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# St Giles

LONDON CENTRAL

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HOSPITALITY AGREEMENT: INFORMATION AND  
GUIDANCE FOR HOMESTAY PROVIDERS

[Making a Home from Home] | Charlotte Peacock

## Hospitality Agreement: Information and Guidance for Homestay Providers

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## **1 Introduction**

Accommodation is about providing homes, not just beds. Feeling at home is important if a student is to work effectively and succeed. The student's stay with the homestay provider is an important element in their course and a significant part of their total experience of living and studying in England. We therefore regard our homestays as part of the service we provide to students, and so like to work with our hosts to ensure that the students have an enjoyable stay and improve their English as much as possible. We expect that students should be treated as a full member of the household; eating together and sharing the common living areas.

This guide has been produced to help new as well as experienced homestay providers to provide a good service in offering accommodation to St Giles students, and sets out the various aspects of hosting a foreign student which all hosts are required to abide by. Please feel free to contact our Accommodation and Welfare Office if you need any help or advice about St Giles homestay.

***We hope you will enjoy being a St Giles Host!***

## **2 What is St Giles?**

St Giles International is a group of colleges. The first St Giles centre was founded in 1955 by Paul and Diana Lindsay. Still family run, the organization has grown internationally and now includes eight year-round centres and three summer schools in England, USA, Canada, and Brazil.

We offer a variety of English courses: General English, Business English, and English for Tourism and Cambridge Examination preparation. St Giles also trains teachers in TEFL, preparing them for the Cambridge CELTA, DELTA and ICALT and the Trinity TESOL Certificates. We have gained an excellent reputation worldwide for our well-rounded academic programmes, accommodation provision, and the many extra-curricular social activities organised for the students.

## **3 English UK**

All St Giles Colleges in the UK are members of **English UK** (formerly ARELS), which is the professional association for schools accredited by the British Council. As a condition of continuing accreditation, the British Council carries out regular inspections of all members, covering every aspect of the activities of our colleges. An important requirement of our membership is that all hosts abide by the English UK code of conduct for homestay providers, which is reproduced in section 37 of this document.

## **4 Why homestay?**

Our students come here from all over the world to study English as a foreign language. They choose homestay for home comforts, a home atmosphere, and a chance to practise their English outside the classroom, and also because they are interested in learning about English domestic life and culture. Integration in a homestay gives them an ideal opportunity for such an experience and to improve their English. We expect our students to join in and to adapt as much as possible. We have found that homestay providers who put the most energy into hosting students also get the greatest satisfaction.

## **5 Arriving in England**

St Giles London Central is an international college, taking students from many different countries. For most, it is their first time in England, and many things will be new and bewildering for them. It is therefore important to be helpful and understanding. Being aware of any cultural differences makes it easier for everyone.

Homestay accommodation is normally booked from Sunday to Sunday unless otherwise requested and agreed. We ask students to contact their hosts at least a few days before they travel to inform you of their estimated time of arrival, but we cannot guarantee that all students will manage this (apart from other factors, some may lack confidence in making contact in a foreign language). It is therefore essential that someone (an adult) is at home to meet students when they first arrive, so we ask you to make appropriate arrangements for someone to be at home all day if students have not given you an arrival time. If you know what time your student is coming, it is your responsibility to ensure someone (and adult) is at the house to greet the student.

## **6 Nationality of students in your home**

The British Council requires that no students with the same mother tongue are to be accommodated at the same time, unless a specific request has been made. The College would therefore ask you to notify us if you anticipate accommodating simultaneously two students of the same nationality or mother tongue.

## **7 Number of students per home**

British Council regulations state that **no more than four students/paying guests** should be accommodated with the same homestay at the same time. This is to ensure that all students enjoy the real benefits of a homestay environment. Homestay providers accepting students from other sources *in addition to St Giles are obliged to maintain this regulation* and to notify the Accommodation Officer in the event of their anticipating a contravention of this rule. It is also part of the regulation that **no more than two students are placed in one twin/double** room unless specifically requested by the school.

## **8 The homestay provider's mother tongue**

For obvious reasons, it is a requirement that either the host or host's spouse/partner should be fluent in English. Moreover English should be the main language of communication in the home.

## **9 The student's room**

The student must occupy a room visited and approved by a member of staff from the College. The room should contain a full-size bed, wardrobe or fitted cupboard, chest of drawers or dressing table, a mirror, desk or table with table-lamp and chair, window with natural light and, if possible, an easy chair. It is especially important that students have a desk or table, as they will often want to study in the evenings. Please ensure that all rooms have more than one light source to make sure the light is adequate for studying.

## **10 Heating**

Adequate heating should be provided – please bear in mind that many students are used to warmer climates or better insulated homes than ours - and some extra bedding should be offered. If you turn off your heating overnight in the winter, it is important to tell students about this in advance.

## **11 Cleaning**

Students should understand that they are responsible for making their beds and tidying their rooms. They should be encouraged to help you with lighter tasks such as setting the table, clearing the table after a meal, etc. The room should be cleaned regularly - please tell students you have to enter their room for this. Other common areas must also be cleaned regularly. Bed linen and towel(s) should be provided and changed **at least once** a week.

## **12 Bathroom and toilet**

A student should have free access to the bathroom in the same way as the rest of the household. A rota system may be necessary. Ask the student to make sure the bathroom is

left clean and tidy after use, and ensure that they know how to use all the facilities. There must be a lock on the bathroom and toilet door to ensure student's privacy.

### **13 Laundry**

Please advise your student about arrangements for washing, drying and ironing clothes. We expect one wash per week to be included free of charge. You can either do this yourself for the student or explain how they can use the washing machine, pointing out features and restrictions. It is a good idea to supervise them the first time they use it. If there is any additional washing, you can ask the student to contribute a small amount, or make clear where to find the nearest coin-operated launderette facilities.

### **14 Meals**

You should provide your student with two fresh meals each day, including weekends. You are not expected to offer a full English breakfast every day, but you should offer a substantial breakfast, including fruit juice, yogurt or cereal, toast, and tea or coffee. The hot evening meal should be substantial and include vegetables, protein (meat, fish or other – particularly in the case of vegetarians).

In order to give maximum opportunity for English conversation, it is particularly important that students have their main meal with the host **most evenings of the week**. Students will expect to have the same meals as your household, and when possible you should eat with them. The College will inform you where possible at the time of booking if the student has any special dietary requirements, but you should check with the student on arrival if there is any other dietary need for religious or medical reasons.

Students should try to fit in with the mealtimes of the host, although some flexibility is required. On some occasions, it may be possible to adjust the mealtime to suit the student, while on others, for example if a student wishes to stay out some evenings, the host could leave (say) a cold dish in the fridge or a meal that the student could reheat in the oven/microwave. Students should be made aware that they should inform you if they wish to miss a meal. If a student is away for a day at weekends, they may ask you to provide a packed lunch.

### **15 Telephone and Internet**

Most students will have mobile phones and can be expected to use this as their prime means of telecommunication. However, land-line incoming calls should be permitted, provided that they are not excessive and do not cause undue disruption to your home life. Outgoing calls can be made, at your discretion, provided that they are not excessive, and students should expect to reimburse the expenses. Long distance (reverse charge) calls may be made but again only at your discretion, unless in an emergency.

The college provides free internet facilities for during the hours it is open. However many students need to use the internet while in the homestay. We expect you to provide this service free of charge – it will mean that we are more likely to place students with you.

### **16 Safety**

It is important to explain to students any special safety rules that you may have, e.g. the need to keep pills, cleaning fluids and breakables out of the reach of small children. The use of electrical equipment and any room heaters, water heaters, etc., should also be explained carefully, as should fire precautions. Hosts are required by law to carry out a risk assessments on their home.

**Please note all households are legally required to have a Gas Safety check on an annual basis and a Fire Risk Assessment.**

### **17 Keys**

Students must be given their own house key for the period of their stay. If the student loses the key, they should be expected to pay for a replacement as the College cannot accept responsibility for this.

### **18 Guests**

Students may occasionally want to invite a friend or relative to your home. This should be permitted provided that they do not cause an unreasonable disturbance to you or your family. Please inform students *at the beginning of their stay* if you wish to impose any rules about guests. We feel it is reasonable that students should ask your permission first if they wish to invite a guest, and you are entitled to expect that guests should not stay after 10.00 pm. Bear in mind, however, that our students are mainly adults, and will therefore not expect to be given instructions on morality. If students would like overnight guests, this is at your discretion. Please refer them to the homestay accommodation officer to take additional payment for their guest.

### **19 Personal privacy**

There will be times when you yourselves want privacy, and you are entitled to inform the students (gently) about this. However, we expect students to be invited to mix with members of your household at other times beside meal times. Please bear in mind that students have chosen accommodation '*in a home*' or '*with a family*' at least partly in order to practice their English.

We recommend that students should have free access to the TV lounge, etc., at least 3-4 nights a week (up to, say, 11 pm). Certainly, students will want to talk with you and other members of your household as much as possible, so please try to make conversation with them. Please note that it is unacceptable to lock the common areas of the house.

### **20 Students' medical treatment and personal problems**

If your student needs medical treatment, he/she should register with your GP, as a temporary resident. If this is not possible, please direct the student to the Welfare Officer at the College, who will provide relevant advice. Please inform us of any serious issues the student may be experiencing.

Unfortunately, in exceptional circumstances, there may be times when students experience serious emotional problems. We do request information from students concerning whether they are taking medication, and whether they have any special needs, and we endeavour to notify hosts about this wherever possible. Nevertheless, if a student's behaviour is giving you undue cause for concern, please contact us for further advice, and to discuss the best solution available. Please note that, ultimately, we cannot accept responsibility for any unreasonable conduct or behaviour of students, though we will try to work together with you to offer support to you and the student. Naturally, in a legal sense our duty of care is to the students, and we have to act in their best interest.

### **21 Religion and Culture**

A great number of important welfare issues or problems may have their origin in this broad category. It is important for hosts to make an effort to understand and respect differences in cultures, and in some cases to make allowances for this.

Differences in culture can often give rise to misunderstandings for homestay providers as well as students. Differences in voice intonation, the use (or not) of 'please' and 'thank you' are common sources of problems. Try to tactfully explain how things are 'done' in your home and in the UK in general.

All religious differences must be respected and received with an open mind. The College can provide students with information on local centres of worship. Advice on these matters can be sought from the College at any time.

## 22 Smoking

Please make very clear from the start your policy regarding smoking. Both the student and the College should be aware of this before a placement is made. If you do not want to permit smoking in your home, please advise students or their friends to do so outside.

## 23 Transport

Please direct the students on how to travel from and to the school on their first day and show them where to find the nearest tube station and/or bus stop. Please also inform them how to get a safe taxi.

## 24 Insurance

Fair wear and tear should not be charged to students, but they should be expected to pay for any damage they may have caused. As the College cannot accept responsibility for any loss or damage, we strongly advise you to make the necessary arrangements with your own insurance company. We strongly recommend that you inform your insurers that you are hosting paying guests in your home, as this might affect the status of any claims you make under your policy.

## 25 Emergencies

The College should be notified **as soon as possible** in cases of

- serious disputes between yourselves and the student/s
- injury, serious illnesses or cases of severe distress involving the student(s).

Regarding welfare and safety, please let us know if your students don't come home at night. Please call the office in the morning in order for us to find out where they are and more important that they are safe and well.

If you are hosting **students under 18**, you should ensure that your students tell you about their planned movements during the day, and that they return home at a reasonable hour when going out at night. Please note that the College asks that 16- and 17-year-olds are home by 23.00pm during the week and 24.00pm at weekends. The College will inform you of any special rules that apply to individuals, and will expect you to ensure that they are observed.

In case of emergency outside normal office hours, please call the main college number 020 7837 0404 and you will be given the mobile numbers of staff on call.

## 26 Termination of Agreement

The College reserves the right to remove a host's name from the homestay register at any time if, in the opinion of the College, there is good reason to do so. Removal from the register may arise through non-observance of this agreement, inflexibility regarding the service you provide to students or in relation to working with us, or due to a serious complaint by a student, or regular complaints of a less serious nature from a series of students.

## 27 Information about you

The information you provide about yourself and your household on the Questionnaire helps us to provide a good service to both our students as well as to our host, so it is essential that it should be accurate and up to date. The data will be held on our computer system to enable us to make a compatible and successful match between student and host, and



relevant details will be sent to the students we place with you. In order to ensure the accuracy of the information we hold, please keep us informed of any changes in your household.

We are registered under the Data Protection Act and Our policy on Maintaining Personal Data on you as a host of our students is included in our Data Protection Policy, which can be found on our website under 'Group Policies'. By signing this agreement you give your consent to storage of this data. You have the right to request copies of any data we hold on you which is maintained for the purposes of placing our students in the most appropriate homestays to ensure their comfort and well-being.

### **28 Short-stay and long-stay students**

We operate a system of differential pricing for students in *standard half-board accommodation* (single or shared), depending on the student's length of stay. Students staying for 1-23 weeks ('short-stay students') pay normal rates, but those who plan *in advance* to stay for 24 weeks or more ('long-stay students') are offered a slightly lower (concessionary) rate in return for their long-term commitment to the College and to the host family. **Normal rates apply to all students for eight weeks in July and August.** Please see the enclosed information sheet giving the rates.

### **29 Placements**

The Accommodation Officer will normally contact you by telephone in order to place a student. This will establish the sex, nationality and age of the student, the length of stay and the type of accommodation required. You will subsequently receive an e-mail/letter confirming the details. A similar email/letter is sent to the student or his/her agent either by post or by e-mail. Please refer to the information in section 5 **Arriving in England.** Please note we cannot guarantee placing students with you on a continuous basis.

### **30 Payment**

All accommodation payments are made via the college, and you should not accept direct payment from the student. Accommodation is normally booked from Sunday to Sunday, but on occasion students may be booked to arrive or leave a day or so earlier. This will be clearly stated on the booking letter, and in these cases you will be paid for the number of nights booked.

Accommodation payments are made fortnightly. Normally a student is with you for two weeks before an initial payment is made. Payment is then made on the basis of two weeks in arrears and two weeks in advance. Sometimes because of irregular arrival dates or in the case of shorter bookings, payment may be made in the third week after the student's arrival.

We make payment through the BACS system. Money will reach your account by the Tuesday after each pay-run.

The policy of accommodation payments being made solely by the college enables us to retain a modest mark-up on the payments made to you as the host. This is to cover some of our administration costs (for example the services of a full-time Accommodation Officer) and to allow us to maintain and monitor high quality accommodation provision for our students and to ensure a good supply of students to our homestay providers.

### **31 Reservations and extension of stay**

If you accept a reservation from the college, it is implicit that you intend to be present overnight in your home for the full duration of the student's stay. If you intend to be absent during any part of the stay, you must discuss the alternative arrangement with the



Accommodation Officer to ensure that they are acceptable to the college. In some cases, we may agree to make alternative arrangements temporarily to cover your period of absence. If you need to go away for any unplanned period after the student has arrived, you must inform the Accommodation Officer as a matter of urgency, and consult with them regarding alternative arrangements.

Reservations must be made via the college and not from the students directly. Any requests for accommodation or changes in accommodation, period of stay, etc., must be agreed in the first instance with the Accommodation Officer and *not with the student*. This is because we feel it is reasonable to give priority to meeting accommodation requests made in advance for new students: existing students who wish to extend their stays with you after arrival have not by definition reserved this in advance, and therefore cannot expect to be given first preference. To do otherwise would cause inconvenience to those students who book in advance, particularly when there are shortages of accommodation. Wherever possible the accommodation officer will do his/her best to make changes in accordance with the wishes of the student.

### **32 Absences/holidays/retainers**

There is a provision at the booking stage for long-stay students (see section 28) to arrange a holiday break of 1 week per 12 weeks of study (maximum 2 weeks at any one time) provided they extend their stay by a matching number of weeks. You will be advised of holiday dates at the time of booking. Students who decide after arrival that they want to take a holiday break, or students requesting changes in holiday arrangements after arrival are required to give the office 4 weeks' notice of their change of plans.

In all these cases, students should expect to pay 50% of the normal weekly charge as a retainer, unless they clear the room of their belongings. The office will make appropriate adjustments to your next scheduled payment in these cases. No reduction in charges will be made for absences of six days or less.

Please note that courses for all students are discontinued for one week at Christmas. If a student on a half board arrangement remains in the homestay during the Christmas week when classes are discontinued, s/he should receive full board on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> December, for which you receive a supplementary payment. Students on bed & breakfast arrangements can, with your agreement, opt for full-board during Christmas week.

### **33 Cancellation**

#### **Cancellation before arrival**

No cancellation fee will be paid if *at least one week's notice* has been given before the arrival date, or if notice is given on a Monday preceding a student's expected arrival the following weekend.

If less than one week's notice is given before the arrival date, or if a student fails to arrive and if in each case the College is unable to replace the student, a cancellation fee of £50 will be paid.

The College cannot guarantee that a student will arrive at the agreed time, nor that s/he will stay for the whole period, since her/his movements and decisions are not under our control. However, every effort is made to minimise any inconvenience or loss on those occasions when arrangements go wrong. Students who arrive after the reserved date of arrival will be expected to pay for the days they were absent, except in cases where you have been notified before the agreed date of arrival.

### **Cancellation after arrival**

If any student wishes to leave the homestay before the agreed date of departure, s/he must normally give one week's notice or payment in lieu. If the student gives notice to the Accommodation Officer on the Monday after arrival, then only six days' notice will be given to the homestay provider (i.e. the student can leave on the following Sunday without penalty), as it is obviously impossible for the student to give notice on a Sunday, when the College is closed.

**Long-stay students** must remain in the same accommodation for a minimum of 24 weeks in order to qualify for the concessionary rate. If a long-stay student changes his/her plans and leaves the homestay before completing 24 weeks, the homestay provider is entitled to receive the normal short-stay rate from the date of the student's arrival until the final day of his/her notice period.

Any advance payment already made beyond the leaving date should be refunded to the College. The Accommodation Officer will discuss this with you.

The notice required is waived by the College in the following cases:

- where the homestay provider has failed to observe any of the terms of this Agreement;
- where, in the opinion of the College, the student or homestay provider are seriously incompatible, and an immediate change is in the student's best interests.

### **34 Problems or changes**

The Accommodation and Welfare Officer is available during office hours to discuss any problems you may have with your student.

***Under no circumstances should a student be evicted without the prior authority of the College.***

You should also notify the College beforehand if there is to be **any change** in the accommodation as booked, e.g. if you are planning to ask student to change rooms, or start sharing with another student. Please remember that sleeping arrangements should be appropriate to the number of people staying in the house. For example, it is not appropriate for hosts or their guests to be sleeping in living rooms while hosting students.

### **35 Income tax**

Please note that you are responsible for any dealings with HM Revenue and Customs regarding your disclosure of income from homestay for tax purposes. You can get advice about this from your local HMRC office if you need to. You should, of course, be aware that the College is obliged to provide details of such payments to HMRC in the event of being asked for information.

### **36 Data Protection**

All hosts accommodating students in their home must be aware that any data that the college has on file may be shared with external companies on request i.e. Inland Revenue, UKVI, during British Council / ISI Inspections and others that may be necessary. You are also required to keep the college updated on any changes that may fail to meet the policy of retaining persistent data in following legal and data archival requirements.

### **37 Students under 18 years of age**

All hosts accommodating students under the age of 18 are required to fill out a declaration form, which will be provided by the College, stating that they and any other adults in the home are not unfit to be in contact with such students. Hosts must also be willing to undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (previously known as CRB checks).

Please note that it is a criminal offence for an individual who is on the DBS barred list to apply to become involved in the provision of homestay which is specified as 'regulated activity' for the purposes of the DBS. Please also note that the possession of a criminal record will not necessarily prevent an applicant from becoming a host, as all cases are judged individually according to the nature of the role and information provided.

### **38 English UK Code of Conduct**

As members of English UK (formerly ARELS), we are required to ensure that all homestay providers abide by the following code of conduct. It should be understood that by signing your Homestay application form, you have agreed to observe the requirements of this Code as well as the other provisions of this Hospitality Agreement.

#### **As the Homestay provider I agree:**

- To encourage the student to speak English as much as possible in my home
- To encourage the student to feel at home and treat him/her as a member of the family rather than as a paying guest
- Not to host another student of the same native language at the same time unless by special arrangement with the students and the schools/centres
- To provide a clean and comfortable student room, meeting the requirements laid down by the British Council
- To provide a home environment in which it is possible for the student to carry on his/her English studies properly
- To provide the student with a balanced and appropriate diet
- To show due concern for the welfare, safety and security of the student during his/her stay
- To give the student reasonable and regular access to bathroom and laundry facilities
- To maintain a close liaison with the student's school/centre and so be in position to help resolve any problems that the student may encounter during his/her stay
- To respect the student's different cultural background and be sensitive to the needs of the student

**You should retain this complete document for future reference.**

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