

The Role and contribution of the Host Family to the International Student Christmas Hospitality scheme

On completing an application form, co-signed by their church minister or pastor, the potential host is asked to stipulate the number of students they could entertain and whether they could cope with specific dietary requirements (such as vegetarian). These forms should be sent to the address at the bottom of the form and receipt of the application will be sent either by email or post.

About 2 to 3 weeks prior to Christmas day the host will receive details of the student/students who will be sharing Christmas with them. With these details will be a contact telephone number and email and it is hoped that the host will make initial contact with the student to make introductions

If the host so desires (and the student agrees) it is acceptable to meet up with the student(s) prior to Christmas lunch so as not to be strangers on the day.

The host is expected to collect the student from their accommodation and deliver them back at the end of the day. Timings are left completely to the discretion of the host (in consultation with the student) and the day is as long as the host family desires.

A usual pattern followed in the past by certain host families (though by no mean prescriptive) has been to collect the student around 10:00am and take them to church so as to present an introduction to the whole Christmas day experience. **This depends on the desire of the student to experience Christmas day Christian worship and the host's usual worship habits; it is not mandatory!** If not the student is usually collected after church around noon. After lunch the afternoon is left to the discretion of the host. Usually this is a time to share and learn from one another and in a number of cases this has extended to offering tea to the student. A lot will depend on the student and the family but past practice has seen students returned to their accommodation usually between 4:00pm up to 8:00pm

Host families are encouraged to complete a response form detailing their experiences of the day and suggestions for future improvements.

For a number of hosts this initial contact has been allowed to develop into long term friendships which have been very rewarding to both parties. In reality the host is free to decide for themselves how or if they would like further contact. Students are briefed that this is a one off experience and are asked to only respond to approaches made by the host. If further contact is not made BY THE HOST (which is often the case) the host's responsibility is deemed to end on Christmas evening