

Homestay Handbook

Welcome and introduction from the guardianship organisation

Dear homestays,

Thames Hightech Ltd gives you a warm welcome and hope we can cooperate well in the future.

Thames Hightech Ltd was founded in Nov, 2018 in London. We aim to provide our services with the fastest speed and the newest technology support, that is why we chose 'Hightech' as our company name. Our main service is the education service. We provide consulting services to students in China who wish to study in the UK and when they arrive there, we will provide further services, including airport picking up, arranging guardianship and homestay, academic tutoring, translation from English to Chinese or otherwise, etc.

Our director Yuhong Li was graduated in UK for Master degree and have been working in education industry for three years afterwards. He will take charge in arranging guardianship and homestay, as well as the management of licensed drivers and tutors. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact him.

Look forward to working with you,

All staff in Thames Hightech Limited

Contact Details

There will be times that you need to contact us. We are always here to assist you with any questions or concerns that you may have. You can contact in the following ways:

General enquiries	
Telephone (office hours 9am-5pm)	07538826068
Email	Andrew.li@thameshightech.co
Emergencies 24/7	
Telephone	07538826068
Safeguarding concerns	
Designated safeguarding Lead [Yuhong Li]	07538826068

Contact Details for the Local Safeguarding Partners (LSP)	<p>Cat Miller</p> <p>Cat.Miller2@lbhf.gov.uk</p> <p>07876-446-323</p>
Contact Details for the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO)	<p>Megan Brown</p> <p>07776 673020</p> <p>megan.brown@lbhf.gov.uk</p>

The role of the guardianship organisation, your role as a homestay

The guardianship organisation

- setting up aims, policies and contract for parents, staff, homestay families
- contact local authorities if any concern has been raised and report if necessary
- provide full support for homestay family wherever needed
- giving training/online videos and answering questions in WeChat group
- Establish profile of homestay family and show general profile, but do not share key information (name, date of birth, address, ID and other information) to students and parents
- Collect and check all information and support in documents preparation and check, including DBS, and gas certificate
- arrange meeting between students, parents, students' guardian and homestay
- Keep record of all important information for staff and homestay family during the term of contract and delete their information when contract terminates
- pre-arrival: visa application support by partner immigration advisor, pre-arrival information, preparation before arrival
- help to take COVID test different purposes eg. Fit-to-fly certificate in needed
- help to arrange medical/dental service if needed
- help students in vaccination especially COVID vaccination in the UK if required by parents in writing
- give student UK sim card they will use whilst in the UK and help to have credit top up if needed

- 24/7 emergency contact for schools, parents, students, students' guardians, homestay families
- Be aware of something unusual such radicalism, online safety and all safeguarding issues and raise concerns, and report when necessary
- Record any self-report from homestay staff and investigate further into all parties involved. Let the student and parents decide whether to stay at the same homestay and arrange another homestay if needed. If the situation is serious, e.g. an offence, report to a senior staff member, normally it will be a DSL.
- Inform homestay if the student needs regular medication.
- Inform any staff and homestay regular safeguarding updates, at least once a year.

Your role as a homestay

- To consent in writing that Thames will obtain Enhanced DBS certificates or Enhanced DBS application
- To create a comfortable family environment for students
- To have well kept, clean bedrooms and living room/study area/lounge with sufficient natural light
- Suitable safeguards must be in place to ensure that students have sufficient privacy from other students.
- Normally Students' guardian or parents will not consent to share bedroom with other students, but if have to, homestay family will inform parents, students' guardian about the arrangement.
- The homestay should have suitable heating and lighting and access to sufficient supplies of hot water as required.
- Homestay will provide study areas for students.
- Will provide appropriate hanging and drawer space for clothing.
- Toilet/bathroom should have a lock on the door.
- Particularly provide information of religious belief, smoking, alcohol or having pets around to parents and students' guardian
- Agree Thames to create a profile including general information to share to parents and students
- Students should have the right to opt for a non-smoking and/or non-pet homestay
- Homestay will not host other students above 20 when host students under 16
- Homestay will not accommodate other adult guest when host student from Thames Hightech Ltd

- Provide three proper meals daily and enough drinks and snack and also looks after students special dietary need.
- Help and supervise student to do laundries.
- Provide information, insurance, documents for Thames to check according to policies
- If homestay have to discipline or give sanction to student, they must discuss with students' guardian, and parents first. They cannot do it without writing consent from parents and students' guardian. No physical punishment is allowed under any circumstance.
- Communicate their concerns of students behaviours and emotion with students guardian and parents
- Attend annual safeguarding training, including mental health.
- A homestay can accept **no more than three overseas students** at the same time.
- If there are any situations which could appear compromising or be misconstrued, or where a homestay's behaviour has fallen below the standards required in the code of conduct, the homestay is encouraged to self-report and get help from the guardianship organisation.

Looking after and respecting the rights of the student

We host students aged between 11-20. Students of different ages may require different care. For example, younger students will require greater nurturing and supervision during their stay, whereas older students will be more independent and may be allowed to visit the local area on their own. Parental permissions may vary from student to student too. We will explain to you what we expect from you prior to placing any student with you.

One of the most mutually rewarding experiences of hosting an international student is learning about another culture. We ask that all homestays respect the students' own culture, values and background and be mindful that there will be some differences in the way students approach everyday life, such as when greeting others or whilst eating. Likewise, the students may have a different religious belief to the homestay. Again, we ask that you are respectful of any differences.

Loco Parentis

We expect our homestays to exercise the same levels of care as a responsible parent – in loco parentis. This means that you are accepting the day-to-day responsibility for the care of the student whilst they are staying with you.

Codes of conduct

Thames Hightech Ltd. has a code of conduct for staff and homestays. Please take time to read through this document as it outlines how staff and homestays are expected to behave whilst working for the guardianship organisation.

www.thameshightech.co.uk

Likewise we have a code of conduct for students. This outlines the expected standards of behaviour for our students. Please read through this as it will help you to understand our expectations. www.thameshightech.co.uk

Safeguarding

Thames Hightech Ltd is committed to safeguarding and child protection. We have comprehensive policies on safeguarding, prevent / anti-radicalisation, low level concerns, complaints, anti-bullying, missing student, online safety, data protection that provide further information and outline our procedures. These can be found at www.thameshightech.co.uk. Please ensure that you have read and understood all our policies.

You are required to undertake a basic certificated course on safeguarding. This should be refreshed every three years. We will also provide an annual safeguarding update. This will be done by online or face-to-face meeting with our director.

We encourage students to talk to any trusted adult should they have any concerns. As a homestay, a student may consider you to be a trusted adult. There may be students who feel more comfortable speaking to other homestay family members about a concern they may have. You should therefore ensure that all members of your household are aware of what to do if a concern is shared with them. We have explained to students that any concerns they raise will be treated seriously. If a student comes to you or any homestay member to raise a concern, please ensure that it is dealt with in line with our published procedure (see safeguarding policy) and reported to our Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

Control

Homestays may only use reasonable, appropriate and lawful means of control to maintain safety. Under no circumstances should physical punishment ever be used.

Homesickness

When students arrive in the UK, they might be homesick.

Signs that they may be feeling homesick include:

- A strong desire to go home
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling sad
- Feeling anxious
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of confidence
- Feeling depressed
- Experiencing mood swings

- Feeling insecure
- Finding simple tasks difficult
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches and nausea

If your student is showing signs of homesickness, tell them not to worry as there are many people who can help them manage their feelings. Let them talk to you about their feelings, and remind them that they can always talk to their house parent, teacher, parent, guardian, or any member of guardian staff who will listen and will be able to support you and offer advice. It is best not to encourage them to frequently call home, as this can make the feelings worse. Keeping the student busy and interested in a variety of family activities and discussions may help them settle and feel happier. Please do let us know if you are concerned that your student is suffering with homesickness. We are here to support both you and the student.

How to comfort a student in distress

There may be occasions where your student is upset. For example, the student may be homesick (see above), unwell or experiencing pressure in their academic studies. In such incidences please do not comfort the student physically. It is inappropriate to hug a student as you may comfort your own child, however there are many things you can do to help:

- Listen to the student's concerns
- Offer comforting words and advice
- If you can speak the students' first language, this may help to calm the student
- Please do alert us to the problem and we will offer you support

Curfews and Bedtimes

Students who have permission to go out on their own will be required to return to homestays by the following times:

- Ages 12 and under: 5pm
- Age 13 - 15 :6pm
- Age 16- 18 :8pm

We will inform you whether or not the student you are hosting has permission to go out alone. All students who are permitted to go out unaccompanied by their homestay must take their mobile phone (fully charged) with them and keep this switched on. Please make sure that they have your telephone number programmed into their phone. It is important that if students do go out unaccompanied, that they let you know where they are going and roughly how long they will be out. If for any reason they are delayed, students must contact you to keep you informed of their whereabouts.

Thames Hightech Ltd suggests that student bedtimes should be as follows:

- Ages 12 and under :9pm
- Age 13 - 15 :9.30pm
- Age 16- 18 :10pm

Any deviation to these times should be discussed with the homestay.

Permission for students to visit the local area / shops / travelling further afield / excursions

If the student is aged 16 or above, they are allowed to go to local area, shops, with consent of their guardian and parents, and homestay.

If students are under 16 want to go out during their stay at host family, they must be accompanied by their host family or guardian with the permission of their parents and guardians.

If the student is going to further areas for longer time and stay overnight:

For student aged 16 or above, their parents must consent in writing to the staff at Thames Hightech Ltd and they also need to give information of where, how, when they will return and with whom. They might also need to provide a contact mobile phone of the person who will be with them during the meantime. ID may be requested and transport arrangements should be fully checked to ensure their safety.

On other occasions, the student might be accompanied to travel or to go to further areas or stay for longer time by their homestay parents or their guardian.

Students staying away from the homestay

When students are in school, they should abide by school rules and regulations and report their school performance in a timely manner. When students go out, they should report and contact their guardians in time.

Accommodation requirements

Homestays should ensure that they provide a comfortable living environment for students. We require our students to be provided with the following:

- A suitable bedroom and social area(s) which are well kept, clean and in good repair, with sufficient natural light.
- Suitable safeguards must be in place to ensure that students have sufficient privacy from other students. Parents should be made aware of students who may wish to share bedrooms and must give consent before the arrangement goes ahead.
- Where homestays are using a double bed, only one student is using this facility. Under no circumstances should students share a double bed.

- The rooms should have suitable heating and lighting and there should be access to sufficient supplies of hot water as required.
- Students should have access to a private space to study.
- Students should have access to appropriate hanging and drawer space for clothing.
- Students should have access to a bathroom with a lock on the door and either a shower or bath.
- Students should be treated as part of the family, and therefore have access to the communal rooms in the home. They should not have access to family member's bedrooms.

Please make us aware if any member of the homestay is a smoker, or if you have any pets. Students should have the right to opt for a non-smoking and/or non-pet homestay environment.

Please be aware of the need to ascertain the adequacy of your home insurance in respect of hosting international students. The insured (homeowner) should declare all facts to the insurer in order to a) obtain the right cover and b) obtain the right premium.

No more than three students should be placed with the same homestay at any one time, unless in exceptional circumstances. Please ensure that you inform us if you who work with other guardianship organisations as we need to check that you are not accommodating more than three students in total when members of an AEGIS guardianship organisation are being hosted.

When students under the age of 16 are in the care of a homestay, no students over the age of 20 should be hosted either by the guardianship organisation or another guardianship organisation working within the same homestay.

Homestays should not host any other paying guests or operate any form of bed and breakfast facility when hosting AEGIS students.

While there are no legal restrictions, homestays are expected to adhere to NSPCC advice on adult supervision and ensure that:

- Students aged 12 and under are not left home alone for a long period of time.
- Students aged 16 and under are not left home alone overnight.
- Students are not left home alone regardless of their age if they do not feel comfortable with this.

Meals and Snacks

We ask that homestays provide students with a full board provision of breakfast, lunch and dinner during their stay, taking account of any dietary needs. In addition,

students should be provided with access to suitable drinks and snacks during their stay.

Laundry

Homestays are asked to provide students with suitable laundry facilities if they are resident for more than one night. In most cases the homestay would undertake to do the laundry for the student. Depending upon the age of the students, the homestay may give permission for them to do their own laundry if requested and agreed.

Use of the homestay's car for transport

Any cars used to transport student should be roadworthy with up-to-date tax, insurance, and MOT (where required). If you provide transport using your car for the students in your care, please be aware of the need for adequate comprehensive vehicle insurance and that you should inform your insurers that you will be using your car to provide transport to international students for which you may be paid or receive expenses.

Please ensure that all relevant laws relating to the use of child seats or booster seats for under 12s, when the student is below 135cm in height, and seat belts for over 12s or more than 135cm tall are discussed with students and adhered to.

Access to computers and the internet & safe use of the internet

It is most likely that your student will want to access the internet during their stay. We ask that they use their own devices and not the family computer. We have an online safety policy that outlines the main risks to be aware of and what you can do as a homestay to help keep students safe. Please take time to read this document via www.thameshightech.co.uk.

Health and Safety in the Home

We expect all homestays to adhere to our health and safety guidelines:

- A minimum of one smoke alarm should be installed on every storey.
- A carbon monoxide alarm to be installed in any room containing a gas, liquid or solid fuel burning appliance.
- An annual landlord gas safety check to be undertaken by a Gas Safe registered engineer and a copy of the certificate provided to the guardianship organisation.
- The homestay must ensure that the electrical system is safe, e.g. sockets and light fittings are secure and not overloaded and any appliances used by the student are safe.

- The homestay must discuss the possible evacuation routes from the property with students on a regular basis. If doors or windows are locked students must know where to find the key in the event of a fire.
- If fire extinguishers and fire blankets are provided, they must be suitably serviced.
- Where open fires are used, a suitable fire guard should be in place when the fire is lit.
- Any matches / lighters should be appropriately stored.
- A basic first aid kit should be available to include, plasters, sterile eye-pad, triangular bandage, safety pins, non-medicated wound dressing, disposable gloves, leaflet giving guidance on first aid.
- Any prescription medication and drugs should be kept safely especially when hosting young students.
- Alcohol should be appropriately stored.
- The homestay should have an awareness of basic food hygiene when preparing meals for students.

We will conduct an initial visit to check that your accommodation is suitable prior to you hosting a student. Thereafter we will visit at least once a year to undertake an annual check. Please let us know immediately if there are any changes in the accommodation you are offering. This includes informing us of any temporary building work that may take place when you are due to host students. In some cases the school may also wish to make an annual visit to check the property. You will be made aware of this prior to agreeing to host a student.

Please refer to our separate Welfare, Health and Safety statement, that can be found via www.thameshightech.co.uk

Private Fostering

Where Thames Hightech Ltd. has any day students under the age of 16 (under 18, if the student has a disability) living with homestays who are not their parent or a close relative for 28 days or more, they must adhere to the regulations regarding private fostering in place within their local area as directed by their local authority.

Thames Hightech Ltd is required to liaise with the school and the homestay to ensure that where possible the local authority are notified of the proposal for a private fostering arrangement at least six weeks before the date on which the arrangement is to begin. Where the arrangement is to begin within six weeks, the local authority is to be informed immediately.

Thames Hightech Ltd will liaise with the school and homestay to explain carefully what is required of them in entering into a private fostering arrangement. This includes explaining that there will be regular visits and meetings with the local authority.

Thames Hightech Ltd has a system in place for recording all correspondence with the local authority private fostering team and securing relevant permissions to share such information as is necessary with the student, parents, agents (where appropriate), homestay and partner school.

In the case of day students over the age of 16, we are mindful of the extended period students will spend with homestays and regularly carry out suitable checks to monitor and ensure their welfare.

Changes in circumstances

You are required to inform the guardianship organisation about any changes to the homestay arrangements.

Expenses and payments

Thames Hightech Ltd ensures that any payments due to homestays are transacted promptly and in line with any contractual agreements in place.

Thames Hightech Ltd will sign a cooperation agreement with the host family, and make a unified payment after the end of the quarterly service. If the homestay family has additional expenses in the service, we will record the expenses (amount, time of expenditure, purpose, receipt) and send them to the parents for unified reimbursement.

Your contract and cancelling the agreement

Please see the details in Homestay Contract.

Responsibilities during a pandemic

Pandemics can cause major disruption to travel and schooling. It is important in such events that Thames Hightech Ltd takes advice from the government, Public Health England and the World Health Organisation. AEGIS also provides guidance for members to follow. This is regularly updated as a situation develops. Usually, in a pandemic it is important to restrict movement so as not to spread the disease further. That means boarding school students would usually remain at school. In the event of a pandemic Thames Hightech Ltd may not be able to offer homestay accommodation as this could place students, homestay families and the wider community at risk. Thames Hightech Ltd will work with parents to find flights to home countries where required. Thames Hightech Ltd will work with schools to meet students' needs during a pandemic. This could be by helping to support students to learn remotely as directed by the school. Thames Hightech Ltd will work with parents and schools to find suitable quarantine accommodation for students where required. Thames Hightech Ltd has a policy that outlines the procedures we are following during a pandemic. This can be found here www.thameshightech.co.uk.

