

## Thinking about your support: Empowerment, Power and Boundaries

Successful sponsorship is all about helping those you welcome feel confident and able to navigate life in a new country. This can be achieved through adopting an empowerment approach – never doing something *for* someone *without* them.

### Empowerment

Nothing *for* someone *without* them

Be mindful of the power you hold

Listen to challenges and concerns

Make clear what you can and cannot do

Be aware of your own boundaries and limitations

The people you support have been forcibly displaced from their homes. They'll be adjusting to a new culture, way of working, and new customs. They may be navigating this alone, with no connection with people they work with or in their new neighbourhood.

Sponsors can provide the support and local expertise to navigate this adjustment. Feeling integrated is a difficult concept, we will all feel it to different degrees at times and it doesn't happen overnight. Integration is firmly based in our own feelings, experience, and ambitions.

### Empowering the people you support

Thinking about an empowerment approach can help someone make an informed decision, rather than decide for them about their lives. This might feel difficult to get to grips with – you might feel that you can do something quicker or have clear ideas about what you would do in a situation, but your role here is to listen, inform and empower. Some people find it easier to think about how you can help to build someone's

confidence to do something on their own. For example, if you make phone calls on someone's behalf to book a GP appointment because it's quicker and you know what you are doing, how would they do this if you weren't available? Working with someone to make the call themselves, with you in the background supporting them doing this for the first time will help them do this without help the second time.

### Power Imbalance

You are likely to know more about the local area, UK customs and norms than the people you sponsor. With this knowledge comes a potential power imbalance of which you should always be mindful. Newcomers will rely on what you share with them about life in your neighbourhood. You can avoid influencing someone's decisions and choices by:



- Presenting all facts as you know them to be, recognising where these facts are from
- Asking open questions as to the action someone wishes to take, once all options are considered
- Running through the consequences of a decision while remaining impartial
- Be a sounding board for someone as they make a decision – if they would like this
- Once a decision has been made, do not question or suggest this might be the wrong decision
- Reflect together on how the process worked

## Setting Boundaries

We all have boundaries; both you and the people you sponsor. However, your motivation to sponsor is likely to have been that you would like to help someone. As per the empowerment approach, we all need to be ready that someone might not want our help, or it might not be appropriate. It may be that you don't have the time to help someone in the way that they would like. This is absolutely ok!

- Being open about your boundaries is crucial. You might not want to provide lifts in your car or share mealtimes together – this is ok.
- Those you sponsor may not want to talk about what happened in their home country leading to their displacement. Respect this and do not push people to have conversations that they are not comfortable with.
- Communication is key; be steered by what people say and respect these boundaries, try to be consistent as a household in keeping boundaries. If you cross a boundary; apologise and move forward – we all make mistakes at times.

## Privacy and confidentiality

Everyone has a right to live their lives with dignity and privacy. If you're sharing your home with someone, you're likely to encounter personal information. Make sure you check with the people you sponsor how they would like to be introduced, or how they would like to be referred to. Referring to someone as 'my refugee' shows a disrespect for their individuality and dignity. They may not want to be referred to as refugees at all. Also, ensure you ask permission before taking photos or sharing photos of your guests. Respect what they decide.

You have a right to privacy too, of course. If your guest asks questions that you do not wish to answer, explain this is the case and move the conversation along.