



Department  
for Education

# **Care experienced young people's views on national standards for unregulated provision**

**Research report**

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**Authors: Kantar Public**



**Government  
Social Research**

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## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the young people who participated in the focus groups and online community. Thank you also to the partner organisations that liaised with Kantar Public to introduce the research to young people and encourage participation.

## Summary

The Government wants to make sure that independent and semi-independent accommodation for older looked after children and care leavers aged 16 or 17 is high quality – this means it is safe and provides enough support for the young people living there.

After listening to people's views on how to improve on this type of accommodation, the Government announced in February 2021 that it will consult on the introduction of national standards (or rules which set out what must be delivered to children in these settings) to make sure that all places where children and young people live are high quality, safe, and support them properly. The Government also said it would consult on Ofsted – the organisation that checks those places where children live are good enough – checking that this type of accommodation is following the standards.

The Government asked young people to share their views about what the new standards should look like, how they should make sure the new standards are followed, and what this type of accommodation should be called now that it is being regulated (it was previously called 'unregulated provision' or independent/semi-independent accommodation).

The Department for Education asked Kantar Public to invite care experienced young people to take part in focus group discussions and an online community to explore their thoughts and get feedback on the new national standards.

## What did young people in our research have to say?



Young people said the support you get in this type of accommodation should be based on what each person needs, rather than everyone getting the same support. Some young people may be more independent and not need much support. Others may need more, for example, if they have a health condition or have recently arrived in the UK.



Overall, young people thought that bringing in national standards for this type of accommodation was a good idea. They thought these new guidelines would help young people get the support that is right for them.



Young people had mixed feelings about Ofsted inspecting accommodation. Those who liked the idea thought it would make providers deliver a good service to avoid being punished if Ofsted think their accommodation is poor quality. The young people who did not like the idea thought that providers might be on their best behaviour when



Ofsted came to visit and could go back to bad practice as soon as they left.

When we asked young people what this type of accommodation should be called, most didn't really mind. Some ideas that people liked were:

- Supported accommodation for young people
- 16 plus accommodation
- Regulated accommodation
- Regulated provision for young people

## Background to the research

In February 2021, the Government published its response to an initial consultation on unregulated provision for looked after children and care leavers.<sup>1</sup> This set out a series of national policy changes the government planned to make following the consultation. Following strong support through the consultation, the Government committed to banning the placement of children under the age of 16 in independent and semi-independent living settings often called ‘unregulated’ settings, consulting on the introduction of new national standards and Ofsted-led registration and inspection for independent and semi-independent provision and giving Ofsted new powers to take enforcement action against illegal unregistered providers. These views were reinforced by feedback from over 160 young people who took part in virtual policy discussions organised by partner organisations the Department for Education (DfE) were working with.

In their February response, the Government committed to a further consultation in 2021 seeking views specifically on the proposed standards for independent and semi-independent provision for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17, and models for registering and inspecting them. Alongside the public consultation exercise, the DfE commissioned Kantar Public to carry out qualitative research with care experienced young people aged 16+ seeking their views on the same topics included in the main consultation. These were:

- What they think the difference between care and support is/should be
- The content of national standards and whether anything is missing/needs to change
- How they think the Government should check that provision is good enough
- What they think DfE should call this provision in the future as they begin to regulate it

DfE were aiming for Kantar Public to carry out 16 focus groups with 80 young people. However, recruitment challenges faced by partner organisations meant that only 11 of the proposed 16 focus groups with care experienced young people took place, with 32 young people participating in total. As a result, and to supplement the findings from the 11 focus groups, Kantar Public conducted follow-up research via an online community with care experienced young people. The purpose of the online community was twofold:

- To sense check emerging findings with young people, with the aim of improving the findings and checking applicability beyond the research population (where possible).
- To share findings with those who participated in the research

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<sup>1</sup> [Unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unregulated-provision-for-children-in-care-and-care-leavers)

It is important to note that the follow up stage was not designed to be a substantial data collection exercise (equivalent to the focus groups) but rather a chance to receive feedback and share insights with those who participated in the focus groups and provide those who had not participated in focus groups with an opportunity to review the findings and share their thoughts.

## Approach

Kantar Public conducted 11 online focus groups with 32 care-experienced young people. Recruitment to the focus groups was undertaken by partner organisations (charities, local authorities and providers), who administered and collected consent materials (provided by Kantar Public) and invited young people to the online sessions. The sampling approach was opportunistic, although guidance was provided to partner organisations to recruit young people across a spread of ages, genders, and legal status. See Appendix 1 for quota table.

Recruitment for the online community involved Kantar Public liaising with partner organisations to invite their young people to take part. In order to protect participants' identities, Kantar provided each organisation with anonymised log in details and collected limited demographic data. See Appendix 1 for quota table.

# Main findings

## Views on the concepts of ‘care’ and ‘support’

Young people taking part in the focus groups were asked to share their understanding of the terms ‘care’ and ‘support’ and describe what is important for them to receive in independent and semi-independent accommodation.

Participants’ understanding of ‘support’ was characterised as practical help and guidance, which was considered important in independent or semi-independent accommodation as young people prepare to live more independently post 18 years old. Generally, there was an expectation among focus group participants that ‘support’ should be provided in independent or semi-independent accommodation. Participants felt ‘support’ should be bespoke, provided to help young people become more independent and be available as and when they need it. For example, young people living in independent or semi-independent accommodation should be able to choose how they spend their money but some might need help with managing their money and budgeting. This type of support was felt to be practical, in the moment and a useful long-term skill (see Chapter 2 for additional support needs).

The emphasis on ‘support’ was checked by our online community participants who were asked to rank characteristics of ‘care’ and ‘support’ in order of importance to them (see Appendix 3). Their responses confirmed that receiving support was key when living in independent and semi-independent accommodation; for example, practical help and guidance with life skills and staff helping a young person adjust to moving in or out of independent or semi-independent accommodation were ranked highly. It was also viewed as important that young people can exercise their independence, for example by having control over their finances and, while they were against the idea of direct supervision, having staff on site who take responsibility for their health needs.

Focus group participants’ perception of ‘care’ was generally described as an emotional response to an individuals’ needs in the moment. ‘Care’ was characterised as having access to friendly, approachable adults for conversations ranging from ad hoc, informal chats to more serious discussions. Some participants made comparisons to their experiences of foster care. They described feeling ‘cared for’ in foster homes as they saw foster carers as ‘replacement parents’ with whom they had an emotional relationship. Foster homes were considered places where adults were expected to care for children due to the child’s age, as minors, and their vulnerability. Acts such as having things bought for them and needing permission to stay out overnight were considered appropriate for those in children’s homes or foster care due to the perception that children under 16 years old need to be looked after. This was underpinned by a sense

that ‘care’ is about someone taking responsibility for a young person’s welfare and wellbeing.

When I needed advice, I could go to my foster mum anytime. You have someone you can go to, chat to. The little things you go to parents for is easier to go to a foster carer than support staff. –

*Anonymous contributor*

However, there was acknowledgment that what young people perceived as ‘care’ provided in foster homes would also be beneficial in independent or semi-independent accommodation at certain times – for example, when first moving into new accommodation or if they were struggling with a personal situation. Focus group participants wanted staff to provide emotional care by proactively checking on the young person’s wellbeing; for example, asking young people how they were feeling. There was recognition in focus group discussions that some young people in independent / semi independent accommodation would not seek out care when they were feeling low, so staff should take the lead by checking in.

Overall, there was a sense that there should be a baseline level of both ‘support’ and ‘care’ (based on how young people perceived these terms) provided in independent and semi-independent accommodation. And both focus group and online community participants prioritised staff adapting their provision to what a young person needs and when they need it. It was important to participants that staff recognised when young people were feeling low or when something was upsetting them. Participants highlighted the importance of qualified staff who are trained to respond to young people’s needs and genuinely care for young people.

Caring is an emotion, a feeling. You can support someone and not care for them but you can't care for someone and not support them.

Support is legally statutory required but there might not be any warmth to it. I want someone who genuinely thinks about and supports me because they care about me. – *Anonymous contributor*

## **Views on what support 16–17-year-olds should receive when living in independent and semi-independent accommodation**

Focus group participants described varied support needs associated with living in independent or semi-independent settings – from round the clock support from a key worker to more hands-off signposting when required. These reflected variations in their own perceived independence, their support networks (family and friends), their personal circumstances (including health needs), and also their mixed experiences of living in different settings.

They acknowledged that some young people needed more support than others, including those with poor mental or physical health and those who did not have easy access to family members. But also that support needs could vary for an individual over time as their circumstances change.

It really depends on the support each individual person needs. I could need a ton of support but a person the same age might need a lot less. – *Anonymous contributor*

Despite these variations, a common theme emerged across the focus groups – that support in independent or semi-independent accommodation should be responsive to young people's individual needs. For these young people, support should be determined on a case-by-case basis, rather than applying a 'one size fits all' approach.

When prompted to consider particular aspects of support, and whether these vary between children's homes / foster care and independent / semi-independent settings, young people highlighted the following priority areas. Note that these were generally in line with previous findings from research with young people (from the virtual policy discussions organised by partner organisations):

**Moving into independent and semi independent accommodation:** Young people flagged that moving into independent / semi independent accommodation can be overwhelming. The transition from children's homes or foster care to independent / semi independent accommodation was considered a big step; the difference between having regular adult supervision and new found independence. While they still reported varied support needs, participants identified this transition stage as a priority time for helping young people adapt to their new setting. For more independent young people, this could be limited to offering support but leaving them to settle themselves into the accommodation, to familiarise themselves with their new surroundings and complete any required paperwork in their own time. For less confident young people, providing care that replicates the care received in children's homes or foster care and providing adult supervision to help ease them into living more independently would be beneficial; for example, facilitating introductions to others who lived in their accommodation, supporting them with making decisions, being around to answer questions and checking in on their emotional wellbeing.

You need someone there for you to have the same conversations you could have with your foster carers. – *Anonymous contributor*

Participants also thought it was important that young people moving into independent / semi independent accommodation were given support in the form of checking they have basic household items, such as bedding, crockery, food and emergency money if needed, to ensure they were set up comfortably.

**Learning life skills and practical help:** Participants were keen to be offered support with learning and practising life skills. This included money management and budgeting, advice on hygiene, cleaning clothes, keeping communal areas tidy, and demonstrations on how to use household appliances like washing machines, stoves, and ovens. Additionally, practical help navigating systems and processes was considered helpful; for example, assistance completing application forms for identification documents.

**Support when seeking employment / entering education:** Some participants wanted additional support when seeking employment or applying to universities and colleges; for example, guidance and advice similar to that provided by a guardian. Engaging in education and employment was considered a necessary step to prepare young people for more independent living. Young people also felt it was important to have a focus on education or employment while living in independent or semi-independent accommodation to avoid the ‘trap’ of becoming aimless.

**Leaving independent / semi independent accommodation:** Older participants discussed feeling nervous about leaving independent / semi independent accommodation as they did not know what to expect going forward. These participants wanted staff or key workers to provide information about next steps to reassure them. This could include ensuring young people know their entitlements and rights before leaving, helping young people find long-term housing, ensuring their new home is ready for them to move into, checking that young people are mentally prepared to move on and helping young people develop a plan for their future.

## Views on the proposed national standards for independent and semi-independent accommodation

There was broad agreement among focus group and online community participants that introducing national standards was a positive development. However, for some the proposed standards (as described during fieldwork – see Appendix 2 for research materials) were considered too basic. Their concern was that generic standards failed to acknowledge young people’s varied needs. Most important to participants was that the provision and staff offer tailored support to meet individuals’ specific needs, and this should be reflected in the standards.

It's just very generic 'we need to make it safer and secure'. Yeah, you need to make lots of things safer and secure. It's stating the obvious. You can have the same sort of approach to a residential home. What makes the standards for a residential home different from a young people's home? – *Anonymous contributor*

Young people were asked to consider proposals for national standards across four areas – leadership and management, protection, accommodation, and support. Reactions to each area are outlined below.

### **Leadership and management standard: each accommodation should have a person who is responsible for all elements of service delivery**

Participants agreed with this standard. The priority for young people was that staff should have relevant qualifications so they can meet the varied and changing needs of young people and respond with appropriate care and / or support.

If they're not trained to deal with [difficult] behaviour, then they're not qualified to go into the job. Some people have different complex problems, [staff] need to be trained to deal with that. – *Anonymous contributor*

In line with previous findings from young people (from the virtual policy discussions organised by partner organisations), participants stressed that they wanted their accommodation to ‘feel like home’. To help achieve this, they suggested staff should only be hired if they had a genuine interest in caring for young people and were proactive in engaging young people, particularly when they are upset.

You don't just need to be interested but to actually do the stuff to show your interest. – *Anonymous contributor*

There were limited comments about the more technical elements of the standard, such as providers writing out how they plan to run the accommodation and what sort of support would be given. Those that did comment felt this was a good idea, to ensure staff are aware of what they should be doing.

### **Protection standard: young people feel safe, and their needs are met**

Participants broadly agreed with the proposals outlined in the protection standard, although some felt these were minimum standards that should already apply. In particular, they thought all accommodation should be free from physical risks and staff should be able to tell when a young person is upset or hurt. After acknowledging the importance of these points, discussions focused on other aspects of this standard – that accommodation is in a safe area and young people are taught how to keep themselves safe.

There was a general sense across the focus groups that independent and semi-independent accommodation tended not to be in safe areas. Participants described instances where they felt threatened or targeted (particularly in relation to their ethnicity;

for example, when their accommodation was in an area with few other people from their ethnic background) or where the accommodation location was known locally to be a dangerous area. This was compounded by the sense that other people's awareness of their status as care experienced young people made them targets for criminals due to their perceived vulnerability. Because of this, participants felt it was particularly important for 16–17-year-olds to be taught how to keep themselves safe as part of their transition to more independent living. When these findings were checked by online community participants, there was a sense that more detail is required in the definition of 'safety' in the standards, as what might be considered unsafe by a care experienced young person might not be deemed unsafe by staff or other adults or vice versa.

Safe area, who decides? I might tell someone I am not safe in that area, and they ask for evidence, like what evidence? It might be a nice area to adults but that doesn't mean I feel safe there. –

*Anonymous contributor*

As mentioned above, participants stressed the importance of feeling safe and protected in their home. Some female participants suggested the standard should explicitly require providers to conduct background checks on staff, particularly males, to ensure they are qualified and reduce the risk of inappropriate behaviour.

### **Accommodation standard: young people experience a comfortable and secure environment**

Having sufficient privacy was essential to participants and a priority within the accommodation standard. Personal space was especially important to those in independent and semi-independent accommodation who did not know or get on with others they lived with.

It was also important to participants that staff respect their privacy. Some participants identified a distinction between accommodation having privacy standards and staff adhering to them. These participants felt there was scope for this distinction to be incorporated into the accommodation standard to ensure staff members respect their privacy.

Staff used to think it was funny just walking in my room whenever they wanted because they had a master key. That caused quite a lot of issues because there was no care and no privacy. – *Anonymous contributor*

Participants who had the opportunity to view their accommodation before moving in found this hugely beneficial. They valued being able to assess the area and determine what they might need to buy for their place in advance. Those who did not have this

opportunity felt this was a good idea and should be incorporated into the standard. Participants noted that living with others was something they had to take into consideration when moving into independent or semi-independent accommodation, it was therefore important to some participants to feel comfortable around the other young people living in the accommodation. They suggested it would be beneficial to know who else lives in the accommodation in advance so they can determine their compatibility with others.

You should know who lives there too, you don't want to walk out your door and realise you are living with someone you can't live with. –  
*Anonymous contributor*

Online community participants also suggested accommodation could facilitate young people spending time together, for example, cooking together, and visiting places so they get to know each other.

People should be there for you and enjoy your life with you. Hang out and do things like visit places, cook together. You should have real people that you know in a real way. – *Anonymous contributor*

Participants also wanted the accommodation standard to include guidance for providers to ensure that fixtures and fittings were replaced or fixed in a timely manner. Some participants discussed issues with their accommodation that had been raised with their provider but not resolved in a timeframe they deemed appropriate.

My partner, his window was smashed in and I think it stayed like that for a year. That wouldn't be acceptable in a children's home. –  
*Anonymous contributor*

### ***Support standard: young people experience high quality, tailored support***

Participants generally agreed with the proposed elements of the support standard as a starting point. However, they felt the criteria was too broad and that the standard should be developed further by incorporating the importance of bespoke support. As discussed above, they stressed that young people living in independent and semi-independent accommodation needed support but that the level of support would vary between individuals and over time. As a result, they emphasised the importance of providing tailored support to suit each young person's needs.

To provide tailored support, participants suggested asking young people what support they need when they move into independent and semi-independent accommodation and young people should be made aware they can ask for additional support or care when

needed. In combination with this, participants felt staff should proactively identify when a young person might be struggling and in need of more care as not all young people will feel confident asking.

Let [young people] verbalise needs instead of guessing. Let it be known to them they can ask for help. – *Anonymous contributor*

Developing a support plan in collaboration with young people was advised, particularly for young people either moving into or preparing to leave independent / semi-independent accommodation. Focus group participants felt a support plan would ease transitional phases, helping young people prepare for their future and reduce anxiety. While online community participants noted that support plans were positive, they emphasised the importance of the plan being devised in collaboration with the young person so it incorporates and respects their wishes. They also wanted the support plan to detail how staff will help them navigate challenges while they are living in independent or semi-independent accommodation. Participants suggested key workers should check in with young people after a few weeks of living in their new accommodation to review how the young person is fairing and pick up any emerging issues.

Having [a support plan] when you first move in is important, I think that's when I really really struggled, in the first week. – *Anonymous contributor*

Supporting young people to manage and maintain safe and appropriate relationships with family and friends was another key element of the proposed support standard. Participants felt it was important the standard recognised that not all children are in care because of a breakdown in their familial relationships. Some participants discussed experiences where rules enforced by providers or staff – such as staff contacting young people when they were out to check up on them, curfews, and required background checks on acquaintances – restricted young people from meeting with friends, family, and romantic partners freely. This negatively impacted relationships and in some cases resulted in relationships becoming unmanageable, which subsequently had a detrimental impact on young people's mental health.

## **Regulating independent and semi-independent accommodation**

Initial reactions to the prospect of Ofsted checking accommodation were mixed among focus group participants. Those who were more negative worried that Ofsted would have the power to check on individual young people's accommodation/rooms and were uncomfortable at the thought of a potential invasion of their privacy. Others felt Ofsted inspections would be ineffective as they recalled their experiences at school where staff

would ensure everyone was on their best behaviour. These participants imagined providers would make their settings look good for inspections and therefore not a true representation of reality.

People like to pretend for one day a year everything will be amazing, it just depends on the people, but I don't like the idea of Ofsted coming in. – *Anonymous contributor*

Those who were more positive about the prospect of Ofsted inspections reflected on their experiences of school staff working hard to ensure everything was set up for inspections. From their experience, Ofsted inspections were helpful to ensure schools were thinking about inspections all year round, which could also apply to accommodation providers. They also assumed providers would be given an Ofsted rating which might incentivise them.

I think [Ofsted inspections] might actually make [providers] step their game up. I actually feel like it would put some semi-independent and independent homes on edge a bit more, especially since now they're getting graded on the quality they're providing. – *Anonymous contributor*

Online community participants had mixed views about Ofsted ratings. Ratings were viewed as either a useful indication of the quality of accommodation or irrelevant as accommodation quality was deemed to be binary – either good or poor quality. For those who thought the latter, issuing providers with a pass or fail after inspection would be considered more appropriate.

Participants that had previously been involved in helping organisations inspect unregulated independent and semi-independent accommodation felt young people should join Ofsted on inspections. They felt young people might trust the Ofsted inspection process more if young people with experience of living in independent and semi-independent accommodation worked with Ofsted on inspections to advise on issues to look out for. However, it was noted that a risk to this approach is that young people on the inspections might be too subjective and think about their experiences rather than what might be good for others.

I wouldn't want them to put what was right for them on to what is right in general. – *Anonymous contributor*

## Naming the provision

There were limited comments from focus group participants about what the provision should be called. Those that did comment thought the name of the provision should reflect what it is to young people and should be named in relation to young people's experiences to set expectations, for example, semi-independent accommodation. Other suggestions included regulated accommodation, regulated provision for young people, and regulated independence. These suggestions, along with suggestions from the children and young peoples' consultation (see Appendix 3) were shared with the online community participants. 'Supported accommodation for young people' and '16 Plus accommodation' were popular suggestions.

## Conclusion

There was a strong desire among young people for independent and semi-independent accommodation to provide support that is tailored to young people's individual needs. They prioritised personalised support over generic approaches and acknowledged that some young people require more help than others; for example, those with disabilities or who do not speak English as their first language. They felt it was important that different needs are recognised and catered to. Participants were receptive to the introduction of national standards to ensure suitable accommodation and support are achieved for all young people in this provision. There were mixed responses about Ofsted acting as regulators due to the fear that providers will be on their best behaviour and not represent the reality of living in that accommodation. However, there was recognition that the threat of an Ofsted inspection might encourage providers to meet the national standards for fear of consequences. The findings from this research will be used to inform the government response to the consultation and will be published alongside it.

## Appendix 1: Participant quota tables

### Focus group participation

	Total	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	Group 9	Group 10	Group 11
Young People Achieved	32	4	2	4	3	2	3	3	3	4	2	2
Male	18	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	0	2
Female	14	3	0	2	1	1	2	1	0	2	2	0
16-20 years old	20	3	2	3	2	1	2	0	3	2	0	2
21-24 years old	12	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	0	2	2	0
Unaccompanied asylum seeker/ Refugee	8	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	2

### Online community participation:

	Totals	Age range	Lived in independent or semi-independent accommodation
YP Achieved	5	17 – 21 years old	3

## Appendix 2: Focus group research materials

### Care experienced young people's views on proposed national standards for independent and semi-independent accommodation

#### Topic Guide v.1

##### Background

DfE want to make sure that independent and semi-independent accommodation for older children in care and care leavers aged 16 or 17 is high quality – this means it is safe and provides enough support for the young people living there. In February 2021, the Government published its response to unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers. The consultation tested a package of proposals and committed to several steps off the back of the response. Support was found for banning the placement of children under the age of 16 in independent and semi-independent living settings; introducing new national standards for independent and semi-independent living and giving Ofsted new powers to take enforcement action against illegal unregistered providers. These views were reinforced by feedback from over 160 young people who took part in policy discussions.

##### Research Aims

DfE want to understand the views of care experienced young people on the national standards and new regime for unregulated provision. The research seeks to understand care experienced young people's views on:

- the content of national standards and whether anything is missing/needs to change
- how they think the Government should check that provision is good enough
- what they think the difference between care and support is/should be
- what they think DfE should call this provision in future as they begin to regulate it

##### Note to Moderators

*During the group, participants may share personal experiences with you. It is important to acknowledge what they have shared and bring the discussion back to the topic at hand. If a participant shares something that makes you concerned for their safety or the safety of someone else, please alert [Alice.coulter@kantar.com](mailto:Alice.coulter@kantar.com) and the safeguarding contact listed in the profile sheet.*

##### Stimulus list

Stim 1 – Difference in support needs between settings

Stim 2 – Person X



### Key contacts

[Alice.Coulter@kantar.com](mailto:Alice.Coulter@kantar.com)

[Sheyi.ogunshakin@kantar.com](mailto:Sheyi.ogunshakin@kantar.com)

**Please note, this guide is not a script and is intended to be used flexibly, with participant responses guiding the flow of the conversation, topics covered in the order that they naturally arise and probes used only when needed**

### Introduction (2 minutes)

Introduce research, reassure about confidentiality and set tone of discussion

- **Warm up and introduction:**

- **thanks & introduction:** introduce yourself and Kantar Public; a research agency. Explain that your job involves talking to different people about different topics to find out about their views and experiences.
- **about the client:** The research is being carried out on behalf of the Department for Education who want to make sure that independent and semi-independent accommodation for older children in care and care leavers aged 16 or 17 is high quality
- **aim of the discussion** is to explore their views on what they think about the ideas the Government has put together to regulate independent and semi-independent accommodation and whether they think anything is missing or could be made better
- **how their information will be used:** Kantar Public will protect personal information closely so no one will be able to connect their responses with any other information that identifies them. Kantar Public have avoided collecting any additional information directly identifying those taking part and if any is shared (for example, names) during the interview it will be safeguarded and maintained under controlled conditions.
- **reassurances:** There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a test. Emphasise we are interested in their thoughts, whatever they are, and that they can be honest and say what they really think about independent and semi-independent accommodation.
- **house rules:** Ask that they respect each other by trying not to talk over one another – they can use the chat function to comment on what others are saying, ask that they do not discuss what others share outside of this focus group.
- **interview length** – 60 – 75 minutes
- **ethical considerations:** **Emphasise they do not have to take part if they do not want to.** Participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. If they wish to withdraw at any point, they can leave the discussion or contact the organisation that put them forward for the research who will notify Kantar and not include their responses in the study.
- **safeguarding:** Explain that if they tell you anything that makes you concerned for their safety or the safety of someone else, you will have to share it with the

person who put them forward for the focus group. If they share anything about the organisation that put them forward for the research, you will have to tell the DfE. Explain that you will let them know before you do.

- **questions/concerns:** Ask if anyone has questions about what they have heard.

### **Pause for questions**

- **confirm verbal consent to take part:** Ask whether anyone does not want to take part.

### **Pause for responses**

- **recording:** Thank them for agreeing to take part. Explain you would like to record the group chat, so you do not have to make lots of notes while we are talking. Ask for permission. Start recording and acknowledge consent on tape.

## **Background** **(5 minutes)**

**Aim:** to build rapport and get participants used to the flow of conversation

- **participant introductions**

*Moderator to ask each participant to share*

- whether they have taken part in an online discussion about this topic before
- establish who has lived in independent/semi-independent accommodation (shared housing) before
- (*If needed*) ask participants to describe themselves; if you could have any superpower what would it be and why

## **Responses to provision** **(5 minutes)**

**Aim:** to provide context, let participants frame the discussion

*Moderator to ask participants to call out responses – remind them they can be honest.*

*Moderator to note responses on virtual whiteboard if applicable*

- **explore word association with the following (probe responses fully)**

- children's homes
- foster care
- semi-independent accommodation – for example, shared housing/supported lodgings [*if necessary, clarify that this may or may not have onsite or floating support from the local authority and/or accommodation provider*]

## **Differences between care and support** **(20 minutes)**

**Aim:** to understand what package of support YP want from independent/semi-independent accommodation, and how this differs to foster homes / children's homes

*Moderator to be aware participants might share personal experiences - if they do, acknowledge what they have shared and continue with discussion.*

- **explore perceptions of difference in support needs between settings (using Ofsted indicators)**

*Introduce Stim 1: Explain that you will run through a number of support areas (these may overlap with things they have raised already) and they should use the ‘raise hand’ function in Zoom to show what they need in children’s home or foster care and what they need in independent / semi-independent accommodation*

- reflecting on all those relevant to independent / semi-independent accommodation (i.e., shared housing)
  - are these all important; are any more / less important
  - are there any support areas missing (reflect on earlier discussions)
  - what are the differences to support areas associated with children’s homes / foster care; and why
  - do you see this as care, or support?
- **explore views about what support 16–17-year-olds should get when living in independent / semi-independent accommodation**
  - capture spontaneous responses
  - what out of stim 1 (if not discussed already)
  - how (if at all) does this compare to support 16–17-year-olds should get when living in foster care / children’s homes
- **explore views about how support needs may vary – over time / between young people**

*Introduce Stim 2: Ask participants to think about the type of support Person X would need when living in semi-independent/independent accommodation, whether there are times when they may need more or less support*

- allow spontaneous responses and probe fully at each stage
- prompt specifically on help for Person X on a day-to-day basis (e.g., managing money, general wellbeing, education, and employment opportunities, help with any legal issues and/or legal entitlements)
- explore how this might vary across different young people – who might need more / less support and why
- in general, what level of support should a yp be receiving day to day? Is it more or less than what you get/got?

### **The proposed national standards**

**(20-25 minutes)**

**Aim:** to explore views on the proposed national standards, what they think might be missing and whether there’s anything that should change

*Moderator to explain you would now like to think about the proposed national rules to regulate semi-independent and independent accommodation for 16–17-year-olds. Moderator to read:*

“The Government wants to make sure that independent and semi-independent accommodation for older children in care and care leavers aged 16 or 17 is high

quality – this means it is safe and provides enough support for the young people living there.

This type of accommodation is meant to offer young people aged 16 and 17 somewhere to live that gives them the chance to develop their independence as they prepare for leaving care and starting adult life.”

- **explore views on the idea of national rules for semi-independent and independent accommodation**
  - capture spontaneous responses (e.g., good idea – should be more consistency; bad idea flexibility of providers suits young people’s needs)
- **explore thoughts on content of the four key areas of the national rules**

*Moderator to read*

“The Government have prepared some national rules that providers (people who run semi/independent accommodation) of semi-independent and independent accommodation will need to follow. They want to get your views on what you think about the rules they want to bring in, whether you think anything is missing or if anything should be changed”

*Introduce Stim 3: go through each rule and probe on the following:*

- overall thoughts
  - whether they think anything should be changed
  - views on rules
    - most important
    - less important
  - whether anything is missing
- **explore whether there are any additional rules that should be included**

### **Checking on accommodation (10 minutes)**

**Aim:** to explore views about different approaches for Ofsted’s regulatory checks (direct inspections of accommodation vs inspections of provider organisations)

*Moderator to thank participants for their thoughts so far. Explain you would now like to think how the accommodation providers should be checked to make sure they are providing safe and supportive accommodation. Moderator to read:*

“Under the new rules, Ofsted will oversee the quality of providers (people who run the accommodation) of independent and semi-independent accommodation. This means Ofsted will be checking in on the accommodation, service and staff, not individual young people. Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. Ofsted inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.<sup>2</sup> DfE want

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

to hear your thoughts about what powers and tools Ofsted will need to regulate this accommodation”

- **explore views on Ofsted regulating accommodation**
  - capture spontaneous views
  - explore advantages and disadvantages to Ofsted regulation
- **explore level of involvement/powers Ofsted should have – *allow spontaneous then prompt on***
  - powers of entry to carry out announced or unannounced inspections of services
  - powers to take enforcement action like issuing compliance notices to services that fall short of standards
  - powers to register and remove providers and services from their register
- **explore views on frequency of inspections**
- **explore views on role of young people (if any) within inspections**
  - whether they would like to be talked to/interviewed as part of inspection

### **Naming the provision** (5 minutes)

**Aim:** to explore views on what provision should be called now that it is being regulated

*Moderator to read:*

“The type of provision we’ve been discussing (semi-independent and independent accommodation) for 16–17-year-olds has previously been called ‘unregulated provision’ but now that it is being regulated it will need a new name”

- **explore views on what the provision should be called**

- capture spontaneous responses

*Note to moderator – if participants are struggling reference some of the thoughts and feelings that have been mentioned throughout discussion to prompt ideas*

### **Thank and close** (5 minutes)

**Aim:** to explore views on what provision should be called

- **thank and close**

- thank participants for their time and contributions
  - any questions/final thoughts
  - confirm that they will be contacted by the person who put them forward for this research but in the meantime if they would like to talk about anything that was discussed during the group they should contact the person who put them forward
  - close

# Appendix 3: Online community activity guide

## #A2: Activity 1

## #A1: Activities 2 - 5

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### **Activity:**

Activity 1

#### **Task 1: (1) Differences between care and support - what's most important to you?**

Welcome to our online community and thank you for taking part 😊

In the focus groups and consultation, we asked young people what support 16–17-year-olds should have when living in independent or semi-independent accommodation. The list below includes the different types of support that were mentioned by young people.

Thinking about the findings, can you rank the cards below in order of importance for you – from most to least important?

**Move a card into a group by clicking the card and selecting the desired group from a list. You can also drag cards directly into groups. Reorder cards by dragging them up and down or selecting "Move Up" / "Move Down" from card's menu.**

**Please note that your responses will not be visible to the other community members**

#### **Cards:**

Access to friendly, approachable adult for advice and conversations about my life

Staff asking how I am feeling

Staff recognising when I am feeling low or something is upsetting me

Someone taking responsibility for my welfare and wellbeing

Practical help and guidance with life skills (cooking, cleaning, budgeting etc)

Practical help and guidance with education and work decisions

Staff helping me adjust to moving into or out of independent or semi-independent accommodation

Adapting what support is offered according to what I need and when I need it

I have control over my finances

I can choose when I go out

I am not directly supervised by staff on site

I am responsible for my own health needs

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## Activity:

Activities 2 - 5

### Task 1: (2) Reviewing the national rules - what's most important to you?

The Government wants to make sure that independent and semi-independent accommodation for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 or 17 is high quality – this means it is safe and provides enough support for the young people living there.

The Government proposed some national rules that providers of semi-independent and independent accommodation (the people who run them) will need to follow.

In the focus groups, we asked young people to tell us which of the proposed national rules were most important to them. We have put the rules they highlighted as important together as a package.

Please have a look at the package. Let us know what is most important to you by using the markers to tell us what you like, dislike, think is a good idea or a bad idea.

**Please note that your responses will not be visible to the other community members**

[https://careexperiencedypresearch.recollective.com/cf/17c1cd8f580\\_593/1913/assets/D4B662F53F1B237CDD0EE5B8ECC728E1/S1913-A18\\_high.mp4](https://careexperiencedypresearch.recollective.com/cf/17c1cd8f580_593/1913/assets/D4B662F53F1B237CDD0EE5B8ECC728E1/S1913-A18_high.mp4)

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## **Task 2: (3) What would make you feel comfortable with Ofsted inspections of providers?**

Under the new rules, Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) will oversee the quality of providers of independent and semi-independent accommodation. This means Ofsted will be checking in on the accommodation, service and staff, not individual young people.

In the focus groups there were mixed reactions to the idea of Ofsted regulating independent / semi-independent accommodation.

👉 Young people who were less keen on the idea were concerned about Ofsted inspecting their rooms, or providers being on best behaviour just for the inspection and hiding any bad practice.

👍 Those who liked the idea of Ofsted regulation thought this would keep providers on their toes and encourage them to aim for a good Ofsted rating.

What would make you feel more comfortable with Ofsted regulating accommodation? Let us know by using the thumb up/down emojis to mark up the image below.

**Please note that your responses will not be visible to the other community members**

## **Task 3: (4) Naming provision**

The type of provision we've been discussing (semi-independent and independent accommodation) for 16–17-year-olds has previously been called 'unregulated provision' but now that it is being regulated it will need a new name.

In the focus groups and consultation, we asked young people what they think the provision should be called and they suggested the names listed below. Let us know which of the names you prefer.

**Please note that your responses will be visible to the other community members**

### **Options:**

- supported accommodation for older children
- regulated independent living
- regulated provision for young people
- i don't care what it is called
- i don't know
- 16 Plus accommodation

- supported accommodation for young people
- other, please specify

## Task 4: (5) Thank you!

Thank you for taking part in this community and for completing all the activities! We really appreciate you taking the time to share your views and have really enjoyed reading your answers.

Before you go, we would like to know a little more about you. Please select all that apply.

Options:

- i am under 16 years old
- i am 17 – 21 years old
- i am over 22 years old
- i have lived in shared housing, independent, semi-independent accommodation before
- i have not lived in shared housing, independent, semi-independent accommodation before
- i participated in a focus group with Kantar
- i have not shared my views on introducing national rules before
- other, please specify
- none of the above



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