

Supported lodgings hosts for unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Celine*

Celine became a supported lodgings host when she moved house a year ago. In that time she has hosted three young men between the ages of 15 and 17 who were unaccompanied asylum seeking children. One young man was from Albania, and the other two were from Iraq.

Why did Celine become a supported lodgings host?

Celine always felt comfortable with children and was familiar with their requirements and the challenges that they face. When she moved into a bigger home and had spare rooms it seemed like the perfect opportunity to help young people.

How did Celine feel about living with unaccompanied asylum seeking children?

Celine didn't have any fears or reservations about welcoming them into her home. She emphasised that any challenges that she has faced were the same as with any other young person, but in her experience these children tend to be more thankful and respectful, and are very motivated by schooling and education.

Were there any particular challenges?

The main challenge that Celine had to overcome was related to eating requirements, as the boys had different dietary needs based on their religions, but she said that this wasn't a big challenge as she simply went to a halal butcher. Keeping the house tidy can also be a challenge, as it can be with any teenager, but having clear expectations was very effective and they are usually very respectful. Overcoming language barriers wasn't an issue for Celine as she was well accustomed to communicating with young people from different cultures, and her husband, who arrived in the UK as a young refugee, also speaks various Arabic dialects.

Sometimes a sensitive touch is required for these vulnerable young people as some of them have had traumatic experiences. The young men can be reticent to talk about their trips to the UK, which can make the asylum process all the more stressful, and in the event of an unsuccessful outcome, they can be distraught and very angry at the system. A tender approach is required in such situations and Celine is always mindful and supportive of her young men. She often organises family activities, such as BBQs and outings. She found this was a great way of helping the teenagers and building lasting relationships.

Support network

The local Children's Services were a major source of support to Celine and her family, as they provide carers with specific training courses and a specific support group for carers who look after unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

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Advice to potential supported lodgings hosts

Don't worry, language barriers are overcome so quickly because they want to learn, and I find the young people are so grateful and are quick to treat you as a family.

