



Homestay and the Code

Handbook for Homestay Practitioners



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority



Table of Contents

Introduction of the homestay review	2
Handbook for Homestay Practitioners	5
Safety Checks for Homestay	10
Appropriate Checks for Homestay	13
Managing Designated Caregivers (DCGs)	16
Arranging a Transfer of Care	18
Working with Homestay Agents.....	20
Acknowledgements	23
Appendix: Homestay Code Reference	24
Homestay for learners between 10 and 18 years old	24
Safety check on homestay carer	24
Appropriate check on 18 years old and above at homestay accommodation.....	25
Plan for the transfer of care	25
Homestay for learners 18 years old and above.....	25
Learner under 10 years old	26
Dispute Resolution Scheme (DRS) and homestay	26
Definitions as set out in the Code.....	27

Introduction of the homestay review

The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 ([the Code](#)) sets out requirements that all signatories must meet to support the wellbeing and safety needs of their international learners.

Under the Code, signatories are required to ensure, as far as practicable, that international learners reside in a safe living environment (Clause 53 (1)(a) for tertiary learners and Clause 76(1)(a) for school learners). This includes homestays, which serve as one form of accommodation for international learners.

Review of homestay requirements

As Code Administrator, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) reviewed homestay requirements. The review included:

- **Comparing** Code clauses for signatories in the tertiary and school sectors,
- **Collaborating** with Education New Zealand (ENZ) to assess sector-wide accommodation capacity,
- **Conducting** focus groups with homestay practitioners from across the sector, and
- **Evaluating** existing Code guidelines related to accommodation.

Below is a summary of the key findings from this review.

Summary of review findings

1) Clarification needed on homestay requirements

Feedback indicates confusion among signatories regarding homestay requirements, as the Code separates them into two distinct outcomes, **Outcome 12 for tertiary providers** and **Outcome 18 for schools**. While the structure differs, the accommodation requirements are identical. Clearer guidance is provided in the Homestay Handbook.

2) Need for practical homestay management resources

While the Code sets requirements for learner wellbeing and safety, it is up to signatories to determine what is appropriate practice. Providers and practitioners suggested that guidance would help highlight good practices while maintaining flexibility for signatories.

A practical resource for homestay practitioners could provide such guidance on key areas, such as:

- **Safety checks** for homestay,
- **Appropriate checks** for homestay,

- **Managing designated caregivers** (DCGs),
- **Arranging transfer of care**, and
- **Working with homestay agents**.

3) Opportunity to Build Awareness of Dispute Resolution Scheme (DRS) updates

The Ministry of Education updated [Education \(Domestic Tertiary Student and International Student Contract Dispute Resolution Scheme\) Rules 2023](#) (DRS rules) came into effect on 1 January 2024. The DRS rules now permit **homestay families to file complaints on behalf of international learners** in their care. Signatories must ensure their policies reflect this change and actively promote dispute resolution processes to learners and homestay providers.

Study Complaints | Ngā Amuamu Tauira is the DRS operator. They help domestic tertiary learners and international students resolve financial and contractual disputes with their education provider. Information can be found on the <https://www.studycomplaints.org.nz/> website.

Under the Code, signatories are expected to adhere to the rules of the DRS. Not following these rules, may be a breach of the Code, which could lead to sanctions being applied by the Code Administrator, as outlined in Clause 14 for international tertiary learners and Clauses 84 and 85 for international school learners.

Resources developed following the review

To clarify the Code's accommodation requirements, particularly as they apply to homestays, and to support signatories in meeting their obligations, NZQA has developed the following resources:

1) Handbook for Homestay Practitioners

- Provides guidance on key homestay requirements, and
- Includes scenarios, questions and answers, and examples to support practitioners in their work.

2) Homestay Code Reference

- Summarises homestay-related Code requirements,
- Highlights the Dispute Resolution Scheme (DRS) rules, and
- Available as an appendix at the end of the Homestay Handbook.

3) Updated Accommodation Webpage

- **Updated content** on NZQA's website to streamline accommodation check process for both **tertiary providers and schools**, and
- Accessible at: [Accommodation checks](#).

These resources aim to enhance compliance, improve clarity, and support good practice across the sector.

Providers must implement the Code in ways that reflect learners' needs and contexts, while being consistent with our expectations as Code Administrator (Clause 3(2)). These resources are here to help clarify what's expected and to support signatories in applying the Code effectively within homestay settings.

NZQA
January 2026

Handbook for Homestay Practitioners

Purpose of this handbook

This handbook is a resource for homestay practitioners, including:

- Homestay managers and coordinators, and
- Homestay agents and subcontractors

It provides information to help ensure safe, supportive, and culturally appropriate homestay arrangements under the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 ([the Code](#)).

Homestay management foundation

Under the Code, homestay means accommodation provided to an international learner in the residence of a family or household in which no more than four international learners are accommodated. A homestay carer is a residential caregiver who is hosting international learners aged under 18. Homestay practitioners should look for reference to “residential caregiver(s)” in Code clauses.

The Code requires signatories to:

- **Ensure international learners live in a safe, supportive environment** (Clause 53 (1) (a) for tertiary learners and Clause 76(1)(a) for school learners).
- **Provide clear, accurate homestay information to prospective learners** (Clause 41(1) (f) for tertiary learners and Clause 62 (1)(f) for school learners).
- **Regularly check on learners in homestays and address their needs** (Clause 53 (1) (f) for tertiary learners and Clause 76(1)(f) for school learners).
- **Work closely with homestay families and contractors to align expectations** (Clause 38 for tertiary learners and Clause 58 for school learners).

Understanding learner needs

Homestays can significantly impact international learners’ experience in New Zealand.

Good practices include:

- **Pre-arrival:** engage with recruitment agents and/or communicate directly with prospective learners and their parents or legal guardians to identify and understand learners’ needs.
- **Enrolment:** conduct surveys of learners and available homestay families to match learners with suitable homestay placements.
- **Ongoing:** regularly review and use learner feedback to inform improvements to policies and processes.

Maintaining a pool of homestay families and collecting household profiles

To maintain a strong pool of homestay families:

- Proactively recruit homestay families from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Promote opportunities through newsletters, social media, and community outreach.
- Ensure contracted homestay agents comply with the Code (see *Working with Homestay Agents*).

To collect detailed household profiles:

- Survey available families in advance about their favourite activities, such as sports, game nights, or mealtime prayers.
- Interview families regarding dietary restrictions, such as vegetarian preferences, nut allergies, etc.
- Record each family's preferences regarding student profiles.

Making a suitable match

By considering your learners' needs alongside the strengths and profiles of available homestay families, signatories can facilitate well-suited placements that benefit both parties.

Successful placements consider:

- **Cultural preferences** (e.g., dietary needs, language, etc).
- **Age similarities** (e.g., pairing learners with families with similar-age children).
- **Special requests** (e.g., siblings living together).

Examples:

- A learner who prefers **home-country cuisine** → Match with a family who can provide it.
- A learner wanting **peer companionship** → Place with a family with a similar-aged child who is interested in learning about different cultures.

Acceptable homestay accommodation

Homestays must be **safe, supervised, and fit for purpose**. Signatories must:

- Conduct **home inspections & interviews** before placement.
- Conduct **home visits**; signatories may choose to outline the home visit process in homestay agreements to manage expectations.

Acceptable homestay conditions

When assessing a homestay, signatories may check:

Category	Requirements
Safety & Security	Secure location, emergency preparedness (first aid, smoke alarms)
Facilities	Clean bathrooms, study desk and chair with appropriate lighting, a fan/air conditioning or heating available if required
Bedroom	Lockable door, clean sheets, extra blanket if required, personal space
Emotional Environment	Welcoming atmosphere, respectful family dynamics

Note: The physical and emotional environment should feel safe and supportive during visits.

FAQs

1. Can a rental house be used as homestay accommodation?

 **Yes, provided:**

- The property is **safe and meets all regulatory standards**
- It complies with **the Code's homestay requirements**
- A full **home inspection** is conducted (regardless of ownership status)

→ For details, see the *Homestay Code Reference* at the appendix.

2. Can home inspections be skipped for rental properties?

 **No.** Signatories must:

- **Inspect all properties** (including rentals) to verify suitability
- Avoid relying solely on a Healthy Homes Certificate, as it is insufficient on its own
- **Reject** any property where the owner or landlord refuses inspection

3. Can a signatory consider an Airbnb property as homestay accommodation?

This depends on the specific circumstances.

 **Yes, if:**

- The Airbnb is a separate sleepout or cabin detached from the main house where the international learner resides.
- The Airbnb is within the same house, but guests stay for less than 5 nights. In this case, the school must clearly outline expectations regarding the learner's wellbeing and safety.

No, if:

The school cannot conduct appropriate checks for every Airbnb guest aged 18 and over who stays 5 or more nights in the same house as the international student. This includes situations where:

- The homestay carer does not inform the school of each guest's stay.
- The school is unable to carry out appropriate checks, even if informed.

▲ Alert: If a non-Airbnb homestay converts to Airbnb during the contract period, signatories must conduct a risk assessment and intervene if necessary (e.g., amend the agreement or terminate the arrangement).

4. Can a recruitment agent host an international learner?

The Code does not explicitly prohibit a recruitment agent from being a homestay carer, provided that:

- The individual meets all requirements for being a homestay carer, and
- Their property meets the requirements for homestay accommodation.

However, signatories should consider the following when making a decision, based on their own risk assessment:

- **Potential conflict of interests:** this may arise if the recruitment agent is hosting a learner they recruited, and if the agent has a contractual relationship with the learner's parent or legal guardian regarding the learner's enrolment or attendance at the school.

Ultimately, the signatory decides whether to keep the financial arrangements for a learner's accommodation separate from those for their enrolment.

5. Complaint process for learners in homestays

The Code requires signatories to have effective practices for international learners to raise concerns and resolve complaints. These requirements are outlined in Outcome 2 for tertiary learners and Outcomes 21 and 22 for school learners and also apply to homestays.

Complaints against an agent

- Learners or their homestay carer may raise concerns directly with the signatory.
- The signatory must follow its internal complaints process, including formal complaints procedures, to address the learner's concerns.
- The signatory must adhere to its agent management process.
- If the learner is residing with the agent, the signatory must arrange relocation to a safe alternative homestay, where necessary.

Complaints against staff

- Learners or their homestay carer may escalate concerns to the signatory's management team.
- The signatory must follow its internal complaints process, including formal complaints procedures.
- If the issue remains unresolved or the learner is dissatisfied with the outcome, the signatory must inform the learner of external complaint resolution options, such as NZQA (the Code Administrator) or the Disputes Resolution Scheme (DRS).

Key reminders:

- **Safety first:** All homestays require in-person inspections, regardless of property type.
- **Stability and suitability:** The signatory makes a decision after a thorough risk assessment.

For further clarification, consult the **Homestay Code Reference** in the appendix.

Safety Checks for Homestay

Signatories are required to conduct safety checks on residential caregivers, referred to here as homestay carers. While Outcome 12 (Clause 54) of the Code outlines the required check for tertiary learners, Outcome 18 (Clause 77) specifies those for school learners.

A **safety check** includes:

- 1. Identity verification**
- 2. Reference checks**
- 3. Police vetting**
- 4. An in-person interview**
- 5. A final risk assessment**

Frequency: Full safety checks must be conducted any time you work with a new homestay family and **renewed every three years**.

The five-step safety check process

1. Identity verification

Examples of acceptable forms of ID verification:

- Passport
- Current Kiwi Access/18+ card
- New Zealand driver's licence

2. Reference checks

Signatory must conduct reference checks with **at least one** of the following:

- Current or previous employer
- Relevant professional/licensing body
- A non-related individual (who can vouch for the homestay carer)

3. Police vetting

- Conducted via [New Zealand Police](#) for approved signatories. Follow the *Police Vetting User Guides* to ensure a proper vetting process for **residential caregivers**.
- **Note:** The Police vetting result does not necessarily determine suitability - it provides a point-in-time check.
- The signatory assesses the vetting results and makes the final decisions.

4. An in-person interview

Signatories must conduct **structured interviews** with the homestay carers to assess:

- **Experience** with international learners
- **Cultural awareness & communication skills**
- **Ability to provide support** (e.g., emergencies, emotional needs)

5. A final risk assessment

After gathering all information, signatories must determine whether the homestay carer poses a risk to the safety of the learner. They can consider:

- Emergency responsiveness** (can they act quickly if needed?)
- Empathy & cultural sensitivity**
- Conflict resolution & communication ability**
- Any other potential risks** (based on police vetting, references, or interviews)

Key points

- **Do things properly:** All five steps must be completed.
- **Re-checks required every three years** (or sooner if concerns arise).
- **Final suitability decisions rest with the signatory.**

For further guidance, refer to [the Code](#).

Why these matters

A **rigorous safety check** helps ensure:

-  **Learner protection** from potential risks
-  **Quality homestay placements** that meet Code requirements
-  **Compliance** with New Zealand regulations

FAQs: Police vetting

1. How long does Police vetting take? What notifications should signatories consider requiring from homestay carers during the 3-year validity period?

- **Processing time:** typically up to 20 working days (per [NZ Police Vetting Service](#)).
- **Planning tip:** account for this timeframe when arranging new placements.

During the 3-year validity period, signatories should consider requiring homestay carers to provide immediate notification of the following, and might include these requirements in written agreements:

- If they or any resident in the home is facing **criminal charges**.
- The outcome of any such charges.

→ Signatories must reassess risks and decide whether to continue the agreement.

2. Can a learner be placed with a family while awaiting vetting results?

-  **No.** Learners cannot be placed until:

- The Police vetting is complete, and
- A final risk assessment (which includes consideration of the vetting results) is completed.

3. If a homestay agent completed Police vetting, must the signatory repeat it?

✗ No. Signatories may **rely on the vetting results** provided by the agent if:

- The **agent's contract** confirms that the Police vetting, or the full safety check, conducted on the signatory's behalf aligns with the Code requirements.
- The vetting is current (≤ 3 years old).

Note: Police vetting is only one component of the overall risk assessment and specifically related to the homestay carer. The vetting result and the risk assessment may be used to support placement of multiple students from different signatories.

Reference check: special cases

What if a homestay applicant is retired or unemployed?

Suitable referees may include a:

- **Former colleague or manager**
- **Volunteer supervisor**
- **Neighbour** (non-related)
- **Community group member** (e.g., sports club, cultural association)
- **School parent** (if applicable)

Key rule: Referees **must not be family members**.

Example: A retired applicant with no recent employer could ask:

- Their **bridge club secretary** to attest to their character.
- A **longtime neighbour** to confirm their stability.

Key takeaways

- ✓ **Placements must not occur** until Police vetting results have been received and the final risk assessment is complete.
- ✓ **Alternative referees** exist for non-working applicants.

Appropriate Checks for Homestay

The Code requires signatories to conduct appropriate checks on all individuals aged 18 and over residing in a homestay carer's accommodation. These requirements are outlined in Outcome 12 (Clause 54) for tertiary learners and in Outcome 18 (Clause 77) for school learners.

Key requirements:

- ✓ **Frequency:** Checks must be **renewed every 3 years**.
- ✓ **Scope:** Applies to **permanent and temporary residents** (with some exceptions).

Who needs an appropriate check

1. Permanent residents (living full-time in the home during the placement)

Examples:

- Partner/boarders/flatmates
- Parents/parents-in-law
- Children aged 18+
- Other international learners (18+)

2. Temporary residents (staying 5 or more than consecutive nights per month)

Examples:

- **Adult children** returning from university during breaks
- **Relatives/friends** visiting often or for longer periods

3. Exceptions for short-term stays (less than 5 nights) & emergencies

- The **Code does not mandate checks** for:
 - **Occasional guests** (e.g., friends staying briefly)
 - **Emergency situations** (e.g., natural disasters)
- However, signatories must have policies to ensure learner safety in these cases. This might include requiring homestay families to notify the signatory as soon as possible about short-term guests.

Key considerations

- **Documentation:** Maintain records of all checks.
- **Written agreements:** Should clearly outline expectations for common events, even if they are not directly regulated by the Code, e.g., short-term guests.
- **Risk management:** Even when formal checks are not required for short-term guests, signatories need to **monitor** their learner's wellbeing and safety in homestays. This includes being aware of how short-term guests

may influence the household environment, positively or negatively, by affecting routines and dynamics.

Why these matter

-  **Ensures a safe environment** for international learners.
-  **Complies with the Code** while allowing flexibility for families.
-  **Provides clarity** on who must be vetted and when.

Scenarios and good practice

1. Homestay carer's family members (18+ years)

Recommended process:

- **Full-time residents:** Conduct appropriate checks **during initial application**.
- **Visiting family members:**
 - Homestay carer must **notify signatory in advance** of visits.
 - If Police vetting is required, this should be communicated clearly to the homestay carer during the interview process.

Key Tip: Allow **sufficient time** for checks before visits occur.

2. Relatives & friends staying (less than 5 nights)

For short-term visitors (e.g., holidays, family visits):

- **Homestay families must:**
 - Inform the signatory **as early as possible** about planned stays.
 - Confirm that guests **will not stay more than 4 nights**.

Key Tip: Set clear expectations through effective communications or consider including conditions in written agreement.

3. Existing international learner (18+) in the home

When placing a **younger learner** in a homestay with an **older resident learner**:

Check requirements:

- The **18+ learner** must undergo an appropriate check (if not already done).
- **Acceptable evidence may include:**
 - Immigration New Zealand's (INZ's) **Good Character** check and Police certificate (from student visa application process).

Special Case:

- If the older learner **turned 18 in New Zealand** (and lacks INZ vetting), follow the signatory's **appropriate check process**.

Placement Decision:

- The **signatory has final authority** on whether to proceed, considering:
 - Safety of the younger learner
 - Any additional safeguards needed

Key takeaways

- ✓ **Pre-vet full-time residents** during onboarding.
- ✓ **Monitor temporary stays** (≥ 5 nights require checks).
- ✓ **Leverage existing INZ checks** where possible.

Managing Designated Caregivers (DCGs)

The Code defines a designated caregiver (DCG) as an alternative residential caregiver for international learners under 18, similar to a homestay carer. The key distinction is in their appointment:

- **Homestay carer:** arranged by **the signatory or their agent**
- **Designated caregiver** (DCG): nominated in writing by the **learner's parent or legal guardian**

Key requirements for DCG arrangements

1. Written designation

- Must be **formally appointed** by the learner's parent or legal guardian
- Requires signatory approval (initial and ongoing during enrolment)

2. Safety and appropriate checks

Before approval, signatories must:

- ✓ Conduct **full safety checks** (five steps) and **appropriate checks**
- ✓ Check that the DCG's accommodation meets the **Acceptable homestay conditions** listed above

3. Roles and responsibilities

- **DCG:** Provides day-to-day care and accommodation
- **Signatory:** Oversees welfare but **is not responsible** for daily care
- **Parent/legal guardian:** Maintains **ongoing relationship** with DCG

Critical considerations

- **Ongoing monitoring:** Signatories must **regularly review** DCG suitability
- **Clear communication:** All parties should understand their roles
- **Documentation:** Keep records of **approvals, checks, and agreements**

FAQs: Approval and eligibility

1. Can a signatory reject a DCG request?

Yes. Signatories may decline a DCG if:

- The proposed caregiver **does not meet the safety and appropriate checks** (for example, the interview or home inspection highlight risks).
- The overall **risk assessment** is unsatisfactory.

Note: Decisions about a designated caregiver (DCG) must align with the Code's residential caregiver requirements.

2. Can an 18-year-old sibling be a DCG?

✗ **No.** While the Code doesn't specify a minimum age:

- The [Age of Majority Act 1970](#) defines adulthood as 20+ years in New Zealand (Clause 4(1)).
- NZQA requires DCGs/homestay carers to be ≥ 20 to ensure legal responsibility.

3. What if the learner hasn't met the DCG in person?

The signatory decides following a thorough risk assessment.

Consider the following:

- A DCG must be a relative or close friend of the learner's family.
- Whether the learner has an existing relationship with the DCG through other communication channels like online meetings, phone calls.

Process:

- 1) Conduct full safety and appropriate checks
- 2) Complete a risk assessment
- 3) Approve/decline based on findings

Key takeaways

✓ **Signatories have final approval** over DCGs.

✓ **Age matters:** DCGs must be **20+** (per New Zealand law).

Arranging a Transfer of Care

The transfer of care provisions in the Code, Outcome 12 (Clause 50(1)(d)) for tertiary learners and Outcome 18 (Clause 73(1)(f)) for school learners, help ensure **safe, supervised transitions** in relation to accommodation and travel that protect learner wellbeing. The Code requires signatories to:

- Establish **written plan of transfer care** for learners aged 10-17
- Notify parents or legal guardians of **all transfers** during and at the end of enrolment

Note: learners under 10 must live with a parent or legal guardian or in an approved hostel. Their care cannot be transferred to another person.

Key elements of a transfer of care

When signatories manage the transfer of care for learners living in homestays, there should be appropriate practice for:

Considerations

-  **Flight/travel arrangements** like booking air tickets
-  **Transportation** to get the learner to the airport
-  Specify **who assumes day-to-day care** and when

Approved person criteria

Nominated individuals must:

- Be **≥20 years old**
- Accept **day-to-day care responsibility** for the learner
- Maintain **communication with the signatory**

Risk management

-  **Alert parent or legal guardian immediately** if:
 - Approved person **fails criteria**
 - Safety concerns arise
-  Maintain **dated records** of all communications

Implementation checklist

- 1) **Customise plans** based on learner's age or needs
- 2) **Pre-approve** all nominated persons
- 3) **Document** every transfer step
- 4) **Verify** post-transfer wellbeing

Scenarios

When a learner/parent requests permission to meet visiting relatives:

Signatory must assess if the request meets transfer of care plan conditions:

-  **Approved:** Process request and document all communications
-  **Declined:** Inform all parties of decision with clear reasons

Some scenarios do not require transfer of care

1. Overnight sleepover arrangements

Necessary checks:

- Parent or legal guardian approval
- Confirmed transportation arrangements

Note: Signatories may prohibit sleepovers based on their educational policies (must be communicated during enrolment)

2. Learner personal trips for events or competitions

For learner participation in external events:

- **Considerations:**

- Approval from parent or legal guardian
- Supervision arrangements
- Associated costs (transport, meals, accommodation, etc)

Note: Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis related to the outcome of the risk assessment.

Notes:

- 1) **Documentation:** Maintain records of all requests/decisions
- 2) **Communication:** Provide clear explanations for declined requests
- 3) **Flexibility:** Balance safety requirements with learner experiences

Working with Homestay Agents

Signatories may engage homestay agents to manage accommodation arrangements for international learners. The Code defines an **education agent** as a person, body, or organisation acting on behalf of a signatory regarding learner enrolment, study, or **accommodation** - including subcontractors.

- **Homestay agent:** Any entity arranging homestays for a signatory's learners
- **Signatory-as-agent:** When one signatory provides homestay services to another (requires formal written agreement)

Responsibilities for Signatories

1. Regulatory compliance

- The Code **does not directly regulate agents** - it regulates signatories
- Signatories must **ensure their agents comply** with all Code requirements
- Ultimate responsibility for learner wellbeing and safety **remains with the signatory**

2. Contractual requirements

Essential elements of agent contracts should include:

- Clear service level agreements
- Compliance with Code requirements
- Monitoring and reporting mechanisms
- Dispute resolution processes

3. Ongoing management

Good practices include:

- Regular performance reviews
- Documented communication protocols
- Periodic audits of homestay quality
- Clear escalation paths for issues

Implementation checklist

1. Conduct due diligence before engaging agents
2. Establish comprehensive written agreements
3. Implement monitoring systems
4. Maintain open communication channels
5. Document all oversight activities

Remember: While agents can provide valuable services, the signatory retains ultimate accountability for learner wellbeing and safety under the Code.

Scenarios

Delegating safety and appropriate checks to agents

When signatories authorise homestay agents to conduct safety and appropriateness checks:

- **Contractual requirements:**

- Clearly specify all vetting requirements in the agent agreement
- Define quality expectations and documentation requirements

- **Signatory responsibilities:**

- Verify all checks meet Code requirements before placement
- Conduct regular meetings with learners to assess their experience
- Maintain ongoing communication with agents for updates

Good practice: Implement a dual-verification system where signatories regularly audit agent-conducted checks.

Addressing learner complaints: unauthorised room sharing

Background

Mei, a 13-year-old international student from China studying in Year 9, was placed in a homestay through a contracted homestay agent. Upon returning home one day, she discovered that a 16-year-old international student from another school had moved into her bedroom. The homestay carer explained that sharing the room would reduce Mei's accommodation fees. Mei was distressed and informed her mother who raised the issue with the school.

Required action

The homestay coordinator in the school must:

- Immediately contact the homestay agent to address the issue.
- Relocate Mei to a safe and appropriate alternative homestay without delay.

Code requirements

The Code, Outcome 18 Process 5 (Clause 76(1)(i)), requires that international school learners be appropriately separated from individuals of different ages to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

(The same requirement for international tertiary learners is outlined in Outcome 12 Process 4 (Clause 53(1)(i)).

Consider preventive measures:

- Include clear conditions in the contracts with homestay agents that reflect age-appropriate homestay requirements.
- Regularly review homestay arrangements to ensure compliance with the Code.

Agent accountability: If the agent fails to meet the school's expectations or breaches the Code requirements:

- Review the agent's suitability.
- Consider whether to continue or terminate the contract based on their performance and adherence to Code obligations.

Acknowledgements

ISANA

The International Education Association Aotearoa ([ISANA NZ](#)) is a national membership-based body that delivers intercultural competencies training for practitioners working with international students and other cross-border learners. It offers the [Supporting international homestay students](#) eLearning micromodule to assist homestay hosts negotiate typical scenarios involving their international students. Homestay parents are introduced to intercultural communication strategies and online cultural learning resources. The micromodule confers a digital badge. It is free to ISANA NZ members, and a nominal fee is charged per-user for non-members.

Homestay managers and international directors can also earn [digital badges](#) for enrolling in micromodules that develop intercultural skills that enable the delivery of tailored support for international learners.

SIEBA

Schools International Education Business Association ([SIEBA](#)) is the peak body representing the interests of schools in New Zealand's international education sector.

SIEBA provides dedicated services, resources, and representation to its member schools, including support related to homestay management.

For more information, schools can contact SIEBA at info@sieba.nz.

Appendix: Homestay Code Reference

Homestay for learners between 10 and 18 years old

Tertiary Outcome 12	Schools Outcome 18	Code contents for homestay
Clause 53 process 4 (1)	Clause 76 process 5 (1)	Code signatory must
(a)	(a)	ensure the homestay is safe and in acceptable condition, and meets all regulatory and legislative requirements
(b)	(b)	ensure safety check is completed and up to date
(c)	(c)	ensure appropriate check is completed and up to date for each person who is 18 years and over and resident at the same accommodation
(d)	(d)	have a written agreement with homestay families that specifies the role and responsibilities of each party in relation to the care of the learner
(e)	(e)	maintain effective communication with the learner, the learner's parent or legal guardian when homestay issues arise, and take responsibility for addressing those issues, including reporting them to relevant authorities and moving learners to appropriate accommodation
(f)	(f)	conduct learner interviews and home visits to monitor and review homestay quality, considering the learner's age, the length of the stay, etc.
(g)	(g)	if DCG, have written agreement from the parent/legal guardian that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCG is subject to the school's approval the school is not responsible for the learner's day-to-day care
(i)	(i)	ensure appropriate separation of learners from others of different ages in the homestay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> checking sleeping arrangement at interviews/home visits asking the learner questions about their safety
(j)	(j)	ensure the learner is appropriately supervised in the homestay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NZ laws of supervision of under 14 years applies to international learners aged under 14 signatory's expectations can be clarified in the written homestay agreement

Safety check on homestay carer

Tertiary Outcome 12	Schools Outcome 18	Code contents and interpretation
Clause 54 process 5 (1)	Clause 77 process 6 (1) (a)	Safety check, up to date and within 3 years
(a) - (e)	(i) – (v)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A confirmation of identity A reference check Police vetting An interview with homestay host on information related to risk assessment Risk assessment by signatory

Appropriate check on 18 years old and above at homestay accommodation

Tertiary Outcome 12	Schools Outcome 18	Code contents and interpretation
Clause 53 process 4 (2)	Clause 76 process 5 (2)	Appropriate check, up to date and within 3 years, on people who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> temporarily reside at that accommodation is/will be residing at that accommodation for 1 or more periods in any month, each period of which is 5 or more consecutive nights
Process 5 (3)	Process 6 (4)	What to check? the full safety check? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may start with the full check, and then reduce components all staff follow the policy on safety and appropriate checks

Plan for the transfer of care

Tertiary Outcome 12	Schools Outcome 18	Code contents and interpretation
Clause 50 process 1 (1)(d) (i)	Clause 73 process 2 (1)(f) (i)	A plan is in place for the learner from the homestay caregiver to their parent/legal guardian, or another person approved by the parent/legal guardian.
(a) – (b)	(a) – (b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> each transfer during the period of enrolment the transfer at the end of enrolment
Process 1 (1) (d) (ii)	Process 2 (1) (f) (ii)	ensure that the parent or legal guardian is notified of each transfer plan

Homestay for learners 18 years old and above

Tertiary Outcome 12	Schools Outcome 18	Code contents and interpretation
Clause 55 Process 6 (1)	Clause 76 Process 5 (3)	Homestay arranged by a signatory, the signatory must
(a) – (b)	(a) – (b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure the homestay is safe and in acceptable condition, and meets all regulatory and legislative requirements maintain effective communication with the learner when homestay issues arise, address the issues including reporting them to relevant authorities
Clause 55 Process 6 (2)	Clause 76 Process 5 (6)	homestay issues include those of health and wellbeing arising from a learner's homestay

Learner under 10 years old

Tertiary Outcome 12	Schools Outcome 18	Code contents and interpretation
Clause 51 Process 2	Clause 74 Process 3	Code signatory must ensure
(1)		international school learners under 10 years live with a parent or legal guardian.
	(1)	international school learners under 10 years live with a parent or legal guardian, unless they are accommodated in a school hostel.

Dispute Resolution Scheme (DRS) and homestay

Education (Domestic Tertiary Student and International Student Contract Dispute Resolution Scheme) Rules 2023

Clause 7: Who may act on behalf of student

International students

(2) (b) a caregiver who is (or was) contractually responsible for the student, acting (i) with the student's consent; or (ii) if the student is under the age of 18 years, with the consent of the student's parent or legal guardian

Interpretation of Clause 7 in relation to homestay

Homestay families who are contractually responsible for international learners can make claims and go through the dispute resolution process on behalf of the learner if the learner consents, or if the learner's parent/legal guardian's consents when the learner is under 18.

Definitions as set out in the Code

Signatory

a provider that has been approved by this code administrator to enrol international learners as a signatory to this code

Residential caregiver, of an international learner aged under 18, means:

- a homestay carer; or
- a licensed school hostel manager or other person responsible in a licensed school hostel; or
- a designated caregiver; or
- a manager of tertiary student accommodation under the Code; or
- in the case of temporary accommodation, a supervisor responsible for the care of learners

Homestay

accommodation provided to an international learner in the residence of a family or household in which no more than 4 international learners are accommodated

Designated caregiver

a relative or close family friend designated in writing by a parent or legal guardian of an international learner under 18 years as the caregiver and accommodation provider for that learner

Legal guardian

a person who, by court or testamentary appointment, is responsible for the learner's wellbeing and safety and financial support and provides for the care of the learner or international learner in their home country

Education agent

a person, body, or organisation acting on behalf of a signatory in relation to any aspect of their international learners' enrolment and study, including accommodation, and includes a subcontracted agent

Learner 'at risk'

that a tertiary provider or school has reasonable grounds to believe that there is a serious issue relating to the learner's health, safety, or wellbeing, including for example, the learner is unable to (a) adequately protect themselves against serious harm; or (b) adequately safeguard their personal welfare

Dispute Resolution Scheme

the student contract Dispute Resolution Scheme established under section 536 of the Education and Training Act 2020

		
The Code (English Version)	NZQA Code website	Code implementation guidance