

Boaz Trust Hosting Guide

Contents

Boaz hosting- a case study	3
Introduction and background.....	4
What does the Boaz Trust do?	4
Why is hosting needed?	5
What (or who!) is a Boaz host?	5
How do I become a Boaz host?	6
How does hosting actually work?	7
Where do the clients come from?	7
How do clients get to meet the host?	7
How long does a hosting placement last?	8
What if my circumstances change?	8
The practicalities of hosting	9
Reality check.....	9
Boundaries	9
What about cultural differences?	9
Do I have to cook for my guest?	10
How much do I need to 'host' my guest?	10
Do I need to give my guest a key?	10
Will hosting mean I have to pay additional costs?	11
Household Insurance	11
Private Rented Tenancies	11
Council Tax	11
Car Insurance	11
Boundaries and responsibilities.....	12
Should I give money to my guest?	12
Will I need to help my guest with their asylum case?	12
Will my guest need a lot of emotional support?	13
What if my guest needs to see a doctor?	13
What if my guest has specific health issues?	13
When things don't work out	14

What happens if I have problems with my guest? 14

What if I need my guest to leave before the arranged time? 14

What happens next? 14

Useful contact information..... 15

What to do in an emergency 15

DISCLAIMER..... 15

Boaz hosting- a case study

One cold Monday morning In December, O and N, from Libya, arrived at the Boaz office with two large bags, having just been evicted from their Home Office accommodation. They had been on our waiting list for a week or so. Our client services manager carried out an initial assessment interview. She discovered that their asylum case had been refused a few weeks earlier and they were now street homeless. In addition, N was pregnant and had been very unwell during her pregnancy.

Our accommodation was full, but thankfully one of our hosts was able to offer them a place to stay that afternoon. O and N were extremely anxious as they hadn't stayed in a British home before, so we did our best to reassure them. When we took them to the house and introduced them to their host, their sense of relief and hope was tangible. Over the next month we supported them with an emergency food allowance and referred them to a local destitution project for further food and support. We provided bus fares for medical appointments and information about local solicitors so that they could make progress on a fresh claim. We referred them to a local project that provides baby equipment free of charge, so they had all they needed. In January they finally moved on to Home Office accommodation and support. It was fantastic when they called in to see us with their beautiful baby a few weeks later!

N told us "Before Boaz we had nowhere to go. My wife was pregnant, and she had depression, stress and was frightened. If we did not come to Boaz, we would have been on the street.

We stayed with Boaz hosts –nice rooms, lovely people. For my wife especially, they became like friends, like sisters - they opened their hearts as well as their house to us. It helped change her mood from depression to happy.

Boaz made a big difference. We are now a happy family with a baby, and you helped us when things were very difficult.

You don't know that when you give us something small, it is very big for us - there are no small things. Giving us a smile, a cup of tea and coffee - maybe you do it for everyone and it means nothing, but it means lots to us. Nothing you've given us is small."

O and N, from Libya

Introduction and background

"I have been amazed with the help Boaz provides to people like me. The thought of being housed with total strangers is very frightening but what washes off the fear is the welcome the hosts give you. They don't judge you or label you."
U, from Zimbabwe

Thank you so much for getting in touch to find out more about hosting with Boaz! The Boaz Trust began as a tiny hosting organisation back in 2004 and since then we've grown and developed and have hosted hundreds of people over the years.

We hope that this guide is useful to you, in helping you understand a little bit more about who we are as an organisation and how our hosting scheme works. At the end of this document, we explain the next steps you need to take if you are still interested in signing up to be a host, but in the meantime, thanks once again for considering hosting, and we hope you enjoy reading through our guide!

What does the Boaz Trust do?

The Boaz Trust is a Christian organisation serving destitute asylum seekers and refugees in Greater Manchester.

An asylum seeker is someone who has fled their country due to persecution, and has claimed asylum in the UK in order to receive refugee protection here. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as:

" a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of **race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion**, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..."

We provide accommodation to destitute asylum seekers and refugees through:

- Boaz houses: our 14 shared houses are not owned by Boaz, but are generously loaned to us by our supporters, or rented by us at a low rate.
- Boaz hosts: hosts are individuals / couples / families who offer a spare room to provide temporary accommodation to a refused asylum seeker in their own homes
- Winter night shelter: we run a night shelter for men over the winter months and are due to pilot a similar night shelter for women in 2017

Once accommodated, practical support is given to our clients in a variety of ways. For example, each of our asylum seeking clients has a named client support worker who will ensure that they are registered with a GP and have access to food through one of the local destitution projects.

We also have access to solicitors who can look at clients' paperwork and evidence to see if there are any options for making further asylum submissions to the Home Office.

The asylum system in the UK is incredibly complex; many people experience problems throughout all stages of the process. We want to see a more just asylum system and an end to destitution, so we are also actively involved in awareness-raising as well as campaigning for change.

Why is hosting needed?

The Boaz Trust hosting scheme was originally set up in 2004 as a response to the plight of destitute refused asylum seekers in the Greater Manchester area. As mentioned above, people claim asylum after fleeing their home country due to persecution. Last year we supported people from over 30 countries who had been persecuted for reasons including their ethnicity, political activism, religious beliefs or sexuality.

When people arrive in the UK and having fled persecution, they are often unaware of the asylum process, and just how complex it is. Many asylum seekers find it difficult to prove to the Home Office, on arrival in the UK, that they are at risk of persecution in their home country. This could be due to lack of evidence, poor (or no) legal representation and advice, or the psychological effects of trauma experienced in their home country or on the journey to the UK. Currently, two out of three asylum seekers are initially refused sanctuary here¹.

The Home Office provides accommodation and financial support for people while their asylum claim is being processed but, if they are refused, asylum seekers (who are over 18) have to leave the accommodation they are in and are no longer entitled to any form of financial support. However they are not usually detained or removed from the UK. This leaves people destitute with no right to work or claim benefits. Many live in fear of being returned to their home countries where they may face imprisonment, torture or even death.

No one knows how many destitute asylum seekers live in Manchester, as once people are not accommodated by the Home Office it becomes impossible to keep records of where people are living. Some sofa-surf between friends, some may face exploitation in return for a bed, while others live on the streets. Hosting is one of the ways in which Boaz supports those in this position.

What (or who!) is a Boaz host?

A Boaz host is someone who generously opens up their home to give a destitute asylum seeker a clean, safe, dry, warm place to stay. We mostly work within the M60, and we can

¹ The Home Office produces statistics every quarter, and the number of initial refusals has remained around 60-66% for several years. See for example:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-january-to-march-2017/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to>

really only accept hosts who live near accessible public transport, giving good access to the city centre.

We try our best to match hosts with suitable guests and also aim to be as flexible as possible. We would not place a male guest in a female only household or a female guest in an all-male one. All clients placed for hosting are over 18 years old.

Alongside our general hosting agreement, you can agree your own house rules and boundaries to ensure that the hosting experience is as positive as possible for all concerned. If you are going on holiday or need to take a break we can arrange for another host to cover for you.

With every hosting placement, there is always an initial one-week trial period to make sure that both guest and host are happy with the placement.

Throughout the hosting process our team at the Boaz office are there to support you and to deal with any questions or concerns you may have.

How do I become a Boaz host?

Once you've finished reading this guide, if you decide you would like to explore hosting further, get in touch with us on hosting@boaztrust.org.uk, or give us a call at the Boaz office. We will take your details and try to answer any immediate questions. We will arrange to meet with you to discuss the hosting process and what you feel able to offer and also to look at the accommodation you have available. You will be asked to give details of two people who can provide character references for you.

It is important at this stage to talk through the implications of hosting with everyone in your household and to make sure everyone is "on board" and has an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have. Once your references have been received we will arrange a time for you to have an induction meeting to give you the opportunity to find out a bit more about Boaz and raise any further questions you may have. After this meeting you will be marked as available to host on our database.

How does hosting actually work?

"I've hosted women from Iran, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Pakistan and Ivory Coast and almost invariably have found it a positive experience. The women I've hosted have stayed for anything from a week to several months, and have been incredibly grateful for a safe place to stay which gives them a sense of security and stability."

Claire, a Boaz host

Where do the clients come from?

Boaz takes referrals from a number of places across Manchester (e.g. other local charities, statutory services including the NHS or social services, and religious or community groups) and we ask referrers to provide as much information about the clients as they can. Each referral is then scored so that those who are most vulnerable move to the top of our accommodation waiting list, and client support workers then arrange to meet with individuals who have been referred for accommodation and support. Clients are risk assessed both through the referral form and through these face-to-face meetings.

If support workers have the case load capacity to place someone then the hosting scheme will be explained to the client. If a client wants to proceed with hosting, then a host will be contacted to see if they are available and we will give the host some information about the proposed guest to see whether they feel they can offer a placement.

Clients don't always accept hosting placements, and this can be for a range of reasons including: fear of pets, negative associations to previous exploitation through domestic servitude, or concerns / embarrassment over living cross culturally in someone else's home. While support workers try to alleviate these concerns, hosting is not for every person referred to Boaz. Equally, if someone's mental health needs are too high, it is not always appropriate to place them with a host.

How do clients get to meet the host?

If you are available to host a client we will arrange to bring them to your house and a simple contract will be signed to ensure your guest understands their living arrangements and how long they can stay. This also gives you an opportunity to outline any 'house rules', which are important for your particular household to help the placement to run smoothly.

The agreement between you and your guest is an informal arrangement and no occupancy agreement is signed. It is not a rental agreement as no money is exchanged and the guest has no legal right to your home. There is always a trial period of one week to ensure that both host and guest are happy with how things are going. Both host and guest will have contact details to speak to the Boaz team including an emergency out of hours number if you have any questions, concerns, or emergencies.

How long does a hosting placement last?

In short, however long you are able to offer! Having said that, we do ask that all hosts are willing to offer a space for a minimum of one month, even though some placements may well be shorter for a range of reasons. In 2016-17, 53% of hosting placements were for less than one month; the rest lasted between one and six months.

We used to have a number of hosts who just offered short term emergency places, but we found that on too many occasions, "emergency" hosting arrangements had to be extended quite significantly for reasons outside our control.

Often, hosting placements are used to accommodate people until a space is available in a Boaz house. In other cases, a hosting placement may be a temporary solution while waiting for asylum support (via the Home Office) to be granted. When a Boaz staff member calls to arrange hosting, they will explain how long they expect that the placement will be for, and hosts can say whether they will be available for all, some, or none of the time.

What if my circumstances change?

Boaz's hosting scheme is flexible, as we understand that during a hosting placement there may be unexpected circumstances that arise, and placements may need to be ended earlier than initially agreed. We ask that hosts inform Boaz as soon as they can if an existing placement will need to be cancelled.

We want clients to feel safe in their accommodation, so we try not to move guests from host to host regularly, but if a host is unable to continue the placement then we will make alternative arrangements for the guest.

Given the hospitable nature of hosts, they often have other people staying in their homes, for example friends or other family members. Again, if the bedroom will be unavailable long-term for Boaz to use, hosts tend to update staff and make contact when they are available to host again.

The practicalities of hosting

“Boaz gave me somewhere to live and supported me with bus fares, and provided me with food at the free shop. I was living with hosts who were really nice people, and welcomed me and helped me to feel at home in their house even though I was a stranger. I have no idea where I would be without Boaz. I would be on the streets.” *C, from Cameroon*

Reality check

Hosting can be a fantastic experience but there can also be challenges involved in inviting someone from a different background to live with you. It is unlikely your guest will be used to doing things the way you do, especially if they come from a different culture and climate and may not have been in the UK for long. It is worth remembering that if you feel nervous at having someone you don't yet know coming to share your home it is highly likely that they are nervous about coming too!

Boundaries

For hosting to work well it is important to think through the parameters you want to set when welcoming people into your home. These can involve simple house rules around meal times, use of the bathroom, kitchen etc. and clearly defining the guest's space and where you would like their bags to be kept. Clear boundaries allow guests to maintain their dignity and are more empowering than unspoken expectations.

Some guests might want to contribute something in return for your hospitality, so don't be afraid to say 'yes' if they offer to help out or perhaps cook a meal. However, some guests may have had difficult experiences of enforced domestic servitude in the past and there should be no expectation that a guest should do more than clean up after themselves.

What about cultural differences?

As best as support workers can, they will try and give an overview of where someone is from before a hosting placement starts. However, it's always a learning curve! When we recently asked hosts for feedback, cultural differences was one of the main things highlighted.

Case study: M, one of our hosted clients told her support worker that she felt comfortable and safe with her hosts, but the hosts had reported a concern that M wouldn't make eye contact, especially with the husband. Initially, the hosts were concerned that she felt uncomfortable living in their home, but after speaking with the support worker and getting to know M a little bit better, they all recognised that eye contact communicates different things in different cultures, and it didn't mean that M felt unsafe or unhappy.

Do I have to cook for my guest?

This is completely up to you and your guest. It can often be helpful to provide a meal when your guest first moves in. Some clients are keen to cook for themselves, as they like to prepare the foods they are used to whereas others may be happy to be cooked for. Each guest and household is different and it is important to be realistic about what you can offer.

When a client is taken on by Boaz we give an initial £10 to ensure they have food for their first week. We also ensure they have access to a British Red Cross project that offers a weekly basic food parcel for up to 12 months. When this provision finishes, Boaz gives clients the financial equivalent (£10 a week) towards food. We also run a monthly 'free shop' where all our clients can collect additional food and toiletries.

We ask hosts to allow guests to have access to food storage, preparation and cooking facilities. If you are sharing your kitchen you will want to clarify when you need space to cook and how soon after cooking you like to tidy up. For many cultures the concept of sharing another person's kitchen takes a lot of getting used to – as does the concept of "helping yourself" – so don't be surprised if your guest simply doesn't!

How much do I need to 'host' my guest?

When we explain how hosting works to our potential clients, we make it clear that households are offering the accommodation, and Boaz staff are there to help with anything else.

Over time, it may be that the host and guest begin to form a friendship, but there is no expectation to involve the guest in all household activities. Each hosting household and relationship is different, so it is difficult to cover all eventualities in this initial guide – for example, some previous hosts have invited their guest on day trips and holidays with them, while others live very separate lives to their guest. There is no expectation to include the guest in all areas of your life, so there should be no guilt for hosts going out or not inviting guests for particular events!

Do I need to give my guest a key?

While you are first getting to know your guest we understand that you may not feel comfortable giving them a key right away. Having said that we would usually suggest that a guest is given a key within the first couple of days, so that they are able to come and go without feeling pressured to stay out all day if, for example, a host is out at work.

In the past some hosts have preferred not to give their guests a key however, this can make life quite difficult for both sides. From our experience without a degree of trust between the guest and their host, the placement is unlikely to work well.

We would also encourage you to exchange phone numbers early on so that you are able to let each other know about any change in plans such as being home late or if a guest is occasionally going to stay the night with a friend.

Will hosting mean I have to pay additional costs?

Having a guest should not be expensive – but if you are a long-term host it may add to your living costs. Boaz is not able to provide you with any expenses for living costs incurred through hosting.

Household Insurance

Hosting a guest should not have any implications for your insurance. It is legally the same as if a family member or friend has come to visit you. However, you do need to check the details of your existing household policy. You need to ensure that putting up a guest in your home, free of charge, is in line with your initial proposal details (statement of facts). It should say if non-family members or lodgers are able to stay. We will need you to confirm that your housing insurance covers this for our public liabilities cover and also to ensure your insurance cover is not made void by having a guest to stay.

If you are discussing hosting with your insurance company it is important to make it clear that no payments are being made and that you are not engaging in any form of business. Most policies allow for guests to stay without any additional premium. However some insurers are more risk averse than others and we have heard of insurers stating they need to charge additional premiums if the house guests are going to be asylum seekers or strangers.

Private Rented Tenancies

Hosting is not covered by the 'right to rent' as there is no rent paid by the Boaz client, though there may be implications if you rent your home from a private landlord or a housing association. We can provide documentation for hosts and guests to make it clear that no rent is paid by Boaz or the client. Please let us know if you are in a private rented or housing association tenancy and have concerns over this.

Council Tax

If you are a single person household your council tax may go up, as you may no longer be eligible for the 'single resident discount'. Ideally you should contact your local authority to inform them that you are no longer living alone.

Car Insurance

We do not ask you to transport your guest as part of any hosting placement and therefore it will not affect your car insurance. Boaz will provide bus fares when clients need to attend

meetings or appointments. If you decide voluntarily that you want to take your guest somewhere, then this will be seen as a personal arrangement and not as a part of the hosting scheme.

Boundaries and responsibilities

My life is so different now, before I had nothing, now I have many things. I have somewhere to live and food to eat. My host family support me and show me friendship. I can't do much now, but I dream that one day I will be able to support myself and build a life here."

A, from Iran

Should I give money to my guest?

We do not expect hosts to offer any financial support for their guests, and we make it clear that guests should not ask their hosts for money. If a guest does ask for money, we'd suggest you ask them to speak with their support worker at the office instead, as Boaz can provide money for certain things (for example, bus fares for attending appointments and activities, or help with certain legal costs such as translation of documents). If a client needs access to a phone for a reason such as contacting their solicitor and phone credit is a problem the Boaz office phone can be made available for them to use.

Will I need to help my guest with their asylum case?

In short, no! Only a qualified immigration adviser, who is registered with the OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) can give legal advice and guidance on asylum claims.

It is fairly common that clients choose not to disclose information regarding their asylum claim with their host. We also encourage hosts not to ask for detailed information, as we do not want individuals to feel obliged to share personal information, simply because hosts are providing accommodation.

Over time, as the guest and host know each other more, guests may choose to talk about their circumstances, but they may also choose never to tell hosts why they have claimed asylum (and it's important to remember, if people don't disclose information, it doesn't mean they don't feel safe or that they can trust you!)

If clients need advice on their legal case they can come and talk to us in the Boaz office, and their client support worker can assist them in finding a solicitor. Please encourage them to call first to make sure someone is available. We have access to several solicitors who work with our clients and we are able to pay for legal documents to be translated (and some other legal costs) where this would be helpful.

Will my guest need a lot of emotional support?

Some guests may be very independent and you may rarely see them! However, many asylum seekers who have just become destitute are in shock. Depression is also common due to traumatic past experiences and their experience of the asylum process here in the UK. It may take your guest a while to learn to trust you and they may never want to talk about their background or home country. As part of the support we offer, Boaz ensures people are registered with a GP, and try to support people to access the right medical services needed.

The majority of refused asylum seekers cannot access formal education, and with no right to work, people can often become more stressed as they 'think too much'. Boaz staff will encourage your guest to keep active to try and help improve wellbeing. Boaz run a programme of activities called Boaz Life, and staff will invite all clients to join in with activities such as courses, day trips, or one-off events. Previously, people have also volunteered with a charity shop or similar project.

If you are worried about your guest especially in terms of their physical or mental health, please do get in touch with us.

What if my guest needs to see a doctor?

Asylum seekers are entitled to register with a GP and access primary health care (including A&E in an emergency). Getting registered locally can sometimes be hard but is worthwhile if your guest is going to be with you for a while or has ongoing medical needs. They will need proof of address to register and we will discuss this with you during the application process to be a host. Your guest will also need a valid HC1 certificate entitling them to free medical treatment. Their support worker at Boaz will help them with this process.

What if my guest has specific health issues?

Some of our clients are living with ongoing physical and/or mental health conditions. Those who have been diagnosed will usually be receiving treatment and support but some health issues may have implications for their behaviour and specific needs.

We try to gain as full a picture as possible of the health issues faced by our clients but please be aware that they may not always want to disclose such information to us or may not have been given a diagnosis. Where relevant / the client has given permission for us to do so, we would discuss any health related issues with you before making firm hosting arrangements.

If you have any concerns relating to the health of a guest please do contact the office or in an emergency please call 999.

When things don't work out

What happens if I have problems with my guest?

We recommend that initially you discuss any issues that arise with your guest and try to come to an agreement. If this is unsuccessful please do get in touch and we will see how we can help.

Every hosting placement starts with a trial period of up to one week. After this time you may well have built up a good relationship and be happy for your guest to stay but this gives you, and them, the option for change.

What if I need my guest to leave before the arranged time?

We recognise that circumstances can change and that sometimes you may not feel able to continue hosting a client. You can terminate the hosting arrangement at any time. We would just ask you to let us know in advance if at all possible, so that we can try to make alternative arrangements. We understand that it can occasionally be difficult to be a host long-term so please don't feel guilty if you need to do this.

What happens next?

We hope this booklet has given you some useful information about hosting and how our scheme works. If you have any unanswered questions or would like to take the next steps to register as a Boaz host please do contact us at hosting@boaztrust.org.uk and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Useful contact information

- Boaz office: 0161 202 1056
- Email: hosting@boaztrust.org.uk
- Address: Kath Locke Centre, 123 Moss Lane East, Manchester, M15 5DD
- Boaz out of hours phone: 07535 467877 (emergencies only please)

What to do in an emergency

In an emergency please dial 999 and speak to the relevant emergency services.

If an emergency incident occurs, please also contact the Boaz office (0161 202 1056) as soon as possible or one of our team via the emergency out of hours phone (07535 467877).

DISCLAIMER

Please note that whilst the Boaz Trust will make every effort to ensure that the hosting of destitute asylum seekers is a positive experience for all concerned, we cannot accept any liability for private arrangements made between host and guest.