



Warm Welcome Student Handbook

WELCOME TO **WARM WELCOME!**

Homestay is about enjoying a home, not just renting a room. Feeling at home is important if you are to thrive. It's a significant part of your total experience of living and studying in Britain. Many of the schools we work with regard homestay as one of the best ways to help you adapt to British life and improve your English language skills.

This handbook has been designed to provide you with a good understanding of what you can expect from staying as a guest with Warm Welcome Homestay, and to help you to enjoy this experience.

We hope that the information contained in this handbook will answer the majority of your questions and concerns but we realise we cannot cover everything so if you do have any specific questions we would urge you to contact us to discuss so that we can help and advise you.

Save our numbers in your phone: 0121 638 0210 (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) or 07749 741 490 (out of office hours)

Our team will always be happy to help!



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Our Hosts & Their Families

Warm Welcome has a range of hosts who are ready to welcome you to their homes.

Our homestays are located in the residential areas and leafy suburbs of Birmingham and are just a short walk away from a bus or train station.

You can expect journey times of between approximately 25 and 45 minutes from the accommodation to your school.

Our hosts' homes have been checked by our Homestay Director to ensure they meet our high standards and aim to comply with British Council guidelines. Our homestay accommodation is visited on an annual basis to ensure our high standards are maintained.

Your bedroom

Bedrooms are for your exclusive use so will not be used by any other member of the household. You will have a clean, comfortable bed along with adequate storage facilities for all your belongings. There will be a desk and chair in your room for study but if this is not possible, your host will provide you with an alternative suitable space in the home.

You are not expected to clean the home but you should always keep your bedroom clean and tidy. Remember that it is a home and not a hotel – there is no maid service in the UK to clean up after you. Plus, most hosts, male and female, go to work Monday to Friday and have busy schedules that don't allow time for them to constantly clean up after you.

Please ask your host if you wish to eat in your room and remember to make your bed and empty your rubbish bin regularly.

Meal Plans and kitchen use

There are two options to choose from when booking your homestay accommodation:



Victoria Square, Birmingham City Centre

- **Breakfast / Self-catering**

With this option, you are provided with a 'help yourself' style breakfast: cereal and/or toast/jam/eggs and tea/coffee. In the evening you will eat out or have light use of the kitchen. Some hosts will allow full use of the kitchen. Please ask at the time of booking.

It is safe to drink water from the tap in the UK so you shouldn't expect bottled water to be available at home. You can buy bottled water from the supermarket if you wish.

Again, you will be expected to clean up after yourself and not leave the kitchen in a mess – your host is there to provide support and guidance but not a maid service.

- **Breakfast & Evening Meal**

With this option you are provided breakfast as above plus a nutritious evening meal that your host/host family would normally eat. Your hosts are not expected to prepare meals from your home country every single day. You are here to experience British culture and the variety of food on offer from your host/host family is a part of that. If there are specific foods that you do not like or more importantly, are allergic to, please tell your host/host family and they will prepare food that is more to your liking. You should also indicate any food allergies on your application form so that we can ensure your host is informed prior to arrival.

Meal times should be agreed between yourself and your host. In the UK people generally eat their evening meal between 6pm and 8pm.

If you are going to be late for dinner or are meeting friends and eating in a restaurant, please inform your hosts so that they do not waste time, effort and money cooking for you. If you would like your meal to be left in the fridge for you to reheat later, please let your host know. Wasting food is considered very impolite in the UK.

Washing Up

If you use the kitchen to make a cup of tea, make a sandwich or heat something on the stove etc you must clean up after yourself. This means you wash, dry and put away any cutlery or plates, bowls, dishes, pots and pans that you use.

Bathrooms

It can be a little different from your home country in that most bathrooms in the UK contain a toilet, bath and sink. Often the shower is attached to the bath and sometimes there is a separate shower cubicle. Bidet facilities for washing are very uncommon in the UK. Private or ensuite bathroom facilities are also not often found in UK homes and must be requested at the time of booking, subject to availability and price supplement.

In most homes, you will share the use of the bathroom with other members of the household. It is therefore important that you leave the bathroom clean and tidy after using it.

Be careful not to leave your belongings lying around the bathroom or to leave it in a mess. If, for example, the floor becomes very wet during use, please ask your hosts for a mop so you can dry the floor. Your hosts are responsible for cleaning the bathroom but you should leave it as you would want to find it – not with water all over the floor making it unhygienic and unsafe for the next person who uses it.

There may be a daily bathroom routine, so please discuss with your hosts what the best time to use the bathroom is. As a guide, we suggest that spending about 15–20 minutes in the bathroom is acceptable. Your hosts will provide you with the use of toilet paper, hand wash/soap and at least a weekly change of bath towel. You should, however, buy your own toiletries, such as toothpaste, shampoo and shower gel.



Birmingham is famous for its' canals



Laundry

For adult students your host will be happy to show you how to use the washing machine and how to dry your laundry, sometimes they may insist on doing it for you. Your host will also let you know when the best time is for you to do your weekly laundry, if you are to do it yourself. If you are aged under 18 your host will do your laundry for you.

Keys & Security

You will be given a front door key to your homestay on arrival. Please keep it safe. They should not be copied or given to anyone else. Your house keys should not be kept together with your homestay accommodation address. If you lose your keys, you should report it to your hosts immediately. You may be expected to pay to have them replaced or have the lock changed on the front door. Please remember to lock windows and the door of the home behind you whenever you go out and when you come home. Your hosts will show you how to do this when you arrive. Security is very important in the UK, which may be different from your experience at home in your own country. It is one of the most frustrating things hosts deal with – students not locking doors and windows, so please do not forget – ever!

Inviting Friends Home

You must ask your host's permission in advance if you would like to invite friends to visit. Friends are not permitted to stay overnight or to eat with you in the home without your host's permission.

Heating in the home

In winter, it gets very cold, and the homestay accommodation will have the heating turned on to keep the house warm. Please note that the heating may not be on all the time as keeping it on all day is extremely expensive. You should not be home during the day anyway because you should be at school. Please don't open windows when the heating is on as that is a waste of energy and money.

If you are not warm enough, please discuss this with your hosts. They will be happy to provide you with extra blankets. However, it is advisable to bring warm, comfortable clothing to wear around the home, and a warm coat/jacket for outdoor wear, especially during the cold winter months.

Air conditioning

In your home country, if it is a warmer climate than ours, you probably have air conditioning systems to keep your homes and public buildings cool. This is not true for the UK. We have such a short summer season with even shorter periods of 'hot' weather that there is no real need for air con. You can open windows to let air circulate your room but you must remember to close the windows when you leave the home – security, as previously mentioned, is extremely important in the UK.

Registering With A Doctor

In the UK we have hospitals and doctors surgeries. Hospitals are generally for emergencies and major illnesses, while doctors' surgeries specialise in general health issues. We call the doctor a GP (General Practitioner) and you can register by finding your local surgery online and then visiting to complete an application. When you register, make sure you take your passport, letter of acceptance from your school and proof of your address (your Warm Welcome Homestay Booking Confirmation is proof of this). If you plan to stay for six months or more, we strongly advise you to register with a GP. If you do not you will have to pay for medical bills. For common illnesses such as colds, flu, fevers or allergies you can buy medicine over the counter or get a quick diagnostic at a local chemist/pharmacy. Supermarkets and convenience stores also sell a range of medicines for common illnesses.

Registering with a Dentist

Dental treatment is not free in the UK. Everyone has to pay something towards the cost of dental treatment. If you need to see a dentist, please ask your hosts for help and advice. They are usually registered with a dentist and can make an appointment for you with their dental practice. You do not need to register if you are here for a short stay of 2 to 4 weeks but for longer stays upto 6 months, it is advisable to register when you arrive.

Keep your host and school informed

Please speak to your hosts as soon as possible if you feel unwell. They will be able to contact a doctor for you or help you find a nearby chemist/pharmacy. If you are unable to attend your classes, please contact your school to tell them you will not be there. It is very important that you let your school know you are unwell and won't be coming to class. You should phone/text your school each day you are unwell and unable to attend your classes.

Alcohol & Smoking

You must be aged 18 or over to be able to buy an alcoholic drink in the UK. Open bottles/containers of alcohol are not permitted on public transport. It is against the law to smoke in any public building, workplace or semi-enclosed space. Most hosts will not allow you to smoke in their home. The host may allow you to smoke outside – if they do, please dispose of the cigarette ends properly. You must be aged 18 to buy any tobacco products such as cigarettes, rolling tobacco and cigarette papers.

Respect

Remember that your homestay is not a hotel but a family home and it is very important that you show your host/host family respect and follow their house rules. House rules are discussed with you on arrival at your homestay. If you consistently break the rules, you may find that you are removed from the home as we reserve the right to do this should your behaviour be deemed unacceptable.

Emergencies

In an emergency take the appropriate action:

- For emergency services (ambulance/police/fire service) dial 999 on your phone.
- For free health advice and guidance and less serious emergencies dial 111 on your phone.
- To contact the police on a less urgent matter dial 101 on your phone.
- Contact your school and/or hosts.
- Get someone to take you to the nearest hospital Urgent Casualty Centre (UCC).



Bullring Shopping Centre Birmingham City Centre

TIPS:

If you are European citizen, you can get a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before you travel to the UK. It will allow you to receive NHS treatment at a reduced cost or free of charge.

Before travelling to the UK you should buy travel insurance. This will help to cover medical costs and lost/damaged property should any unforeseen problems arise.

Public transport in Birmingham

The bus network in Birmingham and the West Midlands is extensive and really is the best way to travel and explore the region. There are train services that link parts of the city to the city centre and can be a more convenient way to travel but it does not provide you with the same flexibility as the bus network.

You can buy a travel card from your smartphone. Download the 'nxbus m-ticket' app to your phone and apply for the student 4 week bus travelcard. Your school or Warm Welcome will be able to advise you how to do this on arrival.

The current cost for 4 weeks student bus travel is £41.90 (this may be subject to change)

Unlimited data for your phone

Most students opt for Three's unlimited data, messages and calls package – you can purchase your sim card from Three's retail outlet in the Bull Ring shopping centre.

The current cost for 4 weeks is £35. Once the 4 weeks has elapsed you can top up online. Again, your school or Warm Welcome will be able to assist you in doing this on arrival.

Registering with the Police and obtaining your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP card)

Citizens of certain countries will need to register with the police. If so, your passport will be stamped with 'police registration within 7 days of arrival' when you first arrive in the UK. To find out if you need to register visit:

<http://www.gov.uk/register-with-the-police>

It is extremely important to register promptly if you are required to do so. You will be charged £34 your first registration, but there is no charge for a renewal. To find out more, visit: www.west-midlands.police.uk/services/overseas-visitor-registration. Failure to register may result in having to pay a fine of up to £5000.

Top tips for an enjoyable stay

- Treat your homestay like your own home but not like a hotel. Your host/host family is there to provide guidance and support but they are not your personal maid service.
- Keep your hosts informed of your plans. Let them know if you will not be home for dinner, if you will be arriving home later than usual, are going to visit another city or if you will be out all night, for example.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to practice and improve your English language skills every day by taking part in family activities, having dinner regularly with your hosts, if on a halfboard meal option, and enjoying everyday interaction and conversation.
- Say hello and goodbye when entering or leaving the home – it is polite and courteous to do so.
- Remember that 'please' and 'thank you' is very important when asking for something to be done or in return for having something done for you.
- Don't talk about money - it is not uncommon for students to be interested in how much a host's/host family's home or car is worth or how much salary a host is paid in their job but this is considered very impolite in British Culture – please don't ask your hosts about their private finances.
- Communicate! If you are not sure about anything, ask your hosts or us here at Warm Welcome Homestay – we are always happy to help.



GET IN TOUCH



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 www.warm-welcome.co.uk