

## OFFICIAL

### Host Family story - Stephanie's story...

"It is hugely rewarding to see him flourish and gain confidence"

We had been thinking about fostering in some shape or form when our young person came into our lives. He arrived with us days after the UK lockdown began. Working from home and with nowhere else to be, we found ourselves getting to know our young person quickly. We were very pleasantly surprised to discover that our young person had considerable independent living skills, was able to cook and happy to muck in with household chores. At the same time, we worried he was quiet and lonely and really wanted to find ways to connect with him and create opportunities for him.

We were successful in enrolling him in school which was such a positive move all round. Being in a local school has helped our young person integrate, find his way around our area on foot, learn English and make friends. Such important things. He has also joined a local football club which is also great for the same reasons.

Our young person has consistently told us he is worried about his asylum claim. We support him by sitting with him during his legal meetings and we discuss it with him when he wants to talk. It is not an easy time for any young person, and I think being in a home environment helps to normalise their situation, whatever the outcome of their claim.

We introduced him to our families at an early stage and he has bonded really well with our parents. We are looking forward to taking him to England later this year to meet our wider family at last. We think that having a 'new' family has really helped our young person feel included and loved again after a really distressing and isolating experience in his home country.

Our goal was always and only to offer our young person a home and the space and freedom to be a teenager, after having been burdened with inappropriate adult responsibilities at too young an age. It is challenging, as his support needs are many, varied and constant, and it can be difficult to juggle his needs with ours, but we always find a way. It is hugely rewarding to see him flourish and gain confidence - and when we hear him laughing in his bedroom or whistling around the flat, we feel so glad we are part of this fabulous experience in nurturing and nourishing our young person.

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