

Referring to Safe and Sound Homes Short-term Accommodation Information for Agencies

What can Safe and Sound Homes short-term accommodation offer?

- Somewhere safe to stay
- Trained and approved volunteers
- Bed, evening meal, bath/shower, breakfast
- Transport to and from the host's house

How does it work?

1. Referral Agencies (such as Connexions, Local Councils, the Police) explain what SASH is to the young person who has nowhere to stay that night: "It's accommodation in the home of a trained and approved volunteer. You'll be provided with a bed in your own room, an evening meal, chance for a bath or shower and breakfast. SASH will arrange transport for you to get there and back into town in the morning. The hosts will try to make you feel comfortable – they are involved with SASH because they know how difficult it is to have nowhere safe to stay."
2. If the referral agency and the young person think it is appropriate and the young person fits into the criteria (see below, 'the criteria for accepting a young person for SASH short-term accommodation), the agency fills in a referral form with the young person. The agency can ring SASH if they have any questions.
3. The agency should go through the form with the young person and get their personal details. If the young person isn't known to the agency, please check their ID, or ask which other agencies they've had contact with.
4. Please check you have the Referral Form and the form entitled Information for Young People. If you do not have these, we can email them to you.
5. After the form is complete you need to call SASH and relay the information over the phone. It is up to you whether you do this with the young person present or on your own. In our experience the referral agency can find it easier to discuss someone – even with their permission - when they are out of the room.
6. As part of the risk assessment SASH will carry out background checks. The most common background checks are the Police National Computer (PNC) and the caution list of young people whom experience has shown would be unsuitable for SASH short-term accommodation. Whenever possible, a young person will be informed that they have been added to the caution list and given the opportunity to appeal. Other checks may include speaking to other

agencies/organisations that the young person has worked with. **Please do not assume that if a young person has a criminal record, we will not offer them accommodation. All decisions are made after checks and risk assessments, and each case is treated individually. If in doubt, ring us on 01904 652043 before making a decision not to refer.**

7. SASH will then call hosts to find out if they are available that evening, and work out the best travel arrangements. Background checks usually take only 10 minutes. Arranging hosts and travel can be relatively quick, although sometimes messages have to be left and SASH need to wait for volunteers to reply and let them know if they are available.
8. Referrals to SASH will be processed as quickly as possible but if there are unexpected delays we will try to get back to the referral agency with an update.
9. If hosts and travel arrangements are sorted, SASH will pass on the relevant volunteer details and the meeting place and time and the agency can record these for the young person on the Information for Young People sheet.

After referrals are made:

- Once a young person has been accepted on the scheme and told where they will be staying and how to get there, the referral agency can write the details of the SASH stay on the 'Information for Young People' sheet (at the end of the Referral Form) and give it to them. Please note that the address of the host should not be written down or given to the young person. This is for the ongoing peace of mind and security of all our hosts.
- It's not unusual for a young person to then change their mind about using SASH. Let us know if this happens so we can cancel the drivers and hosts. However, because of the costs and time involved in arranging the accommodation, if the young person does not show up, or cancels after all the arrangements have been made, SASH will make a charge of £30 per night for cancellations.
- If a young person requires a SASH stay for more than one night, the referral agency should re-refer them to SASH. It isn't necessary to go through the whole referral form again but SASH staff will ask a number of questions relevant to the young person using the service for a further night. If a further stay can be provided the agency should complete the Information for Young Person details.

The Criteria for accepting a young person for SASH short-term accommodation;

- The young person is no younger than 16 and no older than 24 years old (we can only accept young people up to their 25th birthday).

- We don't expect young people using SASH services to have always been model citizens. They may have been in trouble with the police. But we do need to know about any criminal activity, even things still pending, so we can assess if they pose a risk to our volunteers. They won't be excluded automatically because of criminal activity – but it will depend on the nature of that activity. A one-off fight with mates outside a pub late on a Friday night may be acceptable – a history of aggression towards authority figures is not.
- It is important that the young person is open and honest about any past offences. Past offences will not necessarily mean a young person is refused accommodation, but if something is revealed during a PNC check that the young person did not reveal beforehand, it will inevitably raise suspicions about their trustworthiness. The young person will always be given the chance to explain the circumstances surrounding any offences, so that we can make an informed decision over whether to offer accommodation.
- We won't take anyone under the influence of drugs, alcohol or solvents at the time of referral. A lot of our clients are known to misuse one of these occasionally – again that doesn't automatically bar them from accessing short-term accommodation, but whether we can accept them will depend on the substance and nature of misuse, e.g. injecting heroin users will not be accepted – occasionally cannabis smokers will, on the understanding that they will not use illegal drugs whilst on a SASH stay.
- We ask about mental and physical health needs to make sure we can help appropriately –for example, we won't place a wheel chair user in an inaccessible house.
- We won't take anyone who a PNC check reveals as having a 'marker' for violence or sexual offences, or anyone who the Police advise us not to place.
- We won't take anyone seeking a bail address or absconding from custody.
- If you have any questions, please contact Tracey Ward or Adele Coupe (Projects Coordinator) at:

Safe and Sound Homes, The Spurriergate Centre, Spurriergate, York YO1 9QR
Tel: 01904 652043

(Referral Line: 01904 659619)