

# Hosting guide

You are doing an amazing thing in offering someone a safe place to stay when they need it most.

When hosting relationships go well, they can be transformative for the host and guest alike. Every relationship is different, but they all take work.

Try these as points to guide you in your hosting journey:

1. **Follow the basics of Trauma Informed Practice.** This is a well-accepted set of principles that helps many organisations and experts work effectively with people who are experiencing trauma. You do not need special training or resources to be able to create a safe and welcoming environment. Hold these principles in mind in your interactions with your guest:

**Safety (emotional)** - not pushing someone to go beyond their boundaries; being kind, consistent and honest. Don't ask what has happened to someone- they will share if and when they are ready. Focus on the present and the future.

**Facilitating connections** - connecting people to groups and activities of their choice, supporting them to feel part of a community and to do things that bring enjoyment and support wellbeing

**Choice** - offering choice and control at every opportunity. Share full information, ask for their views, avoid making decisions for someone

**Responding to identity and context** - avoiding making assumptions about someone because they are a refugee; simplifying language, explaining concepts, treating each person as an individual, and accepting that their recent experiences will have an impact on their view of themselves

**Building on strengths** - recognising their resilience and courage, using their strengths as the starting point

**Supporting coping** - asking about immediate needs, listening, providing with information and reassurance.

2. **Think about your ground rules**, even if you are a very relaxed host, it will still help your guest to know some basics. Can they come and go as they please? Is there going to need to be a schedule for using the bathroom or kitchen? Do you expect to eat together? What if they want to stay out late? How will you divide household chores? What happens if you are away overnight? Think about the things that are essential to

you and your household and make sure you communicate these clearly.

3. **Behave in ways that promote safety and calm.** Be friendly, non-judgmental, and demonstrate that you are paying attention to what someone needs. Give people choices, encourage their autonomy, and respect their privacy.
4. **Prepare yourself to cope with some of the devastating effects of war.** Everyone who has fled their home country will be experiencing grief and loss. They are likely to be grieving for loved ones, as well as coming to terms with losing their possessions, and their way of life. They are also likely to be anxious for news from home and may sometimes feel guilt that they are safe while others are not. Some will have witnessed atrocities; some will have been the victims of atrocities. These experiences can have a wide range of impacts on a person's life. Be kind, be supportive, seek appropriate help. Remember that you are not providing counselling. Be careful not to ask what has happened to someone- they may not be able to tell you, or may not want to. Be aware of signs and symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD and seek help if someone needs it.
5. **Build a network of support.** If you can, get to know who else is hosting in your area. This will help you to share advice, be a support for each other, and problem solve when you need to. It may also help your guests form a community too. Explain the roles of people around you, whether they are professionals involved in welcoming and supporting refugees, or whether they are your personal friends and contacts.
6. **Get to know the organisations and agencies around you who can help.** Seek support as early as you can. Even if you don't know what the right support is, get in touch with one of the local expert organisations- they will be able to guide you to the right place. Make sure you know who your contact point at the Council is. There is a directory of refugee and migrant services for Wandsworth here. You can also explore Wandsworth's directory of all services [here](#).
7. **Prepare people for independence.** Ukrainians will have the right to work. With good support in the early days of their arrival in the UK, they may be ready to begin employment and seek their own accommodation within a few months.
8. **Consider what you will do if your guests are not ready to leave after 6 months.** How long is your offer for? If you know it is for a finite time, communicate this as early

as you can. If you need someone to leave before they are ready to live independently, seek support from professional groups and from the Council.

9. **Know your limits.** Don't give advice on things that you are not qualified for. Remember that there is a large networks of experts around you.

### **Additional sources of help and advice**

There is advice available from organisations who have built their expertise through many years of coordinating and supporting hosting networks. You can look up some of these yourself, but be aware that there will be key differences between their work and the Homes for Ukraine scheme, but you may gain some useful insights.

- Refugees at Home <https://www.refugeesathome.org/looking-after-host-guest/>
- London Hosting Network <https://housingjustice.org.uk/hosting-project>
- Citizens UK <https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/>

There may be other local groups that you know of who have useful experiences to share about hosting.