

Homestay Policies & Procedures

Language School New Zealand (LSNZ) student accommodation and host families' role is to provide a safe, happy environment for the student to complement their course of study. We realise that a key factor to any successful visits whether for study, work or vacation is accommodation. This is particularly true for international students when it is their first time away from their own country and their parents. We have developed a Homestay and Student Accommodation to ensure the following core elements:

- A safe, clean and comfortable environment is provided for the students
- Students have access to their homestay co-ordinator and School Manager 24 hours a day 7 days a week
- Students are not exploited
- As much as possible, students' special requirements are taken into consideration.
- Students are met at the airport if requested and will be taken directly to their accommodation

To run an effective and efficient Homestay program it is necessary to identify the policies that relate to the running of the business and the procedures required to run the business in compliance with NZQA, English New Zealand and the Code of Practice for International Students, which provides a framework for minimum standards to ensure that international students are provided with a safe and caring family environment.

A full copy of the code can be downloaded from the NZQA website:

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Code-of-Practice-NZQA.pdf>

- Privacy Policy
- Quality Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Code of Conduct for Homestay families
- Risk Management
- Risk Management Strategy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Human Resource Policy
- Monitoring and Evaluation Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Critical Incident Procedure
- Procedure for Interviewing Host Families
- Interview Process for Homestay Families
- Process for Placement of Students in Homestay

Privacy Policy

LSNZ collects large amounts of personal information from stakeholders during the administration process. The privacy of personal information supplied by stakeholders must be respected. Personal information is information not in the public sphere which can identify an individual or which can be associated with a specific individual. Examples of personal information that may be collected by LSNZ include: home address, home telephone numbers, dates of birth, next of kin, ect. Please refer to Privacy of Personal Information for LSNZ policy and procedure.

The New Zealand Privacy Act 1993 details provisions made to protect the privacy of individuals. This act can be view <http://www.justice.govt.nz/policy/constitutional-law-and-human-rights/human-rights/domestic-human-rights-protection/privacy-act-1993> or <http://www.gywlaw.co.nz/Websites/gywlaw2/images/privacy.pdf> as a quick overview of the privacy act.

Quality Policy

Along with the day to day operations, LSNZ undertakes activities that ensure the provision of a quality service. Quality for our homestay program encompasses the quality of host families, host homes, student accommodation and the service provided by staff.

LSNZ is constantly monitoring, evaluating and improving our homestay program which leads to a better experience for international students and hosts and an improved reputation for our Homestay service.

The code of conduct includes all activities associated with maintaining quality so stakeholders are aware of the high standards of the Homestay program.

Code of Conduct for Homestay Staff

Ethical standards

In arranging homestay accommodation for International Students, the Homestay Co-ordinator and staff guarantee to:

- Familiarise providers with the culture and education philosophy of the homestay/student accommodation program and students through - service support and individual awareness.
- Be aware of the needs of the international students and have processes in place to support and assist them.
- Identify any personal prejudices and biases and promote awareness and an adherence to ethical standards.
- Accept flexibility of regulations and communication practices that may be necessary to meet the diverse and variable needs of homestay students.
- Keep all possible communications open, honest and appropriate to the situation.
- Translate, where possible, information at an appropriate level to the student(s) level of understanding.

- Act with sensitivity and discretion and have robust processes for crisis management, in time of grief and trauma.
- Maintain the confidentiality of homestay host and international students' right to privacy under the terms of privacy act and anti-discrimination acts.

Best Practices

In arranging Homestay accommodation for International students, the Homestay and staff guarantee to:

- Provide ongoing support to homestay hosts and international students as necessary.
- Advise homestay host and international students of the expectations of homestay by means of orientation, written documents, additional orientation sessions if needed, as well as web base information.
- Inspect all providers homes registered in the homestay program and provide all relevant information and policy and procedures of the expectations/requirements of the program.
- Place each student in a home which is, to the best knowledge and belief, a safe and suitable home for international students.
- Ensure that all international students under the age of 18 years are placed in the appropriate families that meet all legal requirements of NZQA and Pastoral Care of International Students.
- Encouraging network contacts to ensure the quality of all providers enlisted in the program is maintained.
- Monitor the number of household members.
- Ensure payment arrangements are confirmed with the homestay hosts.
- Follow up any complaint made by homestay student(s)/providers within two business days, earlier if the problem is urgent.
- Respect and be responsive to the beliefs and diversity of cultural requirements of homestay hosts and homestay students by providing alternative accommodation immediately if it is believed that the welfare of the student, or host, may be at risk.
- Provide ongoing support for the homestay providers and homestay students as necessary and ensure that all parties are aware of the wide range of support services available within the school, counselling services, and grievance resolution procedure.
- Maintain clear communication with the homestay co-ordinator/agents on all homestay matters.
- Act openly and professionally in all dealings with other homestay providers
- Ensure that the confidentiality of homestay hosts and homestay students is preserved under the terms of privacy act and discrimination acts.
- Undertake process and impact evaluations, i.e conduct surveys, with homestay hosts and international students to ensure that standards and requirements of homestay student placements are met under the Code of Practice basic guidelines.

Code of Conduct for Homestay Families

Homestay hosts are expected to:

- Develop positive relationships with homestay students which are based on mutual trust and communication.
- Acknowledge the uniqueness of each homestay student and the levels of each student's strength and weakness.
- Support and assist homestay students to live comfortable within a foreign environment.
- Respect the homestay students' right to privacy while privacy does not equate to isolation
- Acknowledge the significance of culture, customs, language and beliefs.
- Assist, support and nurture where needed or requested.

To achieve this desired outcome the family will:

- Provide a safe environment which will offer the homestay student positive experiences while living as a member of LSNZ family.
- Provide the homestay student with a private, clean and warm bedroom, good quality, fresh healthy food, laundry facilities and a supportive environment.
- Provide breakfast, evening meal Monday – Friday, breakfast. Saturday – Sunday, Breakfast, lunch and evening meal (unless otherwise requested).
- Offer help, guidance, support and encouragement with language practice and adapting to Queenstown living especially during the winter months (this may require patience and empathy and a willingness to show the homestay student more than once).
- Provide an orientation/welcome within the family home e.g house rules, what time is dinner, telephone protocols, rules regarding smoking, guest visiting, curfews ect.
- Offer sincere interest in the culture background of the homestay student.
- Respect the homestay student's need for privacy and allow them space to be alone.
- Have a duty of care towards the homestay student.
- Only provide single room accommodation, unless otherwise stated. International students are not to share a room with another student of the same nationality or with a member of the family.
- Liaise with the homestay Co-ordinator of any changes of circumstances in the household.
- Be responsive to the culture differences and beliefs of the homestay student by allowing the homestay student to continue familiar cultural practices without criticism.
- Adhere to guidelines set down by the LSNZ in the homestay handbook.

Risk Management Policy

Risk management is important for the wellbeing of all stakeholders of a homestay program and impacts on liability.

LSNZ has identified the potential risks to homestay students and host families. These risks can include injury, sexual harassment, theft, abuse and psychological problems and mental health issues. LSNZ has implemented a Risk Management Strategy to manage the risks in a consistent manner.

LSNZ aims to minimise any risks by keeping all parties informed of possible risks and practical solutions. Information has been included in the host handbook. Host families and students have been made aware of the method for reporting any incidents.

Depending on the individual situation reactions may include: Re-inspecting the homestay house, moving the homestay student, formal interview with homestay host or, if necessary, contacting the police or other services.

Homestay students and hosts can report possible risk and grievances to the homestay coordinator or the school manager either verbally or in writing. Developing and maintaining accessible and appropriate communications channels is the responsibility of all staff working at LSNZ.

Risk Management Strategy

LSNZ is aware of any potential hazards and has taken steps to remove or minimise them by creating a safe and friendly environment for homestay students. LSNZ accepts that risks happen and has appropriate plans in place to deal with them.

Potential risks include:

- Theft, abuse, sexual harassment, critical incidents and insufficient funds (Student)
- Host families: insufficient process in place to recruit good families, lack of cultural awareness.
- Junior students: 17 years and under are not to be placed with any host family that participates in renting a room to Airbnb guest.
- Student experiencing culture shock

Managing the risk

- Students and host parents are informed on how to report any potential incidents or concern.
- Information given to host families, home interview and equitable placement assists in managing the potential risks

Insure the risk

- Hosts are advised to check the level of home insurance cover that they may be required for hosting an international student.
- Homestay student(s) must have current overseas student health cover or equivalent cover.

Reporting process

- Students and host families have access to mobile number 24 hours a day 7 days a week.
- A critical incident report is completed for each situation. (See Critical Incident Policy and Procedures).
- Consideration is given to the nature of the risk and action taken immediately.

Transfer the risk

- Move the homestay student to safe environment.

- Make sure the new family are able to deal with a homestay student who may be distressed initially.

Critical incident Policy

A “critical incidents” is defined as an event that causes individuals to experience a strong emotional reaction that interferes with their usual coping skills. The event has a level of trauma that is beyond the normal “living” experiences of those affected. The resulting stress reaction may include emotional, physical, behavioural and cognitive changes evident either at the time of the incident or later. The impact of a critical incident may affect any member of the homestay program, not only those most directly involved.

Some examples of critical incidents to which staff may have to respond could include:

- Death of a homestay student or close family member
- Attempted suicide
- Life threatening injuries/illness
- Sexual and /or physical assault
- Mental health crisis
- Drug/alcohol overdose
- Fire/explosion with injuries or significant damage
- Natural disasters (local or international)
- Infectious disease
- Threats of violence to staff and homestay students

The purpose of a critical incidents management plan is to facilitate the delivering of a timely and coordinated response to critical incidents and also to ensure that the reported critical incidents are:

- Documented
- Reported to relevant officials within the educational institution and government agencies
- Communicate to the family
- Managed in a manner to ensure that negative publicity is not generated from an incident

When creating our critical incidents management plan, the following points were considered:

- Accountability: who is accountable for response made to a critical incident?
- Personnel: who is the appropriate person(s) to deal with critical incidents?

Human Resource Policy

Suitably qualified and experienced staff members are fundamental to the operation of an effective Homestay. Staff may need to use their professional and not personal judgement to deal with stakeholders in a professional manner. Staff should also be able to establish a professional rapport with stakeholders while maintaining impartiality and professional distance.

To achieve these desired outcomes we have selection of criteria in place to ensure the suitability of hosts. Homestay students will not be placed with a family who have not been recruited through a full selection process.

The criteria for Homestay families includes the following:

- An adequate room that complies with the Pastoral Care recommendations
- Suitable furnishings as bed, desk and storage
- A suitable level of household English/host family are not the same nationality as the student
- A clean and tidy house as judged by the homestay coordinator
- An understanding of the agreement to the homestay programs code of conduct

The single most important criteria is the ability of the host family is to care for the homestay student in a safe and secure environment, and to provide appropriate support and supervision for homestay student(s) adjusting to living in a new environment especially any student under the age of 18 years (juniors).

Monitoring and Evaluation policy

Monitoring homestay placements is essential in order to keep abreast of problems and ensure a quality service. Monitoring can be undertaken by a variety of means including:

- Regular contact with homestay families
- Feedback forms/student graduation feedback
- Informal meetings with students/Thursday
- Regular home visits
- Encouraging host families to communicate with homestay coordinator about any issues

Homestay visits are particularly important as they enable staff to monitor students living environments and note any changes.

Evaluation

Our homestay program and student accommodation will evolve over time. To ensure continuous improvement LSNZ realises it is important to evaluate the program, including collecting feedback from host families and students.

To obtain feedback, we ask homestay students to complete a simple questionnaires on their experiences on their graduation. A second information process is conduct so students can express their opinion about their stay with a host family, but this is kept short and simple to allow for homestay students with limited English to understand.

LSNZ takes action to improve our homestay program and student accommodation based on stakeholder's feedback. This may include updating all materials and databases and investigation into any cited problems. Negative feedback on a particular homestay host does not indicate that the host family should be refused further students in the future. It is important to investigate the cause of the negative feelings and judge whether the host may be suitable for a different homestay student.

Grievance Procedure

LSNZ and student/ homestay accommodation has in place grievance procedures which are designed to manage complaints from all student and homestay stakeholders.

Grievance procedure

1. Reporting of a grievance by either student or host – this can be verbally or in writing.
2. Confirmation back to the person that has made the complaint. Preferably in writing (see complaint letter template)
3. Communication with the homestay coordinator
4. Once both the School Manager and Homestay Coordinator are satisfied that they have taken into consideration all aspects of the grievance, a decision will be reach as to what course of action should be followed
5. If it is deemed necessary to remove the student from the homestay family, this will be done immediately.
6. If any further course of action is required, then the School Manager will advise both the student and host in writing with the reason for this decision
7. Should either party wish to make a formal complaint about the actions taken they must do so in writing.
8. If the complaint still is not resolved, then the host or the student may wish to write to our professional body and ask for assistance. The address is English New Zealand, P.O Box 35283, Christchurch 8640. Phone: 03 386 1222 or email admin@englishnewzealand.co.nz or Fairway Resolution, Link: <http://www.fairwayresolution.com>

Information provided for Homestay Families

Providing information for new host is an integral component of homestay programs. LSNZ outlines the aims of the homestay and provides practical advice and information to help fulfil these aims. LSNZ has policies in place to ensure that each homestay receives all of the significant information.

The following information includes:

- Homestay handbook
- Cultural difference information
- Contact details for homestay coordinator and school manager
- Police check forms
- Application form
- Monthly news letters

Application Process

The Homestay Coordinator is to work through the following steps with all applications:

- Police vetting form/s completed and processed – suitability of applicants.
- Application form/ Homestay Information and return to homestay Coordinator.
- First homestay visit and interview conducted ideally with all members of the household present.

Homestay requirements

All homestay hosts are expected to have comfortable home and a warm attitude with genuine interest in welcoming international students to their home.

There is no such thing as the 'perfect' homestay so we aim to have a range of host available offering different locations, environments and opportunities to best suit the range of students and their expectations.

Additional requirements to host Junior Students.

No junior student will be placed with any host family that participates in renting a room to Airbnb guest. The school has to comply with the Pastoral Care of International students, due to the short term nature of Airbnb, it would be unpractical for the school to obtain a police check. All other guests over the age of 18 would require a police check, this also includes any flatmates. It is the host family responsibility to inform LSNZ of any changes with regards to any person over the age of 18 residing at the given address whilst you are hosting a junior student.

Student Placement

The homestay information and preference of each successful applicant are entered into the homestay database and matched against whatever details are provided by incoming students in their homestay application forms – sometimes these forms are very carefully filled in, but often they contain very little information. While the Homestay coordinator does endeavour to meet special homestay preference regarding students' gender, nationality, age, duration of stay; the more flexible the a homestay family can be with their preference, the more likely it is that there will be a student match found.

Homestay Fee

The weekly homestay fee covers the following:

- Rent of a fully furnished private study bedroom including bed, linen, desk and chair, as well as storage, lighting and heating in the winter months.
- Two meals a day Monday to Friday (breakfast and dinner). Three meals at the weekends (breakfast, lunch and dinner). Should a family not be at home for evening meal, they should leave a meal for the student.
- Access to a bathroom
- Access to a laundry
- Internet access

The homestay fee is then administered by LSNZ to homestay 2 weekly in advance by electronic direct credit payments into the nominated bank account. Homestay payments are paid on the basis of the number of weeks entered into the payment spreadsheet, so it is very important to inform the Homestay Coordinator of any possible impending changes to the placement to avoid over/underpayment. Should a homestay end up receiving an overpayment, the balance will be requested to be refunded to LSNZ.

Procedure for Interviewing Host Families

LSNZ has selection criteria in place to ensure the suitability of hosts. International student(s) will not be placed with a family who has not been recruited through LSNZ selection process. The criteria will include the following:

- Adequate room following the Pastoral Care guidelines
- Suitable furnishings such as bed, desk and storage
- Understanding of and agreement to the homestay programs' code of conduct

Above all, the most important criteria is the ability of the Homestay host to care for the student in a safe and secure environment, and provide appropriate support and supervision for a student who is adjusting to living in a new environment. It is beneficial to select a wide variety of host families to provide accommodation to the students.

Our homestay coordinator often has to use their judgement when checking homestay criteria. One consideration is whether they would feel comfortable staying in a particular household. The homestay coordinator is trained in host selection and warning signs to look for when meeting hosts and inspecting homes include:

- Inflexible attitudes of potential hosts
- Excessive focus on financial gain as motivation for hosting
- An unclean house
- The presence of many other International students
- Household arrangements not conducive to adequate privacy for student (e.g shared sleeping arrangements)
- Intimidating pets

Monitoring and Support

LSNZ and the Homestay Coordinator monitors each student in homestay placement by:

- Being available to students at LSNZ to discuss any homestay-related questions/concerns
- Mediation and conflict resolution between students and homestay
- Asking to fill in a graduation survey prior to their departure
- Take emergency calls 24/7

The Accommodation Coordinator is also available to homestays to:

- Discuss any hosting issues arising via email, phone and meetings on the school premises
- Visit homestay – or at least twice a year if hosting students under the age of 18 as per the Pastoral Care Code
- Respond to urgent calls