

Offer Practical Help

Last Updated Friday, 13 August 2010

One of the best ways in which you can offer practical support to destitute asylum seekers and refugees is by assisting Positive Action in Housing as an accommodation volunteer. This is when you would help us by offering accommodation in your home for a short period of time, to one of our clients who has nowhere else to stay. Click ["read more"](#) to see a selection of Frequently Asked Questions on this subject, and more information on why accommodation volunteers are such a crucial part of our humanitarian work.

In March 2007, the House of Parliament Joint Committee on Human Rights published the findings of an investigation into the treatment of asylum seekers by the UK Government. It concluded that ["We have been persuaded by the evidence that the Government has indeed been practising a deliberate policy of destitution of this highly vulnerable group. We believe that the deliberate use of inhumane treatment is unacceptable."](#)

Many asylum seekers are having their claims unfairly refused and being made destitute in an effort to force them out of the UK. They are not entitled to any kind of support or accommodation, and our destitution service is unique in providing them with their basic human rights. To read more about destitution and what we are doing to combat it, visit our [destitution service page](#).

One of the most common ways in which we assist destitute refugees is to provide them with a place to stay for a short period of time (generally around a week) with one of our database of accommodation volunteers. We are always in need of more volunteers to help us in this worthwhile and rewarding way. If you think you may be interested in becoming an accommodation volunteer, please read these [Frequently Asked Questions](#):

How Long Will the Person Stay?

In most cases, our clients need emergency accommodation while waiting for Section 4 accommodation. The length of time this will take is not in our control, although it often takes a few weeks. We would ask for your help for a set period of 1 or 2 weeks after which we would still be responsible for finding somewhere else for the client to stay. We would always adapt to your availability and wishes. We would always inform the client about how long s/he can stay with you and that you do it on a voluntary basis. If the client must wait longer than expected for Section 4 accommodation we would ask you if s/he could stay with you for an additional week. If this isn't what you want or isn't possible we would find alternative accommodation.

What Support Will the Person Need?

We would be providing the client a small amount of money for daily expenses. We ask the client not to ask to borrow money from you, and if they have any problems, to speak to us. We would recommend that, if asked, you don't lend any money. What we do ask is that you share food if you wish to. We would like you to tell us if you think that the client needs additional financial support.

What If We Don't Get On?

We understand the commitment you are taking and we are available to arrange alternative accommodation if there are any problems whatsoever. The vast majority of clients are scared and tired and just want somewhere to sleep and eat. They are often very embarrassed because they need this kind of help from strangers. We have very rarely experienced any problems but are at hand to help if one arises.

What If We Don't Speak the Same Language?

Most of our clients speak good English. However some may have recently arrived in the UK and have little English. In this circumstance we would aim to come to your house and introduce you to our client with an interpreter. However, this is not always possible due to the fact that this is an emergency service and we have very short notice of a client being made destitute. We also receive no funding to pay interpreters and often rely on good will. We would at very least provide you with the phone number of an interpreter in case of emergency or any problem.

Can I Choose Who I Host?

We do our utmost to match the needs of both the client and volunteers. For example, most female clients do not want to stay with single men and we know that many female volunteers prefer to host women. We will always respect these wishes. We try to accommodate other needs as appropriate. Ultimately, it is always up to you who you decide to welcome as a guest.

What Can I Expect from Positive Action in Housing?

Positive Action in Housing appeals for accommodation for destitute clients in good faith. We realise that accepting someone into your home is not without risk. To minimise this risk we disclose all information we possess about the client to volunteers. We are available to help resolve any concerns. In three years we have only had one occasion where a volunteer and client did not get on, the client left and we found him other accommodation. We have very rarely had any difficulties with clients staying with volunteers in this way but cannot take responsibility for any problems that may arise.

What Happens Next?

We would be delighted to welcome you onto our database of volunteers. If you have any further concerns or queries, or have already decided you would like to become an accommodation volunteer, please contact a member of staff on 0141 353 2220 or email destitution@paih.org. If you wish you would be welcome to come into our office to register in person or discuss any issues further.

We rarely have prior warning that someone will be made destitute and need emergency accommodation. If we see someone in this situation we would go through our database, taking into account the needs of our client and preferences of the volunteers and phone you. We realise people often need time to speak to their family/housemates. In this case, we would pay for one or two nights' accommodation in a hostel from our hardship fund.

You are never under obligation to welcome a client and we understand that due to personal circumstances you may decide not to host anyone for a certain period of time or on any occasion. We very much understand that it is for us to fit around your needs and schedule.

If you do agree to host our client we will bring them to your home at a time agreed by you. We will provide you with contact information for a named member of our team who has responsibility for the client. We will give you information about any language and cultural needs and will help you in orienteering the client round your home and the surrounding area.