

**NACCOM Hosting Workshop**  
**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

- **General intros and welcomes.....**
- **Would you like to tell us how Host Nottingham began, and how you became involved in it?**

We were aware of the great need for accommodation. Lots of informal hosting going on in Nottingham, but after one guest took his life while with a host, it became apparent that there needed to be an organisation that would provide training, expertise and experience and support for hosts and a 24/7 phone etc. An umbrella group was formed with organizations like Nottingham Refugee Forum, Red Cross, Refugee Action, Nottingham Arimathea Trust, Himmah (Muslim charity) and others.
- **How much did you know about asylum matters before this?**

[Did you start from the basis of hosting people yourself?]  
Had been involved with asylum seekers for some years, but rather on the fringe. Became a Trustee of Nottingham Arimathea Trust and helped to start the HOST Nottingham scheme.
- **Could you describe your role within the charity?**

I was the prime mover in the establishment of the scheme and am a member of the Steering Committee and Management Committee. We have a worker who works for 10 hours per week, but since the beginning of the year she has not been available, so I have been dealing with all the referrals and follow up etc.
- **What is your first point of contact with destitute asylum seekers?**

All those referred to the Host project come through the Nottingham Refugee Forum Destitute worker. The Forum is the main organisation in Nottingham to which asylum seekers and refugees come for advice, food, health issues, and housing etc. The Destitution worker knows all those who are in need and is able to prioritise them. We let her know when we have a host available and they then prioritise the most vulnerable person.
- **Could you take us through the process once you have made the decision to help a particular client?**

When a guest is referred NNRF have completed an application form. I would then meet with them and explain the scheme. We would then meet with the Host and guest and go through the Hosting Agreement with them. Each host makes their own decision about matters like whether they want to share some meals with their guests, whether they want the guest to have a key or be out of the house when they are, whether they can ever join the host to watch TV on occasions etc. After the agreements have been signed the guest may move in straight away or the next day, depending on the host and the urgency for the guest. We will then return to review everything after one week. We would see the host and guest separately and then sometimes together, depending on the situation. We have on one occasion only had to ask the guest to leave after a week as it was clear that there were issues which had come to light of which we had not been aware and which were causing distress to the host.

- ***And how do you decide who you will ask to take someone into their house?***  
 If someone expresses an interest in Host, we would talk to them on the phone and then email or send them the Handbook and other information – this includes an application form. After a week or so we would contact them again and if they are still interested, would suggest that they meet with and talk to a present host, to give them the opportunity to talk through issues which they may have or queries that they wish to raise. We would also say that if they are happy at that stage, we would ask them to complete an application form and return it to us. This can be done by email or hard copy. Provided that all is well, we would then visit the prospective host and talk through how and when they might start. We realise that to be a host is a very big ask, as many people do not have many people into their homes, never mind someone they do not know, from another country and culture and language and who has been through things that they can hardly imagine.
- ***How has that 'host' come on board in the first place?***  
 We give talks, advertise in information places, churches, libraries etc. I have done interviews on the Radio and we have had interviews with hosts and guests. Word of mouth and any contact we can get!
- ***How much support do you reckon to give the hosts?***  
 I talk to them on the phone, text and email fairly regularly. After the initial review if there are any issues, I would follow up with a further visit fairly soon. Some hosts need more support than others, but we have not had any who have had major issues. We make it clear to the hosts that they are not responsible for the guest's legal, medical or other issues – these are dealt with by the Forum. However, some have offered to accompany their guest to the doctor or hospital and also to the solicitor. This has been welcomed as it helps the guest, but also enables the host to get further insight into the issues which many of our guests face.
- ***Once the client is safely settled into the house, what is your involvement after that?***  
 We keep in touch with them both by text and through the Refugee Forum. They are usually in touch with the Destitution worker anyway, so if there are any issues we are made aware.
- ***Has this role changed much since you first became involved?***  
 Yes in some ways. There have been very busy and sometimes very stressful times, but most of the time it is steady. I have to say that since I have taken over the main responsibility of the day to day running of the scheme, I have been working part (and sometimes a large part!) of every day.
- ***What about the hosts? What is your experience of their 'journey' in this situation? ...and what about you, yourself?***  
 It has been a real learning curve for most of the hosts, who did not know a great deal about asylum seekers before they started hosting. For some it has been so life changing that they are now become increasingly involved in asylum issues. Most would say that they have been greatly enriched by the experience. For me, it continues to be a great learning experience, from which I have been greatly enriched and continue to learn a great deal.