

NACCOM

THE NO ACCOMMODATION NETWORK

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HOSTING TOOLKIT

A comprehensive resource for hosting schemes that accommodate destitute asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants.

PRODUCED BY:

NACCOM and Homeless Link



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FEEDBACK, CORRECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

If you have any ideas that you think would improve this publication, we would like to hear from you, including omissions and errors. We aim to regularly update the online version of the toolkit.

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HOSTING TOOLKIT

**A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE FOR HOSTING SCHEMES
THAT ACCOMMODATE DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS,
REFUGEES AND OTHER MIGRANTS.**

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ABOUT NACCOM

NACCOM is a national network of organisations providing accommodation and support, primarily for destitute asylum seekers. The first meeting took place in Manchester on July 17th 2006 when seven people met to share their experiences of offering accommodation to refused asylum seekers. The outcome was an agreement to meet regularly, starting with a conference in Manchester in October 2006, which was attended by around 30 people. The event focused on how to set up and run hosting and housing schemes.

Over the next seven years NACCOM operated as an unfunded, informal network, with meetings every few months in different locations on important issues. Projects shared their ideas, good practice and knowledge. Conferences have been held annually in different towns and cities across the UK since 2008.

By 2013 the network had grown to over 30 groups, and needed a new structure. A steering group was formed to explore ways of developing the network. By 2015 a number of small grants had been obtained, a constitution had been written and the steering group had become the board of trustees. NACCOM became a national charity on 26th June 2015.

You can find up to date information on strategy, events and member projects, and much more at www.naccomm.org.uk.



2020 VISION & STRATEGY

NACCOM is committed to bringing an end to destitution amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with no recourse to public funds living in the UK. We exist to promote best practice in and support the establishment of accommodation projects that reduce destitution amongst asylum seekers. In addition, they may also support migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and/or refugees facing barriers to accessing affordable housing.

We do this by:

- Providing networking opportunities to encourage, empower and connect members
- Sharing knowledge and promoting best practice to provide pathways out of destitution
- Working with others (including those with lived experience) to raise awareness of destitution and campaign for a just and humane asylum system
- Gathering and disseminating data on the scale of destitution and positive outcomes achieved by members
- Empowering members' clients to tell their story so that, working in partnership with other organisations, the human face and consequences of destitution are seen



INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The UK, as an island nation, does not receive as many asylum applications as many European countries, because it is harder to get here than to mainland Europe. In addition successive British governments have made it increasingly difficult for asylum seekers to reach these shores over the past twenty years.

Nevertheless, for those who do make it here, the asylum system is very difficult to understand and navigate. Currently around 70% of initial decisions on asylum claims are negative. About 25% of those whose claims are refused are able to appeal successfully, which means that around half of all those who claim asylum in the UK will be granted leave to remain and will be able to work and access mainstream benefits.

Those whose claims are refused will lose their right to any form of benefit or accommodation unless they can prove that there is an insurmountable impediment to them being returned to their country of origin. With no money and little assistance, most are unable to do this. At this point they become destitute.

Agencies working with refused asylum seekers will all tell you that many of those who have been rejected have been badly let down by the UK's asylum system. Because they will indeed face persecution, even death, if returned to their homeland, they will not willingly go home – even if they are offered financial incentives to do so.

The reality is that, despite the best efforts of the Home Office, many refused asylum seekers cannot, for a number of reasons, be returned to their home country. Instead, they are left here in limbo – with nothing. Each year the number of destitute asylum seekers in the UK increases. No one knows how many there are, as there is no easy way of counting them. Estimates vary greatly, but the number is probably between 50,000 and 100,000. Of these only 2,000 or so - a tiny proportion - are eligible for any statutory support at all.

As a result of the perilous situation that these people face, NACCOM member groups have found a variety of innovative ways of obtaining accommodation for them, from night shelters to housing schemes and empty vicarages: hosting is one way of providing an effective solution to a terrible injustice.

WHAT IS HOSTING?

Hosting is simply where someone offers a room in their house to someone in need. There are many categories of migrant who can find themselves destitute and with no recourse to public funds but for the purposes of this guide it is assumed that the guest being accommodated is usually an asylum seeker whose asylum claim has been refused, and has no recourse to public funds, or else a refugee who has been granted status but has nowhere to live while waiting for benefits and offers of accommodation.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS GUIDE?

This guide is primarily for people who are considering becoming a host, or people who are considering setting up a scheme in their area. The information in the guide has been put together from a number of NACCOM schemes, some of which have been operating for many years. It is a product of diligent research and experience.

IS IT LEGAL?

Yes, there is nothing intrinsically illegal about hosting, and no one who has hosted a refused asylum seeker through a NACCOM project has ever been prosecuted for doing so. As long as the home owner is not receiving payment for the accommodation, Right to Rent legislation does not apply. Things are slightly more complicated if the host is a tenant, as money *is* changing hands (albeit not from the asylum seeker!). In this case it would be wise to contact NACCOM at office@nacom.org.uk for expert advice before a placement is made.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF HOSTING SCHEMES

Hosting schemes vary, depending on a number of factors. Some are run by fairly large charities that also have other types of accommodation such as shared houses or night shelters, and employ paid staff to manage the project. Others are smaller, stand-alone projects which rely on volunteers. There is even an online scheme which matches hosts and guests. The issues encountered and the good practice guidance offered are common to most schemes. You can find out about current NACCOM hosting schemes at www.nacom.org.uk/projects.

PART 1: SETTING UP A HOSTING SCHEME

FIRST STEPS

First of all you will need an organiser, who has the time, and most importantly, the drive, to get the scheme up and running. Ideally they will already have some experience of working with asylum seekers and / or refugees, and therefore know others working in the field. If the organiser is not good at networking and pulling people together, the scheme is unlikely to succeed.

Secondly, you will need a small steering group to share out some of the organising tasks and meet regularly to keep the momentum going. Specific skills are not essential, but having people on the group with communications, networking and IT skills is helpful.

It isn't essential to be part of an existing organisation, but it certainly helps in terms of profile and publicity, as well as simple resources like office facilities and an address. If the scheme is not part of an existing organisation, it is worth considering whether there is an appropriate local charity or voluntary group that could provide an umbrella to work under.

When the steering group is set up, NACCOM may be able to provide someone to attend one of the early meetings and help plan the scheme and talk through potential issues. That often avoids pitfalls further down the line.

FINDING HOSTS

Obviously you can't have a scheme without hosts! Recruitment is therefore key to success. The following list is not exhaustive, but fertile ground for finding hosts would be –

- churches and other faith groups
- community organisations
- people working with asylum seekers and refugees
- academic organisations: university lecturers and mature students in particular
- volunteers and staff at homelessness organisations
- anti-racism and human rights groups

Once you have enough interest – preferably ten or more people who are likely to come to a meeting – then set up an evening meeting and invite them to come. Advertise the meeting in relevant places, and use social media, especially Facebook, to spread the news. If you get a good crowd at the first meeting, your project is likely to get started far quicker. A poor attendance could set the whole project back.

THE MEETING FOR HOSTS

Potential hosts will come with all sorts of questions and genuine fears. The aim of the meeting is to clearly set out how the scheme would work, answer the questions as fully as possible and allay those fears! The elements of the meeting should include:

- an introduction to the steering group
- an explanation of how the hosting scheme would work, and what is expected of a host
- an acknowledgement of the risks that are involved and how they will be managed
- a testimony from someone who has hosted or from another hosting group, who can talk about their experience
- possibly a testimony from a former guest, who will explain the difference it made to them
- an opportunity for questions
- a chance to sign up or take away forms

LAUNCHING THE SCHEME

There are three major things that must be in place before you start –

1. A coordinator

Whether paid or voluntary, someone has to be the link between host and guest, and ensure that adequate support is in place. The coordinator's role is discussed more fully later in this guide.

2. Enough hosts

A hosting scheme must have more hosts than guests at any one time. If capacity is saturated, it is difficult to move people on, there is pressure on hosts to keep guests beyond the specified time, and everyone gets tired. As a rough guide, you need twice as many hosts as guests. That way everyone gets a break, and hosts feel they can offer again after a rest period.

3. Some funding

This does not need to be a great deal, depending on your scheme, but it will at least need to cover insurance, car mileage expenses and travel expenses for the guest. Some projects also give the guest a small allowance each week, while some prefer to give something to the host, which they are free to pass on if they do not need it. The biggest cost will be the coordinator's salary, if you decide to employ someone.

NB: Although it is important to have good policies and procedures, it is also good to get started as soon as possible. It is easy to lose momentum waiting for everything to fall into place, and for potential hosts to drift away. The bottom line is this – *people are much more likely to support something they can see in operation than an idea on paper!*

At this early stage it is worth considering other alternatives, both outside of and within a potential hosting scheme: these include –

Housing Projects

It may be that there are supportive people who have inherited a house, and would be willing to let you use it rent-free. There may also be empty buildings owned by faith groups, particularly vicarages and presbyteries. You may even have a sympathetic housing association with some hard to let properties or empty properties awaiting demolition that they would consider letting you use.

Night Shelters

There are churches and other faith or secular groups willing to use their premises as night shelters. These can be operated in various ways. Some are on a single, permanent site: others are hosted by venues for a week at a time, or operate around seven venues, each taking one night a week. The beauty of night shelters is that they can accommodate more people, which is especially useful in areas where there are a lot of destitute single males. Housing Justice supports the growing national network of Church and Community Night Shelters, and provides training and guidelines to new shelter projects. See contact information at the end of this toolkit.

Alternative Hosting Schemes

An excellent, viable option to hosting with individuals or families is **group hosting**. This is simply where a number of people take responsibility for one or more guests. For example, two families living close to each other might 'share' a guest, so that they have a break, or a church might decide that it could, as a group, look after one or more asylum seekers within the congregation, moving them every few weeks if necessary. This shares the responsibility and burden, and makes longer-term hosting viable. Where the asylum seeker is a member of a particular faith group, why not ask the group to take on the hosting responsibility?

Refugee Lodger

For those who really need an income, they could consider taking in a refugee who has just got their status and has to leave their asylum accommodation. They may have to wait a few weeks for housing benefit, but it will be backdated, and it will provide a much-needed breathing space for the refugee while they sort out benefits, study, work and a long-term housing solution.

For advice on any of these, please contact NACCOM at office@naccom.org.uk

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR NEW SCHEMES

Here is a list of considerations that that you will have to take into account when setting up a new scheme. It is not exhaustive and priorities vary, however it is drawn from the experience of hosting groups across England.

1. Hosts are volunteers

Anyone acting in an unpaid capacity on behalf of your organisation is a volunteer, and needs to have procedures set up for them to be treated as such. Your organisation has a legal obligation to provide these. These are some of the things you will need –

- A volunteer agreement.
- A policy for dealing with complaints and discipline issues.
- A volunteering policy.
- Support and training for hosts.

2. Public liability insurance

- You will need this insurance for hosts. If you are employing a paid coordinator, you will also need Employer's Liability Insurance.
- Some companies will not provide insurance that specifically covers hosting. You can find out some of the best ones that do provide it from the NACCOM website.

3. Who are your guests?

- What are the criteria for guests that you are helping? Will you only be hosting single destitute refused asylum seekers, or is your remit wider?
- Will you include refugees who are homeless while waiting for benefits and housing, or other migrants too?

4. How long will the placements be for?

This is for you to decide, but these are the main points to consider -

- It is important to have a definite end-date for the placement. That gives security to the host, and focuses the guest on the need to find a long-term solution.

Having no end in mind causes uncertainty and can lead to dependency.

- Most hosting schemes have a week's trial period with each new placement, which will be extended if both parties are happy up to the agreed end-date. At that point the host may decide to offer to extend it further, but there should be no pressure to do so. Having a move-on option is crucial to prevent the host feeling guilty when the placement ends.
- An end-date also enables the host to have a well-earned break. Hosting can be physically and emotionally draining, and hosts who have had a positive experience, and whose placement ended at the correct time, are much more likely to offer to host again.
- Very short-term placements take up a disproportionate amount of resources. You still need proper referrals, a facilitated meeting and all the problems of physically moving someone into new accommodation. Unless the need is for just a few days (for example a refugee who has been given a date to move into statutory accommodation), it is advisable to set a minimum length. Some hosting schemes stipulate a minimum of a month.
- Having said that, if the host can only offer someone a few days respite, and the guest is happy to accept it, then it is at least better than being street homeless or sofa-surfing.
- It is also important to determine what other accommodation is available within your organisation or other local groups. If there is a local night shelter, that can provide a useful filter into a hosting scheme: conversely, a hosting scheme can often be a good filter for a more permanent housing scheme.
- Some projects stipulate a maximum length of stay, but there is no reason why a host should not extend the original length if they wish. Some hosts and guests form firm friendships, and older hosts may become like surrogate parents to their guest. Your organisation may just need to decide at what point your support is no longer needed.

5. Referrals

- Who will refer guests to you? It's best not to have too many referral agencies, as standards can vary greatly and monitoring becomes more difficult.
- Look initially at agencies already working with clients that might be guests. They will know them better, and be able to give more details of their situation and suitability. They may also be able to provide case work assistance to the guest as well as to make some assessment of how long their case might take to resolve.
- Cities that have had an asylum population for several years will all have good advice agencies and support networks. Smaller towns and new dispersal areas may have far less options. Refugee Action, Refugee Council, British Red Cross destitution services, law centres and refugee support agencies usually make good referrals, but the main criteria should be how well they know the client and are able to complete the referral forms.

- Referral forms need not be lengthy, but should include all the relevant information needed for making an informed decision of suitability for being hosted. See the Referral Template in the Appendix.
- Beware of taking anyone without a properly completed referral. Hosts need to know who they are getting, and be comfortable with any medical or psychological issues. In this case client confidentiality should not outweigh the right of the host to know relevant information.

6. Vetting Guests

Hopefully the referral form and referral agency will tell you all you need to know, but if you want to make sure that the guest does not have a criminal record in the UK, then the best way of doing this is to seek an Information Sharing Agreement with the police, which will provide checks on clients. Action Foundation and Nightstop North East already do this and the police respond within 24 hours. All requests are done with client consent and through cjsm, which is a secure email.

7. Moving people on

- It would be wonderful if guests whose claims had been refused and were destitute would all be granted refugee status while being hosted, but the reality is that it rarely happens in a short space of time.
- That's why having alternatives, whether that is another 'spare' host or a different accommodation scheme, are really important.
- It's also important to have access to good legal advice and client support. Without that, move-on is very difficult.
- Having support workers who can liaise with solicitors and help guests explore potential options is also valuable. They don't necessarily have to be from the same organisation as the hosting scheme. A partnership with another organisation can work just as well.

8. Vetting Hosts

- The vast majority of hosts are offering to do so out of compassion and good will. There may, however, be some who are not emotionally stable enough to cope with a guest who may be traumatised; on very rare occasions the host may even have an ulterior motive, such as having someone to clean the house, look after the children or even become a sexual partner. That's why good references are absolutely essential.
- Do you need to do DBS checks or not? This will depend on whether your guest is already classed as a vulnerable adult under the relevant legislation. The statutory term 'vulnerable adult' describes people over the age of eighteen, towards whom the state has specific safeguarding responsibilities, because of their age or mental capacity, or because they are receiving certain types of health and social care. If in doubt you should use this eligibility tool -

<https://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check>, which also lists the types of work (paid or voluntary) for which DBS checks should be done.

- If you are doing DBS checks, find out how long they are likely to take. Hosts who are raring to go can get very frustrated by lengthy delays, and may decide to withdraw their offer if it takes too long.
- Most NACCOM members will ask for two character references from people of good standing who know the applicant(s) well. Often these are people already known to the host organisation, who are known to be trustworthy. References together with an interview and home visit should provide reassurance about the motivations and character of the potential host.
- If in doubt, either say no or carry out further checks. It only takes one placement that goes badly wrong to seriously damage the whole scheme.
- After getting completed referral forms, visit the host in their home. That will fill in many of the questions that a form cannot answer, and throw up any potential barriers to a placement. Or you could do it the other way round: some schemes will start with the home visit. If you feel the host is unsuitable, there is no need to follow up with references.
- A home visit is also a good time for a brief property assessment: these are the things to look out for or ask about –
 - a suitable room for the guest and generally clean accommodation
 - the general atmosphere, including children, babies and pets
 - a current gas safety certificate for the boiler
 - smoke alarms and a carbon monoxide alarm: the fire service will fit smoke alarms for free if they have none
 - A first aid kit: you can provide this if they don't have one.

TRAINING FOR HOSTS

- It is good practice to have at least one substantial training session before a new host is allowed to start hosting: ideally this will be for several new hosts, which is both time-saving and also helps the hosts to see they are not the only ones doing it!
- These are some of the issues that should be covered in the training –
 - the hosting process
 - dealing with expectations
 - maintaining boundaries
 - avoiding burnout
 - confidentiality
 - safeguarding
 - communication and support
 - staying safe

- **We recommend that *no one* is allowed to start hosting without adequate training.**
- Examples of training sessions run by member groups can be found in the members-only area of the NACCOM website. Members can request access by emailing comms@naccom.org.uk

THE INITIAL MEETING OF HOST AND GUEST

Some organisations will arrange a meeting *before* the placement, and plan a move-in date if all goes well. Others will have it at the beginning of the placement, being confident that it is a good match. Whichever it is, the initial meeting sets the tone for the placement and should never be rushed. These are the important elements:

- The meeting should be in the host's home: seeing the interaction in situ will help the coordinator to be confident that the placement will work.
- Go through the arrangements and expectations carefully, ensuring that both host and guest are clear about the parameters, and happy to go ahead.
- Ensure that both parties sign the agreement and have a copy for their records.

SUPPORT FOR HOSTS

- Once a placement has started, it is vital that the host is able to get advice if needed. There should always be a phone number to ring between 9am and 10pm. This may be the coordinator or someone else in the group with plenty of experience of hosting. We suggest either having a dedicated mobile phone or using a system that can transfer calls to an existing phone. It is rarely used, but having the option is key to the host feeling supported.
- At the same time, it is good practice for the organisation to be proactive, and not just wait to be called. An occasional call from the coordinator to see how things are going demonstrates commitment and care. This is especially important in the first few weeks of a first placement.
- Although it should have been covered in the training sessions, be aware that some hosts find it difficult to manage expectations, and may try to do too much for their guests – including things best left to legal experts or things they can do for themselves. That can lead to disappointment or burnout.
- Happy and supported hosts are much more likely to host again!

ISSUES THAT MAY AFFECT HOSTING PLACEMENTS

The examples used are from Action Foundation in Newcastle. Local authorities and insurers have very different policies towards asylum seekers, so do check what applies in your area.

1. Council tax- single persons discount.

Some local authorities are removing the single person discount for those that are hosting a guest. In these instances, it has been agreed with the local authorities that there will not be a change to any single persons discount if they are hosting a guest for up to 4 weeks. Any host placement that is longer than 4 weeks could impact on their discount.

2. Housing benefit.

Again it is up to each local authority to decide if hosting will affect a non-dependant charge if someone is hosting and on housing benefit. In some instances, it been agreed with the local authorities that there will not be a change to any housing benefit if they are hosting a guest for up to 4 weeks. Any host placement that is longer than 4 weeks could impact on their housing benefit.

3. Potential car insurance issue.

If you are asking your host to transport their guest as part of their role, you need to include it as one of their tasks and ensure that the car is road worthy. The host should then inform their car insurance company. If you tell them it is definitely not their role, but they can still do it of their own free choice, then they are free to choose to do this.

4. House insurance.

Hosts need to check that they are allowed to have non-family members/non-paying guests stay. The public liability insurers 'Case' have said that they want written confirmation that the host household insurance allows them to host in order for the public liability cover to be valid.

5. Right to rent.

There are issues regarding Right to Rent if someone is hosting who is in a private rented tenancy or housing association tenancy, *not* a council tenancy. Even though no rent is involved, someone new staying in the house means that the landlord must be informed and then the Right to Rent check would be needed if the tenancy was about to be renewed.

PAPERWORK AND FORMS

- Time spent on getting the paperwork right is time well spent. Look through the NACCOM Library (available in the Members Area of the website) to find what best suits your scheme, and adapt it as you need. No one set of forms from another organisation is exactly right for another scheme, as everyone does it differently.
- It is also worth getting a spreadsheet / database set up that could hold all the information that is needed in a useful way. This should allow you to work out where people are in the application process, that you have all the paperwork sorted including home visits, references, etc. You can also store information on where guests are, how long they are there for, and host availability at a given time.

THE ROLE OF THE COORDINATOR

There is no template for the coordinator role. It can be a paid post or done by a volunteer, or even several volunteers, depending on finance, availability and skills. What is important is that these tasks are carried out by one or more people, and that both hosts and guests are clear about who it is and how they can be contacted.

These are the key tasks –

- promoting and publicising the hosting scheme
- recruiting hosts
- collating referrals and liaising with others to determine placements
- providing the link between host and guest
- offering support for the host
- coordinating, but not necessarily delivering, support for the guest
- facilitating training for hosts
- keeping records, overseeing and storing paperwork
- reporting to the management team
- setting up the initial meeting between host and guest, and ideally facilitating it, though it could be done by someone else
- helping the guest to move in, or arranging for someone else to do that
- monitoring progress of the placement, and troubleshooting when needed
- ensuring that the move-on goes smoothly

These are the key qualities that make for a good coordinator –

- personable, calm and friendly: it is vital to put both guest and host at ease

- punctual and efficient: the scheme will not work and people will get upset if the coordinator is sloppy, unprofessional and unable to keep accurate records
- trustworthy and reliable: their word should be their bond. Both guest and host need to see that the coordinator understands and adheres to agreed parameters.
- able to communicate well: it is not necessary to speak other languages (although it would help!) but it is necessary to speak in clear, simple English and ensure that the guest understands. If necessary, they should use an interpreter, who could be a friend of the guest with reasonable English.
- honest and firm: unless the host requests it, the end date of the placement should not be altered, and the guest needs to know that it is not negotiable.

WAYS OF HELPING FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T HOST

There will be people who would love to host, but don't have the facilities to do so, are too timid to take the first step, or whose family circumstances prevent it. These are some ways in which they can contribute to the scheme –

- Becoming the Coordinator or a member of the steering group.
- Offering transport, especially for the move-in.
- Giving: you will need to pay for things like bus fares. For new organisations, a destitution fund will help cover costs.
- Spreading the word: host recruitment is key to any successful project.

PART 2: CASE STUDIES FROM 5 NACCOM HOSTING SCHEMES

1. ASSIST SHEFFIELD



ASSIST is a South Yorkshire charity that has been supporting destitute asylum seekers since 2003. It provides a suite of services, including financial support, (non-legal) case-work support, signposting, accompanying, an emergency night-shelter, and long-term accommodation in shared houses and through a hosting scheme.

ASSIST first started hosting asylum seekers in 2004. It now has three different types of host placements:

- **Weekend hosting** for clients who are using the emergency night-shelter from Monday to Saturday, but need a place to stay between Saturday afternoon and Monday morning. Guests are carefully vetted and only placed with very experienced hosts for the first two weekends they are hosted.
- **Emergency hosting for women:** ad-hoc placements, usually of women who have been newly referred to ASSIST, that last between one and four weeks, to enable ASSIST to find a longer-term accommodation solution for the client.
- **Long-term hosting:** anything more than 4 weeks and up to a maximum of 6 months during which the guest lives with the host, while receiving support from ASSIST with moving on his/her asylum case. Where the guest continues to require accommodation after the end of the hosting placement, ASSIST will move him/her into one of their shared houses.

ASSIST's hosting network is supported by the Hosting Support team, a group of 8 volunteers. Each of them is allocated as a buddy to one of the around 40 hosting households. The volunteers also recruit and train new hosts. The Hosting Support Group is supervised by the accommodation worker, who also has responsibility over the housing scheme and night-shelter. ASSIST provides a small financial weekly contribution to its host households.

In 2016, 29 people were accommodated through long-term and emergency hosting for ASSIST clients who used the night-shelter during the week.

A CASE STUDY

Asad, a 21-year old from Somalia, was refused asylum in 2014, whilst living in Sheffield. He had made some friends in a local football club, who were able to help him with food and accommodation for a while. When they were no longer to support him, Asad came to ASSIST and moved into the house of Peter, a host with ASSIST.

At the time, Peter was also hosting another refused asylum seeker from Iran, with whom Asad became good friends. Having a stable home enabled Asad to gather evidence for a fresh claim, and through members of the Somali community, he was eventually able to trace his father, whom he had never met, and who lived in London and had become a British citizen.

Asad was eventually moved into Section 4 accommodation outside of Sheffield, but recently got in touch with ASSIST to let them know that he has now been granted Leave to Remain in the UK.



Quote from a host family

"We have received much more than we have given. Hosting has helped us think seriously about community, justice, ownership and especially hospitality. We have recommended hosting to everyone we know!"

- Jochen Kortlaender, ASSIST Accommodation Development Worker

2. GRACE HOSTING PROJECT AT LASSN, LEEDS



Leeds Asylum Seeker Support Network (LASSN) was set up in 2001 and has a Befriending Project, English at Home Project and Grace Hosting. Grace Hosting has a paid 25 hour Volunteer Manager. There are a group of unpaid volunteer coordinators who take referrals

(Monday – Friday) for short stay placements from referral agencies and match the guest with one of Grace Hosting's short stay hosts. The length of stay can vary from one night to 30.

They also have Longer Stay hosts who host a guest for an agreed amount of time. This stay is organised and regularly reviewed by the Volunteer Manager. Stays can vary in length from two months to a year or more.

Grace Hosting Stats can be found at lassn.org.uk/grace/grace-statistics



Quote from a guest

“Staying with hosts stops me feeling like a homeless person and I become someone’s friend, even if it is just for one night”.



Quote from a referral agency on the impact that a longer stay placement had on their client:

Samuel (not his real name) has been destitute for many years and has been night to night hosted by Grace Hosting for a long time. Since December he has been living with a longer stay host. His caseworker gave the following feedback about the impact that this has had on Samuel:

“He is being really proactive, and having a longer stay allows for the stability he needs to concentrate on his asylum claim”. When Samuel came into the LASSN office we could see how positive he was. He said that he now has ‘hope’. Samuel is now in the process of submitting a fresh claim.



Quote from a host

“We started hosting in March 2015 and have hosted many people, mainly from North Africa and the Middle East. Most people we see for just 2 or 3 nights. We’ve been able to connect with people through cooking and eating together and have met some really nice people as well as learnt some lovely recipes from different parts of the world. The hardest part of hosting is seeing our guests leave, not knowing whether they will have somewhere to stay the next night. Sometimes we see people more than once, which has been nice because we’ve been able to get to know people more and have built up some good relationships. We’ve really enjoyed the experience and what we have always tried to do is offer a warm welcome. Having heard from some people who’ve stayed with us that they’ve experienced prejudice and hostility during their time in the UK, this is all the more important to us.”

- Jo Carter, Volunteer Manager, Grace Hosting

3. THE BOAZ TRUST, MANCHESTER



Boaz Trust started in June 2004 with a small scale hosting scheme and gradually expanded to 15 shared houses, a winter night shelter across 7 churches and around 20 active hosts.

They currently employ a hosting facilitator for 0.5 days a week, as part of a wider staff team. Hosted clients are supported by a support worker, and additional support for hosts is provided by the support workers and volunteer manager. Hosting placements are usually short-term, until there is space in a shared house.

Since 2004 they have hosted over 280 people. In 2016, Boaz hosted 22 individuals, roughly half men, half women.

Their vision is 'life in all its fullness for people seeking sanctuary in the UK', and the threefold mission is to:


- End destitution amongst people seeking sanctuary
- Empower people seeking sanctuary
- Equip churches and others to serve people seeking sanctuary in their communities.

Hosting covers all three, by providing destitute sanctuary seekers with safe accommodation, an opportunity to build friendships and experience life in a (usually) British household, and practice English. It also gives host families an opportunity to practice hospitality and promote understanding amongst friends, family, neighbours and community.

A CASE STUDY

One morning in December 2015, O and N, from Libya, arrived at our office with two large bags, having just been evicted from their 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 and they were now street homeless. N was also pregnant and had been very unwell during her pregnancy.

Our accommodation was full, but thankfully a short term host offered them a place to stay. O and N were extremely anxious, but we were able to reassure them. When we took them to the house, the sense of relief and hope was tangible. Over the next month we supported them with emergency food 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. In January they moved on to Home Office accommodation and support. It was fantastic when they called in to see us with their 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 2 different hosts, and had a very nice time.*

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 when things were very difficult."

- Ros Holland, Chief Executive, Boaz Trust

4. HOST NOTTINGHAM



Host Nottingham started in 2011/12. They employ a part-time Project Co-ordinator for 13 hours per week. The Chair of Trustees also spends a lot of time on the

project, and volunteers help with certain aspects of the work. Office space is provided by the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum.

Placements vary from a few days to three months, although some have exceeded this, with the full agreement of the hosts. The demands of the Home Office and difficulties with solicitors mean there are an increasing number of clients with ongoing cases, and it is a struggle to find longer placements for them.

Opening your home to a destitute asylum seeker or newly recognised refugee has an enormous impact. Every single guest has said how deeply grateful they are and what a difference it has made to them to feel welcomed, accepted and safe.

In the 5 years it has been running, Host Nottingham has hosted more than 60 people with more than 35 hosts and for more than 2,500 nights.



Quote from a guest

'I had never heard of the organisation before I came to Nottingham and when my solicitor mentioned where she was taking me I was really scared for myself, but I was also desperate and jumped to the chance. On the 17th February, a day I will always remember, I was met by a staff member who was smiling, attentive, caring and non-judgmental, and having lived on the streets I was used to people who judge and pass you by all the time, so to have someone treat you like a human being that was really important.

The couple I was placed with were very patient, caring, and protective of me and made sure I was comfortable and fed. There is something very special about someone telling you 'this is your room and a set of house keys' - it restored my faith in humanity.

Someone taking a risk and trusting you with their home, made me appreciate and know

who really is your neighbour in a Biblical way. I am so grateful to God for the HOST organisation which exists to help people through difficult situations.'



Quote from a host

'We are relative newcomers to hosting. Our first guest from Kenya stayed with us for 3 months last year and our second, a 16 year old from Sudan, arrived just last week and is currently awaiting formal foster arrangements to be put in place, hopefully by the end of January. We're sure other hosts will agree that this is a two way process. We can't speak for our guests, but on our side we have experienced many emotions and feel enriched and often humbled by the contact. The early days can be a bit challenging, as both sides get to know each other and adjust to living outside their usual comfort zones, and as the raw unfairness of life comes right into our home. But that passes quickly as personalities develop and we all simply get on with the practicalities of day to day living. We hope our guests feel safe and able to pursue their goals to remain and live happily in this country. In our experience hosting provides a unique opportunity of developing friendships outside the circles in which we usually operate, and we have come to value that far more than we could had expected.'

- Jane Henson, Chair of Trustees, Host Nottingham

5. HOUSING JUSTICE HOSTING / LONDON HOSTING NETWORK



Housing Justice

Housing Justice, the national Christian housing and homelessness campaigning organisation, worked with NACCOM to organise the first Hosting Conference in London in 2009. Following this they helped set up the London Hosting Network with other partners including Praxis, Spare Room and the London Catholic Worker. Progress in developing hosting in London was slower than in other cities, so Housing Justice applied for funding for a full time paid Coordinator and set up Housing Justice Hosting in 2015.

Since the project started 68 hosts have been recruited, and 37 people have been hosted. At time of writing 28 people are being hosted, and 5 people have so far been granted indefinite leave to remain.

London Hosting Network now includes Refugees at Home and several other groups, who together have over 180 hosts.

A CASE STUDY: KHADIJA'S STORY

Khadija (not her real name) came to the UK in 2015 having suffered sexual violence and fleeing with no passport or documents because she had to run for her life from her home in Africa. She entered the UK "through the back door" and applied for asylum.

Khadija stayed with friends for a few months until they could no longer accommodate her because their landlord had found out she was staying there. Her friends managed to get her a bed for a few nights with someone else, but on the morning of the referral, he told her she would need to go out when he left in the morning and not come back.

The people who referred Khadija managed to get the man's wife to keep her over the weekend until a host became available for her through the Housing Justice hosting scheme. She stayed for just over a month, and was very happy with her hosts (she was their first guest) until being taken into accommodation in Liverpool by the National Asylum Support Service pending a final decision on her immigration status. Khadija got on so well with her host family that they have remained in contact, and whenever she has to come to London, she spends the night with them. Because the experience with Khadija was such a positive one, the hosts went on to welcome other asylum seekers into their home; Khadija, meanwhile, spent most of 2016 waiting for a decision from the Home Office until one day, to her amazement and delight, she received a call from her solicitor telling her she had been granted leave to remain. Khadija was afraid to believe it until the letter arrived a few days later. However, it did, and she is now rebuilding her life, having returned to her nursing studies and enjoying life in Liverpool.

Khadija remains the best of friends with her hosts Ann and her daughter Portia, and says they are now "sisters for life!"

- Alastair Murray, London Development Coordinator, Housing Justice

PART 3: MEMBERSHIP OF NACCOM

If you are starting an accommodation scheme for destitute asylum seekers, there are real benefits in becoming a member of NACCOM. Membership fees are deliberately set to be affordable to all.

Full membership is open to any organisation that is committed to providing accommodation for destitute asylum seekers. They may in addition provide accommodation for refugees and others with no recourse to public funds. It entitles members to –

- Assistance with capacity building across a range of accommodation services, including hosting schemes, housing projects and night shelters.
- Support with evaluating destitution services (if there is capacity this service may be extended to associate members).
- Voting rights at Annual and Extraordinary General Meetings.

Associate membership is open to any individual or organisation that is in sympathy with the aims of NACCOM. Associate membership will not convey voting rights at Annual or Extraordinary General Meetings.

All Members – full and associate, are entitled to -

- Reduced rates at NACCOM meetings, training sessions and Annual Conference.
- Access to expert advice and resources (please note there may be a small charge for printed material).
- Access to the Members Area of our website featuring a Forum and Library.
- Use of our regular e-bulletins to publicise services and request or disseminate information free of charge.
- Participation in our annual UK-wide accommodation survey.

If you would like to become a member, you can find full details and the application form online at naccom.org.uk/get-involved/membership/

For a full list of NACCOM members, their location and contact details, visit naccom.org.uk/projects/

WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY

"Really enjoyed the conference and got lots of answers to queries I was struggling with."

- Action Foundation

"Sharing knowledge, skills and best practice- very informative."

- Night Stop North East

"Has led to...new opportunities for sharing and learning, thus improving what we offer."

- Sanctus

"Helpful to have the chance to meet others who are doing the same kind of work".

- London Hosting Network

"It was good to meet others doing hosting and hearing their joys and challenges during the workshops"

- Share Tawe

"A welcome reminder of how much good stuff is out there to support destitute asylum seekers."

- Individual attendee at a conference



4

PART 4: TEMPLATES, POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FORMS

Unfortunately it is not practicable to include templates in this toolkit, as they would take up far more space than the rest of the toolkit.

You can find a selection of templates on a range of issues in the Members Area of the NACCOM website (www.naccomm.org.uk). These are all in WORD format and available to be adapted for NACCOM members for their schemes.

These are some of the issues covered:

- Guest Agreement
- Guest Assessment
- Guidance for Guests
- Guidance for Hosts
- Home Visit Assessment
- Host Application Form
- Host Assessment
- Host Confidentiality Declaration
- Host Property Checklist
- Host Volunteer Agreement
- Host-Guest Agreement
- Referral Form
- Referral Guidelines
- Safeguarding

If you require any further information on any matters regarding this toolkit, please email us at office@naccomm.org.uk






Thank you for reading.
Please get in touch via the contact details below if you want to
find out more about our work.

Please note hard copies are available to order
via the NACCOM office (details below).

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