

- ◇ The Refugee comes to your house to find a roof over their head, which is one less big thing to worry about while RAIS continues to help them sort everything out.
- ◇ The guest is not in your home to solve immigration issues or relive trauma. Some are reluctant to open up about their circumstances and may even feel ashamed or embarrassed by them. So be sensitive. Try not to make assumptions or appear too intrusive. A few general questions should establish some basics, perhaps something about family, country of origin or how long they have been in Lancaster.
- ◇ Talk about yourselves and your interests and this will probably encourage your guest to talk about themselves. Most of them wish to improve their English so give opportunity for them to practice.
- ◇ At times you might be even invited to a self prepared meal or be offered practical help by your guest. Accepting an invitation or offer of help makes a huge difference to their sense of self-worth and their ability to give back.
- ◇ Be open to them explaining and introducing you to some of their customs and culture.

Any further questions? Do get in touch with us



A joint project by RAIS and St Thomas Church Lancaster. For more information please contact us:

RAIS:

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Mind the Gap

Short term hosting project for refugees

Mind the Gap is a collaborative project between RAIS Lancaster and St Thomas' Church Lancaster. Its aim is to help to provide temporary guest accommodation for refugees who are at present here in the UK on their own and who have just got leave to remain. In the majority these guests will be male.

This will prevent the refugee becoming destitute when they have to move out of their Home Office accommodation but often still have to wait for their first benefit payment and NI number to arrive in order to sort out a bank account and other first steps.



How does it work?

Each hosted individual will be supported by an allocated RAIS volunteer who will have access to an interpreter if necessary and will liaise with the host family on behalf of RAIS.

All refugees are well known to RAIS and are therefore able to provide the host with all the information they would need about the requirements of each individual.



The guest first of all needs a room to sleep and access to a bathroom and use of a kitchen.

As host you are encouraged to introduce them to your 'house rules' to avoid any misunderstandings and unwanted problems. Together with your guest and a RAIS volunteer or interpreter you can discuss and arrange with your guest whether you want to share any meals, how your guest can access your property, and any food or cultural requirements.

Hosts and guests will fill out a form with their requirements and needs, and RAIS will do their best to create a good fit.

Hosts will become part of a potential host data-base and can state clearly when they would be available for hosting. They would always be able to indicate, when a need for hosting arises, if they are able to help in that specific situation.

If you have extra room in your house during specific periods of the year and are interested in joining our data base or finding out more about our scheme, please do contact us.

Some guidelines and hints for potential hosts

Inviting a guest into your home can be a very rewarding experience for both the host and the guest. Both can learn a lot from each other, and many hosts and guests report how they have been changed and touched in positive ways through this experience. Some long-term friendships have developed.

There are of course some pitfalls as different cultures are meeting within the host's own home. RAIS volunteers and members of our St Thomas network can help you to get off to the best possible start in your hosting experience. Here are some suggestions on how to make the most of this opportunity, so that it can be a positive experience for both you and the guest:

- ◇ A good starting point is always to try and communicate well with your guest, giving clear guidelines on the dos and don'ts in your house, and asking them what their needs are.
- ◇ Keep the possible language barrier in mind. Use simple language. This is not the same as 'dumbing down', it is just using words that everyone will understand. Speak clearly and slowly. Be prepared to repeat phrases. Don't speak more loudly to compensate! Google translate is a helpful tool to clarify words and meanings.
- ◇ Don't be reluctant to contact the allocated interpreter or volunteer if any communication breakdown occurs.

