a legislative issue that the regulator will hone in on”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

This key informant supported the use interim accommodation regulations<sup>11</sup> as a means of ensuring that young people have access to the move-on support they need to ensure a positive longer-term outcome. Beckett et al (2010) recommended the use of Supported Lodgings in Scotland as an alternative form of temporary accommodation. One key informant, however, reflecting wider calls in the homelessness sector for buy in and involvement from other areas of local government (Littlewood et al, 2018), cautioned against narrowly conceiving of Support Lodgings as a housing and homelessness intervention, commenting that youth homelessness is:

“still seen as a housing problem... [but the] presenting issues that we know of, are essentially health and social care issues and where are they in relation to this agenda?... I think there's a massive bit of catch-up that needs to happen in relation to other service areas and other budgets being brought to bear. The danger... is if we see this as simply a housing solution... this is not a housing issue. This is about creating a supportive environment in which young people can thrive”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Given the cultural and attitudinal barriers and challenges identified above, a second key enabler relevant to the expansion of Supported Lodgings in Scotland is the raising of awareness and understanding of the Supported Lodgings model. Key informants saw this as having several components and involving multiple players. A clear role was seen for Scottish Government to endorse and promote the model to local authorities, but also for organisations and leaders working in the youth homelessness sector:

“I think it's a whole selling job about what actually it is and what it can bring and how people can benefit from it.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

“firstly it needs to be recognised as... I mean if you have a Minister making a positive statement about this, I think that's helpful”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2010/2/contents/made>

“so there's no one in the homelessness sector that's talking about it... It needs to be done, tested and then shared. We just need someone in our sector to start championing it, I think.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

This set of actions, by these multiple players, was identified as necessary to achieve local authority 'buy-in', something seen as essential to the introduction of Supported Lodgings. One key informant running a large scheme in England endorsed a strong lead from Scottish Government as a facilitator of Supported Lodgings growth, going beyond awareness raising and information, reflecting the history of Supported Lodgings growth in England in the 2000s:

“if Scottish Government are keen to make this work... they need to be pulling in powers that be, people who make the decisions, the civil servants making the decisions in their local authority to understand, this is our strategy... this is the number of Supported Lodgings placement we expect from you for the next three years, for example”

Key informant, England, voluntary sector

As discussed above, awareness raising and familiarisation was seen as necessary not only among professionals, but also crucially among young people themselves:

“There needs to be an increased awareness... and knowledge of it... a lot of young people are approached, and even my colleagues, and other people that I've spoke to, they sort of screw their face up when they first hear about it. The biggest thing would be, to start off with, increase[ing] that knowledge and awareness of what it is, and the benefits of it. That would be an initial thing.”

Key informant, Scotland, voluntary sector

Third, and strongly prioritised by key informants, the availability of funding to pilot and establish Supported Lodgings schemes was identified as a crucial aspect of any effort to bring this kind of provision to Scotland at any meaningful scale. There was, however, quite some enthusiasm about taking advantage of such funding should it become available:

“funding is really tight... but ... I think there could be a lot of positive arguments swayed in terms of funding even for a trial, a pilot project to demonstrate the outcomes that we can achieve through the project.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

“if there was an opportunity to fund a pilot, to gauge the success of it... we'd be incredibly willing to consider it and pilot it and if somebody wants to help us fund that for the first three months, six months, nine months, then of course we'd do it.”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

Some key informants went further, suggesting that a national Supported Lodgings infrastructure could be set up to facilitate local authority practice and provide efficiencies:

“It would be great if they did something nationally with an infrastructure for a host scheme... I think there's huge merit in even the Scottish Government setting up this scheme that local authorities can buy into. There'd be consistency, it would give you that credibility as well... if something was done nationally I think there would be a lot of buy-in from other local authorities... and then maybe even local authorities that are interested in it, giving them some sort of additional funding to allow them to pilot it for a pilot period. Then the year after for the local authority to fund it themselves. I think that would be a huge incentive for many local authorities”

Key informant, Scotland, statutory sector

This infrastructure could take advantage of the enormous expertise already present in Scotland via the provision of Supported Carers schemes for care leavers<sup>12</sup>, and Support Lodgings schemes for young people experiencing homelessness in England.

#### 4.4 Young People's Perspectives

Young people with experience of homelessness who took part in focus groups in three different parts of Scotland (see chapter 1) were not familiar with the idea of Support Lodgings before being introduced to it during these discussions. This section thus gives a sense of their initial reactions to the model.

Young people's reactions can be divided into three main groups. The largest group had **mixed views** on Supported Lodgings, seeing some positives to it as an accommodation option, but not seeing it as an option they would now take up (though some felt they might have taken it up in the past depending on other available options):

“it's not my thing but it is a good system. I would say that...It's a good thing but it's not for me, personally.”

Male young person, Edinburgh

“I suppose if you've not really had the family life and that, and then you're getting used to family sort of thing. If you're homeless, you've been chucked out by your family and you didn't get on well with them or something, do you know what I mean? Then they'd want to see how a family works. It sounds alright.”

Male young person, Edinburgh

“I think it depends what point you're at as well ... Say you were staying at your house before, and you had everything you had, you don't want everything to change, and you're just being in random people's house, but if it is that you need that, you're obviously going to stay here...it depends where you are.”

Male young person, Dundee

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.staf.scot/supported-lodgings-focus-group/>

Young people falling into this group often saw Supported Lodgings as particularly well suited to 'younger' young people, or particular groups of young people they thought would benefit from it, like asylum seekers and/or those who don't speak English:

"I think it's – 16 to 25...I can't really see a 25-year-old moving in with someone's family, do you know what I mean? For the younger age group it would be good, but if I was 25 and got offered to go and stay with a family right now, I'd say no."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"I guess, once you get older, it's difficult to go back to this kind of thing...Maybe when you're younger"

Female young person, Edinburgh

"Could be suitable for people that don't know English, that are new to this country, that are from war-torn areas...For them, it'll be like because they're been through dramatic stress and that – because they're going to be in a house with a family, they'll get to know the family, get to know the food, the culture, adapt to it. Instead of them being on the street when they come here, they will just not feel that they're separate."

Male young person, Edinburgh

Some of the young people in this group weren't enthusiastic about the idea of Supported Lodgings, but saw it as a reasonable 'last resort' if they had no other options:

"I wouldn't do it, but you can't really be... If you're in that situation you can't be, 'No, I'm not taking it.' If it's the only option...To be honest, if it was me, I'd probably just go and use that space as my space, and then do whatever, go out or whatever and then come back as somewhere to stay."

Male young person, Dundee

"I wouldn't want to go anywhere with a family, but if I had to, I would."

Female young person, Dundee

One young person wasn't that keen on the idea of Supported Lodgings in general, but – having felt very isolated in previous temporary accommodation – was more open to the idea if there were other young people living in the home:

"I would say if there was another young person living, that would be a good thing because you wouldn't be that [isolated]... basically."

Male young person, Dundee

Around equal numbers of young people fell into the remaining two groups, one seeing Supported Lodgings very positively, and the other very negatively. Young people's **negative views** sometimes reflected that they saw the model as 'weird', sometimes reflecting scepticism about hosts' likely motives, or a feeling that sharing their home would be potentially awkward and uncomfortable:

"I don't know, it would just be weird. I'd feel uncomfortable...Probably not [an option that she would have considered, even when younger]. Someone just going into your room when you're sleeping, that's creepy...There could be creeps or anything... it's not ideal for me, but if people want to be caring and [have] randoms in their home, that's fine... [but] How can they take someone random that they don't know?"

Female young person, Edinburgh

"I wouldn't want to do it...It'd be awkward as f\*\*k."

Male young person, Dundee

"I'm picturing, when you say that, it's a family, a mum, dad and whatever and you just stay in the house. That seems quite weird to me. I wouldn't go in another family's house and just act like I live there, act like this is mine, act like that's mine because even if I did, you still have a thought in the back of your... 'This isn't mine.' It's not."

Male young person, Dundee

Other young people didn't want to live their lives by others' rules, seeing living in someone else's home as inevitable restricting their freedom:

"you need to respect everyone in that house because it's someone else's house. It's not yours. Nothing's yours. Even though you get told, 'That's your room.' It's not actually your room. It's not – so you need to bite your tongue and you need to stop doing this and that, just because you are somewhere else."

Male young person, Dundee

Others described themselves as quite anxious about meeting new people, meaning that they didn't see the model as right for them:

"I couldn't do that, no. I find it very hard to open up to people and let them in and so, I'd be very insecure for a good long time, so I wouldn't be able to communicate with them or anything like that."

Male young person, Edinburgh

Over the course of the focus groups, some young people who had negative views about Supported Lodgings early in the discussion, 'softened' their views a little, primarily in response to a more detailed discussion about Supported Lodgings placements worked:

"I didn't really know much about this and if I knew at the time I would have had choices with someone like this before...If I knew someone like this when I was maybe 16 then I would have been in a better place by now."

Female young person, Edinburgh

"I don't know [if I'd take up a Supported Lodgings placement]. It just depends on the people and that."

Male young person, Dundee

"It's another option. It gives you another option. You're not just stuck to the one thing. You've not got anywhere to stay so you're just getting shoved in there. It gives you, 'There's this option here. You could do this. You could go to a family.' I don't know if most people would want to choose it, but if it was put to that, I don't think it's the worst thing you could do"

Male young person, Dundee

Three factors seemed relevant to this softening of opinion: first, young people understanding that house rules would not be highly restrictive; second, the knowledge that schemes involved the provision of external support, and could potentially involve continued relationships with existing and trusted support workers; and third, the idea that the matching process would likely involve meeting a host a number of times before moving into their home.

The final group of young people viewed Supported Lodgings as a **positive housing option** from the get go (none cooled to the idea over the course of discussions), and in several cases one which they wish they had had access to when they were homeless:

"[Supported Lodgings] does sound like something that would have been really helpful."

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

"it looks fine, I'm all for it, yes... If it stops people from being homeless and that then that can only be a good thing."

Male young person, Dumfries and Galloway

"You don't want to be put in that situation [of being homeless], but if you are then it's probably one of the best things you could, the best options, do you know what I mean? It's alright, yes. It does its job. Does what it needs to do. It's a foundation for people. If they need it, it's there."

Male young person, Dundee

Closely echoing the role key informants described Supported Lodgings as playing, this young person saw such accommodation and support as a helpful stepping-stone:



"it's useful moving in with someone who's had experience with paying bills. It's a stepping stone from being a child that stays in a house to being an adult that's completely responsible. This one's a bit of an in-between stepping stone for most people"

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

A core focus of discussions was on how young people felt Supported Lodgings compared to other kinds of supported and temporary accommodation they had lived in, had the opportunity to live in, or were aware of. A relatively clear hierarchy emerged in this regard, with many young people tending to see a place of their own (an independent tenancy) as most desirable, as expected by key informants (see above). Indeed, some young people were now residing in such accommodation after periods of homelessness and/or in temporary or supported accommodation, and were satisfied with that accommodation. For some young people, the wider move towards Rapid Rehousing being considered in Scotland (Littlewood et al, 2018; Evans, forthcoming) may well be the most appropriate and desirable solution. That being said, other young people reported the kinds of experiences in independent flats that had led key informants to feel that some would benefit from intermediate options, like Supported Lodgings. These two young people in Dumfries and Galloway, for instance, had found living in their own flats daunting, isolating and challenging:

"We stayed at a flat and it was kind of awful. The next-door neighbours, the police was there all the time and it's horrific. That kind of environment just causes you to shut yourself in."

Male young person, Dumfries and Galloway

"being in your own flat, you have to know how to cook, you have to know how to do your washing and everything."

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

Young people's supported accommodation emerged as 'level pegging' with Supported Lodgings as an accommodation option, with young people differing in which they preferred the idea of residing in. These young people spoke highly of supported accommodation in which they lived alongside other young people, valuing the sociable environment and the support they received:

"If I had no such thing as like the place where I am now [young persons supported accommodation], then I would go there [Supported Lodgings] ... [Where I am now] There's more people my age or younger. It's more sociable, more going out, more just going about, hanging out, going to the gym, going to the youth clubs... that's the most important for me."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"It's just the staff that are lovely. Everyone in there, you watch people come and go but they're all friendly and stuff. You actually can sit with them at night in your room and watch telly and have a chat with all the people that stay there and things like that. It's nice, it's just a friendly place to be."

Female young person, Edinburgh

By contrast, other focus groups participants were more intimidated by such living situations and positive about Supported Lodgings as what seemed to them to be more supportive and less intimidating alternative. Two female focus group participants commented:

"It [Supported Lodgings] will be better than staying on your own or with a mixture of people, you find them insecure or unsafe. At least, if you stay with someone, you can get to know more than just staying with random people who you can't trust, then you'd find it better."

Female young person, Edinburgh

"it was one place and all these young people would stay there. You'd have a general staff that might help them. I see this [Supported Lodgings] as being a bit more beneficial in the sense they have one-on-one support, and a bit more security. Some of these areas are dodgy as well. I know in these kind of places, and all these young people together, possibly in different backgrounds might influence the young person next-door to do something. Particularly, in some areas the stories they told me of, 'Oh, we got drunk and this person came along, dragged this person along and he took this, and...' Maybe it's good that they don't have that influence, when they're trying to establish themselves as adults. If they're only 16 or something, or 17, and they're in all together"

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

These two young men identified other potential advantages of Supported Lodgings:

"it might be cleaner because – also the place where I stay (young people's supported accommodation project) is under 25s and it's quite – there's people that don't clean up after their mess."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"Well you're just sort of – if it's just you in this family, your issue would be resolved quicker. If you're in supported accommodation or something and you've got say ten people in there, and if they've all got problems, you've got to sort of...wait in the queue"

Male young person, Edinburgh

Supported Lodgings compared highly favourably to B&B accommodation or adult hostels, which were universally seen as extremely undesirable. Hostels were described as "scary" (Female young person, Edinburgh), as places where young people didn't "feel safe" (Female young person, Edinburgh), and as having overly restrictive rules:

"[At the hostel] I was just struggling with the people there. They were just arguing like, you're two minutes late in... I just didn't get along with the people there and they were aggressive."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"The [hostel] was a possible option for me if I didn't couch surf for a week, but... I would have rather stayed on the streets because when I went there, someone was getting taken out in the ambulance, overdosing and the windows were all smashed in and people were fighting outside, so I would have rather slept on the street for a week."

Male young person, Dundee

Similarly, B&B accommodation was seen as characterised by restrictive rules and a challenging 'mixed' environment:

"Where I was, in a B&B, you couldn't have a person in your room from even another room...I think there's always trouble and that in B&Bs because you're mixing it up with everybody, do you know what I mean? There's a lot of junkies in there, so it's bad. I always felt – well, I was all right, I just kept myself to myself sort of thing."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"They don't tell you what to do in the supported accommodation, but B&Bs, you have to be in by this time and you can't do that, you have to do this."

Female young person, Edinburgh

"I felt like if I was living in the hostel, because I suffer from really bad anxiety, it'd be too many people for me."

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

Hostels and B&Bs were thus seen to be potentially highly detrimental to young people's wellbeing, and for these reasons, young people unanimously expressed a preference for Supported Lodgings over these kinds of temporary accommodation. These quotes are illustrative of young people's reasoning and preferences in this area, and also suggest that the flexibility of placements in terms of the location of hosts' homes may be a particular advantage for some young people, especially where alternative accommodation options are far away from urban centres:

"the host person, they've been safeguarded has been checked, whereas if they're in an adult lodging [hostel] they don't know who's living there, who's doing what, there's a lot more risks. At least if it's a young person hostel, they're around people their own ages. It's slightly less risky. If it's an adult hostel, you don't know who's staying there"

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

"It also depends actually what place I'm staying at. If I'm actually in a B&B, obviously they have rules, and I would prefer staying at that Supported Lodging place compared to there because I wouldn't like the restrictions... if it's close to town, that would be good. If I were staying away, like far, far away, and then I found out about this and it was near a town, maybe that would be another option."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"If I had the option, I'd rather come here [young peoples supported accommodation], but if not, I'd rather go there [Supported Lodgings] than a hostel."

Female young person, Dundee

In addition to these views on the overall desirability of Supported Lodgings, discussions with young people also indicate a number of considerations that should be taken into account in the design and development of such schemes in Scotland. As emphasised in the existing practice literature and by the young people who had lived in Supported Lodgings placements, the nature of matching, introduction and move in processes were clearly key in ensuring that young people were comfortable. More gradual and phased introductions (where possible), that gave hosts and young people choices around placements in light of relevant information, were seen to be highly desirable:

"if I were to see a picture of them, I need to see a picture [of] who I'm staying with, or a description...Like their hobbies and what they like and what they don't like, that'll be better."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"I feel like you would need to spend a night at theirs first and see how the whole day goes through and then from there, you'll have a better image of what they're like in the house... You could get to know their routine a tiny bit as well, so you'd feel more comfortable...and then you could go away and think about it and then you'd really know then...Yes, that would be the only way that I would potentially maybe go down that route. If I properly knew them and had some time."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"If it's a younger individual and they're going into a family, you'd have to have made sure that everyone in the family's also okay, and make sure no one changes their mind halfway through, make sure everyone's happy with the situation before it's actually committed. I also worry about, maybe a young person going into the host and then the host, possibly, changing their mind ... It would be quite affecting to young person... I think establishing this is definitely what both people want and a bit of security for both parties before it starts."

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

This theme of rejection also emerged in relation to specific issues, like young people's sexuality. One participant highlighted the enormous importance of assuring that young LGBT people were moved into supportive placements where hosts were aware and entirely comfortable with their sexual orientation, rather than *"from one non-supportive situation to another"* (Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway).

Young people had somewhat differing opinions on the idea of 'house rules' within placements. Some felt that such rules were necessary, and of benefit to the young person as well as the host, and emphasised the importance of *"good communication"* (Female young person, Edinburgh) between the host and young person in managing those rules and living together in practice. Another was uncomfortable with the idea of *"somebody telling us what to do... the thought of, 'My*

*house, my rules, 'type thing'* (Female young person, Dundee) and was therefore not keen on Supported Lodgings as an accommodation option. For many young people, the key thing was that – reflecting young people's status as adults – placements were negotiated on the basis of equality and respect, and not as a surrogate parent-type of arrangement, with implications for how house rules, standards and support would be negotiated:

"if you established early on what kind of relationship it would be, I guess. If you establish it would be a roommate kind of situation you were going into, then I'd feel a bit more comfortable... establish that they're both on the same level, both adult-level, I guess, one supporting the other, not one parenting the other, I'd say."

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

"I wouldn't want someone trying to be a parent model. I can't do parents at all."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"I think everyone wants support, but it's more that you don't want them coming to you. It's more, when I need it. If I need it, I'll come to you. That's more... If you want your own space, you don't want to have to think, are they going to come up? Are they going to come up? Are they going to ask me? You just want to be, 'Okay, I need this, so I'll go ask them.'"

Male young person, Dundee

Nevertheless, many young people saw the potential benefits of having a host available to offer particular kinds of support:

"It sounds like a good set up... You've got people that actually care and want to help these people and things like that... there could always be someone, as a host, that could actually get them on the straight and narrow and help them out and stuff. It would be nice for that person – the young person to turn to them for advice and that, if they wanted it. It would be nice that way."

Female young person, Edinburgh

"Everyone needs support with some things. There's no-one perfect at everything, so just to have someone..."

Male young person, Dundee

A key theme threading through their comments in this area was that young people have different needs and are at different stages in the transition to adulthood, and that living arrangements and the host's role and attitude need to reflect those differences flexibly. It was clear from young people's comments that balancing the support role with giving young people the space to make their own decisions (and perhaps mistakes) would be a key part of any host's role, and one facilitated by good relationships, communication and matches between hosts and young people:

"I think it depends on how well you react with a family. If you get on really well with them, you maybe won't have your barriers up so much and be willing to let them help you with things, but if you didn't really get on with them, you wouldn't want them to be in your business, that sort of thing."

Male young person, Edinburgh

"If you can't deal with things by yourself then I'd say that [host support] would help, but if you're capable of doing anything normal, then that's going to be a struggle, people at your door all the time."

Male young person, Dundee

"It depends on the person... I think the support they need would depend on the person and the host, I guess."

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

Other comments made by young people included that while it was appropriate for some kinds of support to be provided by the host (e.g. *"Social skills, and daily skills with making food and that"*, Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway), others – for instance support with mental health problems – should be responded to professionally by experts.

Young people had differing views on the legitimacy of being expected to pay 'digs' money to hosts. While many viewed it as a way to develop important skills around budgeting, and fair if the young person was using the hosts supplies (food, toiletries etc.), others thought it cut against the idea that hosts were 'voluntarily' helping young people who were struggling:

"if you start getting used to paying at least a bit of money it prepares you for bigger bills and paying your way, I guess, having to support yourself. I think, it would be good. Plus, I don't think the host should have to pay for everything. I know they'll get a bit of help with the money and that, but essentially, they will need some money from the young person as well."

Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway

"Do the people volunteer? Do they volunteer to do it? Do they go, 'I'll have these people staying at my house because I know they're struggling?' Then that should be the point. If they're volunteering to help people..."

Male young person, Dundee

It was clear that for many young people, not having enough money to pay their 'digs' was seen as likely given their low income, and having to talk to hosts about this was a source of anxiety:

"If I didn't have money, I would struggle to pay this stuff because I wouldn't even be able to support myself in any way...if they ask me why I'm late... I'd probably feel awkward...or I don't have a job or something like this. If they ask me, I will find it awkward."



Female young person, Edinburgh

"it's possibly the harder of things to do, talk about money when you don't have it. It's like really... You do want to shut yourself in and just be like, you know... It probably wouldn't be easy... you wouldn't know how the host would react to that. If you knew them very well, then, it would be easier, but if you're not sure how he's going to react, that's always the fear, I think."

Male young person, Dumfries and Galloway

Another young person took a different view, and was concerned that young people might 'take advantage' of the host, spending their money on things they didn't need, and thus saw the role of the scheme in ensuring that young people did pay as important: *"I think it would make the young person responsible, they have no choice but to give the money, the third party is aware of what they're giving. Then, it forces the young person not to take advantage of the situation"* (Female young person, Dumfries and Galloway). These varying views on 'digs' contributions support the cautious conclusion reached in chapter 3 (and by Sewel, 2016) that they may form a useful component of Supported Lodgings provision in helping young people to budget, notwithstanding the challenges young people may face given their often low income via social work allowances, benefits and/or paid employment.

Of high importance to young people were arrangements for how they moved on from Supported Lodgings placements, and the provision of support to do so. It was important to them that there was flexibility over when they moved on, with placements of between six months and two years seen to be around the right range:

"I think if there should be an option there, the person can say, 'Look, I'm not where I need to be yet, and can I have maybe a couple more months?'... making sure that they are ready to move on afterwards. If there's no extra support there to help them to get ready for that change afterwards, then, they'll just be back to where they were before"

Male young person, Dumfries and Galloway

Young people had different orientations in thinking about moving on from placements: for instance, while one young person highlighted that moving on having 'made a connection' with the host family *"would just be sad"* (Female young person, Edinburgh), another young man focused more on the instrumental benefit of a successful placement in terms of providing a reference to future landlords: *"if you've got a proven past of living with other people, getting along for x amount of time, someone can be a lot more willing to actually rent out the place"* (Male young person, Dundee).

Overall, focus group discussions with young people reveal a range of different attitudes to Supported Lodgings. Some young people have a clear preference for independent accommodation, and conceive of Supported Lodgings as an undesirable alternative or 'step back'. Even vulnerable young people with support needs may well be able to sustain an independent tenancy with the appropriate floating support provided. Other young people, however, have a clear desire to live in some kind of supported accommodation, and see different advantages and disadvantages to Supported Lodgings versus more traditional supported accommodation projects. Whereas some felt that living in a host's home would be weird or awkward, others felt that it offered a stepping-stone, and less intimidating environment than living with lots of other young people. What is abundantly clear is that Supported Lodgings represents a far preferable alternative for all young people than hostel and B&B accommodation.

## 4.5 Potential Host Perspectives

Individuals with a spare room and an interest in supporting young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness were invited to take part in focus groups and interviews to discuss the scheme in our three local authority areas of focus: Edinburgh (10 participants), Dundee (3) and Dumfries and Galloway (2). These participants therefore tended not to know how schemes work in detail prior to participating in these discussions. How schemes work was explained during the focus groups, but the findings here still reflect the initial reactions of our 15 participants.

As described in chapter 1, a significant proportion of those who came forward to participate in these discussions had some background either working or volunteering in youth, homelessness, care or other related provision, for instance as a respite foster carer, Shared Lives carer, Nightstop host or support worker. By and large, this involvement seemed to predispose householders positively towards being involved in schemes, with the exception of 'new recruits' to Nightstop, who seemed to see Supported Lodgings as a very large commitment compared to what they had signed up for, often one they were not willing to consider pursuing until they had more experience, or their circumstances (high pressure work, travelling, having visitors often, having caring responsibilities) changed. That being said, a number of Nightstop hosts who participated in focus groups felt that meeting a young person via Nightstop and getting on with them well might be a natural and comfortable 'route in' to hosting them longer term. This suggests that any schemes developed in Scotland in the future might usefully focus their host recruitment efforts on those with some experience working or volunteering in these areas, and that dividends may accrue where Supported Lodgings and Nightstop schemes are run in tandem.

Altruistic intentions threaded through householders' explanation of their willingness to consider becoming a host, albeit that many were also clear that they felt it would be personally rewarding. Interest often reflected people's experience of bringing up their own children, supporting their children's friends, or being aware of the challenges young people face in the transition to adulthood for other reasons:

"we had a young person who was kicked out of her house, a friend of my daughter's and we took her in and she stayed with us for about three months. I guess that was a big eye-opener for us and a steep learning curve and just made us realise how difficult it is for young people, if things don't work out for them in their home lives."

Female householder, Edinburgh

"we want to help people who are disadvantaged... We would want to help others as we would wish for others to help our daughter if she was in difficult straits and us not being around"

Male householder, Edinburgh

"One of my friends went down the drug route and is now sadly, no longer with us and this is all to do with getting put out the home, not finding any place to stay and going down the wrong path and that's it. There was nothing then and I don't see a lot's changed... so yes, I think it's very much needed and would be valuable"

Female householder, Dundee

"I think it's about just giving someone enough support to be able to sort of find their own way... when you're sort of 16, 18, 19... it shouldn't be such a big, jarring thing; it would be a more of a gentle transition, and one that sort of goes at the speed that suits the individual, and I think something like this would give more people that opportunity."

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway)

Many potential host householders focused on the positive outcomes they felt Supported Lodgings could achieve, by providing young people with *"a supportive family setting"* (Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway), *"a good base"* where they can *"feel safe [so] then they can progress on to other things, to studying, to feeling internally better, a sense of belonging"* (Female householder, Dundee). Because of these perceived positive outcomes, some participants emphasised that being involved could be very rewarding personally:

"I like that age group, I like that bit of sharing life with someone who's at a difficult stage where you can kind of quite gently help see them through it, hopefully. I like this preventative aspect to it; that it can help prevent a whole load of awful things which can land on people's heads"

Female householder, Edinburgh

"I think it's just going to be able to see the young people moving on and being successful."

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

Some single and often older householders emphasised their ability to help, in terms of time, and having a spare room (which some people expressed a degree of guilt about), with several seeing Supported Lodgings as potentially particularly appropriate and rewarding for 'empty nesters' whose own children had left home:

"I've got the space at the moment. It doesn't seem right one person living in a big house and I do like having that at the moment. I may not stay for that much longer; I don't know, but I would like to share that space with somebody who would be able to take advantage of it"

Female householder, Edinburgh

"I think for some people, they may be empty nesters. They've probably got spare rooms... they're living in what feels like an empty house because their family have... left now because they're all grown up... They want to be able to do something to help, and to be able to do it in your own home is a nice easy way of doing that."

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

The perceived advantages of Supported Lodgings compared to other forms of temporary accommodation was also emphasised by participants as a motivation underlying their interest. Specific concerns included negative influences and/or the poor quality of accommodation in adult

hostels or B&Bs, as well as the isolation young people could experience in independent tenancies, and the destitution they could experience given their very low income in such accommodation. By comparison, Supported Lodgings was seen to potentially offer a “*safe nurturing environment*” (Female householder, Dundee). These kinds of concerns were particularly strongly articulated in the Dundee focus group, which may reflect the distinct challenges associated with the city’s heavy reliance on what’s seen as poor quality hostel provision (Littlewood et al, 2017), combined with the fact that all Dundee focus group participants had some awareness or experience of local homelessness provision:

“I’ve also seen the inside of some of the B&B accommodation which people can end up in and it’s not a pretty sight.”

Female householder, Edinburgh

“I think it’d [Supported Lodgings] be a lot better than the temporary accommodation that is out there and available for young people, sat in flats with cold walls and nobody really checking up on them, nobody to give them advice. Yes, there’s workers around but the workers are usually nine until five, whereas I think in Supported Lodgings, relationships would build and people would be there 24/7”

Female householder, Dundee

“it’s a much positive move than the temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation comes with unemployment, benefits, encouragement to stay on benefits, because it’s an expensive route where I think in Supported Lodgings, you’ve got the encouragement to look at how people live and look at the other side of values of what people have and also, the positive-ness. A lot of these people are going to be working, a lot of these people are going to have higher education and that rubs off... it gives them more encouragement”

Female householder, Dundee

Considerable discussion in householder focus groups focused on the risk assessment and matching processes that would occur prior to any placement starting. A strong emphasis was placed on Supported Lodgings schemes undertaking a thorough assessment of risks on both sides. All householders involved in the focus groups were comfortable with undergoing safeguarding checks, but by the same token wanted assurance that they were safe in their own home and knew what to expect with the young people that came to stay. This did not necessarily mean householders were unwilling to accommodate and support young people with, for example, mental health problems, histories of challenging behaviour or even criminal activity (views differed here, see below), but they did expect to have been made aware of any such issues, behaviours and associated risks:

“everyone needs to have a clear idea of what the expectations are, and if you’ve got someone that’s come in who’s had a troubled history, then you need some of the information relating to that... [to] have an idea of what level of support they’re going to need.”

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

“my willingness to have a young person in my home is partly based upon the fact that I know that there is quite a thorough risk assessment... There's always a risk with anybody you allow into your home, but I have enough of a degree of confidence in the risk assessment that it's not something that keeps me awake when I've got somebody staying with me.”

Female householder, Edinburgh

“if there was previous for violence or say, anything like that. You would want to know that you're safe and the rest of your family are safe... I think you'd need to know these things because you don't want to... put your own family at risk”

Female householder, Dundee

Householders also placed a great deal of importance on the matching process undertaken by the Supported Lodgings scheme. Several described living with someone else as an ‘intimate’ thing, the success of which they thought depended on an appropriate match. What was seen to constitute a good match included a range of things accorded more or less weight by different participants, including likes and dislikes, personalities, faith and other cultural factors, eating habits (e.g. strict vegetarianism), and having had similar experiences to the young people they were helping, and the young person’s level of support needs:

“I think that matching process at the start would be really, really important to make sure that the fit was right to begin with”

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

“it's a very intimate thing to have somebody living in your house for that long.... Even with all the best intentions on both sides and even with a young person who has no serious issues at all, it could be a complete clash of personalities.”

Female householder, Edinburgh

“the matching thing, the consideration of the young person, who they are, what's their likes, dislikes, to who the host is and then you've got religions, which could be a big thing... that could [cause] some conflicts.”

Female householder, Dundee

“somebody who has been through the same experience could maybe help them.... They've been through the same, they've been through maybe worse and they've managed it, so there's encouragement or hope.”

Female householder, Dundee

"I think another fear I would have is maybe about that matching process... you do get the youngsters who are going on to college, university, they're very bright, they're ambitious; easy-peasy, nothing to it. There are some very, very needy people who need much more support. You'd feel much more concerned about their future down the other end of the scale. The scale is huge."

Female householder, Edinburgh

There was general support for matching and introductions to take place over two or three meetings where possible, so young people could *"get the feeling of the house"* (Female householder, Dundee) and hosts could also have time to reflect on whether the set up would work. 'Tester' visits, of potentially a night or over a weekend, were seen to be desirable if possible. Several householders expressed anxieties about a scenario in which they 'rejected' the young person at some point along this introductory process. This reflected a sense that it would be *"difficult to say no"* (Male householder, Edinburgh), particularly where that process had progressed over a number of meetings or weeks, and fears about the impact this might have on the young person: *"For people who've been rejected so often already... what would happen if I was to be yet another person who'd rejected them?"* (Female householder, Edinburgh). These fears of feeling obliged to agree to a placement or guilty about pulling out of an arrangement having met the young person would therefore be usefully addressed by schemes during the induction and sign-up process.

Most householders were of the view that a few basic house rules, applied with some flexibility over time and depending on young people's circumstances would help facilitate positive placements:

"I think people need to know where they stand. I don't think it's appropriate to have a list of 20 house rules, but I think there probably needs to be just a few basic rules. For example... no smoking in my house would be probably number one... I'm not talking about being overly restrictive because we're talking about people who you're mentoring to be adults in the world, so you don't want to treat people like children."

Female householder, Edinburgh

I think you would allow some scope... you've got to have a wee bit of come and go with them (Female householder, Dundee)

"I think ... that you would start pretty cut and dried, black or white; no grey. Then there'd be room for the grey to seep in once everybody had learned to live with each other and learn how each other worked."

Female householder, Edinburgh

Two householders involved in the research were clear that they had very rigid preferences in some areas, one in relation to their vegetarianism (they would not want young people to cook or eat meat in the house) and the other in relation to alcohol (they would not want any alcohol in the house). Such factors would need to be taken fully into account prior to any placement starting. The idea of having both guidance and support from the agency running the scheme in setting and negotiating house rules was reassuring to householders. While some felt they'd want to try and deal with any conflicts over rules themselves, there was a clear view that having support staff available to help mediate would be helpful and valued.

The theme that seemed to be most important to potential host householders across the focus groups was the nature of support available to the host and young person under schemes. The



provision of adequate support was seen to be key not only to how placements went, but also to recruiting hosts in the first place, as these more and less optimistic contributions illustrate:

"I think there's a lot of people who would be interested [in becoming a host].... I think there is an appetite to be able to help ... I think it will depend on the sort of support that's available for people once they do that... so that if they do have any problems, they've got somewhere to go... that's going to be a big pull and help the people who might be hesitating."

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

"I believe that the number of young people you could house and help in this scheme would be small... perhaps very small.... I don't believe that the numbers of people willing to become hosts will be significant... The average person who could offer a home would need a great deal of convincing and promised back up before they would get involved."

Female householder, Edinburgh

All householders who participated in focus groups were comfortable with the idea of providing practical support with basic life skills (cooking, budgeting and doing household chores) to young people who came to live with them. Indeed, this tended to be seen as a natural and inevitable feature of living with a young person. On issues seen to involve more expertise – ranging from issues accessing and claiming benefits, to mental health needs – there was emphasis on the need for both training for the host and (crucially) external support being available to the young person:

"I don't think the host should be expected to be experts in all those areas... the organisation... the support worker should be signposting that young person and supporting them to do all of that... you just end up spreading yourself too thinly and feeling that you're Jack-of-all-trades and master of none."

Female householder, Edinburgh

"if I was expected to give them any support with applying for things [e.g. benefits] then I want training first in how the system works here because I wouldn't know that myself... stuff like... emotional issues or substance abuse issues then I would absolutely need training because that's certainly not, I'm not a counsellor or anything close to it"

Female householder, Edinburgh

"I would want... training... to help me think through these kinds of issues and how you might deal with scenarios before they actually came to be something you'd have to worry about. Especially if the person had specific requirements... issues that aren't usually what comes to your door.... a mental health issue... I don't know what it might be, but some help in understanding what they're going through and what we can do to help; all that kind of thing. I would appreciate that to come up in the training."

Female householder, Edinburgh

Several householders made the point that being a host should be framed as a 'professional' rather than 'parental' role from the start, to ensure that the young person felt that they were *"actually moving into adulthood and [not] just being treated as a child in another home"* (Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway):

"I think we need to encourage hosts to see themselves as a professional supporter, whatever title you would give them, rather than allow them to become a sort of mum and dad figure. I think that goes wrong... if you're getting paid to do something, even if it is... just a room and you're reminding them to get up on time, and do their washing, and all the rest of it; even if it's that, you still should recognise it as you're being paid to do something, and that you need to recognise the boundaries between being friendly and open and warm, and inviting, and kind, and supportive, and recognising that there's a line that you can't cross as a host; that you shouldn't cross."

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

One participant in an Edinburgh focus group recognised this general position, while also acknowledging the risk that they *would "mother them", "make them into a semi-adopted member of a family" and "turn them into a substitute for my empty nest, particularly if I really liked them"* (Female householder, Edinburgh). These perspectives underline the importance of setting clear boundaries and expectations of hosts appropriate role with young people prior to placements starting, and providing opportunities to reflect on how placements evolve over time, i.e. through the kind of 'supervisory' opportunities and host support described in chapter 2.

Host householders also emphasised the importance of adequate support in relation to young people moving on from the placement. This was a particular worry for three participants, one of whom felt that *"more needy or... less capable"* young people might *"find it immensely hard to move on"* (Female householder, Edinburgh). Others explained:

"For me it's the transition. I just worry about seeing them out the far end of it... I would very much hope that it had been quite well thought through... [that] there would be that support from the intermediary agency... to work with that young person through that transition period and out again... managing that bit out the far end is my biggest question mark over it"

Female householder, Edinburgh

Reassurance around the scheme's role in securing move-on options for young people at an appropriate point and with some kind of ongoing support might help allay potential hosts' concerns in this area.

The greatest concerns for potential host householders, however, was around the mental health needs of young people that might stay with them under a scheme, and specifically supporting young people who self-harm. Only a small number of householders expressed an unwillingness to accommodate and support such young people. Another small group had been involved in youth services and had some experiences of these kinds of challenges: *"[self-harm] wouldn't [put me off] because most of the young people I've worked with, they've all self-harmed, so that's nothing for us"* (Female householder, Dundee). The vast majority of householders, however, while not ruling out accommodating young people with mental health problems, were clear that they'd need to be assured of a high level of professional support – both for them, and the young person – in order to be willing to do so:

"[with] mental health issues... that support from the expert organisation behind me has got to be constant, 24/7 and close... I wouldn't say no to any of these quite severe problems like track record in mental health or evidence of self-harming or any of these things providing that I really, really knew the 24/7 was there... Genuinely there."

Female householder, Edinburgh

"there are some more serious mental health issues where... it wouldn't be the supporting party [host] that would be doing that and they wouldn't be necessarily showing you how to do deal with it, there would be actually, somebody that would be giving them mental health support."

Female Householder, Dundee female

"if you are going to go ahead with this and there is a possibility you are going to be placed with someone who has issues, and you have to be there for them on their best day and be there for them on a bad day. I just think that the support network needs to be so... There should be such a foundation in terms of training and advice offered to hosts, but also there needs to be an assurance on the other side of the fence for that young person to know that, 'Actually, I'm going into somebody's house here for six months to two years who is actually going to be able to help me.'"

Male householder, Edinburgh

A clearer 'red line' for some householders concerned living with a young person with a violent background or history of offending. Several single women participants expressed that they needed to feel safe and secure in their own home. Two participants suggested having a graded funding structure that recognised the greater burden on hosts supporting young people with higher support needs or more challenging behaviour.

Turning to the issue of remuneration, householders felt that the level of payments received by hosts should, on the one hand, not be too high, to avoid attracting people 'for the wrong reasons', but on the other, (at least) meet (all) the costs associated with being involved and not exclude lower income households from becoming hosts:

"The more you pay people, the more unsavoury elements that you're going to attract. If you don't pay people you're going to get the people who are doing this out of their own goodwill, [but] you're going to exclude the people who can't actually financially support this"

Male householder, Edinburgh

"I think probably it should cover the costs, and then probably be a little bit more because... it probably does cost a bit more than people initially think it's going to cost. I think if it's set too high you're going to attract people who want to do this for the money and not for the right reasons. "

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

Different participants emphasised different sides of this dilemma. One person expressed the 'extreme' view that hosts shouldn't receive any money but host in a voluntary capacity:

"under this scheme with things like financial payments and the young person contributing and things... it would take the edge off it... It opens it up to people who are only interested in the financial side of it. Regardless of whether or how much you vet people... It completely changes the nature of it... if you're going to do it, you're going to do it [because] you want to do it. You're going to throw your heart into it, kind of thing, not because there's a financial incentive. I think just as soon as you bring money into these things you change the complexity, the dynamic of it completely"

Male householder, Edinburgh

A much more common perspective, however, was that payments to hosts should cover or slightly more than cover costs, including costs like increased household bills and wear and tear, but not exceed that level to too great an extent:

"I think it should be based on the expenses. I think the aim should be... not out-of-pocket. It means I can provide the food and the electricity and what not that they need without worrying about how much it's costing me."

Female householder, Edinburgh

"If there's a financial gain, a big financial gain, I think that would be completely... [it would] change the whole – if you're covering your costs, that's fine"

Female householder, Dundee

"I'm not sure that market rent [for the young person's room] is the issue. I think... [for] the host family it should cover their costs."

Female householder, Edinburgh

Other participants took a slightly different emphasis, and wanted to see host payments pitched so as to enable lower income households to comfortably become hosts:

"an awful lot of people who are maybe not in a strong financial setting, as we are, who maybe have more skills and more time and are better equipped to deal with some of the more complex issues, but financial barriers exist in terms of running a home with an extra mouth to feed or bills to pay, etc. so... yes, it could be open to abuse. Anything could be... but I wouldn't say that that was a reason not to do something and not to offer that because as much as you could bring people in that can do it voluntarily and happy to do it voluntarily, forever and a day, you're potentially excluding people who could really provide a good home for people, but they just need a bit of financial support to do that."

Female householder, Edinburgh

"I am in a fortunate position. I'm working full-time, my mortgage is paid off, my children have left home, I'm not rich, but I'm permanently comfortably off, but I think it's a great shame of people who are not as comfortable as that don't get the chance to participate in this kind of thing if they wanted to."

Female householder, Edinburgh

One participant in Dumfries and Galloway seemed more open to the idea that higher payments to hosts could play a legitimate role in attracting people to schemes:

"if you want the right people, you've got to get the pricing of it right in terms of making it attractive in a way that they can actually see value in developing their skills and really investing their interest and their willingness into it"

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

Householders were also asked how they felt about young people themselves making a contribution to household bills. There were mixed views about this. One man quoted above was opposed to any money changing hands, including in this way. Others thought it provided a good way for young people to get used to budgeting and managing money. Others still had no opposition to a young people making a contribution, but didn't want to have to manage and negotiate receiving those payments themselves:

"I'd almost like to have seen something where there is a basic rent for the room and then the young person somehow has to pay towards the bills, so that they're actually learning how to budget as they're going along... getting an idea of what that's actually going to be like when they actually go out and have to do it themselves in the outside world"

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

"the best natured people who've chosen to live together still fall out over who's turn it is to buy the toilet roll. I'd rather almost encourage them to use service that's there so this is inclusive.... it would just be great to be able to use the agency as an intermediary and that the money goes direct to them rather than to the host."

Female householder, Edinburgh

"I would feel uncomfortable [asking for 'digs']...it would have to be [agreed] at the beginning in the contract"

Female householder, Dundee

Also relevant to the discussion of remuneration is that only in the course of discussion did some participants come to realise the full cost implications of hosting a young person, including: losing the single person's Council Tax discount; the cost of WiFi internet access or a Television licence for those that didn't already have these; the increase in food and household bills; and increases in insurance premium. On the latter issue of insurance premiums, the most common view was that a slight increase in premiums *"wouldn't be a barrier"* (Female householder, Edinburgh) to becoming a

host, but more sizeable increases (£100 or more per year) might be. In such cases, it was suggested that the uplift be covered by the scheme.

That money received for being a host needed to be declared for tax purposes was an area that householders thought might be a barrier for recruiting hosts, albeit that some were less phased than others about the idea of completing a tax return. It was clear that they'd welcome help and guidance from the scheme provider agency in this area. A potentially greater barrier, however, was identified with respect to potential host households in receipt of benefits: though none of our participants reported being in this situation themselves, they acknowledged that the complexity and unresponsive nature of various kinds of social security benefit might provide a considerable barrier to participation. Ensuring that schemes had 'worked out in advance' how benefit income would be affected was identified as one means of trying to mitigate this risk.

"if somebody was unemployed and on benefits, but still wanted to be a host, how would any money that they received affect any benefits that they got?... when I [worked in Kinship Care]... It was by no means straightforward... Even those people that were on the other end of the phone, the so-called experts didn't really know.... nobody knew if it was a taxable income.... I think that's something that it's probably worth trying to work out in advance instead of retrospectively"

Female householder, Dumfries and Galloway

"for some people that cannot work for whatever reason... benefits is their only means of income and then, this is going to affect it. I think that would really put a lot of people off."

Female householder, Dundee

## 4.6 Conclusion

There was a very high degree of support among sector experts for bringing Supported Lodgings to Scotland as an accommodation model for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Positivity about the potential role of the model in Scotland reflected a number of factors: its perceived and considerable advantages compared to alternative accommodation options, which are seen to be often unsuitable and even harmful; the unique components of Supported Lodgings, namely its non-institutional, home-like and family-based design seen to offer personalised and flexible support; the potential of this set-up to facilitate and enable a range of positive outcomes for young people spanning mental health and wellbeing, life-skills, education and employment; and its potential contribution to local authorities' corporate priorities and strategic objectives, not least to offer accommodation that is more affordable than alternatives (particularly B&B accommodation, but also hostels and supported accommodation) to both the young person and the local authority.

That being said, key informants identified a series of barriers and challenges associated with the potential introduction and growth of Supported Lodgings in Scotland, pertaining to: how such provision would sit alongside the existing legislative framework on homelessness; cultural and attitudinal barriers among both young people and those working in the homelessness sector; and – most crucially – the availability of funding to set-up schemes and fund them on an ongoing basis. All these barriers were seen to be at least potentially surmountable, via Scottish Government and Scottish Housing Regulator clarification about the 'place' of Supported Lodgings within local authorities' homeless duties; awareness raising and information campaigns targeting key audiences; and the commitment of 'pump-priming' funds from Scottish Government to pilot Supported Lodgings, demonstrate proof of concept and negotiate access to more secure funding



streams. This final funding challenge was acknowledged to be particularly onerous in the context of austerity and reduced local authority budgets, as well as at a time when supported accommodation funding is expected to be radically reformed (DCLG/DWP, 2017). Some sector experts felt, however, that Supported Lodgings represented a means of responding to these challenges, rather than as prevented by them.

Young people had mixed views on Supported Lodgings. The largest proportion of young people we spoke to had mixed feelings about this accommodation option, not necessarily seeing it as a choice they would make now, but viewing it as an option they may have considered in the past, or as particularly well-suited to some specific groups of young people. Another group were strongly predisposed against the idea of Supported Lodgings, seeing it as a potentially awkward and uncomfortable living situation, unwilling to return to a family environment, and sceptical about the motives of potential hosts. A third group saw Supported Lodgings as a highly desirable option, that they wish had been available when they were in housing need and were particularly positive about the offer of support available from hosts and the opportunity to develop skills and get used to managing household tasks before moving on. Though young people varied in whether their most preferred accommodation option was an independent tenancy, supported accommodation, or Supported Lodgings, all were of the strong view that Supported Lodgings provided a *far* better alternative accommodation option than hostels or B&Bs, which were viewed with fear and trepidation. This indicates that Supported Lodgings could play a particularly important role in areas heavily reliant on such forms of temporary accommodation. These findings give only limited support to some key informants' fears that there would not be demand for Supported Lodgings among young people. Increased familiarity with the option and careful management of schemes in line with young people's preferences and anxieties may well increase the modest appetite for Supported Lodgings identified here.

Our discussions with potential host householders in three areas of Scotland suggests that there is a pool of individuals with spare rooms who are strongly motivated to help young people by providing accommodation and support, and who were not put off by discussions about the practicalities of such schemes and support needs of young people that might be placed with them. Discussions did reveal a number of factors that would need to be addressed in the design and delivery of Supported Lodgings to ensure the successful recruitment and on-going involvement of hosts, namely: the provision of clear information about what being a host involves prior to sign-up; risk assessment and information sharing regarding the support needs and histories of young people referred to hosts; adequate training and support to hosts on an on-going basis, with a particular focus on equipping hosts to deal with mental health issues; and fair remuneration that covers the costs of being a host (including 'less visible' costs) and that does not disadvantage lower income households from participating, but avoids attracting people simply seeking financial gain. The findings discussed here provide cautious optimism that a diverse pool of hosts could be recruited by Scottish Supported Lodgings schemes, and suggest that targeting households with some prior involvement or commitment to the broad set of issues relating to youth development and homelessness might pay dividends.



## 5. Conclusion

Supported Lodgings is an established model of supported accommodation for young people. It is used successfully and extensively across the UK for care leavers, in some parts of the UK as a response to youth homelessness, and also forms part of provision for these groups in the USA and Canada. It is one example of wider enthusiasm for and growth in 'community hosting' as a housing solution for a variety of groups. Despite this, Supported Lodgings has not been developed in Scotland as a significant element of the response to youth homelessness. This report suggests that a strong case can be made for Supported Lodgings to play such a role in the future.

While the specific design and management of different Supported Lodgings schemes varies, they hold in common the provision of accommodation and support to young people by exploiting community assets (spare rooms and altruism), and blending these assets with established services. This set-up enables young people to live in a safe and secure environment, from which they can progress towards a range of outcomes, spanning self-confidence and self-belief, a sense of belonging and connectedness, life skills and household management, education, employment and training, and access to appropriate move-on accommodation. The small but growing evidence base on Supported Lodgings (to which this study further contributes) indicates that they are effective in achieving these outcomes – and achieving them to a greater extent than other accommodation and support options available to young people.

Some of the distinct advantages of the Supported Lodgings model are that it: offers a means for young people to avoid the risks and harms associated with other kinds of congregate accommodation for homeless people; avoids the risk of isolation, loneliness and tenancy breakdown that some young people can experience if they move into independent housing 'too early' or with insufficient support made available to them; and provides an environment in which young people can 'absorb' independent living and other skills informally, simply by living in an 'ordinary' home with a 'normal' householder and their family, as well as by receiving more formal supports. The analysis of Supported Lodgings schemes presented here suggests that if managed well, they lend themselves to the provision of personalised, flexible, robust and asset-based support.

The findings of this study provide strong support for the development and growth of Supported Lodgings schemes targeting young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Scotland for four key reasons. First, **there is a problem to be solved**. Existing accommodation options for young people at risk of homelessness are inadequate. Despite improvements in recent years, too many young people are still accommodated in B&B accommodation at some point in their 'homelessness journey', an experience they find isolating and intimidating. A significant proportion continue to be accommodated in 'hostel' accommodation, and while some of this is likely to be small scale supported accommodation for young people, some of it is in all-age adults hostels, which a litany of evidence – including this study – describes as not just poor quality, but potentially harmful, especially for young people. Moreover, for some young people, an independent tenancy is not their first choice of housing, because they do not feel ready to live independently and in some cases, have moved into such housing and not sustained it. While more and better provision of floating support may be the solution for some of these young people, Supported Lodgings provides an additional and unique option that young people and sector experts agree has a potentially valuable role to play.

Second, **Supported Lodgings is a tried and tested model**, not a risky innovation. Supported Lodgings schemes are in operation across the UK (and further afield) and a great

deal of expertise and experience is available to help support the extension of the model into new geographies and for other groups. This community of practice, and the available research and practice literature cited throughout this report, tell a clear story about the ingredients of success required for Supported Lodgings to be successful, for provider organisations, hosts, and most importantly, young people. These include the recruitment of a diverse pool of hosts; robust risk assessment (of both hosts and young people) and information sharing; rigorous and gradual matching and introduction processes; ongoing training and support for hosts, especially on mental health issues, including 'peer support', and with 'on call' support available 24/7; good communication between hosts, young people and support workers; opportunities to review and reflect on placements as they progress; fair funding to hosts (with higher rates paid to hosts accommodating young people with higher support needs); secure and sufficient funding to provider agencies, particularly to cover staffing and infrastructure costs; affordable accommodation costs for young people that don't create a poverty trap and work disincentives; and forward planning to support and accommodate young people post-placement.

Third, there is **strong sector support** for Supported Lodgings in Scotland – among voluntary sector youth homelessness providers, local authority commissioners and housing/homelessness team managers, and national level experts in homelessness – as demonstrated in this report. Key informant opinions ranged from those who were already strongly supportive of developing Supported Lodgings in Scotland to address youth homelessness related challenges, to those who were more sceptical but either saw the model as well worth exploring, or in several cases substantially warmed to the idea when familiarised with the model. The possibility that Supported Lodgings would offer a workable alternative to Bed and Breakfast accommodation was a particularly welcome consideration for commissioners, so too that it might offer a more affordable alternative to both Bed and Breakfast, hostel and existing supported accommodation.

Fourth, the pursuit of Supported Lodgings is **in line with the current direction of policy development** in several ways. Considerable efforts are now being made to transform temporary accommodation and end homelessness in Scotland. Effectively preventing and resolving youth homelessness – and in ways that ensure that today's young people do not become the homeless adults of tomorrow – should be a central component of these efforts. Policy attention is increasingly turning to Housing First and Rapid Rehousing as core components of a new approach to homelessness in Scotland, but while the evidence base for this shift is indisputable for homeless adults with complex needs, it is less clear in relation to young people. Supported Lodgings – in its offer of non-institutional accommodation in 'ordinary' home environments – goes with the grain of these models, while also offering to cater for the age, stage and preferences of some young people. Another development that makes the advance of Supported Lodgings in Scotland particularly timely is the anticipated changes to how temporary and supported accommodation will be funded in the future. This provides further impetus to a reconsideration of 'what works' and 'what is cost-effective' in terms of accommodation options for young people experiencing homelessness.

If this case for the expansion of Supported Lodgings is accepted, the following recommendations targeted at a range of key players provide means of pursuing this objective.

Building on community hosting recommendations made by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group and already accepted in principle, Scottish Government and the Housing Minister should **recognise and promote the status of Supported Lodgings as a tried and tested form of supported accommodation provision** that has the potential to significantly enhance options for disadvantaged young people and facilitate a reduction in the use of unsuitable temporary accommodation.

Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator should seek to **clarify where Supported Lodgings ‘fits’ within the statutory homelessness framework and local authorities’ duties to homeless households**. Any future reform of Scotland’s legal framework on homelessness should be cognizant of the potential positive role Supported Lodgings could play as a response to youth homelessness.

**Future announcements of changes to supported accommodation funding – by the UK or Scottish Government – should include attention to Supported Lodgings as an important element of supported accommodation provision.** Such guidance and reforms should seek to protect the flexibility of Supported Lodgings provision, enabling scheme providers to access appropriate levels of funding for the service they provide and client groups they serve.

In line with Scottish Government’s current ambition to end homelessness and transform temporary accommodation, **funds should be made available for local authorities and voluntary sector partners to pilot Supported Lodgings schemes**. This funding should be of a sufficient level to cover the initial infrastructure and set-up costs of a new Supported Lodgings scheme, potentially in partnership with willing local authorities, and give those pursuing pilots the time to build a critical mass of host householders, demonstrate and evidence the effectiveness of the model, and secure future funding mechanisms. Further consideration should be given to **supporting the development of national guidance and resources advising local authorities on Supported Lodgings** and providing opportunities for practice exchange and capacity building in this area.

**Philanthropic and grant funding organisations should consider providing support for the development and testing of Supported Lodgings schemes** in Scotland, including via the provision of funds to robustly evaluate their long-term outcomes in comparison to other accommodation and support options for this group.

**Youth homelessness organisations should seek to develop Supported Lodgings schemes to complement wider services**, and in particular consider the extension of Nightstop schemes to include offers of longer-term accommodation for young people and of care-leaver focused Supported Lodgings schemes to the youth homeless population. These organisations’ branding, reputation and existing community networks provide a base from which to communicate with the general public about the value of community hosting and Supported Lodgings, and connect with potential hosts.

**Housing association, local authority and private landlords, and mortgage lenders, should be encouraged and enabled to allow and support their tenants and mortgagees to take up opportunities to become Supported Lodgings hosts.** There may be a particular opportunity here for social rented landlords to encourage tenants currently under-occupying their homes to consider using their spare rooms in this way.

The general public’s appetite to help tackle homelessness has seemed to grow exponentially in recent years. **Individuals and households should consider – and be encouraged to consider – offering a spare room as part of a community hosting scheme as an important and evidence-informed way to reduce and prevent homelessness.** The UK and Scottish Government may wish to consider how they can **support and incentivise householders to take up community hosting opportunities**, for instance via income or council tax exemptions or reductions.



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