



# HOMESTAY HANDBOOK

A HOSTS GUIDE TO PROVIDING ACCOMMODATION TO  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



# About Us

Foyle International is the longest-established language school in Derry, providing high-quality English Language and Cultural programmes for international students, alongside work-based learning programmes and cultural stays for students from across Europe.

Since 1990, we have worked closely with local hosts to provide a welcoming “home-from-home” experience for our students. For more than three decades, our hosts have played a vital role in helping students feel part of the local community while experiencing life in Derry and the North West.

We are incredibly proud of our hosts, who consistently receive excellent feedback from students for their warmth, kindness, and hospitality. Their commitment to providing a genuine warm Derry welcome is at the heart of what makes the Foyle International experience so special!

## Our Location

72 Great James Street  
Derry  
BT48 7DE  
*Opposite St Eugenes Cathedral*



## Communication

You can contact our office during working hours, or alternatively contact us via WhatsApp. **Please keep a copy of the details below stored on your mobile.**

WhatsApp is the main way which we communicate with our hosts.

**Office:** 028 71 371 535

**Foyle Mobile (WhatsApp):** +447784632323

**Email:** accommodation@foyle.eu



**Emergency Contact numbers- Out of hours**

**Aine:** +447512705122 (Safeguarding Lead)

**Paul:** +447712658570 (Director)

# ***Homestay with Foyle International***

Hosting with Foyle International is different from simply renting out a room. Our students are supported by the Foyle team throughout their stay, and we are here to support you too.

Being a homestay host is a rewarding experience. It is an opportunity to:



Meet people from around the world.



Learn about different cultures and traditions.



Share your home and help students improve their English.



Create lasting memories and friendships.

For many students, living with a host is the most memorable part of their stay. Your welcome, support and hospitality play an important role in making their experience in Derry a positive and enjoyable one.

**Thank you for being a part of the Foyle International community.**

## ***British Council Accreditation***

Foyle International is accredited by the British Council under the Accreditation UK Scheme. Accreditation demonstrates that we meet recognised standards in areas including student welfare, accommodation and delivery of junior programmes.

Foyle International are proud to be the first English Language school in Northern Ireland, and to be the first to receive British Council Accreditation.

As a host, you play an important role in helping us to maintain these standards by providing a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for our students and by following the procedures and guidance outlined in this handbook.

# *Your Role*

Hosting a student means welcoming them into your home and including them in everyday family life. Students should eat meals with you, share common living areas, and have access to household facilities such as laundry and Wi-Fi.

We encourage hosts to treat students as members of the household.

## **Host Responsibilities:**

- Provide a sufficiently spacious bedroom, adequately equipped with natural light, linen, and storage space.
- Ensure the home is in a good state of cleanliness and repair.
- Collect your students on arrival and drop them back for departure.
- Drop students at Foyle International's office (or NWRC if it is during the Summer School Programme) on the first morning of the programme only.
- Provide a safe, comfortable, and welcoming home.
- Help students feel part of the household.
- Explain key information such as meal times, house rules, nearest bus stops, and fire safety procedures.
- Encourage students to ask questions if they are unsure about anything.
- Contact the Accommodation Officer or Foyle Team if you have any concerns.
- Share your culture and take an interest in the student's background and experiences.
- Speak clearly and encourage conversation to help students build confidence in English.

In line with British Council requirements, no more than four students can stay in a homestay at any one time. Hosts must also inform Foyle International if they are accommodating students from other organisations during a student's stay.

Please keep Foyle updated on any changes relevant to hosting, i.e. new members of the household, repairs/renovations, etc.

# Accommodation

## STUDENT BEDROOMS

We visit our homestays regularly and approve the rooms that our hosts have advised are student rooms.

Students must only stay in the rooms that we have approved, if you wish to add a new room to the approved list then a check can be arranged with the Accommodation Officer.

Students must have:

- A clean, comfortable bedroom
- Adequate heating and lighting
- Sufficient space
- Proper bed (camp beds, childrens beds are not suitable)
- Sufficient storage space for belongings
- Fresh bed linen provided weekly



We also ask that where possible, students could have access to a desk or a quiet space where they can study.

As many students come from warmer climates, extra bedding may be appreciated during the winter months.

## BEDROOM ARRANGEMENTS

- Adult students should have their own bedroom, unless sharing has been agreed in advance with Foyle. Often, students do have a pairing request with a friend or classmate in their group.
- Students can share a bedroom with another student from Foyle International.
- Under no circumstances can students share a bed.

## SHOWERS AND BATHROOMS

- Make sure students can easily use the bathroom and shower.
- Agree a schedule if needed, explain how to use the shower, and ask students to leave the bathroom clean and tidy.
- If hosting female students, explain how to dispose of sanitary products.



# ***Becoming a Foyle Homestay Host***

## **1. Complete Host Application Form**

Tell us a little about yourself, your home and your hosting preferences.

## **2. Home Visit**

Our Accommodation Officer will visit your home to:

- Meet you in person.
- View the student bedroom and shared areas.
- Explain the hosting process.
- Answer any questions you may have.

## **3. AccessNI Background Check**

An AccessNI Enhanced clearance is required if you wish to host under 18s or vulnerable adults.

Foyle International will:

- Provide guidance on completing the check.
- Cover the cost of the check.

## **4. Reference Check**

5.

We ask that you provide us with 2 references whom we will contact directly.

## **5. Application Reviewed**

We will review all information to ensure that your home is suitable for hosting.

## **6. Application Approved - Welcome to Foyle!**

Once approved, you will be added to our host database and may begin receiving student bookings.

**All that's left to do now is to wait to welcome your first student!**

# Arrivals/Departures



Arrival day is important as it is often a student's first impression of Derry and Northern Ireland. Students may have travelled a long way and may be tired or anxious.

Our students will arrive to one of the following locations:

1. Foyle Street Bus Station
2. Foyleside Coach Park
3. Sainsbury's Car Park

## **Communication**

You will receive a Whatsapp message in advance advising you of the time, date and location of your students arrival and departure. On arrival day, we will keep you informed of any delays.

## **Arrivals**

- Hosts should meet students at the agreed arrival point alongside Foyle staff.
- If you do not drive, please make suitable arrangements where possible, for example asking a trusted family member or friend to assist.
- Taxis may be used if necessary. However, please remember that travelling alone in a taxi can be a worrying experience, particularly for younger students. Hosts are responsible for the taxi cost.

If required, Foyle staff can arrange a taxi through City Cabs on arrival and will send you a message once the student has departed. This should be agreed with Foyle in advance.

## **Departures**

- Hosts are responsible for arranging transport to the departure point, including booking any required taxi.
- Hosts are responsible for the cost of the taxi. Students should not be asked to pay for their arrival or departure transport.
- A warm welcome and a friendly goodbye can make a lasting difference to a student's experience.

***A warm welcome and a friendly goodbye can make a long-lasting difference to a student's experience.***



# Meals

Hosts must provide meals for students according to the student's board arrangement. If a student has a particular diet (i.e. vegetarian) we will discuss with you in advance. Meal should be well balanced and part of a healthy diet.

**Full board:** Breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal

**Half Board:** Breakfast and evening meal



## Breakfast

Cereals, Toasts and Jams, fruit, Tea / Coffee / Fruit juice.

Cheese and Ham options are also appreciated by many European students.

*If appropriate, students can help themselves to breakfast items.*

## Lunches

Sandwich / Pasta / Salad

+ 2-3 snacks i.e Fruit, Yoghurts, Cereal bar, crisps

+ bottle of water/juice

**Note:** Please avoid lunch items that must be reheated, as not all students will have access to microwaves on their programmes. If unsure, please ask Foyle regarding this.

## Evening Meal

2 courses (Main + after dinner snack/desert)

Ideally together at dinner table - get to know each other, allow the student to practice their English

We understand that it is not always possible to sit down together each evening (i.e. differentiating work schedules) but where possible, we appreciate that the effort is made.

Where a student decides not to return home for dinner, they should organise their own meal arrangements. Evening arrangements should always be communicated between the host and student, regardless of student age.

# House Rules

If you have any house rules or special requests, please explain them to your student when they arrive. It can be helpful to provide a written copy in their bedroom or a communal area so they can refer to it during their stay.

- Students should let you know if they will be home late or staying elsewhere overnight (18+ students only).
- If they would like to invite their friends to your home, they should ask for your permission in advance.
- Students are responsible for their own spending money, including social activities, shopping, and personal expenses.
- If you need to go away during a student's stay, please contact the Accommodation Officer as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be discussed.
- English should be the main language spoken in the home, helping students make the most of their immersion experience.
- When hosting students under 18, it is important to be aware of their curfew time.
- We recommend exchanging mobile numbers on the first day so that you can contact them if necessary.
- If a student does not return home by their agreed curfew, please contact the emergency number provided by Foyle International.



# Payments and Bookings

## Per Week

Full board - £140

Half board - £120

Special diet Vegan, Lactose/Gluten free - + £15 top up

- Hosts are paid every two weeks
- Payments made on the first working day, two weeks after the student's arrival date.
- If a student's stay is less than two weeks, payment will be made on the first working day after they depart.
- If a student leaves at the weekend, payment will be processed on the following Monday.
- Please note that **payments are calculated on a nightly basis**, so the amount may vary if a student's stay is not an exact number of weeks.



- **Do not discuss payments with students.**

## Student Allocations/Cancellations

- Students are allocated to host families on a rotational basis.
- Student numbers and profiles vary throughout the year, so placements cannot be guaranteed.

Allocations are based on:

- Student preferences
- Host preferences
- Individual requirements
- Practical arrangements (i.e. travel)
- Availability

Please keep the Accommodation Officer informed of your availability.



**If you accept a booking, we ask that you commit to hosting the student whenever possible.**

Occasionally, students may cancel or bookings may change at short notice. We will let you know as soon as possible.

# Rules for under 18s

## Curfews

**13-15 year olds: 9.30pm**

**16-17 year olds: 10.30pm**



Curfews relate to student's own free time where they are unsupervised. Students age 18+ do not have a curfew unless they are on a junior programme, or have rules set in place by their school. **In this case we will inform you that they are to be treated as a junior and will observe the 10.30pm curfew.**

**We** ask that hosts do not agree to a separate curfew for their student. If you are unsure of any curfews or exemptions, please contact us. More information on curfews on pages 19 and 20.

Please note that where a student is going to an event or activity **with you** and are supervised, the curfew does not apply.

## Free time (unsupervised)

Students under 18 will have some free time during their programme. Students are permitted to have unsupervised free time in the city (i.e. they want to meet up with their friends in the city centre). Please make sure that you know:

- Where they are going
- What time they will be back
- That they understand travel plans (i.e. what bus they will take)
- That they are contactable

## Independent travel outside of city

If a student is under 18 they are not permitted to:

- Travel independently outside of Derry
- Stay overnight in another city

If there is an exception to this via parental consent, Foyle International will inform you. Students on Summer School programmes will never be permitted independent travel.

# Illnesses, Accidents and Attendance

If a student feels unwell during their stay, we recommend that they visit a local pharmacy for advice in the first instance. Hosts should not provide medication to students.

For non-emergency medical concerns, students should attend a private clinic. Hosts are not expected to accompany students to appointments. Group leaders will attend with their students, and individual students will be supported by a member of the Foyle International team, who will also contact parents or guardians where necessary. Students are responsible for checking any health insurance claims.

Recommended clinics:

- Emerald Urgent Care, Derry
- Duality Healthcare, Derry
- Kingsbridge Private Hospital, Ballykelly



## Medical Emergencies

In an emergency, students can access NHS services through the Accident & Emergency (A&E) Department at Altnagelvin Hospital.

In the case of a serious illness or medical emergency, Foyle International will contact the student's parent, guardian, or emergency contact where appropriate.

## Absence

If your student is unable to attend their programme due to illness please inform the Foyle International Team as soon as possible.

## Lateness

If you are aware that your student will be late please let Foyle International know. Students who continuously turn up late will be spoken to about the disruption.

# Student Welfare

Supporting a student's wellbeing is an important part of being a Homestay Host. Students are often adjusting to a new country, language, culture, and daily routine, which can sometimes feel overwhelming.

Young people can be particularly vulnerable, as they may not fully understand local customs, expectations, or boundaries.

You can help by:

- Being approachable and supportive.
- Explaining things clearly and encouraging students to ask questions.
- Helping students understand household routines and expectations.
- Being alert to any changes in behaviour or signs that a student may be struggling.
- Being a positive role model and maintaining appropriate behaviour when students are present.

## What to Look Out For

Students are often adjusting to a new country, language and routine. It is normal for them to need some extra support.

### Common Welfare Concerns

- **Homesickness** missing family, friends, and familiar routines.
- **Isolation** spending long periods alone or struggling to settle in.
- **Anxiety** appearing worried, overwhelmed, or lacking confidence.
- **Friendship difficulties** finding it hard to make friends or join in with activities.
- **Accommodation concerns** difficulties adjusting to household routines or feeling uncomfortable in their surroundings.

**If you have any concerns about a student's wellbeing, please contact the Accommodation Officer or Foyle Team as soon as possible. Early support can make a significant difference to a student's experience.**

# Safeguarding

Foyle International is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults who come into contact with its services. The organisation aims to provide a safe, respectful, and responsive environment in which concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm are identified early and acted upon promptly and proportionately.

**Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.**

## If a student discloses a concern

Hosts are not expected to investigate safeguarding concerns or determine whether abuse has occurred. Your role is to listen, reassure, record and report.

If something doesn't feel right, report it to the school. You do not need proof or evidence to raise a concern.

If there is an immediate risk to a student's safety, contact the emergency services first and then inform Foyle International as soon as possible.

### LISTEN



### REASSURE



### RECORD



### REPORT

- Remain calm
- Listen carefully
- Allow the student to speak freely
- Do not interrupt unnecessarily

- Thank the student for telling you
- Take them seriously
- Explain you will need to share the information with the safeguarding team
- Do not promise confidentiality

- Record the facts
- Use the student's own words where possible
- Record dates, times, locations, names

- Follow the school's reporting procedures
- Inform the appropriate safeguarding contact without delay

# Our Safeguarding Team

## Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

## Deputy Safeguarding Lead/Officers



**KELLEY  
PROCTOR**

Academic Manager  
kelley@foyle.eu



**AINE  
MURRAY**

Operations Manager  
aine@foyle.eu



**HEATHER  
MORAN**

Accommodation Officer  
accommodation@foyle.eu



**AISLING  
DOHERTY**

Student Placement Officer  
aisling@foyle.eu

## Concerns

As a host, you have a duty of care to help keep students safe while they are in your home. This guidance applies to:

- All students under 18
- Any Adult at Risk who may need additional support.

Safeguarding concerns may include:

- **Emotional abuse:** bullying, intimidation, isolation or behaviour that upsets or frightens a student.
- **Physical abuse:** physical harm or inappropriate behaviour that causes injury or fear.
- **Sexual abuse:** inappropriate sexual behavior, grooming, exploitation or online abuse.
- **Neglect:** not providing appropriate care, supervision, food, warmth or protection from harm.

# Reporting Routes

## Safeguarding Concern

### Examples

- Student discloses abuse
- Student says they feel unsafe
- Inappropriate messages
- Bullying/harassment
- Missing student
- Self-harm concerns
- Serious welfare concerns



Concern identified



Listen and reassure



Record key facts



Inform Accommodation Officer or DSL



Report immediately to DSL/Deputy DSL



DSL assesses and determines next steps



Incident recorded

## Welfare Concern

### Examples

- Homesickness
- Friendship difficulties
- Student isolating themselves
- Anxiety
- Emotional distress
- Student struggling to settle

Welfare concern identified



Listen and reassure



Record key facts



Inform Accommodation Officer or DSL



Support provided



If safeguarding concerns identified, DSL informed



DSL determines safeguarding response

**If you are worried about a student, contact a member of the safeguarding team immediately.**



## **Example Scenario: Student Misses Curfew**

Students aged 16 and under have a curfew of 9.30pm. Students aged 16-17 have a curfew of 10.30pm.

At 10.40pm, your 17 year old student has not returned home.

You send them a message, and they reply, “Sorry, I missed the bus, but I’m waiting for the next one and should be home in 20 mins.”

### **What should you do?**

- Maintain Contact
- Confirm where they are
- Confirm if they are safe

### **At what point should you be concerned?**

If the delay becomes significant, and you are concerned for their welfare, or if they stop communicating.

### **Should you contact Foyle immediately?**

Yes, if you are concerned.

Foyle may deal with the curfew breach separately - so please tell us at the earliest reasonable time.

**The key issue is whether the student is safe and contactable**

## **Example Scenario 2: Student Misses Curfew, stops responding.**

Students aged 16 and under have a curfew of 9.30pm. Students aged 16-17 have a curfew of 10.30pm.

At 10.40pm, your 17 year old student has not returned home.

You send them a messages, no reply. You do not know where they are or how they are getting home.

### **Is this a safeguarding concern?**



YES - this is a concern, and should be reported immediately. Contact the emergency number(s).

### **What to do next?**

Foyle/DSL can decide what further action is required.

## **Curfews: Key takeaways**

If a student misses curfew but remains in contact and can confirm their whereabouts and travel arrangements, continue to monitor the situation. Inform the school if necessary.



If a student cannot be contacted, their whereabouts are unknown, or there are concerns for their welfare, contact the school immediately.

# ***Practical Information***

## **Problems and Concerns**

Most students and hosts enjoy a positive experience. Occasionally, misunderstandings or difficulties can arise.

If you have any concerns, please contact the Accommodation Officer as soon as possible. Many issues can be resolved quickly with advice and support from the Foyle team.

If a problem cannot be resolved, alternative accommodation arrangements for the student will be organized.

Please do not struggle on alone - we want our hosts to feel supported too.

## **Damage to property**

Foyle International is not liable for damage to property.

If any damage occurs during a students' stay, please inform the Accommodation Officer as soon as possible. Whilst we are not responsible, we will work with the student, and their sending organization, to help resolve the situation.

## **Insurance**

- Hosts should have appropriate home and contents insurance.
- Inform your insurer you are hosting international students.
- Explain any household security procedures to students, including locking doors and setting alarms.



## Fire and Gas Safety

Every host must have:

- A working smoke alarm
- A fire escape plan that is explained to students
- Home with gas appliances must provide a valid Gas Safety Certificate.

## Tax and Benefits

- Under the Government's Rent a Room Scheme, hosts may earn up to £7,500 per year tax-free (subject to current HMRC rules).
- Hosts are responsible for managing their own tax affairs and checking how hosting may affect any benefits they receive.

Further information is available from HMRC and the relevant government agencies.

## Feedback

We regularly ask students for feedback about their experience, including their course, activities and homestay.

This feedback helps us to

- Recognise good practices
- Identify areas for improvement
- Continue to develop our homestay programme

A students' accommodation feedback can be provided to hosts on requests.

We also welcome feedback from our hosts and encourage you to share your experiences, suggestions or concerns with the Accommodation Team.

# Prevent

As a language school, Foyle International has a responsibility to help keep students safe from all forms of harm, including being drawn into extremism or radicalisation. This forms part of the UK Government's Prevent Duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

The Prevent Duty is not about preventing students from having political or religious beliefs. It is about protecting vulnerable people from being influenced by extremist views that may encourage hatred, violence, or illegal activity.

The four fundamental values are:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance for people of different faiths, beliefs, and backgrounds

As a Homestay Host, we ask that you remain aware of any concerns that a student may be vulnerable or at risk of being influenced by extremist behaviour.

If you have any concerns, no matter how small, please do not try to deal with the situation yourself. Contact Foyle International immediately so that appropriate advice and support can be provided.



# TIPS

**A few simple things can make a big difference to a student's experience.**

1. Take time to chat each day. Even a short conversation over breakfast or dinner helps students improve their English and feel part of the household.
2. Explain your house rules early on. Go over meal times, bathroom routines, curfews, and anything else that will help students settle in. A printed version is a good option for them to recap.
3. Be patient. Students may need time to adjust to a new language, culture, and way of life.
4. Encourage students to ask questions. They may be unsure about everyday things and could be too shy to ask.
5. Include them in family life. Inviting students to join everyday activities can help them feel welcome and build their confidence.
6. Help them find their way around. Show them local bus stops, nearby shops, and important landmarks during their first few days.
7. Keep communication open. If you have any concerns, contact the Accommodation Team as soon as possible.
8. Remember that cultural differences are normal. Be open-minded and use any misunderstandings as an opportunity to learn from each other.

**Most importantly, be yourself. Students choose a homestay because they want to experience everyday life in Derry and feel part of a local home. A warm welcome and a little patience can make their stay a memorable one.**

# ***Data Protection and GDPR***

To support your role as a Homestay Host, Foyle International will collect, securely store and process the following personal information, including:

- Full name
- Home address
- Contact telephone numbers
- Date of Birth
- Email address
- Bank details
- Contract information
- Information about other household residents
- Property risk assessments
- AccessNI information

Your information will only be accessed by members of staff who need it to carry out their role. If you wish to access any information held on file please request so through the accommodation officer.

In some cases, we may need to share certain information with trusted third parties to meet our legal, safeguarding, and accreditation requirements.

These may include:

- Accreditation and inspection bodies, such as the British Council and BAC
- Students and, where appropriate, their parents or guardians
- Government and regulatory bodies, including the Home Office, Immigration Services, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Police
- AccessNI/DBS checking services

Foyle International is committed to handling all personal information securely and in accordance with current data protection legislation.

# Contact Details

## Day to day communication and student bookings:

**Office:** 028 71 371 535

**Foyle Mobile (WhatsApp):** +447784632323 - *also used on arrival/departure days*

**Email:** accommodation@foyle.eu

## Emergency Contact numbers- Out of hours

**Aine:** +447512705122 (Safeguarding Lead)

**Paul:** +447712658570 (Director)

