

# **Hosting Good Practice Guide**



### www.naccom.org.uk

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## The Purpose of This Guide

We know from the vital work of our members who run hosting schemes across the UK of the important role that hosting can play in providing safe, temporary homes to people in need of urgent sanctuary who are fleeing persecution, trauma and conflict. This guide aims to provide some good practice guidance to ensure that hosts and anyone running a hosting scheme are able to facilitate a safe, supportive and positive hosting experience for all involved.

### Who Is This Guide For?

☑ Hosts

Organisations who are involved in running a hosting scheme

# Acknowledgement

We are thankful for the technical knowledge and advice of NACCOM hosting projects in producing this guide, particularly **Hope at Home** (<u>www.hopeathome.org.uk</u>) and **Housing Justice** (<u>www.housingjustice.org.uk</u>) for sharing their resources.

### Background

NACCOM members have been running successful hosting projects for many years. Each year, 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).

Well-managed schemes offer full training, host handbooks, support workers and links to resources and support organisations. We would always recommend hosting via a well-structured and supportive scheme. If you are a host with a NACCOM scheme always adhere to their guides, rules, policies and procedures.

### 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 (or potentially more than one person) in need of temporary accommodation who stays within the host's property. For the purposes of NACCOM's work, a guest is most often someone seeking asylum, a refugee or a migrant with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

In 2017 (updated in 2020) NACCOM produced a **Hosting Toolkit.** This is a comprehensive resource to help with the setting-up and running of hosting schemes that accommodate destitute people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants. This guide can be downloaded for free at NACCOM-HostingToolkit-2021.pdf (or via NACCOM.org.uk).

In continuing our work to promote and advocate for good practice within hosting, we have produced the following guide to highlight key issues and guidance for anyone considering hosting and for running a successful hosting project, whether that is through a NACCOM member scheme or some other hosting initiative.

Please also see our **Hosting Good Practice Guide Part 1 – Key Considerations for Prospective Hosts** for a comprehensive set of questions for anyone considering hosting as well as for those supporting host placements.

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### Appendices

You can find all the appendices relating to this document at <u>www.naccom.org.uk/resources</u>

- 1. Policies, Procedures And Forms
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# Host Co-ordinators and Support Workers

A well-run hosting project will typically have both a **Host Co-ordinator/Host Support Worker** who provides a key point of contact for hosts, as well as a **Guest Support Worker** who is the main point of contact for guests (similar roles may be provided by a referral partner/agency). Regular contact with Support Workers allows for early discussion on issues as they come up, allowing them to be dealt with quickly to ensure that the placement is as successful as possible. Support Workers are also there to help facilitate an early end to a placement if the relationship breaks down for any reason.

#### The Host Co-ordinator and Support Worker role might typically include:

- Ensuring host agreements and guest agreements are signed and understood by all parties.
- Ensuring the guest's move-on plan is in progress and the host is kept updated (see section below on move-on).
- Providing advocacy and professional support for the guest where needed.
- Working to resolve issues that arise with the placement.
- Helping with finding alternative accommodation, if necessary, when the placement ends.
- Signposting to and helping the guest to register with/access statutory/voluntary services including GP services and welfare/benefits if appropriate.





The host plays a vital role in providing stability, acceptance and a safe, temporary home environment for the guest. This includes:

- Their own bedroom.
- ✓ Access to a bathroom.
- Access to kitchen, including storage and the ability to prepare their own food.
- Access to laundry facilities.
- ✓ Access to Wi-Fi.
- ✓ Shared access to living room (at agreed times).

During a hosting arrangement it may be appropriate for the host to actively encourage and support guest(s) with the development of specific life skills, such as being able to do their own washing, cook meals and use public transport. The desire of hosts to assist and support their guest is natural, but it can also potentially be overwhelming for guests. It's important for hosts to be sensitive to the amount of support that their guests require. It is also vital that any support and assistance provided should ultimately be with the aim of enabling and empowering guests to integrate into their new community and rebuild their lives.



## **Preparing For Your Guest**

Welcoming a refugee into your home is a big commitment that needs careful consideration. It can also be uniquely rewarding for both guest and host. Once the decision to host has been made, it's worth spending time thinking about how you can best prepare for your guest. Based on the expertise of NACCOM members, below we have highlighted some key points that hosts may wish to reflect on as they get ready to welcome their guest.

Please note that the below points are intended as a guide and don't attempt to account for every unique hosting arrangement.

### Culture

Some hosts will have had limited or no experience of relating to people from other cultures, whilst some will have had considerable experience. Even when this is the case, it may not fully prepare people for their first hosting placement. Although we consider here some of the potential challenges, hosts generally find the opportunity to experience something of other cultures enormously rewarding. As we have already said, no two hosting arrangements will be the same, so even if you are familiar with a particular culture, your guest may bring their own unique beliefs and customs.

### **Personal Names**

Whilst learning new names (or name customs) may be confusing, it is a token of respect and friendship to quickly learn how to properly pronounce someone's name and to use their name of choice. Some cultures will use 'Mr' or 'Mrs' before a first name as a token of respect. Always ask your guest how they like to be addressed if you are unsure.

### **Gender-based Customs**

In some cultures, there is more role-division than we may be used to. This could become evident, for example, if male guests do not expect to assist with household tasks. For some it will not be appropriate for a man to be alone in a room with an unrelated woman. Handshaking (and any other close physical contact) with someone of the opposite sex or religion may cause offence or allow for possible misinterpretation. Conversely it is quite common in some cultures for men to hold hands in public. Concepts of appropriate personal space differ widely from culture to culture.

### **Eye Contact**

In some cultures, eye contact during conversation may be considered disrespectful, especially between different generations and between unrelated men and women.

### **Television and Other Media**

Guests from other cultures may be shocked to see, perhaps for the first time, what they consider to be very immoral images portrayed on television, even after the '9 o'clock watershed'. Some sensitivity may be needed.

### **Dress**

Hosts need to be sensitive to cultural approaches to dressing. We may be quite used to walking around our homes in our nightclothes, or even underwear, especially in summer. This could, however, cause significant offence and discomfort to a guest or give rise to misunderstandings that may be difficult to remedy.

### **Please and Thank-you**

Some languages have no equivalent word for 'please'. 'Please' and 'Thank you' may be more commonly expressed through actions and attitudes than words.

### Pets

Some cultures would consider household pets, in particular dogs, as unclean. Always discuss this with potential guests before a placement is arranged. If you agree to having a guest's pet, set clear boundaries.

### Language

Misunderstandings may arise due to language. Some guests may or may not have a basic grasp of English, some may have none, some may be fluent. Always speak clearly, using simple sentences and everyday words, maintain eye-contact (if appropriate) and keep smiling. Speaking loudly or shouting will not help bridge the language barrier! Google Translate or other translation apps can also be helpful.

### Yes and No

Non-western languages can in some cases be less direct. To refuse someone's invitation, for example for a meal, may be considered rude. A person may answer 'Yes' out of respect and the wish not to offend, without any intention of actually taking up the offer. However, in a hospitality situation it is not uncommon for someone to refuse an offer initially, for example of a cup of tea or food; the offer may need to be repeated (perhaps up to three times) or emphasised to demonstrate that it is genuinely meant. Asking less direct questions and giving space for alternatives can be helpful.

### **Times For Prayer**

Be sensitive to a guest's need to pray. Prayer times are often more rigidly adhered to in Islam than some other religions and certain days of the week, such as Friday, may have more significance than others.

### Food

Sharing a meal can be one of the simplest and most comforting ways that hosts and guests can feel at home together. Both hosts and guests need to be aware, however of different cultural or religious food laws and customs that may need be observed. Muslims and Jews will not eat pork products; most Hindus are vegetarian; practising Muslims eat Halal meat. Likewise, some practising Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs will not be happy to eat food cooked in pots used for beef or pork. This clearly has significant implications for eating together and the storage of fresh meat, which hosts will need to agree with their guests from the start. The use of cutlery is an eccentric western custom to some. Hosts and guests need to be aware that some religions observe fasting that can take place at various times throughout the year, with specific rules that need to be followed during these periods, for example Ramadan, when no food or drink is taken between dawn and dusk.

### Top Tip:

Creating a guide to your home and including useful information such as your household daily routines, who you are, who lives in the house etc, you are, who lives in the house etc, for your guest when they arrive. This will aid you both in building a relationship, as well as help your guest feel more comfortable.

### **Religious Festivals**

It is helpful if hosts can try to familiarise themselves with the main festivals associated with the faith of the guest placed with them.

### **Personal Hygiene**

Washing, rather than using toilet paper, is the norm for many Muslims after using the toilet. It may help to provide a jug for this purpose. It may also be helpful to explain the different uses of the bewildering array of soaps, foams, gels, etc that are found in many bathrooms!

### Timekeeping

There is a saying that "the West has the clock and the East has the time." Some other cultures attach much less importance to punctuality than we do in the West. Being late for an appointment may not infer disrespect, simply that something perceived as of greater importance (perhaps helping a friend) has intervened.

### Talking About Personal Faith, Culture And Traditions

It is important that hosts do not seek to use their role as an opportunity to try to convert or influence others to their own faith. Guests may, however, welcome the chance to hear about other religious and spiritual beliefs, whilst also having the opportunity to share their own. So, while discernment and sensitivity are needed, such discussions should not be off-limits.

Hosts and guests may also find it rewarding and helpful to have wider discussions about cultural and social traditions and customs. If you do not already know much about a new guest's home country, it can be helpful to do an internet search before they arrive, or even access a map so that guests have the opportunity to show you where they have come from, if they wish.

# Building The Guest-Host Relationship

Every guest-host relationship is unique and will have its own unique challenges and rewards. The relationship you form with your guest will depend on what they are comfortable with. It is also useful to think about what you are comfortable with. Establishing clear boundaries at the outset of a hosting arrangement can make a substantial difference to its success, as well as ensure the safety of both guest and host.

Guests often worry about 'being a burden' or 'being in the way' in the house, so they try hard not to be 'any trouble' for their hosts, which sometimes leads to them 'hiding away'. Hosts can help by showing that they value their guest's company and are glad they are there.

Below are some practical ideas for building positive relationships in hosting arrangements.

Offer to eat meals together. You might offer this once a week or every night – whatever fits with your schedule.	Create a welcoming space – a welcome pack with toiletries is always a good start but you can also give a welcome card, flowers and cake!	Allow them to help with chores if they offer.
Show them around shared spaces and invite them to make themselves at home.	Have fun with communication and language. Show an interest in their language and ask them to teach you some words.	Show them around the local area – GPs surgery, shops, library, park etc.
Give them space and privacy to settle into their bedroom but let them know you're around if they need you.	Always give them a choice and accept their 'no'.	Ask about their interests.
Respect their privacy. Always knock on their door, and only enter if they say you can.	Invite them to shared experiences – watching TV, going for walks, playing games, popping to the shops etc.	Show kindness, treat them as an equal.

### **Supportive Relationships**

Refugees fleeing war, conflict and persecution, who may also have experienced a dangerous journey to the UK and further hardship on arrival, such as destitution and homelessness, can often feel that their world has become unstable, unsafe and untrustworthy. It is important therefore that the relationship between host and guest is one that is empowering, trusting and supportive.

It is natural for hosts to want to get to know a guest better, but there are many reasons a guest might not be comfortable forming a close relationship quickly (or at all). The best a host can do is be supportive and recognise that it can take time for people to feel safe. The key to making these supportive relationships successful is: being consistent, reliable, familiar, boundaried, safe. If you can be this for your guest and you can make their environment like this, you will be supporting their wellbeing.

### Visitors

If the hosts are inviting visitors (friends, family, colleagues, workmen) we advise you to inform guests so they know there will be other people in the house. Be sensitive to a guest's experiences; for example, a female guest may not be comfortable around unknown men and may feel unable to be alone in the house with a man, including the host's relatives, or workmen. Explain a guest's presence to visitors in a respectful way and ensure visitors treat guests with respect and do not ask intrusive questions. Hosts should be prepared to step in if a visitor is making a guest feel uncomfortable.

### **Power Dynamics**

Hosts need to be particularly mindful of the power imbalance in any host-guest relationship and make sure that they are doing the most they can to empower guests. For example, if a guest is upset by a host overstepping their boundaries, they often feel they have to 'put up with it' because they have no alternatives. The responsibility is on the host to pre-empt this and treat guests with respect and dignity. It is also important to think about how we talk about our guests to others e.g. if a guest discloses personal information to you, this is not a 'story' to tell your friends.

Hosts should, whenever possible, give their guests choice and control in their lives. This can be with seemingly small things, like:

- Asking for their opinion or input.
- Letting them choose activities/food/TV shows they want.
- Making sure not to presume or treat them like they are powerless.

There are some behaviours that can help build trust with a new guest:

- Set clear boundaries this is vital for both you and your guest, so they know what to expect.
- Explain that there are limits to confidentiality – you should never promise to keep things secret (if, for example, there is a safeguarding concern).
- Be open, honest and genuine there is no need to play a part!
- Be consistent it is so much easier to trust someone who is reliable and predictable, and this makes it even more important not to over-promise.

### **Activities**

Finding activities that a guest might enjoy to help them settle in and fill their time can be immensely beneficial. It can also play a vital role in boosting a guest's self-esteem, increasing their sense of community and connection, improving their English, giving them new skills and helping their wellbeing in innumerable other ways. However, it is important that no pressure is placed on guests to engage with activities just because 'we' think it will be good for them. If a guest is not interested, we should respect their wishes and be mindful that it may take people time to feel stable enough to want to engage.

# Understanding Trauma

The main effects of trauma can be described under four headings: psychological, physical, emotional, and behavioural, though they will be interconnected.

### Psychological

Those who have experienced repeated trauma will usually also struggle with their mental health; anxiety, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Complex PTSD (CPTSD) are frequent. PTSD is an anxiety disorder where someone relives the traumatic experience/s through nightmares and flashbacks. This could occur immediately after a traumatic experience or weeks, months or years later. They may also experience the following symptoms: nightmares, flashbacks, feelings of isolation, irritability, insomnia, hyperarousal (to threats), difficulty concentrating, physical sensations, avoidance of things that trigger flashbacks.

### **Vicarious Trauma**

Failure to be boundaried or questioning guests about what happened to them may not only lead to retraumatising guests, but can also lead to hosts experiencing vicarious trauma.

### **Physical**

There are many physical effects of trauma that are directly linked to the psychological disorders:

It is also possible that the 'wear and tear' of living with ongoing trauma has, over time, caused other physical illnesses. Research has linked trauma to stress related illnesses such as: chronic Breathing difficulties, asthma, frequent colds, sore throats, addictions such as alcohol and drugs, skin disorders etc.

### Emotional

Trauma also effects someone's emotional life. Initial emotions might be fear, anger, sadness and shame. Survivors may also experience some or all the following at various points: repression of emotions, due to fear of losing control, denial of feelings associated with the trauma, numbness and lack of emotion, low self-esteem and lack of worth, feel different or see themselves as 'damaged goods', somatisation (a focus on bodily symptoms as a way of avoiding emotional pain), substance abuse, compulsive behaviours e.g. overeating.

hoto courtesy of Canva

#### **Behaviour**

Many of the behavioural responses to trauma have already been mentioned as all four areas are so interrelated. Survivors of trauma suffered at the hands of others may struggle to trust or be afraid of those in authority. This could affect the way they relate towards others or come out in their relationships. Some may associate elements of trauma with their current circumstances, reacting in the present as if they were still unsafe.

Some survivors may try to take control by being assertive or even aggressive towards others, others may feel like they have no control, struggling to make even small decisions.

For more information on Understanding Trauma please see Appendix 7 at www.naccom.org.uk/reources.

# $\begin{bmatrix} \circ \\ - \end{bmatrix}$ Boundaries With Guests

As a host it is important to adhere to clear boundaries. This will ensure your host role is not jeopardised in any way. It also ensures equality, avoidance of vicarious trauma/trauma and therefore protects both host and guest.

### Do Not Get Involved in a Guest's Immigration Status or Case

It is important that hosts maintain clear professional boundaries and do not give information, advice and guidance to guests on regulated activities such as immigration and legal advice, for which they are not qualified and that it would therefore be illegal to do so.

This does not mean hosts cannot help someone in other ways. For example, accompanying guests to appointments or by providing a support letter or ensuring a guest understands official correspondence or by simply listening to a guest when they are anxious about their uncertain future.

### **Giving Money to a Guest**

Think carefully before giving money to a guest. It could create a precedent and raise expectations, as well as create awkwardness. If a guest has recourse to public funding, you can support them to access local benefit or job advice services or help them to make an application for appropriate benefits. If your guest does not have recourse to public funding (NRPF) it is important to know where they are able to acquire financial and subsistence support, for example from the voluntary organisation that arranged the hosting placement with you.

### **Do Not Question a Guest**

At its core hosting is based on a humanitarian response so it is important not to question a guest about their reason for being in the UK or how they got here. Even a simple question can cause distress and reactivate trauma.

### Respect a Guest's Ability to Make Their Own Decisions

Some of us find it harder than others to resist telling people what we think they should do to resolve their situation. This is particularly difficult if, for example, a guest spends a lot of time in their room, not going out, not interacting with the host household or appearing to do anything to resolve their situation. Of course, we don't know what lies behind this behaviour; the guest may be feeling low - or may be enjoying the privacy, quiet and safety of a space of their own. It is important to give information, offer options and make suggestions rather than try and force someone to go down a particular path.

### Remember That You Are Not Responsible

Not surprisingly, some guests struggle with difficult feelings, fears or memories. Remember that your role is simply to provide a safe and welcoming home for the guest - you are not responsible for their situation, however unsatisfactory you may feel it is. Tell yourself, 'I am doing all I can'. Don't lose sight of the fact that if someone is struggling emotionally, the value of someone who listens, shows an interest, and takes you seriously is immense. Do not be tempted to try and 'counsel' the person; there are professionals and specialist services for that. If you find it difficult to cope with your own feelings, seek further appropriate support.



## **Maintaining Appropriate Relationships**

A good hosting scheme will provide clear guidance/ training on maintaining appropriate relationships and performing your role as a host. It is good practice to be clear to your guest:

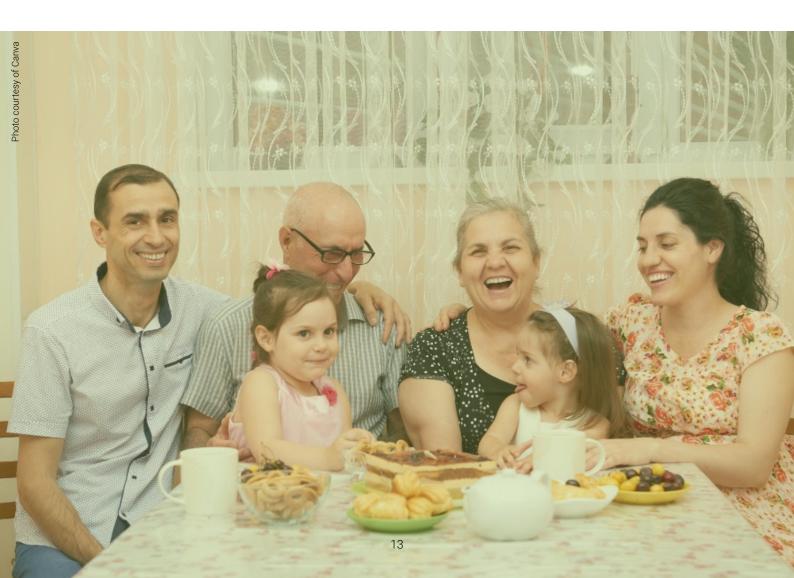
- Be very cautious around giving or accepting gifts. Consider the relative value to the giver and recipient. Will it lead to any change in expectation? Was it solicited? Was it for a particular occasion where gift-giving is the norm? Please note that cash gifts are never appropriate.
- If you are asked to do anything that you don't wish to or are uncomfortable about, explain that in your capacity as a host you are required to check back with the hosting coordinator/ support worker.



- Sexual innuendo or behaviour is entirely inappropriate. Please also be aware of how people can misinterpret behaviour. Please seek guidance from the hosting coordinator/support worker in this eventuality.
- Physical relationships between a host and their guest should be avoided and are not acceptable within formal hosting schemes. If a host feels that a situation is developing that may be problematic, they should discuss as soon as possible with their hosting coordinator/ support worker who should be able to offer nonjudgmental guidance.

# 🖉 Children

It is strongly advised that hosts do not leave their children, grandchildren, or any other children who they are responsible for, with the guest(s) unsupervised until or unless a strong relationship of mutual trust has been established. The same principle applies to the host not taking responsibility for any guest's children. Many hosts will have children. With this in mind, please see 'A kids' guide to hosting', which is included in Appendix 6. This is aimed at children under 10 years old and will hopefully help them to understand why a stranger is coming to live in their home.





It is everyone's responsibility to prevent someone or ourselves from harm and abuse. Raising a safeguarding concern means reporting abuse under a safeguarding adults procedure. If you are hosting under a Hosting Scheme you will have had safeguarding training and be aware of the relevant safeguarding procedures to follow in the case of abuse happening or being reported. Likewise, your Local Authority will have a safeguarding board and procedures. We recommend you make sure that you know how to report a safeguarding concern relating to the person you are hosting, should it be needed. Your role is not to take the place of statutory services.

Everyone has a role to report a safeguarding concern, whether there are concerns about the welfare of

children or adults at risk, and take action to address them where appropriate. This may involve reporting concerns to the relevant statutory services (ideally with the consent of the people concerned, where possible) and working with them to address the concern. Do talk about safeguarding responsibilities with your guest, it's important for them to understand what is expected in the UK.

If you have a safeguarding concern regarding your guest, or you are concerned about their behaviour, you should contact your Host Co-Ordinator or Support Worker. If you are not hosting under a hosting scheme, contact your Local Authority immediately.

If it is an emergency, contact 999.

### **Overview of Safeguarding**

#### What Is Safeguarding Adults?

Safeguarding adults refers to the multi-agency procedure that works to protect adults at risk from abuse or neglect. Safeguarding law and policy uses a very specific definition of "adult at risk". Being a survivor of human trafficking, person seeking asylum or refugee does not mean that someone will be automatically considered to be "at risk". Someone who has been forced to flee their country because of fear, persecution and those that have been subjected to trauma, sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude and other inhumane treatment against their will, without friends or family support, with no income, home or right to remain in the UK is very likely to be less able to protect themselves from harm than someone who has these things.

An adult at risk is an adult who is aged 18 years or more and has needs for care and support (whether or not these are currently being met), and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

### An adult at risk may therefore be a person who, for example (this list will not be exhaustive):

- is an older person who is frail due to ill health, physical disability, or cognitive impairment.
- ✓ has a learning disability.
- has a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment.
- has mental health needs including dementia or a personality disorder.
- ✓ has a long-term illness/condition.
- misuses substances or alcohol.
- is an unpaid carer such as a family member/ friend who provides personal assistance and care to adults and is subject to abuse.
- lacks mental capacity to make particular decisions and is in need of care and support.

### What Is Safeguarding Children and Young People?

A child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe and be committed to practice in a way that protects them by recognising that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989.
- All children regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs and other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

### **Responding To Safeguarding Concerns**

If anything occurs during a hosting placement which makes you concerned for the safety or wellbeing of yourself, your guest or someone else, it is important that you know how to act and who to speak to.



If your guest discloses something concerning or you witness concerning behaviour:

- X Do not ask further questions to delve deeper.
- X Do not investigate further yourself.
- Do not promise confidentiality you must report concerns.
- Do note down exactly what occurred and/or was said.
- Do inform Host Co-Ordinator/Support Worker immediately.
- Do err on the side of caution and if something makes you concerned, report it: multiple small incidents can build up a bigger picture of something serious.

## Move-on Options / Ways a Placement Might End

All guests must have a move-on plan they are actively working towards. This will look different depending on their situation. However, these are some of the general options guests will have depending on their status in the UK:

- Asylum application and Home Office accommodation
- Moved into social housing/private rented accommodation with benefits

- Moved into social housing/private rented accommodation with job
- University and university accommodation
- Moved in with friends or family
- Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) to country of origin



## **End of Hosting Placement**

Circumstances change, which might mean that you and/or your guest do not want to continue with a hosting placement, or you reach the end of your agreed hosting placement time. When hosting through a well-managed hosting scheme you will be supported in bringing a hosting placement to an end and the guest will be supported to move on to alternative provision.

If a placement needs to be ended immediately because of unacceptable behaviour, a well-run hosting scheme would support the guest with this and they would be referred back to the original referring organisation. The safety of guests and hosts should be prioritised at all times. When a hosting placement ends, a well-run hosting project will contact the host for a debrief on how they feel it has gone. Debrief questions might include:

- ✓ What went well?
- ✓ What didn't go so well?
- Is there anything you would change next time (e.g. practical arrangements in the host/ guest agreement, support from the hosting organisation)?
- Are you happy to host again?





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