
GUIDE FOR HOSTS – PLEDGE A ROOM OVERVIEW

IRC REGISTER OF PLEDGES

Migrants travel from the Middle East and Africa risking their lives in the hope of finding a safe place to live.

Even though migrants have now reached the safety of Ireland, their journey has not ended. Living in a different country with a new language, accessing housing, health, employment and education are all challenges.

The Irish Red Cross and its members are committed to facilitating and supporting migrants during their resettlement journey here in Ireland. We are dedicated to harnessing community support and good will, so that migrants and refugees can integrate into Irish life.

Irish people expressed an outpouring of practical support to migrants, which led to the Irish Red Cross creating the Register of Pledges to facilitate these offers of help.

PLEDGE A ROOM

Irish Red Cross Register of Pledges is a way to match new migrants to Ireland with people who have pledged offers of practical support. Irish Red Cross professional caseworkers use a client led process to ensure that migrant's immediate needs and future aspirations are met. The Register of Pledges contributes hugely to achieving this.

The Pledge a Room initiative is part of the overall Register of Pledges. This allows people who want to offer a spare bedroom in their house to connect with a new migrant, with the support of the Irish Red Cross team.

The goal of this guidance note is to offer the host some practical advice to prepare you to receive a guest in your home.

WHY BE A HOST TO REFUGEES?

Your generous pledge is giving a person the opportunity to work towards rebuilding their lives in a safe and supportive environment.

Many new migrants want to move into a pledged room as a way to kick start integration into Irish society.

WHO WILL I HOST?

Refugees who have been granted the legal "asylum status" or "leave to remain" in Ireland. These people have been living in Ireland, in reception centres, for at least several months while waiting for permission to move into Irish communities and continue their journey to rebuilding their lives. You will host a person who qualifies for all normal social welfare benefits and rights.

We match single people or couples to live in pledged rooms.

We are working with people with a range of nationalities but mainly Syrian and Iraqi.

There are many professionals and students, mostly with an age range of 18 – 32.

People utilising Irish Red Cross services have varied levels of need – language, health both physical and mental.

We will not assign anyone with extreme needs to pledged rooms.

We do not work with unaccompanied minors.

WHAT DOES HOSTING INVOLVE?

- Generously providing a safe and friendly home to a refugee.
- Providing a bedroom to sleep.
- Providing use of cooking facilities.
- Providing use of washing facilities.
- Access to a bathroom.
- The use of storage space.
- Offering privacy, respect and dignity to your guest.

HOSTING PROCESS

1. Fill out the pledge registration form online or by phone to Irish Red Cross
2. Contact by Migration Team if accommodation appears suitable
3. Assessment of the pledged room in person by IRC representative
4. Irish Red Cross caseworkers work with refugees in order to match pledges of accommodation with their needs
5. If a match is found, the caseworker meets with the host to discuss any concerns and develop house rules
6. Host and guest meet in pledged accommodation
7. Move day is scheduled
8. Ongoing casework support is provided after the move takes place

HOW LONG DO I HOST?

We ask for a minimum 12 month commitment.

This may be shortened for any reason – e.g. if guest moves to new accommodation, or either of you decide it is better for the guest to move out

WILL MY GUEST FIT IN?

You will probably experience some differences in the way your guest deals with things. We try to mitigate any potential problems that this might cause by facilitating a meeting between you both before a move-in happens.

Dealing with disagreements is something that comes up in every house sharing arrangement. All issues should be explored first between you and the guest. Clear and open communication between you, the guest and the Irish Red Cross is essential to maintaining successful shared accommodation.

If the issue cannot be resolved through mediation and all avenues have been explored, the IRC will support with 'moving on plans' for your guest.

BOUNDARIES

We would ask that you respect that your guest may not want to talk in detail about their past or their current personal situation

Hosts are not expected to offer financial assistance or get involved in legal cases

We advise that you contact your guest's caseworker if you have any concerns about their welfare or to discuss referral of your guest to an organisation or service

REFERRALS

We advise that you contact the Irish Red Cross for advice before making a referral to a local organisation. This could be in relation to a health issue, employment or other service the refugee might need.

It is important that organisations have the appropriate training and vetting to address client's needs. We understand that people wish to help in whatever way they can but, it is important that this is managed in the correct way and therefore Irish Red Cross should be informed of this information.

PRIVACY

Like anyone, we all enjoy our own private space when we need to rest, enjoy a book or time to ourselves. This too is the case for your house guest. Irish Red Cross request that both guest and host respect the right to privacy and that this is upheld at all times. Some points on privacy:

- Never enter the guest's room without receiving permission from the guest.
- Do not take photographs without the guest's permission.
- Do not share any information with a third party about your guest without permission
- It is important to always receive consent from a parent or guardian before taking a photograph should a guest be under the age of 18.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Language capabilities of migrants entering Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) is varied. Some migrants have fluent English, some have basic conversational and some do not have any at all.

Huge effort is being made to address this language barrier but learning a new language takes time.

Take this into consideration when engaging with your guest. Rest assured that however frustrating you may find a language barrier on occasion, the guest probably feels the same!

HOUSE RULES

We all have ways of living our lives that are different to others. When sharing a home it is important to outline some rules at the start so that everyone understands do's and don't's. Irish Red Cross will facilitate setting some basic house rules before the guest moves in. This agreement can be in writing, will be explained and agreed before the move takes place.

What you decide to set as a house rule is completely up to you and your individual circumstances. You may like to think about the following:

- Food preparation and mealtimes
- Access to house keys
- Sharing the bathroom
- Heating
- Dish and clothes washing
- Storage for possessions and food
- Contribution to bills
- Smoking
- Household chores

- Quiet times
- Treatment of pets
- Using the internet/ computer/ other electronics

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT (HAP)

- As a host, you may decide to official register your guest as a tenant, and you are entitled to receive Housing Assistance Payment for this.
- Please inform us if you are looking to process HAP and IRC will support with the tenant's registration.

WHAT SUPPORT DOES IRC PROVIDE WHILE I AM HOSTING?

Case work support: It is important to be aware that the guest in your accommodation has a number of trained professionals addressing their needs and helping them integrate into Irish society. It is important to understand that caseworkers cannot share some information due to the confidential nature of their work. Some areas that require specialist support:

- Trauma is a multi-faceted and complicated emotional response that can take years of engagement by trained professionals to treat. You can help support the guest by creating a safe space that emphasises respect and dignity. Friendship and understanding can support people to feel more secure in their environment to provide the safe space for people to recover.
- English language
- Health – mental and physical
- Family reunification

Other support the Irish Red Cross will provide:

- The Irish Red Cross will provide an interpreter where necessary.
- Advice and support for you as the host.
- Support in drawing up house rules.
- Assistance in registering for Housing Assistance Payment.

SAFETY

- Our primary concern is the safety and well-being of all our clients and our hosts. Our caseworkers can be contacted on 01 642 4600 should support and assistance be needed.
 - Please feel free to contact the Irish Red Cross should you wish to discuss anything in more detail.
 - The Irish Red Cross has developed numerous training modules that deal with issues such as safeguarding, dealing with difficulties and welfare/befriending. We are more than happy to share information with a pledger and to offer any support we can.
 - Finally, we wish to express our sincere thanks and gratitude for the support you have offered to migrants starting their new life in Ireland.
 - And we wish both parties luck and success.
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