



Tips for those wishing to host refugees and asylum seekers

1. Make sure you have the support of your whole family, including those who visit your home frequently.
2. Don't ask direct questions about the trauma your guest may have experienced as there is always a risk of re-traumatisation. They will tell you what they want you to know in their own time - be led by them. Remember anything they tell you is *their* story to tell, not yours. So don't tell your friends and family all about your guests without their permission.
3. Never take photos of your guest, and especially not their children, without their permission and do not upload them to social media without their express agreement.
4. Do show curiosity about their country – food, customs, birthdays, etc. Many will be proud of their country and will want an excuse to remember the good times. Try learning a few words of welcome in their own language.
5. Your guests have just lost all control of their lives and are totally dependent on others – encourage them to regain their agency and independence. This means trying not to do *everything* for them, however tempting it is. Give them lifts in your car and cook for them in the first days, but then show them how to catch the bus and allow them to take over your kitchen, at least sometimes!
6. Don't be offended if your guests simply want to stay in their own room(s) in the evening. Continually socialising with others can be hard work (for both guests and hosts) so try to make their rooms somewhere they can be comfortable spending a lot of time on their own. Having a guest TV is often a good idea.
7. Set some House Rules right at the start – this saves difficulties later; and you can always relax them when things start to settle down and you know them better. See below for some practicalities.
8. Ask for help if things start to go wrong. Your community, your friends, neighbours, your local council and local charities may all be able to offer support.
9. The hardest part of hosting is the move-on. Where do your guests go after the end of their placement? If you have agreed to take someone for 6 months and are unlikely to want to extend this, make this clear from the outset and try to have arrangements in place for what happens next. In Sanctuary Hosting, if the guest is not yet in a position to live independently, we try to help our guests by offering a new hosting placement.

Some practical issues

Particularly when you are new to hosting, it can be helpful to have a few guidelines on practical issues.

The suggestions below are not requirements of our hosting scheme, and are not monitored by Sanctuary Hosting, but are intended to help the guest to settle in and the host to feel confident they have covered some of the things their guest may need to know or be wondering about.

The basics

- Make sure you know the guest's full name and telephone number. These will be on the host/guest agreement.
- You might also suggest swapping email addresses? Facebook?

Security

- If the guest is to have their own key, run through how the locks work. Cover all external doors. What about windows? - do you close/lock them when you go out? Which ones?
- Explain the alarm system if you have one.

Coming into the house

- Where should the guest leave their coat? Umbrella?
- Is yours a 'shoes off' house? What about when dirty/wet?

Heating

- Explain how it works (if it's all set centrally, you may want to make it clear that the guest shouldn't change anything)
- Are there thermostats on individual radiators? Which ones are you happy for the guest to change?

Common spaces

- Make it clear which rooms the guest can share. And when.
- If relevant, show how the TV / music works

Kitchen

- Are you going to provide basics such as bread, milk and laundry powder?
- Make it clear exactly what the guest is welcome to use. Be specific – 'help yourself to anything' is generous, but guests may find it hard to act on.
- If you're going to invite the guest to eat with you, when/how often?
- What time do you eat?
- Find out if there is there anything they can't/prefer not to eat.
- If the guest is going to provide some or all of their own food, is there a shelf should use? Is there space in the fridge?
- Run through the kitchen with them - how does the cooker/microwave/dishwasher work?
- What's the system for the bins?
- What about recycling?
- Any rules on cleaning / what goes in the dishwasher etc?

- Do you have a fire blanket/fire extinguisher in your home?
- How to use the washing machine and how you dry laundry.

Bathroom

- If you have more than one bathroom, which should they use?
- Any restrictions on time (eg in the morning when you're rushing to work)?
- Where can they keep their bathroom stuff?
- What about cleaning?

Garden

- Can they use the garden? whenever they want?

A few other things

- Do they need anything to practise their religion?
- If they have a bike, or if there's one they can use - where to keep/lock it up.
- Do you want to give them eg the neighbours' names / phone numbers in case of emergency?

The immediate area

- In Sanctuary Hosting, the guest support worker will help the guest to access facilities, classes, activities etc, but you might want to explain local bus routes and shops.