St Mungo's
Community Hosting Guide

Haringey
LONDON

St Mungo's
Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

This guidance has been put together to help potential Community Host Volunteers think through what is involved when opening their home to an individual and offering them a safe room until their long term housing issue is resolved. We hope this guide is useful to you in helping you understand a little bit more about who we are as an organisation and how our hosting scheme works.

The Community Hosting service is managed and maintained by St Mungo's in collaboration with Haringey Council and is an essential part of the new Haringey Rough Sleepers Partnership. This is a new initiative designed to identify and assist those who are currently or are at risk of rough sleeping.
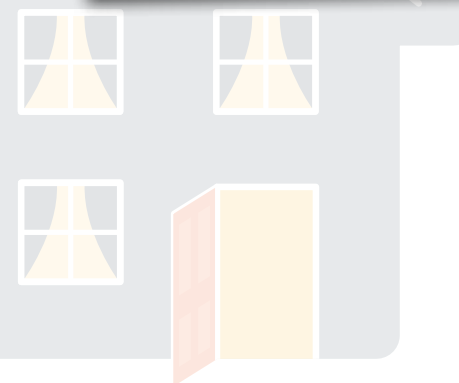
What is Community Hosting?

Community Hosting is a service which looks to support individuals who are at risk of sleeping rough or becoming homeless.

Community Hosting involves a trained and vetted Hosting volunteer providing:

❯ A clean, safe, dry, warm room
❯ Access to laundry and bathroom/showering facilities
❯ Access to food storage, preparation and cooking facilities
❯ A friendly, safe environment

Individuals become homeless for a variety of reasons and the Community Hosting service looks specifically at offering them a safe place to stay whilst supporting them to find long term accommodation.

What is a Community Host Volunteer?

A Community Host Volunteer is someone who generously opens up their home to give an individual with no home a clean, safe, dry and warm place to stay. Our Community Hosts live across London in a wide range of accommodation and housing.

We try our best to match hosts with suitable guests and also aim to be as flexible as possible. We would not place a male guest in a female only household or a female guest in an all-male one. All our clients placed in hosting are over 22 years old.

With every hosting placement, there is always an initial one-week trial period to make sure that both guest and host are happy with the process and placement.

Throughout the hosting process our Community Hosting Coordinator is there to support you and to deal with any questions or concerns you may have.

Who are the Community Hosting guests?

The service aims to assist individuals who we assess to be low risk. We help single males and females over the age of 22 years of age who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and are engaging with services to help them.

We do not accept individuals into the service who may pose a potential risk. This includes:

❯ Individuals who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol
❯ Individuals who have committed serious sexual or violent crimes
❯ Someone who at the time of referral is presenting with high mental or physical health issues.

Where are the Community Hosting guests referred from?

Community Hosting takes referrals via Haringey services and homelessness organisations across London. The Community Hosting service has formal agreements with each of these agencies, outlining what is expected from them and what they can expect from Community Hosting service. The referring agencies agree to ensure that all potential guests meet our referral criteria and that they will provide ongoing support.

We ask all organisations that are referring to provide as much information about their clients as possible. Each referral is then assessed by the Community Hosting Coordinator so that those most vulnerable are moved to the top of our accommodation waiting list and the Community Hosting Coordinator arranges to meet with the potential guest to carry out a further assessment and risk assessment. Guests are assessed through both the referral form and through these face to face meetings.

Alongside an assessment and risk assessment we also ensure to carry out police checks (PNC's) on all potential guests as well as requiring two references who will provide us with further information about the individual.

How long do volunteers host for?

The length that Community Host Volunteer's host for is very varied. We ask that hosts are able to commit for at least two weeks as we need this time to be able to find long term accommodation for the individual. The length that volunteers choose to host for is completely up to them and this will be a discussion that they have with the Community Host Coordinator.

1. Short Stay (under a month)

Short stay accommodation is offered when it appears a client may have an ongoing need for accommodation and has access to benefits. The Community Hosting Coordinator would work with these clients to move them into long term accommodation such as in the private rented sector.

SHORT STAY < 1 month

2. Longer Stay (over a month at a time)

Some Hosts may be able to host for longer than a month. This is especially important for asylum and refugee cases which can sometimes take longer than a few months to resolve. The maximum amount of time that a Volunteer host can host for is six months.

LONGER STAY > 1 month
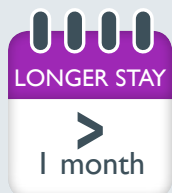
What if the host's circumstances change?

The Community Hosting service is flexible as we understand that during a hosting placement there may be unexpected circumstances that arise and placements may need to be ended earlier than initially agreed. In these instances, we ask that hosts inform the Community Hosting Coordinator as soon as they can if an existing placement will need to be cancelled.

We want guests to feel safe in their accommodation, so we try not to move guests from host to host regularly, but if a host is unable to continue the placement then we will make alternative arrangements for the guest.

Can a volunteer host if they have a lodger or children still living at home?

Yes, having a lodger or family at your address is not a problem and we welcome households applying. As part of ensuring safety, we would need to complete a DBS check for anyone at the address who is over the age of 18.

The Hosting process

1. Volunteer hosts apply via an application form on the St Mungo's website in which you will be asked to fill in some information about yourself.

2. In the application, you will need to provide two professional references.

3. Each potential host will also have to have a DBS check completed by St Mungo's through this initial application stage.

4. Following completion of the application form, all potential Community Host Volunteers will have a home visit from the Community Hosting Coordinator. This will be where we can find out more about you and how you would like to be involved with Community Hosting. At this stage, the Community Hosting Coordinator will also carry out Risk Assessment of your home.

5. Once all checks have been completed, all potential Volunteer hosts will be asked to attend an evening of training where crucial topics will be covered such as Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Lone Working.
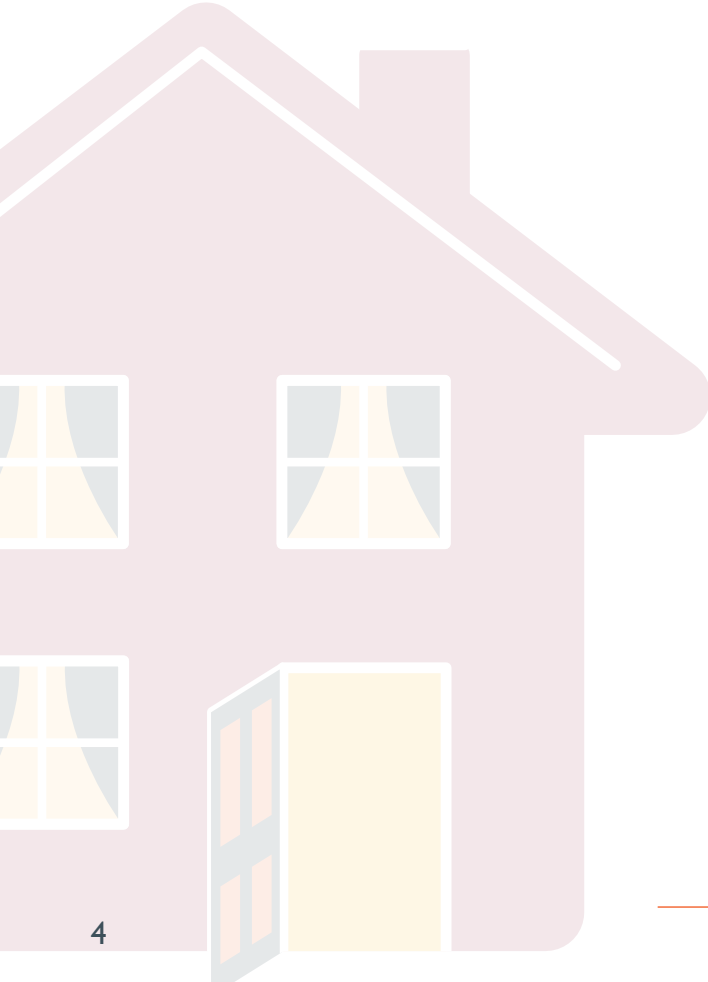
Home Health & Safety checks

The Community Hosting Scheme promotes and safeguards the health, safety and welfare of everyone involved through its safe working practices. It is recognised that each individual has personal responsibilities for their health and safety, but the Community Hosting scheme has an overall responsibility for ensuring that its health and safety guidance is understood and acted on.

Due to this responsibility, the service needs to ensure that each host has met a range of health and safety requirements. Each potential Host Volunteer will be visited by the Community Hosting Coordinator at their home and a Health & Safety Risk Assessment will be carried out. If for any reason, the Community Host believes there may be a Health & Safety requirement needed (for example the property could be missing a hardwired battery backed smoke detector) then they will work with the host to put this in place.

How do hosts meet their guest?

When the Community Hosting Coordinator has matched you with a potential guest, a meeting will be arranged somewhere near your home where you will have the chance to meet your potential guest alongside the Community Hosting Coordinator and ask any questions you may have. At this point we will also go through the Community Hosting service agreement where a set of rules will be explained to the guest about your home and how you would like the process to work.

Following this meeting, you will decide whether you want to go ahead with the hosting process and if so we would look at moving the guest into your home at a time that suits you. If at any point you do not feel comfortable with the arrangement you will always be able to stop the process immediately.

What support do we provide our hosts?

Community Hosting offers Hosts a range of support, to ensure everyone feels safe, supported, and knows what to do if things don't go to plan. This includes:

⬊ Initial training for all hosts, as well as access to ongoing training if the Host wishes
⬊ Particular care is given to ensuring new Hosts are supported – we will always check in after the first night to see how it went and provide on-going support tailored to what the host believes they may need
⬊ All hosts are given an information pack during the training containing information about the relevant legislation, local projects and resources, as well as useful phone numbers and websites
⬊ The Community Hosting Coordinator can be contacted if hosts or clients have any concerns during the working week. Additionally, there is always a St Mungo's Manager on call who can be contacted in case of any emergencies.

Being clear about the role of hosts

The principal aim of Community Hosting is to provide accommodation for those who are homeless or are about to become homeless and need somewhere to stay whilst we establish their long term accommodation needs.

There is no expectation that a host will become involved in helping a guest with their housing situation. All guests will be receiving support from the Community Hosting Coordinator as well as the Haringey Health lead. This will not only be with housing but also any other areas where guests may need assistance whether this be health, benefits or assisting guests into accessing employment, training and volunteering opportunities.

Whilst the heart of the hosting concept is building relationships, the agreement makes it clear to guests at the outset that hosts are only able to support them whilst they are being hosted. There is no expectation that hosts will be able to provide ongoing practical or moral support.

The Community Hosting Coordinator will make sure, wherever possible, to identify and refer on the guest to other sources of support when they leave.

How do I apply to become a host?

If you decide you would like to explore hosting further and have other questions, please contact Saskia Prichard, our Community Hosting Coordinator on

Saskia.Prichard@mungos.org or

07522 945 480

If you would like to make an application to become a host, you can apply via the St Mungo's Volunteers page at

www.mungos.org/get-involved/volunteer

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