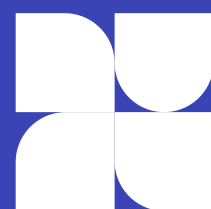




International
House
Manchester

Homestay Host Training Guide



Welcome to the IH Manchester Homestay Host Training Guide.

This guide has been created using advice, reflections, and best practice shared by some of our most experienced hosts. The aim is to provide practical guidance, reassurance, and real-life examples to help support both new and existing hosts in creating a positive homestay experience for students.

Every host family is different, and there is no single “perfect” way to host. However, the experiences shared in this guide highlight the importance of communication, patience, inclusion, cultural awareness, safeguarding, and creating a welcoming home environment where students feel safe, respected, and supported.

This booklet should be used alongside the official IH Manchester Homestay Handbook and related policies, which outline the school’s expectations, procedures, safeguarding responsibilities, accommodation standards, and rules for hosts.

We would like to sincerely thank all of the hosts who contributed their experiences and advice to this guide. Their insight, care, and commitment play an important role in helping students feel at home during their time in Manchester.



Jordan Clark

Accommodation and
Welfare Manager



What do you think is the most important thing to do when a student first arrives?

Be welcoming, show them around your home, introduce them to other people in your home (family and students) and give them the WiFi code.

Host, Jane

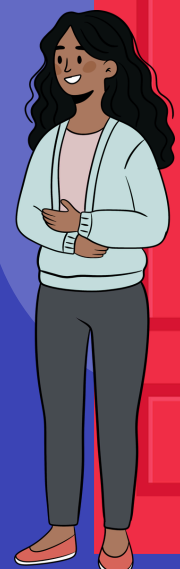


For me this is one of the most important parts of a student's experience, this is the very first impression a student will have when they meet the family for the first time, a warm welcome, often trying to welcome the student with a hello in their language from home and helping them with their luggage. We make sure, and it might sound obvious, but make sure their room is ready and looking great, providing a little welcome pack, perhaps water or maybe a small snack in their room. The student often travels long distances so welcoming them with a big smile really goes a long way so they feel at home. When possible we try and start the welcome before the student arrives by requesting their contact number so we can touch base and let them know we are looking forward to welcoming them to our home. When dialogue starts you can start to get to know them which breaks down some barriers prior to arrival.

Host, Lami



For detailed procedures, expectations, and safeguarding guidance, please refer to the IH Manchester [Homestay Handbook](#).





How do you help students feel comfortable and “at home” in the first few days?

It's really important to be mindful of what a big deal this can be for people. Some people have never left their home country and are in an alien culture in someone's house. It's a lot! Think about how you would feel? Go into town with them and help them get to the college. We show them how to get a monthly tram pass. We reassure them that whilst they are staying with us they are part of the family and not to feel like they have to be on their best behaviour. Of course every family has rules, so in the first days it's important to go through all your house rules so they know what's what. Remember, smiling and nodding is absolutely NO indication they have understood what you have said. 😊 Make sure they understand, there will definitely be mistakes in the first instance! We always eat together as a family and ensure we ask them about their day before we talk about anything else.

Host, Sarah

Ask how their day went, what they learnt in school, whether they made any new friends, ask them about their family, find out a bit about them, and generally check they are OK. Some students get very nervous about the first day of school, travelling on public transport etc. Reassure them (especially if they are young) that it is OK to feel worried about their first day, but they will make friends and the school itself is very welcoming. If it is winter, offer extra blankets for their bed.

Host, Helen



What advice would you give to hosts about communicating with students who have limited English?



Have your phone with you to translate something if required, use simple language, speak slowly and clearly, tap into their learning style (for example, we've had post-it notes labelling items around the house), talk about their day, try and reinforce learning from school, help with homework and just generally be available.

Host, Jane

Be patient and give them plenty of time. Use the translate apps...usually students have these on their phones. If you are unable to get a very important message across you can ask the school for advice.

Host, Helen





How do you build a positive relationship with your students during their stay?

Spend time with them, tidy their rooms, do their laundry, take them out with us (for example, football matches, trips to other cities, theatre, concerts, family occasions), watch tv together, get to know about their life, family, faith, culture and interests. Our home is full of laughter and nothing is ever a problem.

Host, Jane



Explain that if they need anything to ask you. Tell them they are a part of the family while they stay. Spend time with them. Create a time when you can catch up. For us, it's often at meal times.

Host, Precious



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What have you learned about cultural differences from hosting students?

We have hosted students from all over the world and there are many cultural differences. Firstly we respect and have prior learning from our own experiences of travel, we look to accommodate so, for example, hosting through Ramadan we will discuss what this looks like for them and what we can do to support them, as this would be a new experience for the student in observing Ramadan in another country.

Another cultural difference could be punctuality, for example, so it is always best to set out clear boundaries of expectations so students are aware if you have certain rules in the house.

Host, Lami

As you host different people you will be aware that different cultures have different ways of doing things, its great to ask people! For example, we have a Japanese student and he explained this:

The Japanese blessing said before meals is "Itadakimasu" (pronounced ee-tah-dah-kee-mass), which translates to "I humbly receive". It expresses gratitude to nature, the farmers, and the chef for the food, often accompanied by joining hands and a slight bow. We now all do this together when we sit down to eat because we think it's beautiful. We will probably always do this now even when he goes. You may not agree with some cultural practices and that's okay too, it's your house your rules. But asking people about what they are used to with regards to eating together, about being together and explaining what people do in Britain and why is really helpful for everyone to understand. We can all learn from each other.

Host, Sarah





What should new hosts keep in mind to make sure students feel respected and included?

Put yourselves in their shoes. Imagine what it must be like sleeping in a stranger's home under their roof, in their bed, eating different food with different rules that are not always in line with yours. Be open minded, share this that they have taken a big leap to learn English and that they are surrounded by lots of people who can help them. I always consider, if my children were to study abroad with a host family, how would I want them to be treated.

Host, Precious



Always include them. Ask if they want to join in with your family life. Also respect their space and autonomy and freedom to come and go as they wish.

Host, Bernard

What are your top practical tips for managing meals, routines, and house rules?

The students have usually travelled for hours, and are tired when they first arrive, so the last thing they want to hear is a set of rules and regulations, so I introduce what I expect slowly over the first days, unless something crops up that I have to address immediately, for example, making noise at 2.00am. Be patient, as most students do want to please their hosts and are usually very polite and respectful. Don't expect everything to be perfect straightaway, allow for mistakes. I plan meals in advance before I go shopping and sometimes over the weekend, will batch cook, so I know when I haven't got much time, I just have to heat something up.

Host, Helen



It's important to be able to be comfortable being assertive if issues crop up, or talk to the school if you are struggling. We have never had a student we have significantly struggled with, however everyone has different likes and there will undoubtedly be issues that come up. If someone is doing something

you have asked them not to do or don't like just have that conversation with them, but the school are very supportive if you need them. As you get more students you will realise the things that need to be said in the beginning. We have a house WhatsApp group where we put announcements about dinner time, family events, interesting events in Manchester and where any of us might be when we are out.

Host, Sarah

What information do you think is essential to explain clearly to students at the start?

Health and safety (for example, in case of fire), WiFi code, where to put dirty laundry, how to work the shower, how to lock/unlock the front door, how to get to/from school and use our WhatsApp group to communicate.

Host, Jane



It's your house so be clear about what is appropriate for you. Your house your rules. Remember, for quieter students, if you if you don't tell them they will be fearful of asking, and could be frozen in their room for days scared to ask you something! Just think about the basics, sharing bathrooms, meals, clothes washing, movement in the house and privacy.... then as you have more people staying you will realise what else to add on the list! But do make sure you say it, and are very clear they understand. It will save you lots of issues later on!

Host, Sarah

The bus to school, how long it will take and how to get there and back. Also the ways to pay for the journey. We also give them our mobile number in case of issues and we set up a WhatsApp group as each student joins so we can all communicate with each other.

They can advise if they don't require a meal or if they are staying late in the centre.

Host, Bernard



What are some common challenges you have experienced as a host? How did you deal with them?

One of the biggest challenges is the bathroom and how to leave it. Some cultures have different bathroom habits. We just have to explain this is a family home not student accommodation and to leave the bathroom as you would want to find it.

Host, Bernard



Common challenges that we have experienced tend to be centred around dinner. Are they eating dinner or are they eating out? But this is quickly managed when there are clear guidelines of what is expected, so communicate this from the start and you will find this to be a smooth process for the duration of their stay.

Host, Lami



For detailed procedures, expectations, and safeguarding guidance, please refer to the IH Manchester [Homestay Handbook](#).

➤ What advice would you give to new hosts if something goes wrong or a student is unhappy?

The school are always on hand to help resolve any difficulties. They are always happy to change the student and speak to them if any issues arise. The school do a wonderful job of balancing your needs as a host with the students. Try to embrace hosting.

Host, Precious

The majority of the time you will have a feeling when something is not quite right. When this situation arises I always try to address it by taking time out to sit, making them comfortable and trying to understand the issue. This also safeguards you as a host. I always contact the school to let them know the situation so you are not dealing with the situation yourself.

Host, Lami

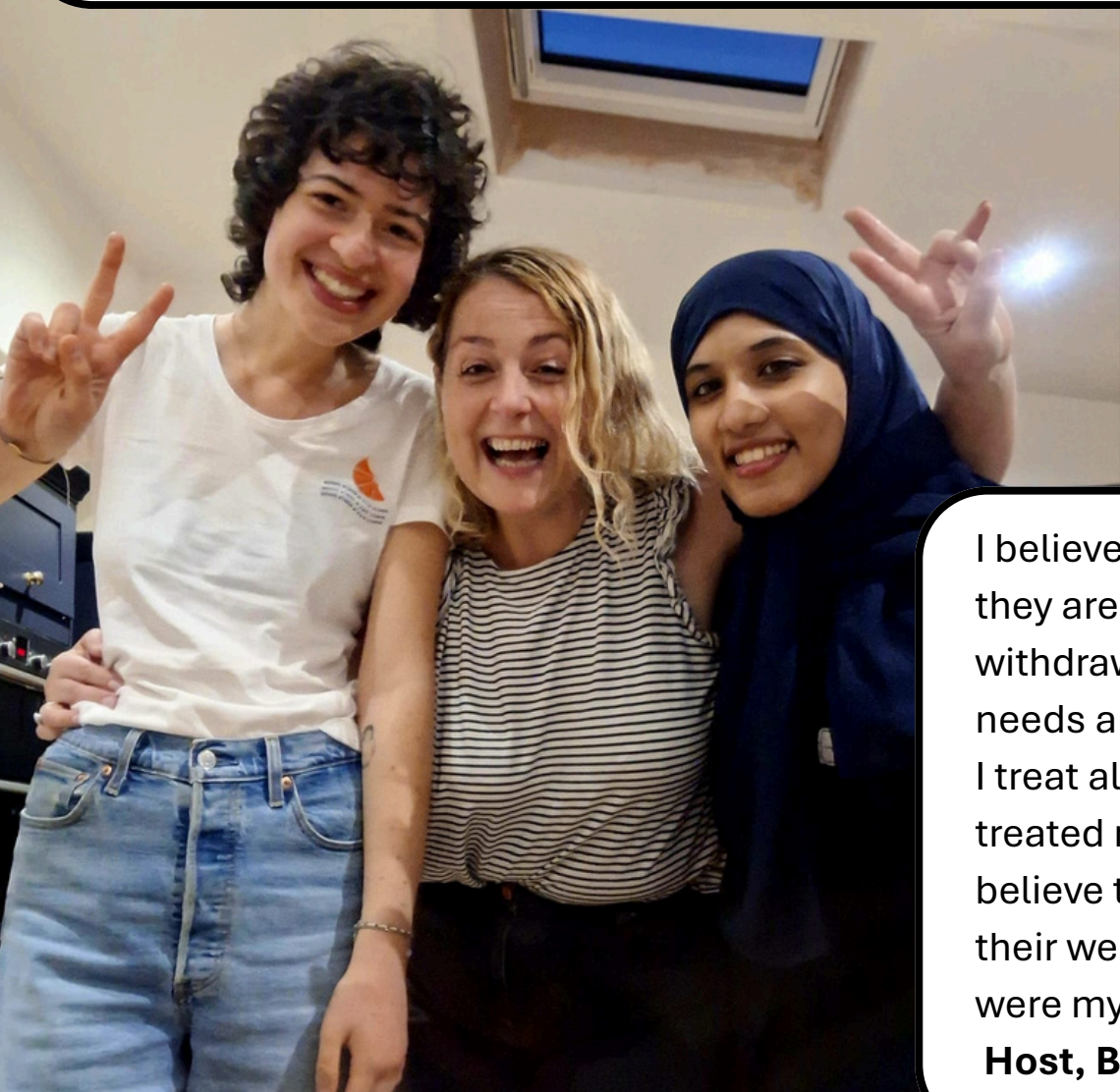


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In your opinion, what does “looking after a student’s wellbeing” mean in a homestay setting?

This will vary depending how old the student is. If the student is near the age of 18, they are generally going to be less confident than say someone who is in their late 20s. A younger student (not always, I have met some very confident 18yr olds!!) make require more input from you. Expect to put aside more time in the first few days to help them with simple things, such as how to travel to school or what they would like for breakfast. Ask if they would like to join you for a trip to the shop or for a walk around the local area.

Host, Helen



I believe it's checking that they are happy and not withdrawn and that their needs are being met. I treat all students like I treated my own girls and I believe this is looking after their wellbeing as if they were my own.

Host, Bernard



What should a host do if they are worried about a student's wellbeing or behaviour?

Talk to the student themselves in the first instance. Have daily check-ins. If you're concerned, ask them. Say I've noticed you've been a bit quiet recently, do you want to talk about anything? Things happen in students' home countries they might not think they can talk about. We have often found out about past traumas, and people's mental health has sometimes needed extra support. Most of all talk to the school and keep them up to date with any concerns. Between your knowledge of them at home and their experience of them at school you will have a better understanding together. But as adults, accept that you can't fix everything and if someone wants to be private you have to respect that as well.

Host, Sarah



If you are concerned about a student's behaviour, or wellbeing, the key action is to contact your Accommodation and Welfare Manager.

Host, Lami



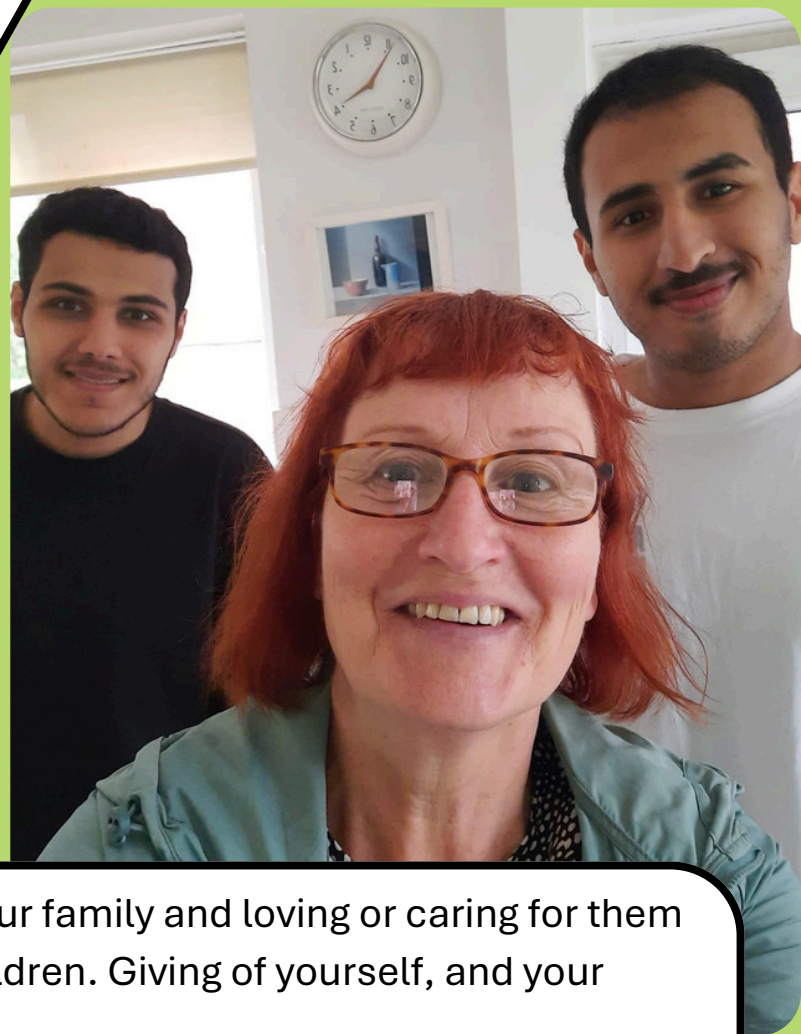
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What do you think makes a “great” homestay host?

A great host family is one that genuinely is excited about welcoming people from around the world into their homes, and appreciates what they can learn from their guests as well. It is about being comfortable with not putting on your 'best face' all the time and making students feel they don't have to either. It is about being a bit relaxed and not taking things too seriously. It is about genuinely wanting to support people to learn English, and to be on hand to make someone's time here memorable. It is about representing British values.

Host, Sarah



“Adopting” students into your family and loving or caring for them as if they were your own children. Giving of yourself, and your time, to the students.

Host, Jane



What do you enjoy most about being a host?



Meeting new students. Seeing them open up more as time goes on. Feeling comfortable in your own home with students. Talking about cultural differences with them. Saying hello to their families. Being a part of their English journey.

Host, Precious

Meeting people from all over the world. And this might sound weird, but when a student cries when they are leaving, it shows me how much they have enjoyed their stay with us and will miss being here. I always tell a student at the start of their stay to treat my home as if they were at home. When they leave and say it was just like being at home it makes us very proud.

Host, Bernard





What is one piece of advice you would give to someone hosting for the first time?



Be open minded. Students come from different cultures that are not like yours. As a result, issues do arise but talk to them respectfully and you often get the same respect back. Enjoy the journey. You meet some incredible, inspiring people. Get to know them? Why have someone in your home and not get to know them. For me I think, I would rather know the person living in my home.
Host, Precious

Everybody is different, embrace it. Set clear guidelines from the start and you'll find the experience enjoyable and rewarding. Help is always on hand from the school so you'll never have to deal with challenging situations alone.

Host, Lami



www.ihmanhester.com
jordan.clark@ihmanchester.com