



***Home Accommodation Guide***  
*— People Make The Home*





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*A guide for  
home accommodation providers,  
home accommodation residents  
and the volunteers of the Home  
Accommodation Network*

Kotimajoituksen tuki ry  
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# Introduction

**T**he Home Accommodation Network brings together asylum seekers and people living in Finland. Our aim is that increasingly many asylum seekers could choose to stay in a private home instead of a reception centre during their asylum process. Home accommodation is one of the few models that promote two-way integration, which helps to reduce discriminatory attitudes and reinforces diversity and equality amongst other things. The Home Accommodation Network aims to make the home accommodation process as easy and smooth as possible for the home accommodation provider and resident alike.

The Home Accommodation Network and its support association Home Accommodation Support (Kotimajoituksen Tuki ry) are working in collaboration with other national and local actors to organise home accommodation. Through network cooperation, the employees at the association and the Home Accommodation Network volunteers help to create new home accommodation opportunities and give support to home accommodation providers, home accommodation residents and other asylum seekers in accommodation-related matters.

This guide is intended as support for home accommodation providers and residents, those considering home accommodation and other active members of the network.

# What is a home accommodation?

**H**ome accommodation is a mutual arrangement that offers both parties a chance to lead a good and purposeful everyday life. The asylum seeker living in home accommodation starts life in Finland in a meaningful and dignified way. Integration is quicker when language learning, building networks and getting to know Finnish customs happen more efficiently. For the home accommodation provider, opening one's home to an asylum seeker gives an excellent opportunity to get to know new people and to participate in a civic activity that is extremely important at both individual and societal levels.

A person applying for international protection is usually accommodated in a reception centre, as part of the reception services that have been defined by law. However, the client can choose to arrange their own accommodation for the entire reception period. A client staying in a place of their own choice outside the reception centre, such as home accommodation, will be registered as a so-called "private accommodation client".



# Operating principles

## **VOLUNTARINESS**

Home accommodation is based on a voluntary agreement between the parties involved. It is important that both the accommodation provider and the home accommodation resident consider their own motives and expectations before starting the home accommodation. The accommodation provider does not get compensated for the accommodation and

the home accommodation resident participates in household chores, for example, together with the other people in the home. Since the asylum seeker has chosen the accommodation voluntarily, they can also choose to return to stay in a reception centre at any time. However, it is good to keep in mind that returning to the same reception centre as before may not be possible and the asylum seeker may get directed to another reception centre.

### **RECIPROCITY**

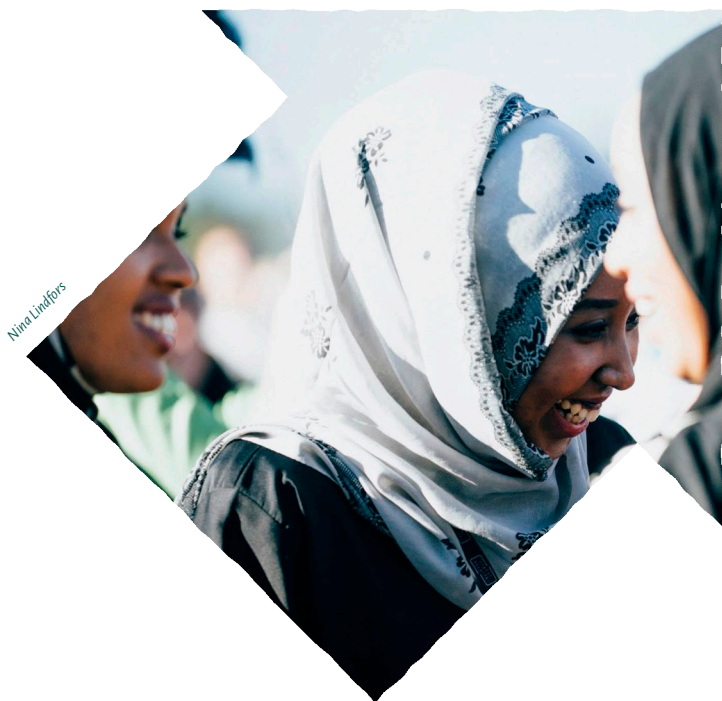
The Home Accommodation Network is not about those giving and those getting help but about people living together side by side. The aim of home accommodation is to create a fair daily life, for which all parties take responsibility. One aspect of mutual coexistence is that everyone might need and offer help at different times. However, the accommodation provider has the right to decide on the basic rules in their home and this should be discussed and agreed before the home accommodation starts, while also agreeing about the general rules of the accommodation.

### **TRUST AND THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY**

Although the relationship between the accommodation provider and the resident is of equal nature, it is good to keep in mind that the accommodation provider has more authority than the asylum seeker who is staying in the accommodation provider's home.

The home accommodation resident has no obligation to inform the accommodation provider about the progress in the asylum process, but they are free to do so if they wish, (See Annex 2, Key Facts About the Asylum Process and Being Undocumented). By mutual agreement, the accommodation provider may also support the asylum seeker at different stages of the process. However, the accommodation provider is under no obligation to participate in the process and it is good to know and recognise the limits of one's own skills and resources.

The right to privacy applies to both parties and neither the accommodation provider nor the home accommodation resident has, for example, the right to share photos or private information about the other party without permission. It is good to note that a person's status as an asylum seeker is confidential information as such.



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# Key Facts About Home Accommodation

## **WHO CAN PROVIDE HOME ACCOMMODATION?**

Anyone who has extra space in their home and the willingness to open their home to asylum seekers can offer home accommodation. You don't have to be an asylum expert or an experienced volunteer to become a home accommodation provider.

## **THIS IS HOW HOME ACCOMMODATION GETS STARTED:**

Home accommodations get started in different ways. An asylum seeker may move into home accommodation with someone they already know or the home accommodation agreement might form between a person looking for accommodation and a person willing to offer it who don't know each other from before. In the latter case, the Home Accommodation Support and the Home Accommodation Network usually play an especially important role in bringing the accommodation provider and the home accommodation resident together and in facilitating the accommodation process.

If you are interested in becoming a home accommodation provider, we encourage you to contact the Home Accommodation Support to find out about opportunities for arranging

home accommodation. Our association can help you make the connection in case you don't know any asylum seeker/s to whom you would like to offer home accommodation. We help with the preparations for home accommodation also when the two parties wishing to start home accommodation have met in some other way, and especially if the accommodation provider and the person planning to move into home accommodation don't know each other well from before.

The process is as follows:

- 1.** Fill in the contact form on our website <https://kotimajoitusverkosto.fi/yhteys/>. You can tell us about your situation and your wishes in more detail and ask any further question. The staff will contact you as soon as possible. You can also contact them directly by phone or e-mail. You will then have a meeting with the staff to discuss things related to being a home accommodation provider, arranging home accommodation, your motives and prospects for providing home accommodation etc.
- 2.** After that, provided that the intention to arrange home accommodation still exists, the staff can arrange a meeting between you and an asylum seeker. You can also accommodate several asylum seekers or a whole family if you have enough space in your home. It is possible to agree about the start of the home accommodation during the introductory meeting or you can decide to have a longer process of getting to know each other, during which both parties can still consider whether they wish to start the home accommodation. This may include further meetings, visits to the home, possible weekend visits etc. It is important that both parties are certain about their willingness to start the home accommodation before it actually starts.
- 3.** Agreeing about home accommodation: if both parties are willing to share a home after the meeting/getting to know time, the asylum seeker can move in with the home accommodation provider. An asylum seeker moving into home accommodation can ask for help from the staff when it comes to handling things with the reception centre and agreeing about the home accommodation either verbally or in the form of a written accommodation agreement, (see Annex 1, Home Accommodation Agreement Model). It is also advisable to continue keeping in touch with the staff on accommodation-related matters. The Home Accommodation

Network and its support association will do their best to provide assistance and support to both parties during the home accommodation. The parties engaged in the accommodation process are responsible for the accommodation and the agreement.

We recommend that you familiarise yourself with the materials provided by the Home Accommodation Support, such as this guide, and that you do not hesitate contacting the staff with any home accommodation related questions even when the home accommodation hasn't or will not start according to this model. All home accommodation residents and providers are also warmly welcome to join our network.

You can join the Home Accommodation Network's Facebook group Kotimajoitusta turvapaikkaa tarvitseville Finland with accommodation providers, home accommodation residents and other active members of our network, or you can contact us by e-mail: [info@kotimajoitusverkosto.fi](mailto:info@kotimajoitusverkosto.fi).



# The Reception Centre's Role

**A**n asylum seeker staying in home accommodation retains the right to get a reception allowance and the other statutory reception services. For this reason, the asylum seeker must be officially registered at a reception centre even when staying in home accommodation. Being registered in

a reception centre is also the prerequisite for keeping the asylum process going. Other statutory services, such as the social and healthcare services, will also be primarily provided by the reception centre. If the reception centre and the home accommodation are located in different areas, the asylum seeker has the right to access the services of the emergency room at the closest health centre in urgent situations. Less urgent cases will go through the reception centre. Asylum seekers needing special assistance are also entitled to professional help arranged for by the reception centre.

If the asylum seeker moves into a home accommodation that is located in another municipality, they will usually get the services from the reception centre that is closest to them geographically or transport-wise. The aim is to ensure the orderly transfer of the client from one centre to another: when the sending reception centre has received the client's notification regarding home accommodation, they arrange the transfer, making sure that the receiving centre gets all necessary information about the client.

The accommodation has to be genuine, which means that the home accommodation resident must live in the address that they have provided to the reception centre. It is also important that the communication between the home accommodation resident and the reception centre works well. This may require the ability to move between the home accommodation and the reception centre when necessary. It is always advisable to contact the social worker at the reception centre in matters related to home accommodation (moving to private accommodation and transferring to another reception centre, etc.), the asylum process and other possible concerns. If the asylum seeker wants, the staff at the association can support also this cooperation in different ways.

# Home Accommodation in Practice

**W**hen a new person moves into a home, it affects the daily life of everyone in the household. Both the home accommodation provider's and the resident's daily lives usually start running very smoothly when things are being discussed openly and rules are agreed together.

The accommodation provider should estimate for how long they will be able to commit to the home accommodation, and also this should be agreed. It is desirable to provide the home accommodation for the entire duration of the asylum process. However, both parties have the right to terminate the home accommodation at any point. It should be kept in mind that the reception centre placement given to the asylum seeker will depend on their asylum process and the current availability. It may not be possible to find accommodation in a reception centre, especially in the bigger cities, in which case the asylum seeker gets transferred to any reception centre where space is available.

The asylum seeker must have the right to stay in the home accommodation also when the accommodation provider is on holidays or otherwise absent from home since the reception centres cannot provide short-term accommodation to asylum seekers.

There is also a need for shorter pre-arranged accommodation. Spending a weekend away from the reception centre in home accommodation can be a welcome break from regular daily routines. Asylum seekers living in reception centres should agree with the reception centre in advance about stays that are any longer than this.

The house rules and the use of the common areas, as well as the household chores, should be agreed about as soon as possible, taking into account any cultural or religious matters that might affect daily life together. Important contact information should be given and displayed, as well as the information regarding the local services. Inviting guests, use of alcohol and other substances, silence, possible pets and other practicalities should be discussed. The common rules can also be noted down in a written home accommodation agreement. It is good to bear in mind that the practices often still evolve after the accommodation has started and the common rules may have to be adapted. This, too, should be done through open discussion.

The home accommodation provider and resident don't always have a common language, but people have had good experiences about home accommodations in such cases as well. The wish to communicate, translation apps and gestures will take you a long way. The staff at the association can also use a phone interpretation service to help with the start discussion and in special situations during the home accommodation.

The asylum seeker moves into home accommodation as an equal resident. This includes doing their share of the common household chores, amongst other things. Accommodation is offered voluntarily and one should not expect to be compensated with money or extra work. However, it is possible to decide about a compensation for the extra expenses caused by the asylum seeker (e.g. water or electricity), but also this should be agreed in advance. The accommodation provider should find out if they need to inform the property manager or some other party about the new occupant. It is also good to check that your home insurance is in order.

It is possible to opt for a sub-lease agreement instead of actual home accommodation if the asylum seeker has an income and can pay for the accommodation. A person who is not covered by Finnish social security is not officially counted as a household member and therefore, according

to Kela, the asylum seeker's temporary residence in the apartment does not influence the general housing support that the household might be claiming. The asylum seeker will not be taken into account when calculating the expenses or the income either. If necessary, you can contact the staff regarding anything that is unclear in this regard.

The accommodation provider should be aware of the challenging conditions that the asylum seekers are coming from and of the journey to Finland having been a long and difficult one for many. Private space and a safe, calm environment are therefore especially important for many asylum seekers. We also recommend that the accommodation provider, the resident and all others living in the same apartment make sure that they have received the necessary vaccinations.

# Home Accommodation Network and The Home Accommodation Support Association

**T**he Home Accommodation Network is a civil movement that started to operate in Autumn 2015 in different parts of Finland, with ordinary Finns inviting asylum seekers to live in their homes instead of reception centres. The members of the Home Accommodation Network consist of home accommodation providers and residents as well as volunteers operating both nationally and locally.

The Home Accommodation Network is self-managed. The main channel for the work is the Facebook group Kotimajoitusta turvapaikkaa tarvitseville (Finland) (Home Accommodation for Asylum Seekers (Finland)). This group also serves as the platform for searching and offering home accommodation.

The network gets help from its support association Home Accommodation Support and its Board of Trustees and employees. You can contact the staff regarding any questions about home and private accommodation or about other issues related to the daily life of asylum seekers. We offer support, advice and service guidance in matters related to accommodation and the asylum process.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

General e-mail address [info@kotimajoitusverkosto.fi](mailto:info@kotimajoitusverkosto.fi)





## Local Level Network Activities

**T**he Home Accommodation Network consists of volunteers, home accommodation residents and home accommodation providers from different parts of Finland. The local groups had a central role in the early days when the Home Accommodation Network started to operate. The local groups were

bringing potential accommodation providers and residents together, liaising with reception centres and local authorities and providing assistance to the parties involved in home accommodation. The local groups often collaborated with other groups in their area, arranging activities and events where people from different backgrounds got to meet one another. The local groups were usually communicating via a Facebook group.

Anyone can set up a local group if it seems that there is need for local activities in a certain area. Support from experienced network volunteers and the staff is available to get started with the activities. You can look for other interested people in local associations, educational institutions and churches, for example.

The Home Accommodation Network is self-managed, which means that the local groups can arrange activities as they see fit, depending on the local needs. It is important, however, that all network volunteers are committed to the jointly agreed operational principles of voluntariness, reciprocity, trust and right to privacy. It is important that the local groups and the locally operating volunteers actively communicate with the network and its support association since the staff gets many inquiries about home accommodation from different places, on Facebook and by e-mail for example. More and more interested people will be able to join the Home Accommodation Network when the network has up-to-date information about all regional activities.

The staff also has the means to help the local actors arrange events, peer support and trainings.

# Annex 1:

## Home Accommodation Agreement Model

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Home accommodation provider	Home accommodation resident
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Phone number	Phone number
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Home accommodation address
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■ Home accommodation is always based on voluntariness. The home accommodation resident will not have any work duties. The accommodation provider and the resident have agreed to share the household chores as follows:

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■ The asylum seeker does not pay rent. The home accommodation provider and resident have agreed that the home accommodation resident will contribute to the household expenses as follows (water, electricity bill, etc.):

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■ The home accommodation provider has no obligation to provide sustenance for the home accommodation resident. As a general rule, the resident buys their own food and groceries. However, the home accommodation provider and the resident may choose to agree something else about purchasing and paying for the food and about cooking. The accommodation provider and the resident have agreed on the following for the purchase of food and groceries:

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■ The asylum seeker and the accommodation provider have agreed on the following house rules, which must be adhered to:

- Facilities (shared and private rooms, including places for keeping food, hygiene items etc.)

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- Use of television, computer and other devices at home, Wi-Fi etc.

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- Smoking, consuming alcohol or other substances at home

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- Food and dietary restrictions

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- Laundry

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- Standard of cleanliness and sharing the household chores

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- Clothing

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- Visitors and overnight guests

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- Silence

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- Child care and upbringing

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- Liability to compensate when something gets broken

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- Key (who has the key and where to get the spare key)

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- Other things

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The accommodation provider has given the home accommodation resident the essential safety information about things such as the emergency numbers, fire alarms, possible fire extinguishers etc.

The accommodation provider has explained and/or shown the home accommodation resident all other essential information needed for staying in the building and the apartment (i.e., door codes, radiators, use of household appliances).

The accommodation provider and the home accommodation resident have the right to privacy. Sharing photos or other information about the home accommodation resident or the accommodation provider, on social media for example, must be mutually agreed in advance.

The accommodation provider and the home accommodation resident can terminate the agreement without any penalty or fee. In such case, the other party must be informed as much in advance as possible. Should any problems arise, we encourage you to contact the staff at the Home Accommodation Support, even for small reasons.

The Home Accommodation Network and Home Accommodation Support are not parties to this agreement.

Date and place:

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Signatures and names in plain letters:

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Home accommodation provider      Home accommodation resident

## Annex 2:

# Key Facts About the Asylum Process and Being Undocumented

Although the home accommodation resident has no obligation to inform the accommodation provider about the asylum process, they can choose to do so and, by mutual agreement, the accommodation provider may give support to the asylum seeker at different stages of the process. It may even happen that the home accommodation resident becomes undocumented at some point. If, for example, the asylum seeker gets signed out of the reception centre due to negative asylum decisions, all their reception services will come to an end. In such case, they will not be entitled to get even the reception allowance and they won't necessarily be able to contribute to the common expenses.

Since the asylum process and its various stages, as well as the possible undocumented status, strongly influence the situation of the asylum seeker staying in home accommodation, it is useful for the home accommodation provider to be familiar with the main features of the asylum process, which will be described below.

The asylum process can take several months or even years, depending on the applicant. For a more comprehensive description of the asylum process and how it is handled, see for example the website of the Finnish Immigration Service or the Finnish Refugee Advice Centre.

Individuals getting accommodation through the Home Accommodation Network have filed an asylum application, which is being processed. Once the asylum seeker has lodged an asylum application and has been registered at a reception centre, they can move in Finland freely and if they choose to stay outside a reception centre, they can basically decide where they want to live. They will be invited to an asylum interview where

they will be asked about their reasons for seeking asylum. The asylum seeker has the right to bring a legal assistant to the interview. After the asylum interview, the Immigration Service takes a decision. Depending on the applicant, it may take several months before the decision comes through or it might come very quickly indeed. If the outcome is a positive one, the asylum seeker has been granted a residence permit. Those who have been given a residence permit will be asked to attend an obligatory residence permit information session at a reception centre.

If the decision is negative, it is possible to appeal to the Administrative Court. The asylum seeker usually has the right to remain in Finland until the Administrative Court has processed the appeal and they will also retain their right to work. Processing the appeal may take several months or the decision may be given very quickly. If the Administrative Court does not change the decision of the Immigration Service, the asylum seeker may be expelled from the country, provided that the Supreme Administrative Court doesn't issue a stay of execution. If the asylum seeker has not been granted leave to appeal either, the negative asylum decision is legally enforceable. It is important that the asylum seeker maintains contact with their legal advisor throughout the process. Before the Immigration Service gives a decision, legal advice and counselling are available primarily from the Public Legal Aid Office. If the decision is negative, the asylum seeker has the right to choose their own lawyer.

If the asylum seeker has been given a negative, legally enforceable decision but can still not be removed from the country by the authorities, the reception services may terminate. Once the asylum seeker has been signed out of the reception centre, they become undocumented by status and stop getting support from the centre.

The authorities are responsible for helping people who are undocumented. This has been stated in both the Constitution and the Social Welfare Act. The municipality always has the primary responsibility to provide basic needs and care, including at least a temporary accommo-

dation, food, indispensable medicines and emergency medical care. An undocumented child has the right to free basic education and is covered by the Child Welfare Services in the same way as all other children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child also protects the rights of children who are undocumented. The authorities must always take into account the best interests of the child in decision-making.

In Finland the responsibility is usually divided between the municipalities and Kela but practices vary depending on the municipality. It is advisable to contact the staff in all matters related to being or becoming undocumented and getting the services. The staff will be able to give advice, support and service guidance on both the asylum process and the undocumented status.



**Home**  
Accommodation  
Network