



Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association

Host Family Handbook



www.scottishoverseasguardianship.co.uk

Director: Pamela Keracher
52 Glasgow Road,
Perth,
Scotland
PH2 0PB

Mobile: 0044 7762791805
Email: pamkerachersoga@hotmail.co.uk

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association

Contents

Contents

SOGA Introduction

Introduction and training to hosting students

from overseas Language / Culture

What does SOGA ask from our host families?

Home-from-home environment.

Your responsibilities as a Host Family.

If you feel your student is suffering from Homesickness.

What a student can expect from you.

The students need to have.

What you can expect from the student.

House rules

What you can expect from Scottish Overseas Guardianship.

Please do contact the SOGA office if you have any questions.

Bookings and Cancellations

Payment and Expenses

Other information

Safeguarding, Physical restraint, Paperwork, AEGIS Guidelines and Inspection,

Communication from schools. Legal Contractual Arrangements, Other Arrangements,

Pandemic, Policies and Contact Numbers.

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association Policies

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association Contact Details.

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association

Pam Keracher



S.O.G.A

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association (known as S.O.G.A) is one of the oldest school guardianship agencies in Scotland, possibly the UK. Founded in 1987 by Jeanne Hackett.

S.O.G.A is based in Perth; a historic city set beside the beautiful *River Tay* and is located just 90 minutes from 90% of Scotland's population.

The agency is managed by the director Mrs Pam Keracher who is assisted by a small administration team. Together they make all the arrangements for the students. Students stay with Host families, who are all inspected and checked to the highest standards, including police checks (checks are in line with Child Care Legislation and Government Guidelines in relation to good childcare practice).

The director or her administrative assistants, visit the students in schools at regular intervals and are there to represent parents at parents' evenings, school sports, music events and are always on call by school or parents.

School Guardianship is not UK.GOV Legal guardianship.

In 1987, Jeanne Hackett recognised the need to develop flexible and affordable guardianship for students from overseas who were studying in Britain. During the initial years, it became apparent that different families required different types of guardianships. As a result, she felt a growing need to try out new ideas and levels of guardianship. S.O.G.A is therefore the dream child born out of her desire to offer an excellent service that is both flexible and affordable.

In 2007, Jeanne Hackett retired, and the organisation was bought over by Pamela Keracher (known as Pam). Pam was well known to students and their families having been a host family for several years.

Welcome to the SOGA family!

Thank you for choosing to host our students. On behalf of the SOGA team, we hope that you find the experience very rewarding. SOGA has been working with host families for many years, and we have some families who have been with us for more than 15 years. We look to find families that can provide a home-from-home environment and welcome overseas students into their own families. SOGA prides itself on the positive relationships we have with our host families.

Introduction to Hosting Students from Overseas

Language / Culture

SOGA students come from a variety of countries, however, the majority come from Hong Kong or Mainland China. All students attend boarding schools which have fixed periods when schools are shut, these are called 'exeat' and 'half term' and these are the occasions for which we typically seek a host family. Some students also choose to stay for the longer holidays over Christmas and Easter.

SOGA aims to place students with well suited families and hope that we make a good 'match'. Where possible and in mutual agreement we try and place students with families on a regular basis.

However, we all know that this is not always possible due to family commitments and decisions by the student and their own family.

When hosting students there are various considerations to bear in mind

Language – mostly our students have a good command of English, but some students will find initial conversations and interactions a challenge.

Safeguarding training is given prior to hosting, this may be online training or in person. Knowledge on Prevent, Health and Hygiene and First Aid are also covered.

Please be mindful that communications are sometimes interpreted in different ways, by both parties.

Shyness can often come across as a student being rude or standoffish.

Cultural differences

With all cultures there are differences and considerations which families need to be mindful of. From table manners, interaction with family pets, use of phones and technology to use of hot water, we encourage our host families to have open conversations and guidelines to help our students understand what is expected of them in your home.

What does SOGA ask from our host families?

As host you become a member of the SOGA family as a family we support each other, Parents, Hosts, Students when needed to create empathy, peace of mind, emotional support, guidance, and help with navigating those cultural differences.

We ask for good citizens and role models.

People who we would want to stay with ourselves and trust with our own children.

Want to help international students settle into their British educational experience.

Have a spare bedroom to offer an international student.

And we are required to confirm the Police checks (PVG) and home safety checks are all in order. We are happy to assist with these.

Home-from-home environment.

Many of our families have hosted for a long time and show real care and affection when a student lives with them.

Welcoming students into your family is a rewarding opportunity and something that can lead to a longstanding relationship.

Arriving at a host family for the first time can be an anxious time when your own family are thousands of miles away, some suffer from homesickness and require extra nurturing. If you require help or worried, please never hesitate to contact the office, 07762791805.

If you feel your student is suffering from 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 students.

Your Responsibilities as a Host

SOGA is always the educational guardian and looks after the legalities as a host your responsibilities are to protect, care for and provide full board and lodging for your student on a day-to-day basis. In the home Students are all coming from boarding schools and therefore will be used to full-board meals but also have experience of sharing their living space with others.

In your house the student may have their own room or share with another student which are well kept, clean and in good repair, with sufficient natural light plus with. appropriate hanging and drawer space for clothing. When using a double bed, only one student is using this facility. Under no circumstances should students share a double bed.

Access to communal areas, kitchen, living- room, garden, etc of the house can be identified when you meet the student for the first time.

Students should have access to a private space to study, this need not be in the bedroom, but a space made available for him/her. A table and light.

Clear guidelines for any house rules should be made in the first instance.

Bathroom usage may have to be defined and limits.

What the student can expect from you.

The students need to have:

A comfortable bed with clean, warm bedding and a bath towel

Somewhere to put their belongings

A table/desk and chair (with lighting) for working, ideally in their room

Bedding for longer term students should be changed weekly

Bathroom and personal hygiene.

Please inform the student of any limitations for shower or bath usage. Please do ensure students are maintaining good personal hygiene and have a conversation when necessary.

Students should have access to a bathroom with a lock on the door and either a shower or bath.

Food

Food is always a talking point with students and feedback shows that food is top of their priorities!

Chatting about food with the student will give you a chance to ask about allergies and likes and preferences. Food is also an opportunity to sit around as a family and share conversation over a lovely meal.

Please make sure snacks are available. SOGA will pass on any information we have on dietary requirements.

Table manners Please do, sensitively, educate the student with regards to table manners. The student is requested to not leave the table until everyone has finished and to carry the plates out to the kitchen at the end of the meal.

It is fine to ask a student to help wash up or load the dishwasher or if able and permitted by parents to help cook

Asian students can be noisy eaters. This is a cultural difference rather than rudeness. You may wish to explain, sensitively, that eating quietly is good manners when in the UK.

Accommodating Students

SOGA will not ask you to host a mix of boys or girls, unless in exceptional circumstances. However, we may ask you to host more than one student, who are close in age. SOGA believe this is a beneficial as it gives the student another person to talk and share the hosting experience.

Accommodating Students continued.

SOGA know that hosting students presents a good opportunity to earn an extra income but to uphold AEGIS guidelines a maximum of three students can stay in your home at any one time. Please do let us know if you have students staying from other organisations. We may be forced to remove our students if the maximum limit is exceeded. It is not permitted to host additional family members/friends without notification and PVG checked.

During a health pandemic, each hosts ability to host will be different subject to your own family needs, we appreciate this, but also ask you to be mindful your student may require to be accommodated.

Pets

The UK is a pet loving nation, but this is not always the case in other cultures. Please be mindful that other cultures do not have the same affinity with pets as most people in the UK.

Laundry

Students will have laundry over the longer holidays. Please ensure the student knows where they can do their laundry. Culturally, female students from China and Hong Kong expect to hand-wash their underwear daily so please advise them where it is acceptable to place the items to dry.

Wifi

Students will expect access to the internet but please feel free to ensure that the internet is being used responsibly. SOGA encourages our host families to play an active part in helping students stay safe online. Please consult our E-safety, Bullying and Cyberbullying policy Sextortion.

This provides guidance and safeguarding advice for host families and students.

Health and Safety

In line with AEGIS inspection regulations SOGA is required to ensure measures of Health and Safety are adhered to. Host will be required to ensure they have in place several documents.

Policies information can be obtained online at our website. www.scottishoverseasguardianship.co.uk

A list suggested for the host families are listed at the end of this handbook.

Documentation to have in place and up to date:

Valid PVG all members of the family household over 16,

Gas safety certificate (*if gas supply to the property is present*),

Gas Boiler Landlord Gas Checks, annual maintenance records produced at annually and checked.

Insurance policies (car and household),

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. (Scotland all interconnected) On each storey and carbon monoxide alarms should be placed in all rooms containing a gas, liquid or solid fuel burning appliance.

Driving License and Insurance (Advise Insurance company if transporting students)

Plus, an emergency evacuation plan should be in place and explained to the student at the first sit down meeting (Meet and Greet)

A list suggested policies for the host families are listed at the end of this handbook.

Policies such as First aid, fire prevention and home safety in terms of safe electrical systems and storage of prescription medication, drugs, and alcohol.

What should host families expect from the student

Experience from past and current hosts recommends outlining 'house rules' early on to ensure the student is clear and expectations are set.

All students are given directives on staying with a host family.

SOGA ask all our students to remember they are living in a family home and not a hotel. Their actions have a direct impact on the people they are living with. Please be mindful that students often have schoolwork to do or spend time catching up on sleep. Therefore, they may spend more time in their own bedroom than you may expect!

Departure and Arrival

Many of our hosts offer to help pick up and drop off from school or other places. If driving, ensure all students use seat belts as law and /or car seats if required, confirm with your insurance company you are permitted to claim expenses. Please do speak with the SOGA Office to find out more. SOGA will provide you with all transport details in advance of the student arriving and departing. Older students may make their own way to your home via trains, buses, or other modes of transport. However, most students arrive by taxi. Should a student not arrive within 2 hours of the stated arrival time, and you have not been informed, please contact SOGA immediately.

Before the student departs,

we suggest you conduct a visual inspection of the room to ensure the room is in order, no belongings have been left or any damage has occurred.

Home times and Leaving Students Unattended within the Household.

When students go out there are definite times that SOGA have in place for students to adhere to. Please ensure you have exchanged contact details with the student and ensure you can get hold of them when they are out. Having an open conversation about where and what the student intends to do when they are out. Establishing a return time is important. Students should notify you if there is a change of plan. Students are not permitted to stay out overnight – this will be in breach of their VISA – unless arrangements have been made through SOGA in advance, along with a signed parental consent form.

We have a policy to cover student Missing/lost, this can be found on our website.

SOGA has guidelines on times to be home as below.

Aged under 14 Must be accompanied by an adult member of host family.

Aged 14-15 Home by 9.30pm or before dark, whichever is the earlier.

Aged 16 Home by 10pm.

Ages 17-18 Home by 11pm.

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.

Students are not allowed to smoke, dye their hair, have piercings or tattoos. Please point out this rule if they share with you their intention to break this rule.

Please contact SOGA if you require further support.'

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association

UK law

Both schools and households will have rules. Some are house rules and others are UK law.

It is illegal to use or obtain class A, B or C drugs at school or in the host family.

Alcohol and smoking (including e-cigarettes) can only be purchased when you are 18 or older.

Consent and sexual activity

Should the host family become aware of any unlawful sexual activity they should contact SOGA's DSL immediately – 07762791805 or 07834717879. NSPCC - "In each UK nation, the age of consent (the legal age when people can engage in sexual activity) is 16 years old. This is the same regardless of the person's gender identity, sexual identity and whether the sexual activity is between people of the same or different gender". Please refer to SOGA's safeguarding policy for further details.

What should host families expect from SOGA.

Please do contact the SOGA office if you have any questions.

We are here to help! • Email – pamkerachersoga@hotmail.co.uk Telephone –07762791805 –
Emergency line - 07762791805 – 24 hours a day – 7 days a week.

Contract

You will receive a contract once a SOGA member has visited you at home. This constitutes the contractual basis of our partnership, so please read the terms within carefully. We will visit annually and ensure all appropriate checks are conducted. This includes visual inspection of all rooms in the property and specific paperwork.

Once the students depart from school SOGA is the educational guardian for the duration, until such a point that the student returns home or returns to school. SOGA is your first point of contact should you be unsure, or the student is unsafe (hospitalisation, missing person, unusual behaviours etc.)

Communication

You will be in contact with a member from SOGA office who will contact you and organise student bookings, transport, and other matters. Also available to be contacted should you have any queries.

The key information you will receive from SOGA is as follows:

Bookings

Made through SOGA with confirmation via email.

We hope to have a Host portal available online soon for you to access.

Cancellations

In the event of a cancellation, we endeavour to find you an alternative student. We do have a discretionary cancellation policy.

Payment

Direct into your bank account within 7 days on the event ending.

On receipt of the email advise confirming the students' stay, any expenses incurred and a short report on their time spent with you. The short report is part of our safeguarding policy, helping to ensure our students are safe.

For longer term hosting payment is typically paid every 14 days.

Expenses

Expenses, are out of pocket Expenses and are paid at cost value, additional expenses may be charged for petrol and time on additional trips etc.

Larger spending can be authorised by either the office or the student's parents. Any agreed expenses should be submitted via email to SOGA.

We aim to repeat successful arrangements to maintain continuity for both Host Family and Student.

However, we cannot guarantee bookings as changes do occur due to parents making alternative arrangements

OTHER INFORMATION

Safeguarding

We ask all our host families to have awareness for safeguarding. SOGA's Safeguarding Policy is available from our website. SOGA will provide safeguarding awareness reminders with confirmation of all bookings and offer additional training (normally during the Summer Break) with updates via email. Suitable Safeguard training with an annual update provided by SOGA is compulsory as stated in the AEGIS guidelines.

If you have any safeguarding concerns, please contact Soga's designated Safeguarding Lead (Pam Keracher). His contact details – 07762791805 or 07834717879 pamkerachersoga@hotmail.co.uk.

Physical restraint

Physical restraint is only permissible when a child is in imminent danger of inflicting an injury on him/herself or another. Physical restraint should be used only as a last resort if all other methods have failed.

All incidents of physical restraint should be reported to the DSL and recorded. Physical and corporal punishment is strictly forbidden.

Paperwork

A SOGA member will visit you to check paperwork, in advance of hosting. You will be given a checklist of what paperwork is required. Please keep your paperwork together and up to date with any changes to be sent to SOGA as soon as possible. Your PVG will be completed online, and you will need to have this in place for any individual in your house over the age of 16 who resides in your home whilst students are staying with you.

AEGIS Guidelines and Inspection

Soga is a member of AEGIS which has strict guidelines that we need to work within.

During our re-inspection process we will be required to share the contact details of our host families. In line with GDPR, please contact the office, pamkerachersoga@hotmail.co.uk, if you do not want your details shared solely for the purpose of inspection.

Communication from schools.

There may be occasions when we ask for you to have direct contact with school. (Maybe a parent meeting or attending a music concert) We will seek your permission before this direct communication method is initiated.

Legal Contractual Arrangements

Please carefully read the contract between SOGA and Host families. This, along with the terms and conditions, contains important information. Please note that due to the guardianship contractual arrangements between SOGA Guardians and you the host family, as well as our contract with the students and their parents.

ALL Other Arrangements

All arrangements must be completed through SOGA Guardians Head Office. If our students or parents attempt to make a private arrangement with you directly, it is essential that you contact the office. This is for two important reasons – if we do not know about the arrangement, then we simply cannot pay you; also, the legal responsibility of guardianship would fall to you, and this is very different to simply being a host family.

Termination of Contract

The contract may be terminated by writing to Mrs. Pamela Keracher at pamelakeracher@gmail.com

It is requested to give one school term notice but not a legal requirement.

What happens if there is another World Health Pandemic or UK *Health Scare*?

Pandemics can cause major disruption to travel and schooling. It is important at that time for Mrs Pamela Keracher to take advice from the government, Public Health, Scotland/UK, and the World Health Organisation. The Guardianship Governing body AEGIS will also supply guidance for us as members to follow. This will be regularly updated as the situation develops.

Usually in a pandemic it is important to restrict movement so as not to spread the disease further. That would mean boarding school students would normally remain in school.

Mrs Pamela Keracher will work with you to find flights to home countries where and when required. Mrs Pamela Keracher will work with schools to meet students' needs during the pandemic. This may be to assist students to learn remotely or as directed by school. In the event of a pandemic Mrs Pamela Keracher may not be able to provide the normal accommodation, if it was to put host families, students, and the wider community at risk.

Mrs Pamela Keracher will work with you and your child to find suitable quarantine accommodation for students where required.

Policies and Contact Numbers

All SOGA's policies can be found on our website or are available from the office.

Such as, Safeguarding, Missing Child, Complaints, Data Protection, E-Safety, Bullying and Cyber bullying. Health and Safety, Fire Safety and Notice, First Aid Policy,

[NSPCC's work in Scotland | NSPCC](#) Link to more childcare information.

If you at any time are worried about the student, contact Mrs Pam Keracher, if you feel the student is in imminent danger contact the local authority or police.

LADO	Child protection and duty team	01738		
Perth	- (24 hours) email: ChildProtection@pkc.gov.uk	47676 8		
Edinburgh	If you think a child is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected, speak to: the Children's Services duty team by calling 0131 271 3413 (Mon - Thu 9am-5pm and Fri 9am-4pm) the Emergency Social Care Service by calling 0800 731 6969 (freephone) at any time outside normal office hours.			
Stirling	If you are worried about a child, you can contact us to report concerns. During the day you can contact Stirling Council Social Work with concerns on 01786 471177. Out of Hours (after 5pm and weekends) you can contact the team on 01786 470500 . 25 Feb 2021			
	POLICE			
	Child In Danger Contact Police Scotland Police (Non Emergency Number)	101		
	In an emergency call 999	999		
	NHS 24	111		

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association

Childline	0800 1111
Crimestoppers Scotland	0800 555 111
Phone number	
Child protection and duty team - (24 hours) email: ChildProtection@pkc.gov.uk	01738 476768
Police (Non Emergency Number)	101
In an emergency call 999	999

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association Contact Information.

S.O.G.A Office is
52 Glasgow Road,
Perth,
Perthshire,
PH2 0PB

Email: info@scottishoverseasguardianship.co.uk
pamkerachersoga@hotmail.co.uk

Accounts.
pkeracher@outlook.com

Tel 07834717879

Telephone: Business 0044 (0)7762791805 (available 24 hours)
WhatsApp
Wechat
Viber
Messenger

If it is not possible to answer your call (i.e., if I am driving or at a school meeting) please leave a message and text on WhatsApp, WeChat or Viber or Messenger and I /we will return your call.

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association