



**HOSTING  
FAMILIES  
AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE**





THERE'S NO TRUER SAYING  
THAN 'IT TAKES A VILLAGE  
TO RAISE A CHILD' - YOUR  
NETWORK OF FRIENDS  
AND FAMILY WILL BE AN  
INVALUABLE HELP"

**JONATHAN AND RACHEL**

Hosting may be the most rewarding thing you ever do, but there is a difference between hosting a single person and taking an entire family into your home. Refugees coming to the UK as a family group will have faced real danger, been uprooted from their homes, are possibly traumatised, exhausted, and very unsettled.

Some prospective hosts are understandably nervous about the idea, especially if the guest family has teenagers – anyone who has brought up children knows the teen years can be tricky. Others might be worried about hosting children of different ages to their own, and how that will affect the family dynamic. So we asked our existing hosts who have given homes to families with children for their advice on how to welcome families, and how to give every placement the best chance of success.

Our hosts were overwhelmingly positive when we asked them to describe their experience of hosting families, and this leaflet sets out their advice and recommendations.

## USEFUL TIPS FOR HOSTING FAMILIES

- Provide adaptors so that your guests can use their laptops and charge their phones.
- Ask us for a free Vodaphone SIM – lasts 6 months and each guest can have one.
- Clear some time, maybe even take a day or two off work to get your house ready, prepare their rooms, write your Welcome Pack and introduce your new guests to the neighbourhood.
- The Welcome Pack should include information on local facilities for families – the station, the library, the sports centre, clubs, coffee shops, chemists etc.
- Get yourself fully acquainted with the “Say Hi” translation app.
- Get some treats to welcome them – fizzy drinks, chocolate biscuits, crisps.
- Provide some toiletries in their room. They may have very little.
- Show them the bedroom and bathroom immediately and make clear they can go to their room whenever they like.
- Clear a cupboard in the kitchen so they can store their own food.

## LANGUAGE

Remember that children are very quick learners and will often speak more English than their parents. If you learnt a few phrases of their language it would do wonders to break the ice at the beginning of their stay.

Make sure you familiarise yourself with Google Translate and other translation apps like Say Hi, which is popular with young people. You could also encourage them to watch TV and listen to the radio in English.

## SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Allow your guests to arrange their sleeping any way they want, and make clear they can sleep whenever and for as long as they like. The family might not necessarily want to sleep separately, especially if they are traumatised. Children in different cultures may be used to being in the same room or even bed up to the age of seven and older — though you might bear in mind NSPCC advice that “While it’s not illegal for them to share, it’s recommended that children over the age of 10 should have their own bedrooms – even if they’re siblings or step-siblings”.



THE TEENAGERS HAD DIFFERING LEVELS OF ENGLISH. I GOT A VOLUNTEER ENGLISH TEACHER THROUGH THE REFUGEE COUNCIL ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK FOR THE CHILDREN. LANGUAGE IS SO IMPORTANT. THEY SPENT A LOT OF TIME ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND ON YOUTUBE IN ENGLISH, WHICH I ENCOURAGED”

KARINA

Issa, from Kuwait, and  
Refugees at Home co-founder  
Sara Nathan



“

MY BIG RULES ARE – I WILL NEVER ENTER YOUR ROOM WITHOUT PERMISSION. IT'S YOUR SPACE, AND IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP IT CLEAN – IF I BECOME AWARE IT'S NOT I WILL TELL YOU. GUESTS MUST KEEP ROOM AND BATHROOM CLEAN TO MY STANDARDS... THIS PARTICULARLY AFFECTS BOYS USED TO HAVING THEIR MOTHERS RUN ROUND AFTER THEM”

KARINA



**WE EXPECT EYE CONTACT AND FOR THE CHILDREN TO SAY GOOD MORNING. WHEN WE TOLD THEM THAT'S WHAT WE DO IN THE UK, IT HAS HAPPENED."**

**RACHEL**

## HOUSE RULES

This is your house and you set the rules. Be upfront about everything – different cultures have different ways of doing things and your guests will understand that. If you're a non-smoker, be clear there's no smoking in the house and show them where they can smoke outside. If you want help with the washing up, say so – but be sensitive: in some cultures for a man to help in the kitchen would be demeaning.

There will be an adjustment period while you all get to know each other. Make sure you're patient and communicate.

## LIVING WITH TEENAGERS

When we asked our hosts to tell us their experiences of living with refugee teenagers, the response was overwhelmingly positive. "She is very easy, very nice, polite, quiet, studious, kind and thoughtful," was a typical comment.

Many said the effect on their own teenage children was enlightening. One host told us: "Our 17-year-old daughter is learning more from this than she will from the classroom. She is getting real, in-depth experience of empathy for the guest family. She is learning about rules and conflict. She has both the baby, who she adores, and the teenager. She is learning what it's like to be a refugee."

Anyone who has brought up a family knows the pitfalls of adolescence, and with possibly traumatised teenagers these might be multiplied.



**WITH A TEENAGER IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE CLEAR ABOUT BOUNDARIES. I HAVE TO GET HER UP EVERY MORNING AS SHE IS SLEEPING IN MY OFFICE, AND SHE DOES LEAVE PILES OF CLOTHES AROUND. THE FIRST DAY SOME FRIENDS OF OURS TOOK HER TO WESTFIELD [SHOPPING CENTRE]. THEY BOUGHT HER A COUPLE OF THINGS – NOTHING BIG BUT THINGS SHE COULD CALL HER OWN. THEY WENT TO TK MAXX AND THEN WENT TO NANDO'S AND SHE SAID IT WAS THE BEST DAY OF HER LIFE."**

**JONATHAN AND RACHEL**

## SCHOOLS

Some children will still be studying online with Ukrainian teachers – a full and demanding curriculum for over six hours a day. Our hosts tell us the children with them are very industrious and attentive to their lessons. But of course although they may be learning English, that brings them no friendship or integration into the UK.

Finding a UK school is a priority, and possibly the most demanding part of being a host, once your guests arrive.

Refugee children have the same right to schooling as any other child: it's a legal requirement for them to be in education until they are 18. Your local authority should provide information on which schools have places available in each age group. You can also ask if they have a specific policy for Ukrainian children.

Be aware that help from local authorities can be patchy – some hosts report that they found theirs very unhelpful. Do as much independent research as you can, for example finding out which schools are already taking refugees, and call or visit them direct.

Independent schools are also an option and some have no-fee policies for refugees. For more information see “Useful websites” below.

## ENTERTAINMENT AND SOCIALISING

The benefits of getting children out of the house – meeting people, socialising, playing sport – are obvious. You should find out everything you can about your community groups and get your guests out and about as soon as possible. A number of local authorities offer free public transport for refugees. Use your networks to find sports events and centres they can join and find out which galleries, museums and entertainment venues give discounts. London Zoo, for example, has a £3 per person offer for refugees and in Scotland the National Trust offers a free admission pass. Places near you may do something similar.

Remember though that your guests may be traumatised and hiding their true feelings. It might be very difficult for them to enjoy themselves if they are worrying about the people they left behind. Be sensitive and don't insist on a day trip to the zoo if you feel it might be too much for them.



**SOME REFUGEES ARE DEALING WITH SURVIVOR'S GUILT. THEY FEEL THEY CAN'T CELEBRATE THE GOOD THINGS HAPPENING TO THEM BECAUSE THEY ARE SO WORRIED ABOUT FAMILY AND FRIENDS BACK HOME. I WORRY ABOUT ISOLATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH SO I ENCOURAGE THEM TO SOCIALISE AND TO BRING PEOPLE BACK TO THE HOUSE.”**

**KARINA**



“

THE SCHOOL ASSIGNED  
STUDENTS IN THE CLASS  
TO BE BUDDIES,  
WHICH HELPED A LOT”

JONATHAN AND RACHEL

Jonathan and Rachel Bartlett  
with their Ukrainian guests,  
the Stelmakh children



“

I REALLY BELIEVE FOOD IS IMPORTANT AND THAT MY GUESTS HAVE TO HAVE FOOD WHICH IS CONNECTED TO WHO THEY ARE. IF THE GUESTS WANT TO DO THE SHOPPING, I OFFER TO PAY. GUESTS ARE WELCOME TO COOK AS MUCH AS THEY WANT – BUT I EXPECT THEM TO COOK FOR ME TOO. AND THEN CLEAN UP”

KARINA

## PARENTING

Everyone has different ways of parenting and you might be surprised by your guests' attitudes. In some cultures, for example, boys and men would never help around the home, while girls are expected to do chores. Most hosts understand that it's best not to interfere – remember that some of your customs and attitudes will seem odd to your guests. There are some things you'll have to make clear: some cultures allow parents to smack their children and you should explain that it is illegal in the UK. While there are many other potential issues – different bedtimes, toleration of noise, different eating habits – all should be dealt with tactfully and bearing in mind that your guests have come from a different culture and may suddenly find themselves a single parent with a father left behind.



**ALL CHILDREN CAN BE NOISY AND WE'VE BEEN KEEN TO REASSURE OUR GUESTS THAT WE HAVE HAD PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN OUR CHILDREN. AT THE SAME TIME WE'RE PLEASED THAT WE HAVE ENOUGH SPACE TO WITHDRAW INTO SEPARATE ROOMS IF WE WANT TO.”**

**NICOLA**

## COOKING AND MEALTIMES

Suddenly having four or five extra around the table can be challenging. Set out the rules – no smoking in the kitchen, do your own washing up – and find out how your guests deal with mealtimes. Do they let their children use their phones while eating? Do they allow them to graze or do they insist on set mealtimes – and if so, do they eat at the same time as you?

Learning about another culture's food traditions can be incredibly rewarding, but your teenage guests might like nothing more than fizzy drinks and crisps. Make it clear when your mealtimes are and that your guests can eat with you or they can cook their own food. Find out what foods they like (one host noted that their guest loved Italian food because it's popular in Kyiv) and cook for them while they find their feet. Let them know you'd be very happy for them to cook for you if they like. Tell them that you expect them to pay for their food when they get their benefits but you will pay at first.

Refugees at Home can provide a weekly bursary of £30 per guest per week, to help with these costs and your guest's other expenses, until universal credit or job income kicks in. Just email [treasurer@refugeesathome.org](mailto:treasurer@refugeesathome.org)

## MOVING ON

Placements with host families are temporary – the average length of stay with Refugees at Home is three months; the average stay under the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme is six months – and must necessarily come to an end. The transition (either to another host or to more permanent accommodation) always has to be handled carefully, especially when there are children involved. There are a number of ways you can minimise the disruption, but the key thing is that your guests know that although they are leaving your house they are not leaving your (and your children's) life.

Although parting can be difficult (and in some rare cases, traumatic), it's also a hugely positive step. The fact that your guests are ready to move on means they are settling down, becoming a part of a new society. It can even be a joyous moment, especially if you make absolutely clear that this isn't a severing of relations, that you will keep in touch as friends.



**PLACEMENTS ARE TEMPORARY BY DEFINITION. SOMETIMES THEY END EARLY BECAUSE OF A CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES FOR EITHER GUEST OR HOST, VERY OCCASIONALLY THEY END SUDDENLY OR UNEXPECTEDLY; SOMETIMES THEY'RE EXTENDED. HOWEVER THEY END, WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT HOSTS AND GUESTS AS THEY MOVE ON TO THEIR NEXT STAGE."**

**AREEJ, PLACEMENT COORDINATOR**

### Useful tips for easing the transition

- Start planning the end of the placement as soon as possible: the process shouldn't be abrupt; there should be plenty of discussion about it and a clear understanding of what will happen next.
- Make clear that you want to keep in touch and discuss how you're going to do that.
- Make dates before they leave, so that children know they will still have a place in your life.



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THE IDEA OF TEENAGERS  
SLOBBING AROUND DURING  
THE HOLIDAYS DIDN'T  
BOTHER ME AT ALL – BUT  
THEY NEVER DID. THEY  
WERE REALLY, HONESTLY,  
NO TROUBLE”

NICOLA

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### LEGAL ADVICE

<https://advice-ukraine.co.uk>

[www.augb.co.uk](http://www.augb.co.uk) – Association of Ukrainians in GB

### TRANSLATION

[www.sayhi.com](http://www.sayhi.com)

[translate.google.co.uk](https://translate.google.co.uk)

### SOCIAL MEDIA

<https://telegram.org> - the messenger of choice for many Ukrainian young.

### SCHOOLS

[goodschoolsguide.co.uk](http://goodschoolsguide.co.uk)

[childrenslegalcentre.com](http://childrenslegalcentre.com)

### CONTACT US

<https://www.refugeesathome.org>

0300 365 4724



“

I TOOK THEM FOR A WALK THE FIRST DAY AND HE ASKED WHERE HE COULD PLAY BASKETBALL. WE DROPPED HIM OFF AND SIX HOURS LATER HIS WORRIED MOTHER ASKED WHERE HE WAS. HE WAS STILL THERE, SHOOTING HOOPS”

LOUISE



HOSTING CAN BE A GREAT  
PRIVILEGE, BRINGING JOY TO  
THE HOSTS AND PROVIDING PEACE  
AND SECURITY TO GUESTS –  
WE'RE VERY HAPPY TO HAVE THIS  
WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY”

NICOLA



[www.refugeesathome.org](http://www.refugeesathome.org)