

Hosting Good Practice Guide

Key considerations for prospective hosts

The purpose of this guide:

We know that hosting can play an important role in providing safe, temporary homes to people in need of urgent sanctuary who are fleeing persecution, trauma, and conflict.

This guide aims to address some key questions that anyone who is thinking of hosting should consider before agreeing to open up their home. Hosting is a serious commitment that may not be the right choice for everyone.

Who is this guide for:

- Anyone considering hosting a refugee or person seeking asylum in their home
- Anyone wanting to gain knowledge on hosting 'good practice'

Terminology:

In this guide we refer to ***hosts*** and ***guests***.

- A ***host*** is someone who owns or rents a property and who is able to provide a spare room in their property to someone in need of accommodation on a temporary basis, with no rent being charged.
- A ***guest*** is someone in need of temporary accommodation who stays within the host's property.

Background:

Action Foundation delivered a successful hosting project from 2016 until 2020 with 32 host families for 5763 nights. Although we no longer provide this service, we know that hosting provides a vital pathway out of destitution and homelessness for hundreds of people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Action Foundation are a member of NACCOM (the No Accommodation Network). Prior to Covid-19, NACCOM members accommodated 986 people across a network of 1,350 active hosts. There are currently 31 hosting projects in the NACCOM network. This guide is mainly based on NACCOM's 'Good Practice Guide (2022) Part 1 – For Prospective Hosts' (which NACCOM members developed) and incorporates minor adaptations from our experience and learning from Hosting over the years.

In 2017 (updated in 2020) NACCOM produced a Hosting Toolkit. This is a comprehensive resource and good practice guide to help with the set-up and running of hosting schemes specifically aimed at accommodating destitute people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants. This free resource can be downloaded at [NACCOM-HostingToolkit-2021.pdf](#).

This **Hosting Good Practice Guide** aims to highlight and address key issues and considerations around good practice in hosting arrangements for hosts and support organisations.

Introduction to hosting

Hosting is simply where someone offers a private room and access to shared facilities in their own home to a person or persons in need, free of charge. As well as providing a safe, temporary home, hosting can give people in the asylum and immigration system vital stability that enables them to access the support they need to move forward with their life.

It can also be a rewarding experience for both guests and hosts; an opportunity to learn about different backgrounds, cultures and world-views, a chance to make new friends and connections, and to help with integration for people who are new to the UK.

Hosting works best when the right time, support and consideration has been given to facilitating a positive and safe hosting arrangement, particularly as many people in need of hosting may have experienced trauma, conflict or persecution.

Our experience tells us that with the proper vetting and matching of hosts and guests, property checks, training to ensure a trauma-informed response, and ongoing support within an appropriate community setting, hosting can provide both a positive and safe environment for someone in need of refuge as well as a positive, life-enhancing experience for the hosts.

It is important to acknowledge that hosting is intended to be a temporary housing solution and where possible support should be sought early on for longer-term housing solutions for the guest(s).

Before you host: key considerations

Making your decision:

- **Have all household members, including children, been consulted and are in agreement with taking on the responsibility of hosting someone?**

Hosting is a significant commitment, particularly if it is going to be for more than a few months. It is important that individuals and whole households take time to properly reflect together on your ability to take on such a responsibility, and the ways that hosting might impact on your life. It is important to not just think what hosting someone in your home will feel like for the first few weeks, but after a few months' time; would you still want that commitment? It is also important to consider consulting children who may be away at university and may come back for holidays to see how they feel.

- **What would you want from a hosting situation?**

Imagine you had suddenly been forced to leave behind your home, your loved ones, your job, your country and everything that was familiar to you. We know it can be difficult to imagine the trauma that many people seeking support from hosting will have experienced, but try to think about what kind of support *you* might need if you were in this situation. It's also important to remember that people are individuals, so their support needs will vary considerably.

- **Do you know what statutory or voluntary sector support is available to you and your guest(s) in your area? Are you able to respond to the varying support needs of the individual(s) you may host?**

Hosting arrangements are more likely to be successful where the host receives appropriate support and training on topics such as boundaries, power and ethics, trauma, safeguarding and building meaningful relationships. It's vital for the safety and wellbeing of both guests and hosts that consideration is given to what support might be needed for both parties, and how to access it, not just at the outset of the hosting arrangement but throughout.

- **How would you manage a breakdown in the host/guest relationship?**

We know that things don't always work out and relationships can break down in hosting arrangements. Think about what you would do in this situation, what support you might need and where you and your guest would go to get help to ensure a safe resolution.

- **How would you support and empower your guest(s) to live independently here in the UK?**

Successful hosting fosters independence and does not create dependency, so spend some time thinking through ways that you can empower your guest(s) to rebuild their lives in the UK.

Practicalities of hosting:

Your home:

- Have you got a spare bedroom(s) that is private? (A room that you don't need regular access to and that is empty)
- Have you checked with your landlord or mortgage provider to ensure you can offer a room?
- Have you checked with your home insurance provider?
- How many people can live in your home without it becoming overcrowded?
- Do you have Wi-Fi internet access?
- Are you happy to share your kitchen space? How will that be managed? Are you cooking/eating together or at different times?
- Are you happy for your guest to store and prepare food independently?
- Are you happy to share your bathroom space? Do you have a lockable bathroom door?
- Are there any spaces in the house that will be 'out of bounds', e.g., a study?
- Are you happy to give a copy of your house key to your guest?
- Will you be comfortable allowing people to stay in your home if you go on holiday or are away overnight?
- What period of time can you and your household realistically offer to host for?
- If you are considering hosting a family with children, is your house suitable for children? If so, what ages can you suitably accommodate?
- If you have pets, have you considered how will this affect your guest(s); what if they have allergies and fears? What if they have pets? Will their pets get on with your pets?
- Mobility – is your house safe and accessible for people who may have mobility issues?
- Would the location of your house present a barrier to the individuals you are hosting? For example, is there good public transport that will enable them to access support networks and travel independently?
- Who regularly visits your home? Consider if this may be an issue either for the guest or for your usual visitors e.g., grandchildren or adult children

Safeguarding:

We believe that safeguarding and risk management are key components of a successful hosting arrangement. As part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, councils will be required to undertake accommodation and DBS criminal record checks for all adults (16 and over) in the sponsor household. The level of check is determined by the age and needs of the guests.

All NACCOM hosting projects have a clear and robust approach to safeguarding and risk assessments, including the vetting of both guests and hosts and established reporting procedures. Projects will typically cover the following questions and considerations as part of their host induction and safeguarding training so this will be helpful for you to consider.

- Have you thought about potential risks to you, your family or regular visitors of having an unrelated person(s) living in your home?
- What ongoing support would the guest and host need to ensure an appropriate and trauma-informed response to minimise the risk of, at best, relationship breakdown between host and guest and, at worst, exploitation and harm?
- Do you know how to identify safeguarding concerns? And how and where to go to report it?
- Are you comfortable with Social Workers or other people visiting your home to undertake checks?
- Are you comfortable with safeguarding and/or DBS checks being undertaken on you and all other adults in your household?

Welcoming your guest:

- Have you started to think about how you will welcome your guests and how you will enable them to feel at home (without overwhelming them)?
- Could you put together a house guide including rules, boundaries, and information about your daily routines?
- Would you be happy to discuss house rules; things to consider could include use of alcohol or smoking in the house/garden, sharing chores, privacy, bedtimes, use of laundry facilities, arrangements for staying out or inviting visitors to the house? Agreeing these clear rules and boundaries at the start is always advisable.
- Do you already have links to voluntary sector organisations/faith groups or a City of Sanctuary group supporting people seeking asylum, refugees, or other migrants?
- Do you have the time to support people to register with GPs, dentists, schools etc? If no, who can support your guest with this?
- You may host someone who cannot speak English. Can you help someone navigate a new town/city and new systems without interpretation or translation support? Have you thought about how you will communicate if you do not share a language?
- Will you feel comfortable living with people who have a different parenting style, age, disability, dietary requirements, culture, sexual orientation, religion, or world view to yourself?
- Are you happy living with someone who may not have had any Covid vaccinations?
- It may take time for your guest to gain the confidence to go out of the home to socialise or find employment. Are you happy for someone to spend a lot of time in your shared space?

- Some people can have serious or long-term health conditions, or a disability. What kind of impact would this have on you and your household? Are you able to support people who may have debilitating conditions to access the appropriate and ongoing health care that they need?
- Do you have a physical or mental health condition that may be affected by having guest(s) living with you for a long period of time?
- Have you thought about how you or your guest would feel about staying with someone of a different gender? Is it appropriate for you to host someone of a different gender?

Emotional support:

We believe that having a **trauma-informed approach**¹ is important to ensure a safe and successful hosting arrangement. Hosting projects typically cover the following questions and considerations as part of their host training:

- People fleeing war and persecution are often traumatised. Trauma is the response to an event which leaves someone feeling helpless and terrified. It is important to acknowledge that guests may have suffered trauma and recognise that how they may act / feel is affected by this.

Some people may need specialised treatment or support which can make them unsuitable for hosting, or at least present significant challenges. People suffering from trauma can feel very depressed, hopeless and angry. It's important to consider how you are best able to support someone who has complex mental health problems including PTSD?

It's important to recognise your role is to provide a safe and welcoming space – you are not their therapist or counsellor. If they need therapeutic support they can access this from specialist health care services rather than from you as their host.

- Be mindful of the power imbalance in the host/guest relationship.
- Having a guest in your house will impact your day-to-day life and they might not behave in the way you expected. How resilient are you to change? How do you deal with frustration or conflict?
- It is difficult to hear such traumatic events and you need to be careful around secondary trauma, so how are you going to look after your own mental health/well-being?
- What are you expecting from a guest? How are you expecting them to behave? What if they are very different to this expectation? Are you expecting the guest to show how grateful they are to you? How will you feel if they don't? Are you expecting a friend? The relationship with your guest will likely change over time as the guest 'finds their feet'.
- Guests who have experienced trauma may tell you about very distressing experiences, or they may not want to say much at all about what they have been through. Your guests may not want to talk about their story so it is best not to ask as this can be re-traumatising.
- Are you able to set boundaries to look after yourself? And are you able to respect other people's boundaries, including if a guest chooses not to share their time or their 'story' with you?
- Keep their story to yourself – they may have felt safe to share it with you, but not others. Yet if you are concerned for their welfare, do speak to the safeguarding team at the relevant local authority.

¹ A trauma-informed approach realises the impact of the trauma; recognises the signs and symptoms; responds (with support to the relevant level, and signpost to others when needed); and resists re-traumatisation (for example, not asking them to tell you what has happened unless they want to share).

- Have you thought about opportunities for you and your guest(s) to connect with others going through the same experiences? Are there local support networks in your community that you can join?

Financial considerations:

- How will hosting impact on your financial outgoings e.g. utility bills, council tax or rent, insurance etc?
- If you are hosting someone with access to public funding/welfare support, will you be able to provide food and other basics whilst your guest(s) wait for their benefits claim to be processed?
- If your guest(s) do not have access to public funds/welfare support, how will they support themselves and who will provide them with subsistence support? Who will provide them with food, toiletries etc.?
- Communication (telephone, internet) is vital for someone seeking sanctuary. If you don't have Wi-Fi, are you in a position to have it installed?
- Is there any financial support you or your guest could access to help with any associated hosting costs?

Under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the DWP has confirmed that the host will be no better or worse off in terms of their benefit entitlement as a result of the 'thank you' payment they will receive from the government, and the 'thank you' payment is not a rental liability for the persons sponsored.

The end of the hosting arrangement

- Most hosting projects will have a clear move-on plan for the guest. Where move-on options are not clear, would you be able to let your guest(s) stay longer than the initial agreed period?
- What move-on support will there be for people to leave the hosting arrangement and settle independently in the community or, where appropriate, claim asylum?
- We know that things don't always work out and relationships break down. What would you do in this situation, what support might you need and where would you and your guest go to get help?

Well-managed hosting schemes offer full training, host handbooks, support workers and links to wider resources and support organisations. We would always recommend hosting under a well-structured and supportive scheme if possible.

To find out more about the No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) and their work in tackling destitution amongst people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants with NRPF please visit www.naccomm.org.uk. If you have specific questions email office@naccomm.org.uk.

The Chartered Institute of Housing's housing rights website now has a dedicated resource page on Ukraine with lots of links and guidance <https://www.housing-rights.info/help-for-ukrainian-refugees.php>

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