



'We've occasionally been asked to invite asylum seekers to stay for a few days or weeks. Sometimes this has happened at busy times but we've always been glad that we've done it. Sharing our home and lives for a short time with some really lovely people has always been a good experience for us and we hope has helped them.'

(A Short-Stay Host)

Information For Hosts

Introduction

Many who have hosted asylum seekers consider it to have been one of the most rewarding times of their lives. Clearly however every person (host as well as guest!) is different, as are the experiences they have lived through and the circumstances they are currently facing.

Cities in the UK such as Manchester, Sheffield and Bradford have run successful Hosting Projects for many years, and we have been able to draw on their experiences to develop the Project in Swansea. We hope your involvement with Swansea Voluntary Hosting will be a positive one.

How Asylum Seekers Become Destitute

Asylum seekers become destitute because they have been refused asylum by the Government and all financial and other forms of support has been withdrawn from them

(asylum seekers with children under 18, whose asylum application is refused, continue to get section 95 support (accommodation and cash).

Most of these claims have failed because they lacked enough evidence that they have suffered ethnic, religious or political persecution in their home countries.

In very limited circumstances refused asylum seekers can apply for 'Hard Case' support, or Section 4, as it is known. This is seen as temporary support for those who for varying reasons cannot return to their home country.

This could be because there is not a safe route home for them, or because they have a medical condition that means they can't travel, for instance, being pregnant, or that they have submitted a fresh claim. Only a small number of the people who apply for Section 4 support are successful, which means many end up destitute.

There are also the many refused asylum seekers who don't apply for Section 4, because they are afraid or unwilling to return home voluntarily to countries where there is on-going conflict, violence or human rights abuses, so they remain here, cold and hungry on our streets.

What Hosting Involves

We would like hosting a destitute asylum seeker to be like inviting any other guest to stay in your house. We are not asking for professional support to be offered, simply a place to stay, facilities to wash and somewhere to cook and eat. Some guests will interact with the host whereas other guests can be very shy and prefer to spend time alone.

Swansea Voluntary Hosting will give you as much information about each guest as we can prior to them being hosted with you.

What we ask of each host:

- We would like hosts to allow the guest to have a key to the house. Obviously, if you would like to do this after you have got to know the person for a few days that is fine. Guests often do have college or friends to see during the day, but not everyone does so it is important that people have flexibility to come and leave the house. Some Hosts would rather not have someone in their house all day, and so offer Bed & Breakfast, these options will be put to you when you meet the Co-ordinator.
- We would like the host to provide an evening meal for the first night. For following nights, we would expect food and facilities for cooking to be available to the asylum seeker. Some guests prefer to cook their own food whereas others cook and eat with the hosts.

What We Offer By Means Of Support To Each Host

- Each Host will have an induction session with the Co-ordinator, and a chance to air any concerns they may have.
- We will facilitate peer support meetings for hosts, where hosts can meet other hosts, share experiences, support each other and discuss how the process is working.
- All hosts will be given information of activities for people to do during the day, and details of other support and advice agencies in Swansea.
- We will be actively seeking volunteers who can support Hosts in a variety of ways, e.g. those who can invite guests for regular meals and outings, or provide financial and other practical support.

The Hosting Project cannot provide support to hosts who provide accommodation to asylum seekers or others who have NOT been referred through the Project.

Who can be referred to the hosting project?

The Project's principal aim is to provide accommodation for destitute asylum seekers. This means those whose application for asylum has been turned down, who have no ongoing entitlement to support or accommodation and are not allowed to work.

The Project will not normally place young female guests in all male households, nor single male guests in houses with teenage girls.

The Referral Process

How are Asylum Seekers referred to Swansea Voluntary Hosting?

- Referrals are made through Welsh Refugee Council

The Hosting Coordinator first meets the Guest, to assess their suitability, and then will contact the most suited Host.

If the Host is willing in principal to offer accommodation, then an introductory meeting is arranged with the Guest, preferably at the Host's house. This provides guest and host (and any other members of their household) with an opportunity to find out more about each other over a cup of coffee, also for the guest to see the house and gather important information such as bus routes.

At this meeting important issues can be discussed such as use of facilities in the home, household security, meals, etc. If the stay is to go ahead, the Host and the Guest will be asked to sign an agreement on House Rules and other issues.

It may seem surprising that guests sometimes turn down offers of accommodation. Hosts could easily be offended if the stated reason is, for example, that the house is not clean.

Such an explanation is more likely to hide other issues, such as an inability to cope with the sudden pressure of being amongst a family – especially if the guest has lost their own. It could also be that the locality is perceived to be too remote from friends and others from their own culture.

The Stay

Some stays will be for a matter of days, for example where the guest has a very short-term accommodation need, where a host is only able to offer short stays, or when the guest stays with another host to provide a break for their long-term host.

For longer stays an initial 2-week trial period is agreed. After the first week the project coordinator will meet with the host and guest to discuss how things have gone. Hopefully any difficulties can be resolved at this stage, but if not, then the guest will be asked to leave at the end of the second week and the Project will try to find other suitable accommodation for them.

Guests are made fully aware from the outset that they have no legal rights to stay and that the 2-week stay is strictly a trial period.

Of course, if for some reason, there is a total breakdown in the relationship, the guest will be asked to leave immediately.

Where hosts' circumstances require it, or where there are particular issues with a guest, the Project will seek to 'rotate' the guest within a pool of hosts so that they stay for short periods with each.

Are hosts breaking the law by hosting a refused asylum seeker?

No. It is the Home Office's responsibility to remove those who they believe should not remain in the UK. Our understanding of the legal situation here is that it is an offence to *knowingly* harbour someone who is on the run having committed a crime, or having escaped from a Detention Centre.

Likewise it would be an offence to deliberately withhold information from an official of the state if this is requested from you. Hosts should notify the project coordinator of any enquiries they receive from any official source about their guests.

Some Other Issues To Consider

- **Culture**
- **Religion**
- **Guests' Rights to Privacy**
- **Confidentiality**
- **House Rules**

If you decide **that you are interested in Hosting** you will be asked to complete a Registration Form. But before you register, the Project Co-ordinator will arrange a time with you to discuss in more detail all of the above issues and answer any other questions you might have. They will also tailor the '**House Rules**' to your own particular circumstances.

As well as being asked for general information regarding your home and family situation on the Registration Form, you will be asked to give two references. (As the Hosting Project does not work with children, or those considered by the Criminal Records Bureau to be 'vulnerable adults' we are not able to carry out 'CRB' checks on hosts but we will do so if the criteria changes).

The Registration Form is stored in a secure place and the information you give is strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone without your consent.

DISCLAIMER:

Swansea Voluntary Hosting's role is to facilitate an offer of accommodation from a host to a guest. The agreement made is then purely between Host and Guest. Swansea Voluntary Hosting take no responsibility for any issues that may arise from this arrangement. However, support to resolve these issues will be given wherever possible.

To contact the Co-ordinator

e-mail cards@cityofsanctuary.org **or write to:** **Address:** City of Sanctuary, Swansea Voluntary Hosting, YMCA, 1, The Kingsway, Swansea SA1 5JQ

Thank You.