



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

Hosting Destitute Asylum Seekers

Why is this needed?

Most people think that, when an asylum claim is refused, the asylum seeker is immediately removed from the country. The reality is that, in spite of the 'hostile environment' and the best attempts of successive Home Secretaries, the number of those removed always falls far short of the number of refusals, leaving thousands of asylum seekers homeless and destitute, with no right to work or benefits. With the right support, many of those refused are able to find the evidence needed to put in a fresh asylum claim, and eventually get their refugee status. However, if they are sleeping rough or sofa surfing, it is almost impossible to do this. A place to stay is the most crucial element in getting their lives back on track.

What is being done?

Across the UK there are many new groups springing up in support of destitute asylum seekers. Some of these offer creative ways of accommodating those who have no recourse to public funds – and therefore cannot access housing benefit or pay rent. NACCOM, the national No Accommodation Network, now has 38 member groups from Brighton to Glasgow that offer accommodation for refused, homeless asylum seekers. You can find where these projects are on the interactive map on the website, www.naccomm.org.uk. There are a range of schemes in operation, from night shelters, church properties, houses leased at peppercorn rent, arrangements with supportive landlords or housing associations, and increasingly, since the rise in awareness caused by the tragic death of Alan Kurdi in September 2015, hosting schemes.

What is Hosting?

Put simply, people with a spare room offer that for a period of time to someone who is destitute and homeless. While unofficial hosting certainly happens on an ad hoc basis across the UK, NACCOM members run schemes that involve a degree of formality and professionalism that protects both hosts and guests. [This toolkit](#) will give more information. It will vary from scheme to scheme, but the basics will involve –

- a coordinator, either paid or voluntary, who ensures that the scheme runs smoothly.
- defined parameters, so that hosts and guests know exactly what is entailed before they sign up.
- a meeting of host and guest, facilitated by the coordinator or another responsible person, before the guest moves in.
- external support, both legal and social, so that the host does not become consumed with the problems of their guest, who may well have experienced trauma, stress or depression.
- a place to move the guest on to when the agreed length of stay is completed.
- help and support in case of problems, and the option of meeting other hosts every few months.
- a good, robust referral system that finds as good a match between host and guest as possible.

Is it Legal?

Yes, there is nothing illegal about hosting, as long as the guest is complying with Home Office requirements to report regularly at the local Reporting Centre. If that's not happening, the host might be guilty of harbouring an absconder, although I have never heard of anyone being prosecuted for that.

Does it work, and what can you do?

Yes! Despite occasional language or cultural problems, very few placements fail, and some lead to life-long friendships. At the Boaz Trust in Manchester, where almost 300 placements have taken place over 12 years, there has been one reported theft and no reported criminal damage at all. More importantly, it has offered hope and a new beginning to many desperate and vulnerable people.

If you would consider hosting, why not contact your local NACCOM scheme? If there is no scheme near you, perhaps you might consider starting one – and if you live miles from any asylum seekers, perhaps you might be willing to support NACCOM financially, so that more hosting schemes can be launched.

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