



ASSIST guide for long term and emergency hosts

These guidelines are designed to help you understand the role of ASSIST hosts, and answer questions about how hosting works. If you have any questions, please contact your hosting buddy or Hannah at hannah.brock.womack@assistsheffield.org.uk

Who will I be hosting?

We're currently supporting around 100 asylum seekers in Sheffield who aren't entitled to government funded support or accommodation, and aren't allowed to work because their asylum claim has been turned down. All our clients are all over 18.



Being a host means you are helping to keep people safe and off the streets. In so doing, you will be making a significant difference to people's lives.

Whenever possible, we will look to match guest and hosts (taking into account various factors including your location, length of availability to host and sometimes more personal details like a common language or interests). It is important that we find the best match so that everyone is happy in the placement. For long term hosting, we will introduce you to the

guest before the move in. This meeting will be a chance for you to get to know each other a little, ask any questions you might have, and introduce the guest to your house and house rules. After this meeting we will confirm that everyone is willing to proceed, and then make a date for their arrival.

All-female households can only host women and all-male households host men. Mixed households may host men or women. We will talk this through with hosts individually.

Where will the guest go after staying with me?

Hosting is one of three types of ASSIST accommodation, there is also a night shelter and shared housing. Guests typically go on from hosting into a shared house with other ASSIST clients (which they can access for up to twelve months). Some guests go back into asylum accommodation from being hosted if they have, for instance, submitted a fresh asylum claim.

Who can offer me support and advice?

- You will be matched with a 'host buddy' - an experienced host who can offer basic support and advice and check how the placement is going. You can contact your host buddy if you have any specific concerns
- The paid worker who oversees hosting is the Accommodation Coordinator, Hannah Brock Womack (hannah.brock.womack@assistsheffield.org.uk, 07422 649617)
- As a volunteer, you will receive regular email updates on free training opportunities. For more information on training, socials and other ways you can connect with the wider community, contact Craig Barnett (craig.barnett@assistsheffield.org.uk, 0114 275 4960)
- You are also invited to attend host socials where you'll meet other hosts and guests, these can be great places to share experiences and learn new top tips!
- We offer expenses of £7.50/week to cover increases in bills.

What if there is an emergency?

We would not place anyone for hosting (as far as we are aware) who has a high level of extra support needs such as a significant physical or mental health condition. However, if you have any concerns relating to the health of a guest please contact the hosting team (your buddy in the first instance, or the Accommodation Coordinator if they are not available, and failing that, call the ASSIST office on 0114 275 4960). In an emergency call 999. Your guest will be eligible for primary health care (including A&E) as long as they have a valid HC1 certificate.

What should I expect when hosting?

All hosts and guests are different, but below are a few questions and answers as a guide:

What is and isn't my role?

- Your primary role is to provide your guest with a safe and comfortable room to stay in, and access to cooking and washing facilities.
- Hosts usually provide guests with a key so they can come and go, but this is up to you to arrange and you may wish to wait a couple of days once you've got to know each other. If your guest does not have a key, it should be really clear to them how and when they can access the house.
- You are not expected to get involved in your guest's asylum case - it's in fact illegal to give advice on immigration if you are not trained to do so! Most guests will have a trained caseworker who meets with them regularly as well as access to solicitors and other support and advice networks. You might feel helpless at times, but advice on immigration matters is an important matter and not your responsibility.
- You are not expected to entertain your guest. Sometimes hosts offer guests to take part in activities such as family outings, but this is entirely optional.
- If you want to help your guest to get to know services or activities, The Asylum Journey (<https://asylumjourney.org.uk/>) is a useful online resource.

Do I need to provide money and food?

- Your guest will usually be receiving a weekly welfare payment from ASSIST (either including a bus pass or not, depending on their choice), however on some occasions a guest will not be receiving this at first, and in such instances you may need to help them with paying for bus fares if you live a distance from town. This will usually be communicated in advance, and your expenses will cover this eventuality. Please do let ASSIST know if this is a concern for you as we appreciate not everyone feels comfortable giving money. Most of the time however, your guest will already be in receipt of ASSIST support, and will have chosen to receive a bus pass. If they chose not to, it's not up to you to cover their travel costs.
- If your guest does not require a bus fare, please do not give any other funds. This can build an expectation for other hosts, and there needs to be consistency.
- Cooking together can be a great way to get to know each other, but you are not expected to cook for your guest regularly, unless you wish to offer this. In addition to their money from ASSIST, they will be referred to places where they can access free meals during the week.
- Your guest may access food banks and buy their own food, and if so, may appreciate having a cupboard space where they can store food to cook independently. This is something you could discuss when they move in.
- Every guest will have different dietary or food habits, and feeling 'at home' in someone else's kitchen can take time. If you want to ensure your guest has eaten something, consider providing a bowl of fruit/nuts/biscuits in their room, or out in the kitchen/dining table and with a clear invitation that they can share it.
- Some clients will not accept alcohol or may have issues with alcohol consumption, so it may be better not to offer it.
- Some guests might want to contribute something to the household, so don't be afraid to say 'yes' if they offer to help out or 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.

How will we communicate?

- Language issues may arise, depending on people's countries of origin and level of spoken English. Guests with little English may say they understand what you have said to them out of politeness, so this is something to be mindful of. If you need to discuss something quickly, Google Translate can be useful, or if there is a problem and it's very important that you understand each other, get in touch with Hannah and she may be able to put you in touch with an ASSIST interpreter who can work over the phone.
- Most guests will have a mobile phone, so swapping mobile numbers early on can be useful for keeping in touch, especially via text messages or WhatsApp (guests may not always have phone credit, so calling is a good option to ensure an important message is received). Remember not to share your guests' contact details with anyone without permission.
- It can be useful to write down your address and bus routes. In addition, take your guest on a tour of the local area so they know where to find the shops and bus stops.
- In the unlikely event that as a host you receive enquiries from any official source about a guest, you should notify ASSIST.

What should I be aware of when opening up my home?

- 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!
- We always vet guests to the best of our ability. Long-term hosted guests will be well known to ASSIST and may be hosted by an experienced host before coming to you. A meeting will take place before the placement starts to help with getting to know each other.
- Emergency hosting arrangements are usually arranged at shorter notice and so a meeting beforehand may not be possible. Emergency hosts are encouraged to keep in touch (via their host buddy in the first instance) if there are any concerns about the placement.
- Be aware that guests frequently have depression, poor sleep patterns, and other low level mental health problems. This can be upsetting. If you have specific concerns about your guest or think their health is worsening significantly get in touch (in the first instance with a host buddy unless it is an emergency - see p.1).
- Having some house rules/boundaries can help everyone to know what to expect, so try to develop these in advance (though they will most likely evolve over time) and communicate them simply and often. Typical examples might be:

- What time you would expect someone to come back by at night (or inform you if they are staying out);
- What your expectations are around food (for example, if you are vegetarian and would prefer clients not to cook meat in the house), timings of meals, and clearing up afterwards;
- Whether and where they can smoke near the house;
- What your expectations are around communal space and privacy.
- Be sure to treat each guest as an individual (as opposed to a cultural stereotype), but be aware of potential cultural differences.
- You are not expected to change your regular routines for fear of upsetting guests. Expressions of religiosity (for instance symbols in the home) are absolutely fine, but hosts should not initiate conversations that could be understood to be attempts of converting someone of a different faith.
- If you do not have your central heating on much, provide extra bedding and possibly an oil/electric heater for your guest's room. Consider covering reasonable increases in bills with ASSIST expenses, and speak to your host buddy with any concerns.
- Guests will most likely ask for the Wifi code soon after they move in - be prepared to help set them up with this. If you have access to laptops/computers that you are willing to make available for the guest's use this is often greatly appreciated. Some guests also appreciate a TV in their room, though others will prefer to join you in the evenings if they're in.
- Some of our hosts households include children and this has worked well in the past. Of course it's up to you to decide what suits you and your family, and bear in mind that we are not able to do the same level of background checks as we can for UK citizens. We advise that you do not leave children with your guest unsupervised for any length of time until a relationship of mutual trust has been established, but this is to be on the safe side. Children can develop great relationships with guests and this has proved a really positive feature of hosting placements in the past.

What should I talk to my guest about?

- Be aware of confidentiality guidelines and attend training by ASSIST to help with this. We offer monthly 'Confidentiality, safeguarding and boundaries' trainings which you will hear about in the monthly volunteers' newsletter - please go on this training!
- You should never prompt guests to talk about their reasons for leaving their home country and coming to the UK. It is uncomfortable if the guest feels they are being judged, and could be very traumatic.
- That said, you may be able to support your guest by showing an interest in what they are doing on a day-to-day basis, and encouraging them to go to appointments etc (if they seem to sleep in a lot or struggle to make it to things on time).
- Over time, hosts and guests often find common ground to talk about e.g. food, sport, or entertainment. There is lots of information about things to get involved in in Sheffield on the Asylum Journey website e.g. free music groups, football groups at <https://asylumjourney.org.uk/tool> It's not your responsibility to direct someone to these, but it might be a nice thing to be able to do (printable resources can be found there).

- Please note, even if you don't ever have anything in common with your guest, providing a safe place for them to sleep is the most important thing.

What do I do if I've got other guests to stay?

- It is understandable that from time to time you may need your spare room for other guests. Please communicate this in advance when possible with your host buddy. We will support them to find somewhere else to stay for the duration, either through another host or their own support networks.
- If you have space for other guests and your hosted guest does not need to move out, communicate clearly with both sets of guests that this will be the case so they know the arrangement. Please pass on the messaging from ASSIST regarding not asking questions of your asylum seeking guest so they do not feel uncomfortable.

Will my insurance be affected?

- We advise all hosts to check the details of existing household insurance policies to ensure that you are allowed to put up a guest in your home, free of charge. Your policy should say if non-family members or lodgers are able to stay.
- Please make it clear when discussing hosting with your insurance company that no payments are being made and that you are not engaging in any form of business. Some policies allow for guests to stay without any additional premium, but there are some that will put the premium up slightly. If this is something that you are concerned about please discuss it with your host buddy, ideally before a placement begins.

If I receive a discount on my Council Tax, will hosting affect this?

- If you are currently eligible for a single person discount, at the next opportunity you should inform your local authority of the hosting arrangement. It is important to make clear that any guests you host will not be paying rent and are not themselves eligible to pay council tax (because of having No Recourse to Public Funds).
- Hosts who do this have found they have are still able to access the discount after this has been made clear and we have template statements you can use if helpful. Speak to your host buddy with any concerns.

What is it like to be hosted?

Or course, it's different for every client, and for some people living in someone else's home can feel strange - at least initially - even though having a secure place to stay for is very helpful. Mostly, though, clients have a really positive experience of being welcomed and included. One of our clients who was recently hosted said "I was happy and comfortable there, they're like my family. Even though I live in an ASSIST house now sometimes I miss them!".

What's it like to host?

Again, it's different for everyone! If you decide hosting isn't for you, or isn't for you at the moment, then please get in touch with us at any time.

Mostly, however, hosts find the experience valuable. Marre and Emmanuel told us: "We host because we strongly feel no human being should be without a home and sleeping on the streets. Often we feel like we do so little and it's such a little effort, yet it makes a huge difference for the person we're hosting. It's totally worth it. We enjoy the conversations, learn new things every time, and our children love socialising with their 'uncles!'".

Data protection issues

Attending our 'Confidentiality, safeguarding and boundaries' training (which is held monthly) will help you with any questions around the information you are given on clients.

In brief: please don't keep written notes on clients in a way that is identifiable, and please ensure that any devices on which you receive information about clients e.g. phone with texts messages and email, are protected by a password (so that if it is stolen, no one would be able to access data on clients). Thank you.

Read about our commitment to protecting your personal information and being transparent here: <https://www.assistsheffield.org.uk/privacy-policy>

Who's who at ASSIST?

ASSIST Sheffield is a charity with over 320 volunteers, supported by a small staff team:

Ishah Jawaid - Client Support Manager
Jochen Kortländer - Accommodation Manager
Kevin Quinton - Resource Manager
Craig Barnett - Volunteering Coordinator
Alison King - Finance Officer
Lyndsey McLellan - Community, Events and Grants Officer
Phil Moore - Office Coordinator
Tom Hall - Housing Maintenance Officer
Hannah Brock Womack - Accommodation Coordinator

For more on our organisational structure, including the Leadership Team and Board of Trustees, visit <https://www.assistsheffield.org.uk/our-people>