



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

(April 1st 2015 – March 31st 2016)

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Management Committee

Jane Henson - Chair

Stuart Brown – Treasurer

Rita Cannon – Secretary

Maggie Jones

Jason McCormack

Project Coordinator (Part-time)

Gemma Pillay / Shingai Mushaybasa

Our AGM took place on Monday 16 January 2017

HOST Nottingham: A Brief History

HOST Nottingham was established in response to the growing number of destitute asylum seekers who needed to have some short term accommodation in the city and the need to provide a support network for informal hosts. In the last five years we have hosted in excess of 70 guests and have had the privilege of working with more than 30 hosts.

We achieve our aims by recruiting and supporting volunteer 'hosts' who have a spare room where destitute asylum seekers and others, or 'guests' as they are called, can stay for a period of time while they work with our partner agencies to develop a future plan of action. The scheme is flexible and works around the needs of the 'host' families who offer a room for a week, a month or in many some cases considerably longer.

Referrals come from the NNRF Anti-Destitution Worker with every potential 'guest' being assessed to ensure that both they and their 'hosts' are suitable (and compatible) regarding safety and physical and mental health issues.

These are all short-term placements and all the guests are supported by the Anti Destitution Worker at the Refugee Forum to ensure that their legal and other needs are being met. It is always hoped that there will be a place to which the guests can be referred, be that Section 4 or Section 95 or a place in one of the Nottingham Arimathea Trust properties.

All guests are eligible to attend the NNRF Anti-Destitution food and cash groups, which provide a food parcel and a hot meal every Saturday and £20 in cash for clients every 4 weeks. In addition, we aim to develop meaningful activities to stop days from becoming empty and endless, to bring some purpose and enjoyment into our clients' lives.

HOST Nottingham is also actively involved with awareness raising and campaigning for a just asylum system, working closely with all our partners to tackle homelessness among asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham.

Chair's Report

Over the last year we have welcomed a number of new hosts and also been able to help both destitute asylum seekers and some newly recognised refugees, with short term accommodation. However, the difficulties and hurdles which those seeking asylum and sanctuary in the UK have to go through are becoming more and more difficult.

Hosting: In the last year HOST provided accommodation in private homes for 10 guests who have stayed with 11 hosts for a total of 413 nights. By providing them with a roof over their heads the guests were able to work with our Project Coordinator, partner organisations and their solicitor to develop a future plan of action. Every guest who was living further than a 'walk away' from the city centre was also provided with three bus fares per week to enable them to attend appointments with their solicitors, doctors, ESOL Classes, NNRF's anti-destitution support services as well as social activities. Two of these guests have moved on to shared housing with the Arimathea Trust, two have moved to S95 housing and some are still with hosts waiting for some resolution to their case. Some of those who have refugee status have moved out of Nottingham.

Hosts: I have always found it a very moving experience to take a new guest to meet the hosts who are offering them a temporary home. Most times the guest is clearly very anxious and unsure what is happening, but a couple of days later when we are in touch it is clear that they are happy, secure and deeply appreciative of what is being offered to them. The difference that the welcome and trust shown by the host makes is quite amazing. A big thank-you to all our hosts who have demonstrated such compassion, generosity and trust and have made an extraordinary difference in the lives of their guests.

Host is largely concerned to support destitute asylum seekers who have fled to the UK from many countries and who have been waiting for a resolution to their case for many years. However, we have also been providing short term accommodation for some who have received refugee status, but who, through errors with the paperwork from the Home Office usually waiting for a National Insurance number or BRP card, are not able to access any benefits or housing and are again destitute. These situations are usually resolved in 4-6 weeks, but the accommodation which Host can provide is very important. I have to draw attention to the situation with which we have been preoccupied for the last week. We have been asked to host young men who have been brought from Calais over recent months, but for whom no statutory support has so far been provided – no accommodation, money, clothing, legal or other support. These are vulnerable young people under the age of 18, for whom Social Services surely have a duty of care. It seems to be the case that the Home Office have accepted these young people who have some relative in the UK and then 'dumped' them. When they have arrived in Nottingham they are expected to stay with their relative – most of whom are newly recognised refugees in one roomed accommodation in a shared house, where they cannot have anyone else to live with them. Some of these young refugees have been evicted from their homes because they have a young relative living with them, and then both are made homeless. The volunteer support workers are having to deal with everything to do with their cases without any statutory support, trying to find them temporary housing, provide them with clothing, bus fares, find solicitors and generally try and keep them safe and off the streets. Some of the young people have said that they would rather return to Calais where at least they were fed and had support around them. This truly shocking situation has been eased by some wonderful hosts taking them into their homes for a few days.

Clothes Bank: Last year we started a Clothes Bank which has expanded over the year and through the generosity of the Boots Company, we now have a purpose built facility where the clothes can be displayed well and clients can see easily what is available. It has been very much used and we estimate that between 300 – 400 clients have come and taken clothes over the last year. We have also been able to work with the team responsible for settling the new Syrian families who have been dispersed to Nottingham and also some of the young people from Calais who have been brought to re-unite with family members in Nottingham. We are deeply grateful to the volunteers who have made themselves available to help clients look for what they require. However, we do need more volunteers so that we can have the Clothes

Bank open on more days during the week. We would like to have two volunteers for a couple of hours for four more days of the week.

Project Co-ordinator: In September, Gemma Pillay, who had been our Project Coordinator for the past three years, was asked to work full time in her post as Anti Destitution Worker at the Nottingham Refugee Forum. We were very sorry to see her go, although she will remain on the Management Committee in her Anti Destitution role. However, we were delighted to appoint Shingai Mushayabasa to this part time role. Shingai brings with her experience of working with young asylum seekers and refugees in London and has a deep commitment to human rights. Her other part time post is with Friends of the Earth where she is a Campaign Coach with young people in Mansfield.

During this year we were chosen as one of the three charities to share the proceeds of the Mapperley Park Open Gardens, which is a bi-annual event. It was a real privilege to be part of this wonderful event and to receive such a generous donation. It has meant that we have been able to offer more bus fares where required and support our guests in other ways.

We have continued to see increasingly desperate people of all ages, but particularly young people, trying to find safety and hope after their treacherous journeys away from their countries. However, we also find the treatment of such vulnerable people by our Home Office to be far below the standards we would expect for such people. One of our main concerns in Host is the fact that we are not able to take more vulnerable destitute asylum seekers into host homes, because they do not have a solicitor or are not able to provide the evidence which is demanded of them. For those who have had to flee war, torture, rape and other unbearable situations, they were not able to bring with them all the evidence such as birth certificates, passports, certificates and other papers of identification which are demanded of them here. The reality is that unlike the treatment of UK citizens who face our justice courts, those seeking asylum are presumed to be lying and guilty unless they can prove otherwise which for many is not possible. I find the reluctance of the UK government to accept a fair share of those who have been fleeing Syria and those young people in Calais who have a right to come to the UK to be reunited with families, to be very shameful. We realise that we are increasingly needing to host people for more than three months because of their situations, but are aware that this is a big ask for potential hosts.

We hope that in the coming year we will be able to expand our work and support more vulnerable people. We are aware that the challenges that we face will increase as our borders are becoming tighter, but we continue to be very grateful for our partners and all those who support the work that we do and who are also working to support destitute and vulnerable people who are seeking asylum and sanctuary in Nottingham. We are also very grateful for the work of NACCOM, the No Accommodation Network, which supports all those around the UK who are working to provide some kind of housing and shelter for destitute asylum seekers.

Above all we want to thank and applaud all our hosts who, through their kindness and hospitality, are changing lives and offering hope.

Jane Henson
Chair

Treasurer's Report

We started the year with £4,247 in the bank. Grants received in this financial year comprised £1,000 from The Archer Trust and £5,000 from The Hilden Charitable Trust. We also increased our fundraising and individual donation income to £1,594. A special thank you goes to Jenny Moran, Mrs Collins and Lee Harrison for their regular donations to the organisation as well as to Jenny and Andy Moran for organising a very successful sponsored bike ride.

The main item of expenditure was the Project Coordinator wages and travel expenses for guests. Given that we operate out of an office space provided by NNRF, our office expenditure and overheads are incredibly low and for that we are very grateful.

We have adopted a 'reserves policy' which seeks to ensure sufficient reserves are maintained to cover the winding up costs should it be desirable or necessary to cease activity. These will be sufficient to cover staff redundancies, rent and utility costs and any professional fees likely to be incurred.

At the end of the financial year 2015 / 2016 our closing balance was £4,365.

Stuart Brown
Treasurer

HOST Nottingham Receipts & Payments Accounts For the year ending March 31st 2016

Income

Donations	1,594
Grants	6,000
Bank Interest	2
TOTAL	7,596

Expenditure

Wages	6,545
Payroll costs	234
Travel expenses	507
Publicity	85
Office expenses	74
Volunteer expenses	8
Misc expenses	88
TOTAL	7,541

Surplus	55
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Bank reconciliation

Opening balance	4,347
Deposits	7,596
Interest credited	2
	<u>11,943</u>
Withdrawals	7,578
Closing balance	4,365

Guest's Reflections:

A. From nothing to everything : From loneliness to having a family

When my support was finished and I didn't know how I can live in this hard situation, but I found a lovely family who they helped me to have a better life. I thought that my life is going to get worse without support, but since I live with Roger and Sue. They are more than friends for me, they are like father and mother for me and everyday my life is getting better. They consider me as part of their family. I can say that having a better life was like a dream, but the dream came true, and I want to say thanks for all they did for me.

B. I had never heard of the organisation before I came to Nottingham and when my solicitor mentioned where she was taking me I was really scared for myself, but I was also desperate and jumped to the chance. On the 17th February, a day I will always remember, I was met by a staff member who was smiling, attentive, caring and non-judgmental, and having lived on the streets and homeless I was used to people who judge and pass you by all the time, so to have someone treat you like a human being that was really important. Having being very vulnerable and having trusting issues she made me understand where she was placing me and that I should know she will always be on the other side of the phone should i need to talk.

The couple I was placed with were very patient, caring, and protective of me and made sure I was comfortable and fed. There is something very special about someone telling you 'this is your room and a set of house keys' - it restored my faith in humanity. Someone taking a risk and trusting you with their home, made me appreciate and know who really is your neighbour in a Biblical way.

I feel overflowing gratitude with HOST, especially Gemma, whose compassion and kind heart is always there to help no matter how many times you keep going back for more information and guidance. I am so grateful to God for the HOST organisation which exists to help people through difficult situations. The Host team has helped me to deal with panic attacks as I knew I have someone I can talk to and my hosting family too who went out of their way to assist treated me as one of their own, for this am most grateful. Now I am somehow able to leave the house without panicking, and have started going out to Church and using the tram on my own. If there is any work needed to be done with the HOST please always count me in. THANK YOU.

Host's Reflections:

We are relative newcomers to Hosting. Our first guest from Kenya stayed with us for 3 months last year and our second, a 16 year old from Sudan, arrived just last week and is currently awaiting formal foster arrangements to be put in place, hopefully by the end of January.

We're sure other Hosts will agree that this is a two way process. We can't speak for our guests, but on our side we have experienced many emotions and feel enriched and often humbled by the contact. The early days can be a bit challenging, as both sides get to know each other and adjust to living outside their usual comfort zones, and as the raw unfairness of life comes right into our home. But that passes quickly as personalities develop and we all simply get on with the practicalities of day to day living. We hope our guests feel safe and able to pursue their goals to remain and live happily in this country.

In our experience Hosting provides a unique opportunity of developing friendships outside the circles in which we usually operate, and we have come to value that far more than we could had expected.