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HOST FAMILY GUIDE

for International Students
2026/27



Dear Host family,

Thank you for your interest in hosting our international students. Your support helps students feel welcome and part of a family.

Most students arrive between **February and June/July**, many are **under 18**, and they take their studies seriously. On average, they have over 20 hours of timetabled classes per week at the College.

They usually prefer to live **close to the College or City Centre**. A **free College bus (No. 36)** runs between the College and the City Centre making travel easy and convenient during term time.

Students stay on a full-board basis, and you are required to provide breakfast, packed lunch, dinner, and fruit. Treat students like a member of the family sharing meals and common areas, this will make them feel comfortable and supported. Occasionally, students may ask to cook for themselves.

Hosting helps students:

- Improve their English
- Learn about British life and culture
- Live in a safe, respectful home

We are legally required to do a **DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check** for all household members over 18.

Host families can be individuals, couples, or families of any kind. Hosting is an opportunity to share your home, your culture, kindness and make a positive and lasting impact on the student's experience, not just a financial arrangement.

We match students and hosts based on application details, your location, and previous feedback. Please be advised that **placements are not guaranteed every year**.

The booklet is organised alphabetically for ease of reference. We hope you find our guidelines helpful.

If you have any questions, please contact us **01752 305755** or e-mail **international@cityplym.ac.uk**

Kind regards

The International Team



ABSENCES

If a student is unwell or has an urgent commitment and cannot attend College, they must email both their **tutor** and the **International Office before 9.00am** on each day of absence. Some students may need a gentle reminder to do this.

ARRIVALS/DEPARTURE

When you agree to take a student, you will be informed of their arrival/departure dates and times. Please collect your student **in person** at the College upon arrival.

For departures, you may arrange and pay a taxi for your student(s) to come to the College by themselves, if necessary.

AGREEMENT

Once you have agreed to host a student, the following details will be included in your **Hosting Agreement**: student details, hosting duration, payment rate/amount and arrangement, and expectations of you as a host.

You will be asked to sign the agreement to confirm that you accept the terms and conditions, and return a signed copy to the International Office. Please note: the agreement is between you and the College.

BATHROOM

Students should have free and regular access to the bathroom, just like other members of the household. You may need to agree on a rota for bath and shower times, especially in busy households.

There should be sufficient hot water available for a **daily shower or bath**. Showers are usually preferred, as some cultures consider it unhygienic to bathe without rinsing off soap with clean, running water.

Some students may not be familiar with British-style bath or shower fittings, so please be prepared to **explain how to use them clearly**.

In addition to personal hygiene, **running water may be needed for ritual purification** before prayer, especially for practising Muslims, who pray five times a day and wash beforehand.

Please be aware that water may occasionally splash onto the floor. Kindly show your student where the cleaning materials are kept and ask them to leave the bathroom clean and tidy after each use.



BEDROOMS

A single room must be **spacious enough** to include a comfortable bed, a table or desk, a wardrobe and adequate storage space. As most of our students stay for several months, their room should be comfortable and offer enough space to store their belongings.

Rooms shared by **two students** must be large enough to accommodate both students comfortably, allowing them to study and live without constantly being in each other's way. Each student should have their **own desk or table**, especially as many students bring laptops for their studies.

If it is not possible to provide a desk in the bedroom, then a suitable alternative should be made available elsewhere in the home. This space must be **quiet and free from distractions**, allowing the student to study undisturbed, without having to compete for space with others.

BEDDING

The host family must provide **weekly clean bed linen** and a sufficient number of blankets or duvets appropriate to the season. Please be aware that some students come from **warmer climates** and may find the UK weather, especially in winter, quite cold.

While we **do not expect heating to be on overnight**, enough bedding should be provided to ensure the student stays warm and comfortable.

BENEFITS

If you are receiving any form of government benefits, we advise that you **contact the relevant department or agency** to confirm that hosting a student will not affect your entitlement.

BICYCLES AND CARS

If your student is driving a car or riding a bicycle, please ensure they are aware of **UK legal** requirements and encourage them to read the **Highway Code**. Traffic laws in the UK may differ significantly from those in their home country, and safety is essential.

CLEANING

Some students may not be used to tidying their own rooms or cleaning up after using shared areas like the bathroom and kitchen. You may need to explain that they are now expected to take responsibility for these tasks, and that **you will not be able to clean their room if it has not been tidied first**.

It's a good idea to set clear guidelines about your expectations regarding cleanliness and shared responsibilities. We recommend agreeing on a **regular cleaning time** for the student's room, perhaps while they are in class, and letting them know in advance.

DENTIST

If a student needs to see a dentist, we recommend that they visit your family dentist if possible. Please make the student aware that they will be expected to pay for treatment, **unless**

they have been or will be staying in the UK for more than six months and are eligible for free NHS treatment.

You should also explain that it can be difficult to find an NHS dentist and that private dental treatment may be the only option. For help with finding a dentist, students can contact NHS 111 by dialling 111.

DAMAGES

Students should not be charged for **fair wear and tear**, but they are expected to pay for any **accidental damage caused by carelessness**.

In the event of a dispute, members of the **International Office** can be contacted to help **mediate**.

Please check with your household insurance to ensure you are covered for any accidental damage, as the College is **not able to offer compensation or financial assistance** in such cases.

DBS - DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE

If you will be hosting any students under the age of 18, a DBS check is required for every member of your household aged 18 or over. Please note a DBS certificate obtained through another organisation cannot be used to host our students. DBS Application guidance will be sent after a **successful home visit** (for new host families) or when your current certificate is **due for renewal**. Please send us a copy for our record once you receive your DBS certificate. The certificate is valid for **three years**.

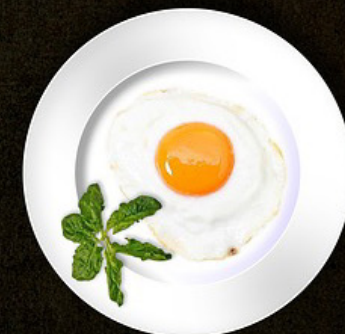
DIETARY NEEDS AND FOOD PREFERENCES

All students will have completed a questionnaire that helps us match them with the most suitable family. This form includes questions about any dietary requirements, such as vegetarianism, diabetes, Halal food preferences, or restrictions on pork due to health conditions or religious beliefs.

You will be informed of any such requirements before we place a student with you. These dietary preferences should not prevent the student from experiencing traditional British cuisine. In fact, it is encouraged that they try English food as part of their cultural experience.

To assist students in adjusting, it may be helpful to explain the ingredients of each dish, as the food may differ from what they are accustomed to. It's also beneficial for you to enquire about any foods they do not eat or particularly dislike. As some students may hesitate to voice their preferences, kindly encourage them to share if they have strong dislikes.

Please be understanding if students eat at times that might seem unusual for British people, and they may even have rice for breakfast. While it's important to promote British food, flexibility is key, especially if the student is hesitant to try new dishes.



DIFFICULTIES WITH THE STUDENT

If you experience any difficulties with your student, we recommend speaking with them directly in the first instance. Most students are happy to explain any cultural or religious differences and are often grateful when you take the time to explain your own customs and household expectations.

Cultural differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, but open and respectful conversation can often resolve these issues.

If you have any concerns or are unsure how to approach a situation, **please do not hesitate to contact the International Office**. We are here to support both you and the student.

DOCTOR AND HEALTH CARE

Students studying in Britain for less than 6 months, have to pay for NHS treatment except in the case of out-patient emergency treatment or treatment for an infectious disease or as a child (under 18-year-old). In such cases they will be seen as a temporary resident. Students should have arranged private health insurance in their home country before arrival.

Students who enrolled on a course longer than 6 months are treated for free on the NHS from the very first day of their stay in this country before arrival.

Please make sure to register your student at your own surgery within two weeks of them coming to stay with

you. Please don't let them wait with registering until they need a doctor.



EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

In the case of a genuine emergency, please treat your student as you would do with a visiting friend or relative and ring the usual emergency services by calling 999. Please notify the International Office as soon as possible about the situation. If the emergency occurs **outside of office hours**, please contact us at the **earliest opportunity during the next working day**.

If your student falls ill, please contact your family doctor and ask him/her to see your student, or call an ambulance if you feel the situation is serious. You could also consider using the **NHS 111 Advice line** for medical guidance or, in emotional or mental health emergencies, reach out to **Samaritans by calling 116 123** (available 24/7).

GAS

According to the **Gas Safety Executive**, the host family is responsible for ensuring gas safety in the home. You must ensure **that all gas appliances are properly maintained and safe to use**. A **yearly Landlord Gas Safety check**, carried out by a **Gas Safe registered engineer**, is required. Please send a copy of the valid certificate to the International Office at least two weeks before your student(s) arrive.

HEATING

Adequate heating should be provided in the student's room at no extra cost to the student. Please remember that students may come from much warmer climates and have not had time to acclimatise. Please ask the students if they require additional blankets/duvets. Please also take into account that they may need to do lots of studying at home in the day, for which their room needs to be warm enough.

HOLIDAYS

Some students return home during the Christmas and Easter holidays. If your student plans to be away during these times, please note the following:

For a full week or full weeks then the student should pay 50% of their fees. This means that they can leave their belongings in their rooms and the host family is not required to prepare any food and organise laundry for the student.

For less than one week, the full payment is required.

If the host plan to go on holiday, then inform your student as early as possible. Also, notify the International Office about the arrangements made for your student during your absence or if you would like us to find an alternative host.

Occasionally, a weekend away is acceptable if the host can arrange for **an adult family member or friend to be on call** during their absence, who can check on the student if needed. Longer or more frequent absences are not suitable unless previously agreed upon with the International Office or in cases of urgent changes in circumstances.

HOME INSPECTIONS

To ensure that the host family meets legal and regulatory requirements, a College representative will arrange a home visit every year to touch base and ensure a positive living environment for our international students

HOMESICKNESS

If your student is feeling homesick, encourage them to talk about their home and share photographs of their family. This often helps them feel understood and supported.

Cultural differences can sometimes make it difficult for students to express unhappiness or ask for what they need, especially if they come from cultures where it is considered impolite. Please reassure your student that you want to know if there are any problems and that you will do your best to help.



HOUSE RULES

It is reasonable for host families to communicate their house rules to the student. We suggest writing these rules down and providing them to the student as soon as possible after their arrival. Discussing the rules with the student can help them understand the reasons behind them. Please try to be flexible, as being too strict may make the student feel unhappy or unwelcome in your home.

INSURANCE

Please ensure that your home insurance covers having a paying guest in your home. The College also recommends that you have a public liability or occupiers' liability insurance. This kind of insurance often included with your home insurance, but you should confirm this with your insurance provider.

We recommend to all students to organise belongings insurance while in the UK. Endsleigh is a reputable provider specializing in student insurance. Please remind your student upon arrival about the importance of having this coverage.

INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

The College has an International Office that supports international students with various issues. You can contact the office at **01752 305755** or mobile **07483 119127** (Office hours only).

INTERNET

It is essential that students have access to reliable internet during their stay, as it is a crucial resource for their studies, communication with family, and general well-being.

KEYS

We expect all students to be provided with a key to access the house.

LANGUAGE

Conversation is a vital part of the student's learning process. We ask hosts to involve students as much as possible, in their everyday activities and engage in daily conversations. Discussing their day over dinner, for example, not only helps improve their language skills but also helps them feel more like part of the family.

LAUNDRY

Towels and bed linen should be provided and these, together with the student's clothing should be laundered at regular intervals. Some hosts are happy to wash clothes for their students whilst others prefer to show them how to use the washing machine themselves. Whatever the arrangements, please speak to your students about this. Some students like to wash their underwear by hand themselves. Please show them where they should wash and dry these items. In some cultures, clothes are changed and washed very often. If this is the case with your student, explain that you will only do a normal amount of washing. If the student has a lot more extra washing, please inform them they will have to go to a launderette to do their extras

LEISURE

Students will probably enjoy accompanying the host on outings, in order to discover more about their local surroundings, and get to know you better too! They also appreciate the chance to meet other English people on social occasions and are grateful for advice and information on local places to visit, leisure facilities, events etc. The College also organises activities and trips for international students.

MANNERS

Please be aware that manners vary across cultures. For example, some cultures may not use phrases like "please" or "thank you" as frequently but may instead show their appreciation through actions, such as helping with the washing up.



MEALS

Our students are provided with a **full board**, which means you are required to provide breakfast, a packed or cooked lunch, and dinner.

Most of the time your student will be in College during lunch time except for weekends. Some students might like a packed lunch, whilst others prefer to buy lunch for themselves in our refectory. If a student is home during lunch time, then it is not necessary for you to be at home to supply lunch, but we suggest that you tell your student that they can get something out of the fridge or can make themselves a sandwich. The evening meal should be a balanced, substantial cooked dinner. We expect that this will include vegetables, meat, chicken or fish (most of the time).

We ask our students to give you plenty

of notice if they are going to miss a meal, but it can be helpful to gently remind them of this from time to time.

Students are expected to share the same meals as the family and to eat together whenever possible, unless a special dietary request has been agreed upon. We also ask that hosts make fruit available for students to help themselves to, within reason. While we encourage students to enjoy traditional British meals, and most are happy to do so, some may find certain foods unfamiliar. For example, they may be used to a diet that includes more rice or salads rather than cooked vegetables. We simply ask that you remain as flexible as possible and, when you can, try to accommodate their preferences. Your understanding and hospitality are greatly appreciated.

MONEY AND PASSPORTS

Students should be encouraged to keep their money and passports safely in their rooms and to avoid carrying them unless they are needed that day. The College will provide guidance and support to students on how to open a bank account.

NATIONALITIES

Host families should avoid accommodating students of the same nationality or who share the same mother tongue, unless all students are comfortable with this arrangement. When students speak the same language at home, they have fewer opportunities to practise and improve their English, one of the main reasons they choose to live with a host family. If students request to be placed with a friend or relative, please encourage them to continue speaking English at home as much as possible.

NOTICE

Our aim is for students to stay with their host family for the full duration of their planned visit. Occasionally, circumstances may change. Should a student wish to move, we ask that they provide at least one week's notice.

If a host family wishes to end the arrangement, we ask that they provide at least one week's notice. In rare and difficult situations, the College reserves the right to move a student from a host family without prior notice.

While the notice period is ongoing, we ask that you continue to treat

your student with care and respect. Maintaining a calm and supportive atmosphere, even in difficult moments, helps ensure a smooth transition for everyone.

OVERNIGHT STAYS

Your student should always inform you if they plan to be away overnight.

For students under 18, they must provide you with a **Parents Consent Form for Overnight Stays**, signed by their parents at least two days before any night they are not staying with their assigned host family.

Trips with less than 48 hours' notice cannot be permitted.

From time to time, students may ask to stay overnight at a friend's house. Any such arrangement should be discussed and agreed with the host family, and should remain occasional rather than a regular occurrence.

PAYMENT

The College pays host families every four weeks during the hosting period.

If the contract ends earlier, the College reserves the right to reclaim any overpaid amounts.

We recommend that host families do not rely on student rent as their main income. Hosting should be a rewarding experience, and families should only open their homes if they genuinely enjoy it. Students may leave early, visas can fall through, and the number of students can vary yearly. Therefore, income from hosting is not always guaranteed.



PETS

Each student will be asked whether they are comfortable staying with a family that has pets. Many households in the UK have pets, which may be unfamiliar to students from other countries. While we often encourage students to experience life with families who have pets, we will never place a student in a home if they have allergies or a fear of certain animals.

Some students may need time to adjust to living with pets. Even those who are used to animals might be surprised by the close bond you share with your pet, for example, pets being allowed in the kitchen or bedroom, which may be unusual in other cultures. We recommend talking with your student about your pet beforehand to make sure they feel comfortable and understand the household environment.

POLICE/SAFETY

Many international students study in Plymouth, and the local police collaborate closely with the College to help keep students safe. At induction, a College Safeguarding Officer meets with students to offer advice and raise awareness of potential safety issues.

Students may be unfamiliar with some electrical or gas equipment, so it is helpful to explain how to use these safely.

Please exchange phone numbers/WhatsApp contacts with your student, so they can reach you in an emergency.

It's important to remind your student to stay cautious when meeting new people, going on dates, or going out with friends. Students are also advised not to share your contact details with people they've just met, and your support in reinforcing this is greatly appreciated.

REMOVAL OF STUDENT

The College's primary responsibility is the welfare of its students. As such, we reserve the right to remove a student from a host family without explanation or prior notice if it is deemed necessary.

RESPONSIBILITY

Once you agree to host an international student, you are responsible for ensuring they have a safe place to stay for the duration of their stay.

If any concerns or disagreements arise with your student, we encourage you to address them through open and respectful communication. If the situation cannot be resolved, please

reach out to the **International Office** during office hours for guidance and support.

If an urgent situation occurs outside of office hours and the student cannot remain in your home overnight, please assist them in arranging temporary accommodation, such as a B&B or hotel. Afterward, be sure to notify the International Office as soon as possible during office hours, this is of utmost importance.

We kindly ask that **both hosts and students honour the agreed notice period** whenever possible. Please endeavour to keep things as normal as possible in support of the student experience and to alleviate any uncomfortable situations.

SMOKE DETECTORS/CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR

It is a legal requirement to have smoke detectors in your home. There must be at least one detector on each level of the house.

Additionally, it is a legal requirement for landlords to have a carbon monoxide (CO) detector in properties with solid fuel appliances, such as coal or wood-burning stoves. For added safety, a CO detector is also required if your property uses gas or oil appliances.

Both smoke and carbon monoxide detectors should be checked regularly to ensure they are in proper working order.

TAX

The College advises host families to declare any income received from hosting students. However, under the 'Rent a Room' scheme, it is possible to earn a certain amount tax-free. For further details or questions, please contact your local tax office or visit the HMRC website.

TELEVISION

Most students enjoy watching television, as it offers both entertainment and an opportunity to improve their English. Please invite your student to watch TV with you, as they may be unsure at first whether they are welcome. Discussing programmes afterwards can also be a helpful way to support their language development.

TIMETABLES

Students might not have classes every day or may only attend for part of the day. On days without scheduled lessons, they could be at home.

TOILETS

Some students may be unfamiliar with pedestal toilets or the use of toilet

paper, as in some cultures washing is preferred. In certain countries, toilet paper is placed in a bin rather than flushed because of weaker drainage systems. Please kindly explain your household's expectations for toilet paper use and disposal. For female students, be sure to explain how sanitary products should be disposed of in your home.

VISITS FROM PARENTS/ FRIENDS

Occasionally, parents or family members may travel to Plymouth to visit the student, or friends from other addresses may want to meet up.

The College has set the following guidelines for such visits:

- 1. No visitors during the first four days** after the student's arrival.
- 2. All visits** must be communicated in advance and agreed upon by the host.
- 3. One visit** from parents to the host home is considered reasonable. If the parents are staying in Plymouth longer and wish to see their child more often, these meetings should take place **outside the home**, unless otherwise agreed with the host family.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

Here are the contact details of other agencies that can provide useful information:

- City College Plymouth switch board: **01752 305300**
- International Office: **01752 305755**
- International Mobile (Office hours only): **07483 119127**
- Emergency Service (Police, Fire, Ambulance): **999**
- Non-Emergency Police contact: **101**
- NHS 111 (medical/treatment advice line, 24/7): **111**
- Cumberland Centre(minor injuries): **01752 434400**
- National Rail Enquiries: **03457 484950**
- Plymouth Tourist Information: **01752 306330**
- Samaritans (Mental Health Support, 24/7): **116 123**
- Plymouth City Bus: **01752 662271**
- Stagecoach Bus: **0345 2418000**

