

Hosting women who have experienced trauma:

What is involved?

What are the benefits and challenges?

Geraldine Cooney and Fran Girling

April 2020



National Development Team for Inclusion

First Floor
30-32 Westgate Buildings
Bath BA1 1EF
T: 01225 789135
F: 01225 338017

© 2020 National Development for Inclusion
www.ndti.org.uk

Acknowledgements

NDTi and Shared Lives Plus would like to thank the host organisations and hosts who shared their experiences with us as part of this research. Organisations who participated are: Hope At Home, Boaz Trust, Swindon City of Sanctuary, HOST Nottingham, Housing Justice, Room for All, Leeds Asylum Seeker Network and Sanctuary Hosting. We would also like to extend our thanks to Hestia, whose support workers conducted a survey on our behalf, and the women supported by Hestia who took the time to answer our survey questions.



Contents

Section 1: Background.....	4
What we did and who we spoke to	5
Section 2: Why hosting?.....	6
What do women want?	7
Why host?	9
Section 3: Hosting arrangements	11
Moving on	12
Section 4: Impact of hosting.....	14
Benefits of hosting for women who have experienced trauma.....	14
Challenges of hosting women who have experienced trauma	17
Section 5: Reflections	20
Issues to consider for a new hosting service	20
Appendix 1. Overview of organisations consulted	22
Appendix 2. Overview of the hosting experience.....	23



Section 1: Background

Shared Lives Plus are a national charity and the UK membership for the Shared Lives and Homeshare sectors. In partnership with Crisis UK and Hestia, Shared Lives Plus are developing a new model of hosting to support women who have escaped modern-day slavery and are at risk of homelessness.¹ Hosting arrangements involve ‘guests’ being offered a room in the home of a ‘host’ for a limited period of time.

To conclude the consultation and design phase of this project, Shared Lives Plus have partnered with the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) to research the impact of hosting women who have experienced trauma, in a family home.

For the purposes of this research, ‘trauma’ is defined as experience of:

- physical, psychological or sexual abuse
- terrorism and war
- domestic violence or witnessing violence against others
- accidents and natural disasters
- modern slavery including trafficking, domestic servitude, sexual or other exploitation, forced labour or debt bondage
- homelessness.

The aim of this research is to look at the potential benefits of a hosting arrangement for this group of women, compared to common alternatives used, or the absence of provision. To do this, we sought to answer the following questions:

- What is hosting and how is it being used for women who have experienced trauma, including women who have escaped modern slavery? What is the nature of these hosting arrangements?
- What is the experience of vulnerable women in hosting arrangements? What is the experience of hosts?
- What about these hosting arrangements is working well, and what challenges are there? What is the impact on vulnerable women being hosted?

This research report draws on data from host organisations, hosts and women themselves. It provides insights into hosting as a potential model of accommodation for women who have experienced trauma and information on hosting for the professionals who support them.

¹ Crisis UK is a national charity supporting homeless people, offering education, employment, housing and wellbeing services. Hestia supports adults in crisis and is one of the largest providers of domestic abuse refuges in London and the South East. It is also the main organisation supporting victims of modern slavery in the capital.

What we did and who we spoke to

To answer the research questions, we gathered data from the following sources:



Telephone interviews with 7 host organisations currently supporting female survivors of trauma in home-based environments (contacted via the national No Accommodation Network (NACCOM)). See Appendix 1 for details of these host organisations.



Telephone interviews with 5 hosts, to learn about their experiences of hosting vulnerable women (identified via host organisations above).



Survey completed by 13 female survivors of modern slavery living in temporary accommodation, conducted by Hestia Support workers.



Case studies of vulnerable women who have been hosted, plus feedback and monitoring data from host organisations giving women's experiences. All names in case studies have been changed for anonymity.

Interviews were not conducted directly with women who have experienced hosting, due to resource and ethical constraints. However, we took care to ensure the voices of women were captured and reflected in this report by utilising survey data (conducted by Hestia support workers) and feedback from 'guests' who had been hosted, collected by host organisations.



Section 2: Why hosting?



Most of the host organisations we spoke with exist to support asylum seekers, refugees and migrants at risk of destitution. Some offered specific services for vulnerable women including those who had experienced domestic abuse, rape, exploitation or homelessness. Some of these organisations provide additional services beyond hosting, such as shared houses, night shelters, community cafes as well as support services and legal and advocacy activities. Three of the organisations established their hosting scheme in 2015, partly as a reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis and its portrayal in the media. One organisation was set up specifically for victims of modern slavery.

Host organisations we spoke to outlined the housing issues facing refugees and asylum seekers, including people who have been exploited or trafficked and victims of modern slavery or domestic abuse. We were told how the ‘hostile environment’ creates a situation where vulnerable people have no recourse to public funds and limited, or no, accommodation options; including being denied access to housing shelters or women’s refuges.

People who are seeking asylum may be housed in temporary Home Office accommodation, and those who have experienced modern slavery or trafficking may be offered a period of time in a safe house for assessment – under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). However, after assessment they have to move on without any accommodation or funds. Even those granted settled status often find themselves destitute or homeless; when a claim is successful people must leave their Home Office accommodation and there are often long delays in processing applications for benefits and for council housing.

Hosting schemes aim to quickly provide a place of safety, often plugging a critical gap for asylum seekers in the period after they have received right to remain, or in the period after an application or appeal against refusal of an asylum claim is lodged. They told us that for many of the vulnerable people they support, especially those with no recourse to public funds, there are no alternative accommodation options and if was not for a host, their guests would be at risk of homelessness or worse.

There are so few safe options... at least 3 of our guests would very possibly be dead now if it wasn't for hosting

Host organisations said that hosting can be a good option for women who have experienced trauma, with hosts providing a temporary place of safety and calm, where a woman can start to think about the future. They all agreed that support services are essential, independent of the host. Some organisations said that medium to long term placements would offer some stability to women who have had to move around frequently. They cautioned that some women would need a specialised therapeutic environment such as a safe house or refuge, and that those in a severe trauma or at risk of re-trafficking may not be suitable for hosting.

Why host?



Volunteer hosts provide a welcoming and relaxed home environment, with a private bedroom, and share their living facilities with a guest or guests, free of charge, for a defined period. Their remit is accommodation-only and non-professional, informal support. Additional support is provided for guests by the host organisation and/or the referring organisation. Hosts receive training and induction before hosting and ongoing support for the duration of the guests stay.

Hosts told us about their motivations for hosting. Several were retired, or approaching retirement, with a spare room and a desire to do something to help. Others were working, but had space in their house, and said hosting could fit around their lifestyle. Some were church goers, whose faith motivated them to help, others simply felt hosting was a positive way to give something back.

Hosts spoke of the benefits of hosting to them – learning about new cultures and people from different backgrounds, as well as the privilege of being able to help a vulnerable person to move on to a more positive place, mentally and physically.

One of the pleasures of hosting is to see them blossom.

When I started, I didn't really know what I was letting myself in for, but I've benefitted a lot from it... it's good to know you are helping people, you've done something.

All the hosts we interviewed said that hosting was a two-way experience and that through having these shared experiences and learning new skills they got more out of it than they put in.

Organisations told us that most hosts were professionals, including health care workers, teachers and social workers. They included single people and couples, those with grown up children and retired people. Hosts had varied home set ups and offered guests different levels of input. Some were working full time and were matched with guests who were independent; others with time available chose to be more involved, for example, taking guests to appointments, shopping trips, community and social events. One organisation reported that one of their most successful hosting arrangements was with a household of younger professionals; this acted more like a befriending scheme for guests of a similar age.

Hosts we spoke to said they received ongoing support from the host organisation, including training on their role, the political context for asylum seekers, debriefing, group peer support and information/contacts for specialist services. Guests received ongoing support and casework throughout their stay.

For any hosting scheme...it is essential that support is in place for both hosts and guest including peer support, psychological support and legal/immigration advice.

The support was really good. We had regular phone conversations with [the host organisation] and online sessions with a psychotherapist who worked with us and two other hosts to talk things through.

Hosts we spoke to who had hosted women with trauma, agreed that these guests may need more input, time and energy than usual. Hosts understood their remit was informal support but acknowledged there was sometimes a temptation to become too involved. There was agreement that training,

ongoing input and specialist support from the host organisation and/or the referring agency was crucial for guests and hosts alike and that this input helped in keeping boundaries clear.

Hosts agreed with host organisations who said that vulnerable women benefitted most from hosts who were able to work closely in partnership with the organisations and support workers who supported them.

It is ideal when people who need support are placed with retirees who have more time to give.



Section 3: Hosting arrangements



We were told that the concept of hosting was often difficult to explain. Host organisations take pains to make sure that guests have a clear understanding of what hosting involves, and what is, and is not, required of them. Voluntary contracts for the guest and host help to clarify the arrangement and ensure it is understood. One organisation emphasised the need to constantly explain, reassure and prove to guests the legitimacy of the hosting scheme, particularly for women who have been exploited in the past by seemingly ‘nice’ people.

Hosting is a weird concept for a lot of people...especially with a history of domestic servitude, or any exploitation the thought of going to stay in a stranger's home for free is difficult...

Host organisations said they work closely with local referral agencies such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, refugee and asylum seeker charities and social services. They said it was important to ensure a full risk assessment to ensure an individual is suitable for hosting. Hosting organisations agreed that people with a violent or criminal history, or with severe mental health issues are not appropriate for hosting. One organisation offering an emergency hosting service for homeless women said that in their experience referrers such as GPs or the police may not have all the relevant background on vulnerable people that is needed for a full risk assessment.

All hosting organisations have a recruitment process for volunteer hosts, involving an application form, references, home visit, DBS checks, discussion of hosting role, and ongoing training. Hosts stipulate the type of guest they are willing to host and the length of time. The host is given information about potential guests and can also decline or agree to an initial meeting. The host's profile and house rules are provided to the guest in advance. Organisations said that choice and careful matching is important to ensure a positive experience for both the host and guest; it also means hosts are more likely to take on guests in the future. We were told that (especially in an emergency) organisations and hosts do not always get full background information at referral and this can lead to problems.

If a guest is interested after seeing the host profile and house rules, they are given the opportunity to meet the host, usually by visiting their home for a chat. Organisations stressed the importance of ensuring the guest has a choice, even in an emergency arrangement.

It is crucial that the guest gets to choose the host as all other choices have been taken away from them.

Interpreters often play a vital role in helping identify issues that are important to individual guests. Factors such as the gender of hosts, presence of children or pets and the busy-ness of the household can all be relevant.

Hosts can have quite busy households, lots of people in and out...this can be difficult for people in trauma, but great for those wanting to meet new people.

Organisations spoke of the importance of the host having clear boundaries; understanding that their role is informal and does not involve casework or therapeutic support. Organisations and hosts agreed that ongoing support for guests, independent of the hosting arrangement is especially important for guests who have an active asylum claim or appeal, those who are vulnerable and/or those who have mental health issues. Some host organisations provided this themselves, others relied on the referring agency for continued support.

Several organisations spoke about the difficulty in recruiting hosts and said they can struggle to meet demand from referral agencies. They emphasised the importance of having a pool of hosts to call on so that individual hosts are not over-committed and can take regular breaks. Organisations said it is important to attract and retain hosts and to ensure hosts do not feel under pressure to take guests when they are not ready. Some said they try to 'put hosts off' by pointing out the potential demands of hosting, aiming to ensure hosts think carefully before taking it on.

Some organisations encourage existing hosts to talk to prospective hosts and offer regular peer to peer support for hosts to get together. Some also offer ongoing support for the guest and host via informal meetings with a volunteer support worker or befriender.

It's not about having lots of hosts but about being able to provide the right support for those you do have.

Moving on

Planned hosting arrangements can last from a few weeks to a few years, though all host organisations reported that they aimed to provide short to medium-term accommodation for vulnerable individuals, and one offered a year-long commitment. Some hosts offered several short-term placements, punctuated by breaks, others took guests for longer periods.

Host organisations told us that ensuring a positive move-on from a hosting arrangement is vital and must be planned for from the outset. But organisations and hosts agreed moving on can be difficult for many reasons, primarily due to the lack of suitable housing available, especially for vulnerable people with no funds. Some hosts feel guilty when they cannot continue the arrangement, especially if the guest has nowhere to go. In addition, hosts often live in large houses in affluent areas and the guest's move on option (if they have one) may seem unattractive in comparison.

It was really difficult, felt really messy, they felt bad, everybody felt bad [when host couldn't extend].

Organisations we spoke to host a variety of people at different points in their journey through the system; they said that move-on arrangements are easier to set up for some than others.

Some guests successfully have their cases lodged in the asylum process and/or are granted Home Office accommodation. Fewer receive their right to remain and might move on into Local Authority housing, or the private rental sector. Some organisations host people who have no move on housing options at all. In this situation, some guests are moved from one host to another until alternative accommodation is found. Some organisations said they run out of options and see people going back to sofa-surfing and street homelessness.

It's the worst bit of our job...when women have to go back to sofa surfing.

A summary overview of a typical guest and host experience is provided in Appendix 2.



Abigail's story

Abigail was a survivor of sexual violence and had been living in a Red Cross domestic violence shelter in Milton Keynes. Abigail is from the Ivory Coast and was in the UK on a tourist visa. Given the serious protection concerns in her home country, she had been advised to apply for asylum though was anxious about making this claim. Abigail was very unhappy living in the shelter, and the Red Cross referred her to Sanctuary Hosting who found her eligible for the hosting scheme.

Abigail agreed to the scheme and was helped by the Red Cross to relocate to Oxford (there were no hosts in Milton Keynes), where she moved in with a couple. Over the month she stayed with them, her emotional health improved significantly. Abigail's Sanctuary Hosting support worker referred her for counselling, met her regularly and helped to link her to social activities in the city. She was also referred to a caseworker within the local British Red Cross team who supported her in processing her asylum claim. She was provided with clothing vouchers and monthly financial support from a charitable Foundation which helped her to feel more settled in the new city.

Ten months on, Abigail remains in the hosting scheme. She claimed asylum and is also going through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for trafficked persons. Her second hosting placement has been successful and while her emotional health fluctuates, she manages overall and is much happier being hosted than in her previous accommodation.



Noor's story

Noor was referred to Hope at Home from a local charity in Sheffield which supports victims of human trafficking. Noor is a survivor of domestic slavery and was being supported by the charity to move on from her past, though while she was on the waiting list for council accommodation, she had nowhere to live.

Noor was matched with a Hope at Home host and agreed to the hosting arrangement. To begin with she was very shy and kept trying to please the hosts by doing jobs around the house. However, after a few weeks, Noor began to realise that she was accepted as she was. She started to settle into the family life; she cooked Bangladeshi food to enjoy with her hosts, started to help on their allotment and her hosts took her out for day trips to local sites which she greatly enjoyed. During the hosting scheme she was able to apply for jobs and had several interviews.

After three months, Noor was allocated council housing and moved in to begin her independent life.



Section 4: Impact of hosting

Host organisations told us that knowing some British people were ‘on their side’ and willing to welcome them into their home, has a powerful impact on vulnerable people, especially those newly arrived in this country and/or those who have experienced trauma or exploitation. Many ‘guests’ may never have been in a British home before and hosting offered valuable opportunities for integration, learning English and navigating unfamiliar systems.

Hosts said it was not always easy, but that hosting involved give and take on both sides. Common challenges of hosting include the inconveniences and misunderstandings that come with sharing a home, hosts becoming over-involved or overstepping the boundaries of their role, or the discomfort of uncommunicative guests who seem unhappy or disengaged.

Common benefits of hosting included bonding over cooking, sharing food and other cultural exchanges, interacting with different people and seeing guests make progress towards their goals. Many hosts and guests formed lasting friendships which led to an informal support network for the guest beyond the duration of the hosting arrangement, including voluntary work and employment facilitated by the host.

We have enjoyed it – not quite the right word – but you feel as if you are doing something. Like most of these things, you end up getting more from it than you give.

We asked host organisations, hosts and women themselves about the specific benefits and challenges of hosting women who have experienced trauma. Although each host and guest had different issues and needs, common themes emerged about the impact of hosting vulnerable women (see Figure 3 and Figure 4 below).

Benefits of hosting for women who have experienced trauma

- **A place of safety**

We were told that living in a ‘normal’ home, rather than a shared house or insecure housing with other vulnerable people, has many benefits for women who have experienced trauma. The safety and freedom of having your own room and a front door key, especially after exploitation or homelessness is important.

Being able to come and go when you please, having somewhere safe to be and to keep your stuff safe, not always looking over your shoulder...has a big impact.

Once she was in a safe place, she had no problems sleeping ... she was quite an angry person, but we never saw that... being in a calmer environment and not being threatened... she changed.

Hosting arrangements could be carefully tailored to the needs of individual women, for example a female only setting if preferred. Feeling safe and cared for in a family home had a powerful effect on vulnerable women.

- **Care and support**

We were told that being in a caring and supportive environment gives women who have experienced trauma the breathing space and ability to think about what they want to do next, rather than constantly being in 'fight or flight mode'.

If you are always anxious, on high alert, you don't feel safe, you can't process trauma or experience normal life.

Processing trauma can also begin in a place of safety. Several women talked about the impact of being hosted on their recovery. We were told that women who are hosted can start to concentrate on dealing with practical issues in their life such as legal problems and accessing health services.

I have experienced breakthrough in this house.

All they [guests] need is some kindness, the sort of kindness that can be found within a family home

Hosts were aware of guests' vulnerability and recognised the importance of simply offering a normal home life and showing that they cared. They acknowledged the limits of their role and the importance of specialist support services for guests.

- **Acceptance and self-worth**

Hosts said that their remit was not to ask questions, but to accept and respect their guests, as they would a family member. They said they were trained not to pry, and guests said they valued the lack of demands and pressure hosts put on them, in contrast to questioning by professionals.

I'm grateful for being accepted and not made to talk about my past.

Some women are traumatised... you can't make their nightmares go away... all you can do is give them a hug and a cup of coffee.

Hosts we spoke to understood the importance of simply being there for guests and accepting them as people.

This acceptance by hosts meant a lot to guests, especially as some were ashamed or embarrassed about what had happened to them or did not wish to re-live their trauma.

If you feel loved and are trusted to be in someone's house, it must make you feel better about yourself.

- **Relationships and trust**

Organisations said once hosting was understood by guests, the idea that it is free and that they do not need to give anything back in return had a big impact, especially for those who have been exploited.

I think women who have experienced modern slavery like me do not trust easily and they need time.

There were clear benefits to women who had experienced trauma of being exposed to non-exploitative relationships and interactions. Living in a home environment can help women start to feel more 'normal' again, helping them rebuild trust and meaningful relationships.

One [guest] said she'd never been able to sit in a room with a man before, but she felt safe with David.

Several guests said they felt like part of the family. This was important for those that had left family behind, who were missing family, or for exploited women who had been ostracised through no fault of their own.

I think this house is what it must be like to be in a family.

Relationships often continued after hosting ended and led to benefits for guests integrating into work, education and the community.



Sara's story

Sara is a survivor of human trafficking and was referred to Hope at Home by a local organisation housing Sara in their safehouse. As a European National, Sara was able to work in the UK but not able to claim housing benefit. Sara agreed to a hosting arrangement and moved in with a host while she looked for work.

Sara settled in well and saw lots of improvements. Sara had been sleeping very badly, and to begin with had decided to look for a job that offered night shifts. However, after a few weeks out of the safe house and with her hosts, Sarah began to sleep well, so much so she decided to look for a daytime job instead. Sara loved the host's dog and would often help with dog walks and enjoy meals with the family making them all laugh with her dry sense of humour. Throughout the placement, she received support by an outreach worker from the referral agency. During her placement Sarah received compensation, and her hosts helped her to open a bank account.

After six months, Sara was able to support herself financially and she found a flat of her own to move into.

Figure 3 Host and host organisation staff on the benefits of hosting schemes for vulnerable women



Figure 4 Female guest feedback on their experience of being hosted



Challenges of hosting women who have experienced trauma

Hosts and organisations stressed the need for hosting schemes to be clear on the host’s role, to manage expectations and to provide support to both the host and guest during the arrangement and when it ends. They said it can take time for guests and hosts to settle into a hosting arrangement and that small misunderstandings were common. We were told that moving on from a hosting arrangement was often an issue. Move-on accommodation was limited and often of a poor standard; guests were sometimes reluctant to leave, and hosts felt conflicted, perhaps feeling pressured to give more than they intended.

Host organisations and hosts reported additional, specific challenges when hosting women who had experienced trauma:

- **Limited resources**

Organisations and hosts agreed that women who have experienced trauma often need more support than other guests. Hosts also needed ongoing support and training, making this work resource intensive for small organisations. Most organisations we spoke to said they provided a hosting service only, with support and case work provided by the referral agency. Those with more resources were able to offer a hosting service and casework support for guests.

The needs of these women are slightly different especially if they have recently escaped from modern-day slavery and they have mental and emotional health needs...

Small and poorly resourced organisations said they did not always have the resources or expertise to properly support a hosting scheme for vulnerable women. We were told that some people who have experienced modern slavery or other exploitation may have low awareness of being exploited and /or they can be vulnerable to being re-trafficked. This led to one small hosting charity to actively avoid hosting victims of modern slavery, after a Vietnamese guest disappeared, presumably re-trafficked.

We can't take on more vulnerable people [such as victims of modern slavery] without offering both host and guest more support and expertise that we don't have

- **Mental health of women**

Many women survivors of trauma struggled with depression and mental health issues. Hosts spoke of guests who had traumatic flashbacks and who experienced suicidal thoughts. Several female guests were reported to be on antidepressant medication and were unpredictable in terms of mood.

Hosts and host organisations reported that in their experience, women only start processing their trauma after a few weeks of being in the hosting arrangement; because the guest feels safe, their adrenaline falls away.

Everything they've been suppressing in survival mode comes to the surface

This can appear like a relapse. Hosts told us they were led by the person, conscious that some women wanted more interaction and support than others, or that they took one step forward and two back.

Host organisations and hosts acknowledged the importance of good support for hosts and ongoing specialist support for women after trauma. One hosting organisation said that ideally women processing trauma should be given specialist accommodation, with professional support available, such as is available via a safe house for women who are fleeing domestic violence.

- **Emotional strain for hosts**

The emotional strain of hosting women who have experienced trauma was identified as a key challenge. Hosts said these guests can be more emotionally draining than others; they reported sadness and some frustration at not being able to make it better. Hosts can become over-involved and boundaries may become blurred, leading to burn out. The founder of one small charity explained that he and his wife created the charity to support hosts after they supported somebody on their own.

There is a cost of hosting...we experienced secondary vicarious trauma, but that was when we were doing it [hosting] without support.

To counteract strain and burn out for hosts, host organisations have ongoing training to clarify the host's remit of the host and boundaries. Some offer pro bono counselling services to their volunteers and/or group therapeutic support where hosts are encouraged to support each other and share experiences.

Hosts had their own strategies; some said that they needed regular breaks, without hosting, to enable them to re-charge. Others took people for short term stays, or only accepted certain types of guests. One charity said that although hosts often preferred women guests, they could be more demanding emotionally than male guests.

We advise hosts to do it when they want to, when they feel able emotionally, that takes the pressure off.

It was acknowledged that some hosts could find it difficult to host women with higher needs. However, the experienced hosts we spoke to said they felt well equipped and supported by the host organisation.

- **Power issues**

Some organisations spoke of the natural power imbalance in the host-guest relationship which can manifest in different ways. We were told that hosts are trained to be aware that their guest's sense of gratitude means they might not feel able to say what they really want.

Hosts are told to avoid prying into the lives and past trauma of their guests, and that guests should not feel they have to share their story. A hosting organisation spoke of the need to redress the power imbalance where possible, for example, through establishing with the guest how they would like to present themselves to the community. One organisation spoke of the importance of inbuilt safeguards in the hosting scheme to avoid certain patterns of expectation taking hold, for example the guest feeling obliged to provide regular childcare or carry out household tasks beyond what is reasonable in a shared living situation.

Often guests are so appreciative of everything... it's about making sure everyone understands their power as a host and the guest might not feel equal.



Section 5: Reflections

Host organisations, hosts and women who participated in this research agreed that hosting can be a positive alternative to existing limited housing options for women who have experienced trauma. We were provided with many examples of women who found the comfort and security of a host's home a lifeline. Some thought that younger women, and those without children, may benefit most from hosting, but success was often down to individual factors such as the personalities and the 'fit' or match of guest and host/s.

The main issue for vulnerable women identified in this research was unsuitable and poor-quality temporary accommodation that resulted in them feeling unsafe, isolated and unable to move on with their life. While hosting schemes provide much needed respite, they do not meet the underlying need for permanent accommodation and are clearly not designed to do this. While some organisations offer emergency short-term hosting, most offer medium to long term arrangements designed to provide women with much needed stability while they are waiting for more permanent accommodation. For some vulnerable guests the lack of permanency inherent in hosting could mean they remain on edge, knowing that without any legal protections, their accommodation rests on the good will of their host. For others, hosting works well, allowing them valuable breathing space and time to focus on their next step.

Women understandably have different issues relating to their trauma and will need different levels of support and input tailored to their needs. Although some organisations felt it was unfair to expect hosts to accommodate women with trauma and high needs, the experienced hosts we spoke to said that, with support, they felt more than able to host these guests. All hosts emphasised the excellent support they and their guest received from the hosting organisation and other agencies; this is clearly a critical factor in the success of hosting schemes. Although some individuals are not suitable for hosting, this research indicates a range of women can benefit from what is offered by a skilled and supported host, backed up by tailored input from both host organisation and specialist support services.

Issues to consider for a new hosting service



For women

There are many benefits of a hosting scheme for women who have experienced trauma, not least security and safety, care and support offered by friendships with people outside of professional support roles, and a way into a new life. Importantly, for some women – particularly those who are outside the NRM or an official asylum process – hosting could be one of the very few accommodation options available to them. Hosting can be a difficult concept for women who have been exploited. Care must be taken to ensure that vulnerable women understand what hosting is and is not, and have choice in any arrangement made, including when it ends. It is also clear that for some women hosting would not be

appropriate, either due to their lifestyle, mental health or need for more specialist support services.



For hosts

Quality training and ongoing support is critical to ensure hosts are supported and retained. Ensuring hosts are not put under pressure to host, take adequate time-off and are clear about their remit and role is essential. Organisations said there is a tendency for some hosts to take on too much of the emotional burden, going above and beyond their role, and had put measures in place to avoid this and thus prevent burnout. In most cases, organisations flagged host recruitment as an ongoing challenge.

Hosts benefited from peer support, on-going training and debriefing after each hosting arrangement. Organisations and hosts also spoke of the benefits of the guest being supported by a volunteer befriender. Hosts and host organisations were clear that the hosting arrangements work because the guest receives ongoing support with their legal and emotional issues from the referral agency, or the hosting organisation, something the host is not involved with. Hosts agreed they are best able to support guests by working in partnership with relevant services and when they can call on them quickly and easily as needed.



For host organisations

Organisations we spoke to varied in terms of their resources – some offered hosting only, others provided hosting with support. Organisations said that getting full and accurate information about prospective guests at referral stage is important for getting the right support in place for host and guests. Hosting schemes aim for clarity and transparency on the hosting process, making it clear from the outset the nature and expectations of a hosting arrangement, including when it will end. Careful handling of the guests move-on is a vital part of any hosting scheme. Depending on their client group, some organisations and guests were more likely to have access to move on options than others.

Most host organisations take referrals from agencies that provide parallel support to the guest, and this was highlighted as an important factor in the success of the hosting schemes. Organisations were clear that hosts are not able, and should not be expected, to provide specialist support, so ensuring this support structure is built around the guests is important. Smaller organisations did not always have the resources to support women with high needs and the hosts supporting them. While there is no official regulation of hosting schemes in the UK, some organisations referred to the Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards as a useful resource to benchmark and guide support they offer.² These care standards are aimed at all professionals who work with possible victims, victims or survivors of trafficking and modern slavery.

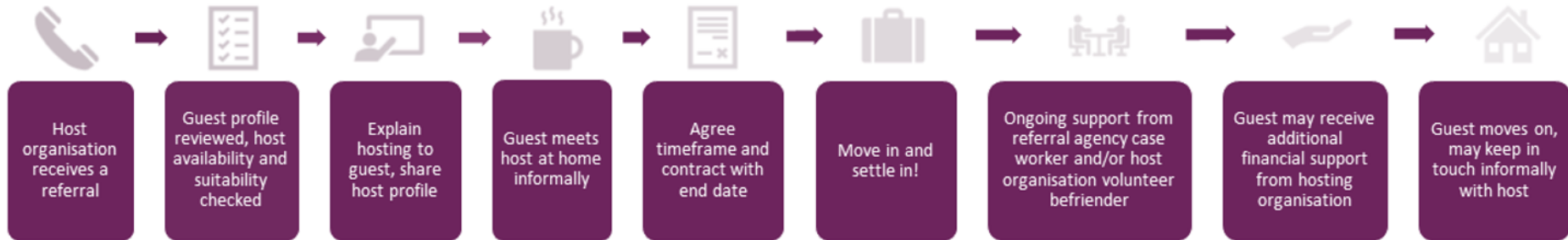
² [The Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards](#), Human Trafficking Foundation (2018)

Appendix 1. Overview of organisations consulted

Organisation name	Hosting offer	Guests supported, including women	Support provided through hosting	Length of hosting support	Typical move-ons
Hope at Home	Hosting scheme	Male and female victims of modern-day slavery and trafficking.	Receive support from other agency case workers.	Average 12 weeks.	Majority move into council or private rental accommodation or into Home Office accommodation
Boaz Trust	Emergency 'street homeless' hosting and planned hosting.	Support adult male and female refugees and asylum seekers. Emergency hosting for women only.	All guests are assigned a support worker.	Planned hosting for up to one year.	Boaz shared house, Home office accommodation. Sometimes back to sofa surfing.
HOST Nottingham	Temporary emergency hosting.	Support adult male and female destitute asylum seekers and refugees with leave to remain. Avoid hosting people who have been trafficked due to dangers of re-trafficking	Receive support from referring agency case worker.	Three months.	Home Office accommodation
Sanctuary Hosting, Thames Valley	Hosting scheme	Support adult male and female homeless refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked people and vulnerable migrants as well as women who have been victims of domestic violence.	A volunteer support worker assigned to the guest and host and continued support from referring agency case worker.	Average of 73 days per placement.	Private rented sector, Home Office accommodation
Leeds Asylum Seeker Network	Emergency hosting and planned hosting	Support adult male and female asylum seekers, have supported some female guests who have experienced trafficking and domestic violence.	Receive support from referring agency case worker.	From 1-2 nights to a few weeks/months	Varies – some move into private rented sector or Home Office accommodation, others are street homeless
Housing Justice	Hosting scheme	Support adult male and female asylum seekers and forced migrants. Have had some women on the NRM.	Receive support from referring agency case worker.	Average of 18 months.	Private rented sector, hospice, etc.
Swindon City of Sanctuary – Room For all	Hosting scheme	Support adult male and female refugees and asylum seekers. Hosted two female guests who have experienced trafficking.	Guests receives support from a volunteer befriender and from referring agency case worker.	Maximum of five months.	Private rented sector, Home Office accommodation

Appendix 2. Overview of the hosting experience

Guest experience



Host experience

