



ASPIRE GUARDIANS

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# Host Family

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## HANDBOOK



*Aspiring for Excellence, Guiding with Care*

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## Welcome to Aspire Guardians

Thank you for your interest in becoming a host family for Aspire Guardians. The role of the host family plays a vital part in the successful running of our business of supporting our international boarding students and our working relationship is very important to us.

This handbook is designed to explain the work that we do and to set out your responsibilities as an Aspire Host Family. We have many years of experience, both personally as an international boarder and with supporting overseas students. We share some of this knowledge with you so that you can be as prepared as possible to welcome Aspire Students into your family home.

We also want to emphasise that although we strive to be efficient and organised in our work, teenagers, as you are probably aware, can have a mind of their own and may change their plans at the last minute. We ask our host families to be flexible to support our students and be patient with us.

Although the host family role is a paid one, it is much more than that for us and our students. The right host family can truly make a difference in the experience a young person has while they are away from home and in the UK. We have many students who have become a part of the Aspire family and keep in touch year after year, even when they progress to university.

We hope you will find this handbook useful and we value any feedback you might have. As a rapidly growing guardianship company, feedback is crucial for us to ensure we are doing things to the best of our ability. If you have any comments on this handbook, or any suggestions for how we can improve our systems or procedures, please let us know by emailing [info@aspireguardians.com](mailto:info@aspireguardians.com) and using the subject 'Feedback'.

Becoming a host family for Aspire Guardians means that you are committed to safeguarding children. Our relationship is a working one, and if you sign our Host Family Contract, you are agreeing to collaborate with us, recognising that not everything always goes according to plan.


We appreciate your flexibility and assistance in presenting a united front with schools, students and parents.

Thank you for choosing to work with Aspire Guardians and for helping us provide care for our students.

### Contact Details

There will be times that you need to contact us. We are always here to assist you with any questions or concerns that you may have. You can contact Aspire in the following ways:

General enquiries	
<b>Telephone</b>	
UK Office hours (Mon - Fri - 9:00 - 17:00)	+44 7542 181 244
HK Office hours (Mon - Fri - 10:00 - 18:00, Sat by appointment only)	+852 5978 6678

Email	info@aspireguardians.com
Whatsapp UK	
Whatsapp HK	
<b>Emergencies 24/7</b>	
Telephone	UK +44 7542 181 244 HK +852 5978 6168
<b>Safeguarding concerns</b>	
Designated Safeguarding Lead Suki Thomas	UK +44 7542 181 244 sthomas@aspireguardians.com
Contact Details for the Local Safeguarding Partners (LSP): Bath & North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership	01225 396312 01225 396313
Contact Details for the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO): BCSSP	Emergency Duty Team on 01454 615165 <a href="mailto:LADO@bathnes.gov.uk">LADO@bathnes.gov.uk</a>

## What is an Educational Guardian?

The term 'guardian' differs from a 'legal guardian'. A legal guardian is someone who replaces a parent, whereas an Education Guardian is appointed by parents who attend a UK Boarding School and act in loco parentis while their children are in the UK without them. Schools, parents and students often get confused as to who is actually their guardian and will refer to the host family as their guardian.

You are their host family and although it is fine for them to refer to you as their guardian, technically and legally, Aspire Guardians is the guardian to the student. As a host family you do not have the ultimate responsibility for the student and are protected by our insurance and company infrastructure.

## The role of the guardianship organisation

Our job as educational guardians, or guardians involves supporting our students to prepare for their departure to a UK boarding school. We support our students before they have even left their home country and help them through the first few weeks of term. This support continues throughout their stay in the UK and at host families. We find host families for students that are required to leave school for any reason, particularly for weekend closures,

known as exeats or any holiday times. We ensure they travel safely around the UK using our trusted drivers; taxi firms or hosts, or on occasions, where permitted, on public transport.

### **Your role as a host family**

Aspire Guardians could not operate without you and we thank you for generously opening your homes to support our international students. We believe that time spent with a host family provides valuable benefits to our students. Firstly, it provides students with a home away from home and somewhere to relax outside of the school environment. Staying with a host family will also give them a cultural experience depending on where you're from. We ask our host families to treat their Aspire students as a part of the family, as if they were their own children.

### **Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS)**

Aspire will be responsible for paying the DBS fee of all individuals aged 16 years and above residing permanently at the family address and is valid for a maximum of three years. It is a requirement that families disclose to us any possible convictions which may post-date the completion of any DBS check related to the application to provide host family accommodation. Failure to do so may jeopardise an arrangement to host our students.

We recommend that once you have your DBS Certificate you register for 'The Update Service' which is an online subscription that allows you to keep your standard or enhanced DBS certificates up-to-date and also allows employers to check a certificate online. You are able to join the Update Service as soon as you have your application form reference number.

Otherwise, Aspire will need to run a new DBS check every three years to ensure the certificate is up to date..

Aspire will make every effort to match a student to the needs and interests of the host family, but cannot make decisions based on race, cultural identity, religious background or sexual orientation.

### **Looking after and respecting the rights of the student**

We host students aged between 13 to 18 years old. Students of different ages may require a different level of care and support. For example, younger students will require greater nurturing and supervision during their stay, whereas older students may be more independent and may be allowed to visit the local area on their own. Parental permissions may vary from student to student and these will be conveyed to you prior to their arrival. We will explain to you what we expect from you prior to placing any student with you for a seamless school to host experience.

One of the most mutually rewarding experiences of hosting an international student is learning about another culture. We ask that all host families respect the students' own culture, values and background and be mindful that there will be some differences in the way students approach everyday life, such as when greeting others or whilst eating. Likewise, the students may have different religious beliefs to the host family. Again, we ask that you are respectful of any differences.

## Loco Parentis

We expect our host families to exercise the same levels of care as a responsible parent – in loco parentis. This means that you are accepting the day-to-day responsibility for the care of the student whilst they are staying with you.

## Codes of conduct

Aspire Guardians has a code of conduct for staff and host families. Please take time to read through this document as it outlines how staff and host families are expected to behave whilst working for the guardianship organisation. If you have not received this along with the handbook, please let us know and we will send this to you.

Likewise we have a code of conduct for students. This outlines the expected standards of behaviour for our students. Please read through this as it will help you to understand our expectations. If you have not received this along with the handbook, please let us know and we will send this to you.

## Safeguarding

Aspire Guardians is committed to safeguarding and child protection. We have comprehensive policies on safeguarding, prevent and anti-radicalisation, low level concerns, complaints, anti-bullying, missing student, online safety, data protection that provide further information and outline our procedures. These can be found [here](#). Please ensure that you have read and understood all our policies. Should you have any questions about any of our policies,

You are required to undertake a basic certificate course on safeguarding. Aspire will share the details of this with you. This should be refreshed every three years. We will also provide an annual safeguarding update. This will be either during the annual visit or online.

We encourage students to talk to any trusted adult should they have any concerns. As a host family, a student may consider you to be a trusted adult. There may be students who feel more comfortable speaking to other host family members about a concern they may have. You should therefore ensure that all members of your household are aware of what to do if a concern is shared with them. We have explained to students that any concerns they raise will be treated seriously. If a student comes to you or any host family member to raise a concern, please ensure that it is dealt with in line with our published procedure (see safeguarding policy) and reported to our Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

## Control

Host families may only use reasonable, appropriate and lawful means of control to maintain safety. Under no circumstances should physical punishment ever be used.

## Homesickness

When students arrive in the UK, they might feel homesick.

Signs that they may be feeling homesick include:

- A strong desire to go home
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling sad

- Feeling anxious
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of confidence
- Feeling depressed
- Experiencing mood swings
- Feeling insecure
- Finding simple tasks difficult
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches and nausea

If your student is showing signs of homesickness, ask and listen to how they are feeling. Many of the students may not realise what they are feeling is homesickness.

Let them talk to you about their feelings, and remind them that they are not alone in their feelings and there are many people that can support them. They can always talk to their house parent, teacher, parent, guardian, or any member of guardian staff who will listen and will be able to support you and offer advice. It is best not to encourage them to frequently call home, as this can exacerbate their feeling of homesickness. Keeping the student busy and interested in a variety of family activities and discussions may help them settle and feel happier. Please do let us know if you are concerned that your student is suffering with homesickness. We are here to support both you and the student.

### **How to comfort a student in distress**

There may be occasions where your student is upset. For example, the student may be homesick (see above), unwell or experiencing pressure in their academic studies. In such instances, please do not comfort the student physically. It is inappropriate to hug a student as you may comfort your own child, however there are many things you can do to help:

- Listen to the student's concerns
- Offer comforting words and advice
- If you can speak the students' first language, this may help to calm the student
- Please do alert us to the problem and we will offer you support

### **Curfews and Bedtimes**

Students who have permission to go out on their own will be required to return to host families by the following times:

- Age 12 – 14; 18:00
- Age 14 – 16; 21:00
- Age 17 – 18; 22:00

We will inform you whether or not the student you are hosting has permission to go out alone. All students who are permitted to go out unaccompanied by their host family must take their mobile phone (fully charged) with them and keep this switched on. Please make sure that they have your telephone number programmed into their phone. It is important that if students do go out unaccompanied, that they let you know where they are going and roughly know how long they will be out. If for any reason they are delayed, students must contact you to keep you informed of their whereabouts.

Aspire suggests that student bedtimes should be as follows:

- Students under 14; 21:00
- Age 15 – 16; 21:30

- Age 17 – 18; 22:30

Any deviation to these times should be discussed with the host family.

### **Permission for students to visit the local area / travelling further afield**

Responsible students over the age of 15, with permission from parents may visit the local area alone or travel further afield. At all times, the students must take their mobile phone (fully charged) with them and keep this switched on and provide the host family with where they are going, who with and what time they anticipate to be home.

### **Students staying away from the host family**

On the odd occasion, students may be invited to stay with their friend, particularly for long holidays. Parent's permission must always be sought in writing in this instance through Aspire Guardians and that full details of the responsible parent has been provided. Host Families, Students and Parents can not make these decisions without Aspire being made aware of the arrangements. Aspire will then call the responsible adult to verify the information and IDs may be checked to ensure the safety of the student.

### **Accommodation requirements**

host families should ensure that they provide a comfortable living environment for students. We require our students to be provided with the following:

- A suitable bedroom and social area(s) which are well kept, clean and in good repair, with sufficient natural light.
- Suitable safeguards must be in place to ensure that students have sufficient privacy from other students. Parents should be made aware of students who may wish to share bedrooms and must give consent before the arrangement goes ahead.
- Where host families are using a double bed, only one student is using this facility. Under no circumstances should students share a double bed.
- The rooms should have suitable heating and lighting and there should be access to sufficient supplies of hot water as required.
- Students should have access to a private space to study.
- Students should have access to appropriate hanging and drawer space for clothing.
- Students should have access to a bathroom with a lock on the door and either a shower or bath.
- Students should be treated as part of the family, and therefore have access to the communal rooms in the home. They should not have access to family member's bedrooms.

Please make us aware if any member of the host family is a smoker, or if you have any pets. Students have the right to opt for a non-smoking and/or non-pet host family environment.

No more than three students should be placed with the same host family at any one time, unless in exceptional circumstances. Please ensure that you inform us if you work with other guardianship organisations as we need to check that you are not accommodating more than three students in total when members of an AEGIS guardianship organisation are being hosted.



When students under the age of 16 are in the care of a host family, no students over the age of 20 should be hosted either by the guardianship organisation or another guardianship organisation working within the same host family.

host families should not host any other paying guests or operate any form of bed and breakfast facility when hosting AEGIS students.

While there are no legal restrictions, host families are expected to adhere to NSPCC advice on adult supervision and ensure that:

- Students aged 12 and under are not left home alone for a long period of time.
- Students aged 16 and under are not left home alone overnight.
- Students are not left home alone regardless of their age if they do not feel comfortable with this.

### **Home insurance**

Please be aware of the need to ascertain the adequacy of your home insurance in respect of hosting international students. The insured (homeowner) should declare all facts to the insurer in order to a) obtain the right cover and b) obtain the right premium.

Breakages and damage do occur sometimes and Aspire's insurance does not cover the contents or possessions of our host families.

It is the responsibility of the host family to ensure that they have up to date and valid sufficient home contents and buildings insurance to cover any reasonable accidental damage that may occur during the student's stay. Normally it is sufficient for the host to inform insurers that the home is being used as a "guest house" and that the cover should be extended accordingly. This means that in the event of damage to the house or its contents the host can claim from the insurers who decide whether or not to try and recover its outlay from the negligent party.

Should any damage be caused by the student, please inform Aspire as soon as possible (not wait until after the student has departed). Please provide evidence of any damage so the issues can be resolved with students and parents as soon as possible.

### **Meals and Snacks**

We ask that host families provide students with a full board provision of breakfast, lunch and dinner during their stay, taking account of any dietary needs. In addition, students should be provided with access to suitable drinks and snacks during their stay. This might include tea, coffee, squash or juice and healthy snacks.

Please let us know if you would like more information on how best to cater for our students.

### **Laundry**

host families are asked to provide students with suitable laundry facilities for students staying for half term (or more than three nights). In most cases the host family would undertake to do the laundry for the student. Depending upon the age of the students, the host family may give permission for them to do their own laundry if requested and agreed.

Bedding should be changed every week and they should be provided with sufficient blankets and a duvet to keep them warm.

## Use of the host family's car for transport

Any cars used to transport students should be roadworthy with up-to-date tax, insurance, and MOT (where required). If you provide transport using your car for the students in your care, please be aware of the need for adequate comprehensive vehicle insurance and that you should inform your insurers that you will be using your car to provide transport to international students for which you may be paid or receive expenses.

Please ensure that all relevant laws relating to the use of child seats or booster seats for under 12s, when the student is below 135cm in height, and seat belts for over 12s or more than 135cm tall are discussed with students and adhered to.

Host families are obliged to comply with these laws and should consult the following advice: <https://www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules/using-a-child-car-seat-or-booster-seat>

## Access to computers and the internet & safe use of the internet

It is most likely that your student will want to access the internet during their stay. We ask that they use their own devices and not the family computer. We have an online safety policy that outlines the main risks to be aware of and what you can do as a host family to help keep students safe. Please take time to read this document which can be found [here](#).

## Health and Safety in the Home

We expect all host families to adhere to our health and safety guidelines:

- A minimum of one smoke alarm should be installed on every storey.
- A carbon monoxide alarm to be installed in any room containing a gas, liquid or solid fuel burning appliance.
- An annual landlord gas safety check to be undertaken by a Gas Safe registered engineer and a copy of the certificate provided to the guardianship organisation.
- The host family must ensure that the electrical system is safe, e.g. sockets and light fittings are secure and not overloaded and any appliances used by the student are safe.
- The host family must discuss the possible evacuation routes from the property with students on a regular basis. If doors or windows are locked students must know where to find the key in the event of a fire.
- If fire extinguishers and fire blankets are provided, they must be suitably serviced.
- Where open fires are used, a suitable fire guard should be in place when the fire is lit.
- Any matches / lighters should be appropriately stored.
- A basic first aid kit should be available to include, plasters, sterile eye-pad, triangular bandage, safety pins, non-medicated wound dressing, disposable gloves, leaflet giving guidance on first aid.
- Any prescription medication and drugs should be kept safely especially when hosting young students.
- Alcohol should be appropriately stored.
- The host family should have an awareness of basic food hygiene when preparing meals for students.

We will conduct an initial visit to check that your accommodation is suitable prior to you hosting a student. Thereafter we will visit at least once a year to undertake an annual check. Please let us know immediately if there are any changes in the accommodation you are

offering. This includes informing us of any temporary building work that may take place when you are due to host students.

Please refer to our separate Welfare, Health and Safety statement, that can be found [here](#).

## Private Fostering

Where Aspire Guardians has any day students under the age of 16 (under 18, if the student has a disability) living with host families who are not their parent or a close relative for 28 days or more, they must adhere to the regulations regarding private fostering in place within their local area as directed by their local authority.

Aspire is required to liaise with the school and the host family to ensure that where possible the local authority are notified of the proposal for a private fostering arrangement at least six weeks before the date on which the arrangement is to begin. Where the arrangement is to begin within six weeks, the local authority is to be informed immediately.

Aspire will liaise with the school and host family to explain carefully what is required of them in entering into a private fostering arrangement. This includes explaining that there will be regular visits and meetings with the local authority.

Aspire has a system in place for recording all correspondence with the local authority private fostering team and securing relevant permissions to share such information as is necessary with the student, parents, agents (where appropriate), host family and partner school.

In the case of day students over the age of 16, we are mindful of the extended period students will spend with host families and regularly carry out suitable checks to monitor and ensure their welfare.

## Changes in circumstances

You are required to inform the guardianship organisation about any changes to the host family arrangements.

We understand that you might have special occasions or holidays planned. If, all of a sudden you become unavailable for any of the upcoming breaks or holidays, we ask that you notify Aspire as soon as possible if you are unable to host students over particular dates.

Becoming a host family can have a huge impact on our students and you will become an important part of their lives. Many host families build lasting relationships with students and we will do what we can to provide consistency of students and host families.

## Expenses and payments

Aspire ensures that any payments due to host families are transacted promptly and in line with any contractual agreements in place.

Please refer to appendix 1 for full fee and expense rates.

All payments to host families will be made by BACS transfer within 10 working days.

Payments to host families may be subject to taxation. Aspire can offer guidance on where to find further information on the 'Rent a Room' scheme or host families can refer to the HMRC website: <https://www.gov.uk/rent-room-in-your-home/the-rent-a-roomscheme>.

Host families should not lend money to students. If there is a cash flow issue (lost bank card, etc.), Aspire should be informed immediately so that this can be resolved with the support of the student's parents. All financial transactions in such a case should be via Aspire as this protects both the host family and the student. If a host family acts outside of this instruction, there can be no guarantee that Aspire will refund the family for any loans made.

### **Your contract and cancelling the agreement**

Host families are able to terminate their contract with Aspire with a notice period of one school term.

Students are able to terminate their contract with Aspire with a notice period of one school term.

Aspire reserves the right to terminate the contract with a host family or student with a notice of one school term or sooner should there be breach of contract or policy.

If a student wishes to withdraw for any other reason, the host family will be informed of the circumstances. Aspire may offer compensation to the host family for the price of any food which may have been purchased in advance.

### **Responsibilities during a pandemic**

Pandemics can cause major disruption to travel and schooling. It is important in such events that Aspire takes advice from the government, the UK Health Security Agency and the World Health Organisation. AEGIS also provides guidance for members to follow. This is regularly updated as a situation develops. Usually, in a pandemic it is important to restrict movement so as not to spread the disease further. That means boarding school students would usually remain at school. In the event of a pandemic, Aspire may not be able to offer host family accommodation as this could place students, host families and the wider community at risk. Aspire will work with parents to find flights to home countries where required. Aspire will also work with schools to meet students' needs during a pandemic. This could be by helping to support students to learn remotely as directed by the school. Aspire will work with parents and schools to find suitable quarantine accommodation for students if required.

# Appendix 1

## Full Fees & Expense Rates

### Hosting

£60 per night

*Includes three meals, all linens and blankets towels, wifi, bedroom, shared bathroom, kitchen, living area and a desk or area for quiet study.*

### Transport

Personal vehicle - £0.50 per mile

Public transport - buses, trains, trams, tube - at cost

£15 per hour - pick up/drop off time (school or airport)

### Meals

Takeaway\* - up to £30

Restaurant\* - up to £50

*\*At the students' request*

### Celebrations\*\*

Birthday Cake - up to £10

Celebratory Dinner - up to £50

*\*\*to be confirmed with Aspire or parents first*

### Tickets\*\*\*

At cost

*\*\*\*please check with Aspire of parents first for any activities over £25.*

***Please keep all receipts for reimbursements of travel, entry fees and meal receipts. Personal car transfers will be based on Google Maps point to point and Aspire need to be notified of a change in journey or lots of traffic at the earliest, safest and convenient time.***

### What you can not claim

- Extra bedding or blankets - Included in hosting fees
- Snacks, tea, coffee within the home - Included in hosting fees
- Personal meals out, without the student present
- Travel to and from family excursions

**If you are not sure, please check with an Aspire member of staff**