

# Maura & Yuliia's Story

Maura started hosting Yuliia and Dmytro in June 2023. She is retired and lives alone, having raised her two children. Maura had experience hosting mature students and decided to offer up her granny flat to Ukrainians in need of accommodation.

I saw the ad about hosting on the internet and I just went on the **Helping Irish Hosts** website and filled in the form. Soon Lorraine rang me and I had already promised the rooms to two students for 10 weeks so I had to wait until the end of June until they were finished to give it over to Yuliia and Dmytro.

To be honest I was **quite apprehensive at first**. I didn't know what to expect because I didn't know anything about Ukraine, I didn't even know where the country was! Then Lorraine sent me an email with a lot of documents with information both in Ukrainian and in English and I printed them off. I gave the Ukrainian to Yuliia to have a read when I met up with her. I read the English part and this told me a lot of stuff about Ukrainian people. I was in contact with Yuliia over text and I brought them over to a restaurant for tea and they came to see the place. They decided to move in at the end of June, I collected their bags and they have been with me since. I was a bit apprehensive because they didn't have a car, but we have a good enough bus service. They settled in well and got used to the bus service.

**It's great that I'm able to give people from a war zone a house or home, temporarily or for however long they want to stay.** It's also good for me to have somebody next door, just company I suppose. They love my dogs and my cats which is good, they love the dogs more than I love them myself! Also it's a **chance to learn a lot about their beautiful country and I hope to one day visit it sometime all going well.** I've learned a lot about the people themselves and the beautiful places they've left behind. I think it's very sad for them.

I can't say there have been any challenges. They do their own thing and we have separate kitchens and they can do their own cooking and I do mine. I give them lifts to town two or three times a week. They're both doing courses and they've joined the gym in the hotel. All is good thank God.

The ARP payment comes in every second Tuesday of the month which is very handy and there was no problem applying for it. **If there's any older people considering it, they've nothing to worry about** and it doesn't affect any social welfare payments.

Overall, it's been a great experience. I'd willingly do it again if it ever comes my way. I'm open to whoever wants it and I'm **delighted to give something back to Ukraine.**



Maura with guests Yuliia and Dmytro

Yuliia was living in state-provided accommodation in Athlone for a year sharing a small room with her mother and husband before she decided to move into pledged accommodation.

First I was in Athlone and I lived there for a year and then I contacted Helping Irish Hosts in February and in April we moved to Sligo. We lived with our previous host Catherine and then Lorraine found Maura for us and we moved in with her in June. My mom is now living nearby with Catherine who was our first host.

I had a difficult situation while living in government accommodation. I stayed in a small room, it was me, my husband and my mom. We all shared one room together. I felt stuck there and I was very stressed. I just wanted to move on from that situation. I knew I couldn't stay in the hotel forever. **I just wanted to feel more independent and you know, be able to cook for myself and the feeling that I had my own space, my home.** The hotel is a nice place but it's nice for holiday not for life. It was a big relief for me moving out of the hotel and into a normal environment.



Yuliia celebrating her birthday with her mom and host Maura

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My relationship with Maura is very good and we spend time together, we talk, we have tea together and sometimes we invite her into our space to try Ukrainian food for dinner. **I'm so happy that Maura is interested in our culture, she's not just a host, not just a person.** She wasn't just looking for someone to occupy space in her house to get money for it. With Maura it's different, it's more than that. I'm happy to feel like I'm home again and have a place that I can call home and to come to from my studies. **Both of my hosts have taught me a lot about Irish life and culture. It's one of the positives of living in hosted accommodation.** I'm learning a lot about this country and meeting people.

I haven't encountered any major challenges. I'm that kind of person, I try to adjust to every situation and I don't like conflict. I like to know the house rules because that's important when sharing a house with someone. Each host is different. **You just need to have open communication.**



Maura and Yuliia with their Matchmaker Loraine

I've learned that Irish people are very talkative and very open and friendly. But I've learned that for instance, when I moved from the hotel we had constant communication with all kinds of people, living in an open space, it was like living in a camp or something and it was very hard emotionally. When I first moved into a host home, I realised that it was hard sometimes to be open to conversation all the time because I was coming from the hotel and **I just needed peace and quiet and silence sometimes.** I was kind of traumatised after the hotel because there was just too much communication, I was so overwhelmed. I know that the hosts want to be welcoming and friendly and they want to talk to you and ask you everything, but I would say just **give guests maybe a few weeks of peace to rest because it's a big change to move somewhere after a year of staying in a hotel especially into someone's house.**

**Opening your house to a Ukrainian person is a great act of kindness because you are sacrificing your peace and your comfort in order to help another person because they are in a difficult situation.** You are doing this because this person really needs your help, some people are in very bad conditions, sharing with others and strangers and they need their space. You will be rewarded, maybe you'll meet friends or if you are living alone, you won't be feeling as lonely anymore and in some cases Ukrainians can become your family or friends. It has benefits for you. So if Irish people are willing to do that, Ukrainian people will be very happy because they feel someone accepts them into their home.



Having lunch with Maura and her daughter



Maura with guests Yuliia and Dmytro and his sister Anastasiia