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Staying safe:

An evaluation of Nightstop services

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Foreword

Nightstop is remarkable. As a community response to the issue of youth homelessness, it is remarkable. As a volunteer response to youth homelessness it is remarkable. For the safe response it makes to young people in housing crisis, it is remarkable.

At the heart of what makes Nightstop remarkable is the contribution of the volunteer hosts. There were more than 500 hosting households in 2010 creating safe places for young people in housing crisis to stay. Our thanks go to all the hosts. Nightstop would not exist without them.

Depaul UK, the largest youth homelessness charity in the UK, has been privileged to act as the umbrella body for all the UK's Nightstop services for nearly five years. Nightstop is one of the many schemes Depaul UK operates which challenge youth homelessness and give vulnerable young people a chance to get back on their feet.

This evaluation is our opportunity to pause, reflect on what has been achieved and identify what we need to do in order to achieve our ultimate aim – of ensuring a comprehensive Nightstop offer that means no young person in the UK has to sleep rough.

Our vision is that, in the next five years, we will double the number of Nightstop beds that are available to young people in housing crisis.

The recommendations in this report are addressed to us at Depaul UK, as the umbrella body, to the 40 accredited Depaul UK Nightstop schemes and to the local authorities who are charged with responding to the children and young people who become homeless in their area.

I hope that the findings of this report will encourage all of us to collaborate and seize the opportunity to make Nightstop a safe alternative to sleeping rough and an important step on the path to independence.

Paul Marriott
Chief Executive
Depaul UK

Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

There are 40 Nightstop services in the UK that provide an opportunity for a young person (age 16-25) who is homeless to stay with a volunteer host, in their home, for one night to around three weeks, whilst family reconciliation work is undertaken and/or more settled accommodation is secured.

The primary aim of Nightstop is to prevent young people from rough sleeping or staying in unsuitable temporary accommodation. Nightstop provided 8,166 bed nights in 2010 to 2,033 young people. The services have seen an 18 per cent increase in the number of bed nights provided from 2009 to 2010 in a context of rising youth homelessness and record levels of youth unemployment. Depaul Nightstop UK is the umbrella body for Nightstop services.

This report is an evaluation of six Nightstop services: Sussex, Gloucestershire, Halton (Runcorn and Widnes), North East, Ynys Môn (The Isle of Anglesey) and Edinburgh. In order to generate feedback on the service and evaluate outcomes attained we distributed questionnaires to volunteer hosts and the young people who stayed with them in a two-week period and undertook telephone interviews with young people who had previously stayed with Nightstop.

Most young people are referred to Nightstop because of family breakdown; our research confirmed that almost half of the young people who stay with a host were thrown out of their family home. Most had been living with friends (sofa surfing) or rough sleeping prior to their stay with Nightstop.

The young people we spoke to highlighted the stress and anxiety caused by their living situation, with more than three quarters stating that they had at least one psychological condition – 13 out of 18 said they had experienced depression. Half were trying to sustain training, education or hold down a job whilst dealing with their homelessness.

Three quarters of young people we surveyed said that the biggest benefit of Nightstop was somewhere safe to stay. Three (out of 18) young people slept rough immediately before coming to Nightstop and half said that they would have stayed on the streets if Nightstop were not available.



Many Nightstop services also work with statutory and voluntary sector agencies to secure more settled accommodation for the young people they work with; 15 out of 18 young people thought that they'd been given enough help with their next move. One third of young people who stayed with Nightstop in 2010 went on to live in supported accommodation (such as a hostel or shared housing).

Young people found living with a host to be a very positive experience – many reported improvements in their health, a reduction in stress, a more positive outlook and wanting to become a part of their community. This was particularly the case for the young people who were able to stay with one or two hosts for a few weeks. However, some young people were moved between households every day (due to the lack of available hosts), which they found very frustrating and disruptive (three of whom were trying to attend college at the time).

Hosts themselves found the experience to be very positive. Very few incidences that caused the hosts concern were reported, with all saying that they liked the altruistic benefits of helping young people and enjoyed their company.

Nightstop is a perfect example of 'big society' in action, mobilising groups of volunteers towards social action that reduces rough sleeping and keeps young people who are experiencing homelessness safe.



Nightstop's Impact

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80,000

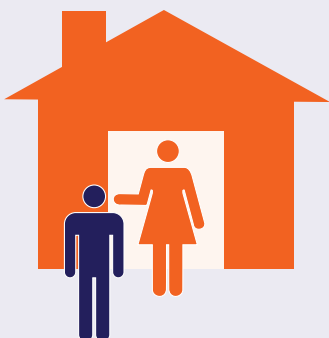
young people age 16-24
experience homelessness
in the UK every year.



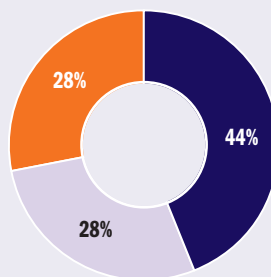
8,166 bed nights were
provided in 2010.

2,033 young people
supported in 2010.

Young person
stays with a
volunteer in
their home.



Where would you have stayed
if not Nightstop?



- Out on the streets
- Friends
- Don't know

80% of young people felt that they got enough
support to move on after their stay.

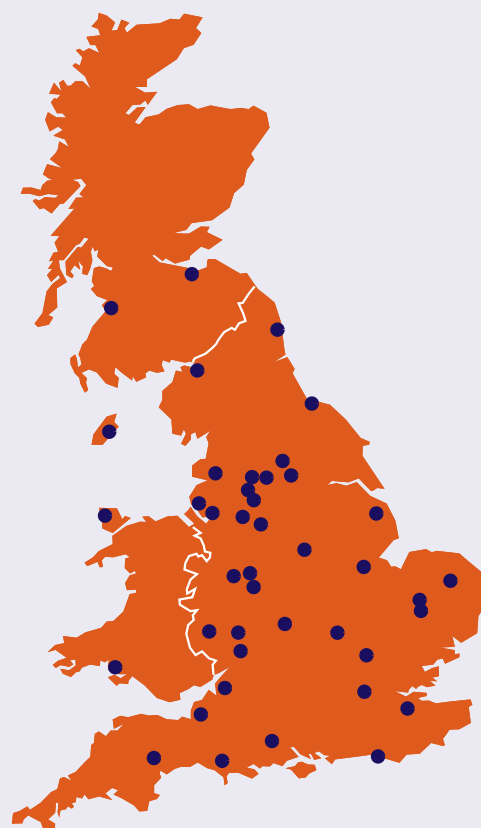
76% of young people felt more positive about their
future after their stay at Nightstop.

72% of young people thought that the biggest benefit
of Nightstop was somewhere safe to stay.

Number of volunteer hours = **122,490**



Nightstop locations



Introduction

Rising youth homelessness

After a sustained downward trend in homelessness (generally attributed in part to increased use and effectiveness of preventative measures), 2010 marked a turning point when the number of homelessness acceptances began to rise again.

Between April and June 2011 there were 4,240 homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities in England where the applicant was age 16-24; a four per cent increase on the previous quarter and a 15 per cent increase on the same period the previous year (DCLG, April - June, 2011. Note that these figures include families who are homeless and headed by 16-25 year olds).

These figures only include young people accepted as statutorily homeless. Quilgars *et al.* (2011) estimate that the number of young people age 16-24 in the UK who experience homelessness every year is 80,000. This figure is based on a range of data sets for 2008-09 and is an increase on the researchers' previous estimation of 75,000 using 2006-07 data.

Labour Market Statistics (November 2011) show that the number of young people who are unemployed has now exceeded one million; there were 1.02 million unemployed 16 to 24 year olds in July to September 2011. This represents one in five young people, a record high.

Commentators expect the economy and current austerity measures to exert upward pressure on youth homelessness as suggested by Jenny Edwards, Chief Executive of Homeless Link:

“ Tensions in families who are coming under economic pressures, parents being more called to account for the behaviour of their older children, and the withdrawal of the education maintenance allowance are some of the reasons why teenagers could be leaving home in greater numbers with nowhere to go. ”

The Guardian, 25th October 2011

Emergency temporary accommodation

Suitable emergency accommodation is one of the most common gaps in youth homelessness services in local areas, and options vary greatly between local authorities. Many homelessness teams and other agencies supporting young people will work with them to try and negotiate a return to the family home or the option to stay with other family members or friends whilst assessment and homelessness prevention work is undertaken, and if necessary accommodation secured. When this is not an option young people need to be provided with a safe and supportive place to stay.

Despite the clear position of both central and local government that Bed and Breakfast accommodation is unsuitable for young people (DCSF and DCLG, 2010) and considerable efforts over the last five years to reduce its use, anecdotal evidence suggested that significant numbers of young people are still placed in B&B by children's services and housing departments in some areas.

A recent study of experiences of young people who are homeless in the North East (Stone, 2010) questioned the suitability of hostels for vulnerable young people, particularly hostels with mixed age groups where the specific needs of young people are not met:

“ Many of the young people involved in this study who had lived in hostels could give examples of peer pressure, bullying, exploitation of various kinds, increase in substance use and criminal behaviour experienced in hostel accommodation. ”

About Nightstop

Nightstop provides an opportunity for a young person who is homeless to stay with a volunteer, in their home, whilst family reconciliation work is undertaken and/or more settled accommodation secured. Young people are given their own room, a toiletry pack and can have their clothes washed if needed. They are also given an evening meal and breakfast. They are normally asked to vacate the host's property during the day; at what time is a decision for the individual hosts.

“ [The main benefit of Nightstop] was somewhere to stay while things got into motion; somewhere to rest. ”

(Male, age 18)

During 2010, 529 Nightstop hosting households provided accommodation for 2,033 young people, with an average stay of four nights. Because the service is delivered by volunteers who host a young person when they have room available, the young person's stay is typically kept short – usually a few nights at a time - but some are able to stay with the same host in for up to three weeks (referred to as 'Nightstop Plus' for the purposes of this report).

The evaluation

Depaul Nightstop UK commissioned Insley Consulting to undertake an evaluation of six Nightstop services around the UK in Sussex, Gloucestershire, Halton (Runcorn & Widnes), North East, Ynys Môn (The Isle of Anglesey) and Edinburgh.

We asked the participating Nightstop services to distribute a questionnaire to the young people who stayed with hosts over a two week period as well as the hosts themselves. 18 young people and 23 hosts completed questionnaires (see Figures 1 and 2 for the geographical breakdown of responses).

No young people stayed with Edinburgh Nightstop in the two week period and only two young people stayed with Sussex Nightstop. In addition, we did not receive any survey responses from hosts in Halton.

Figure 1- survey responses from young people

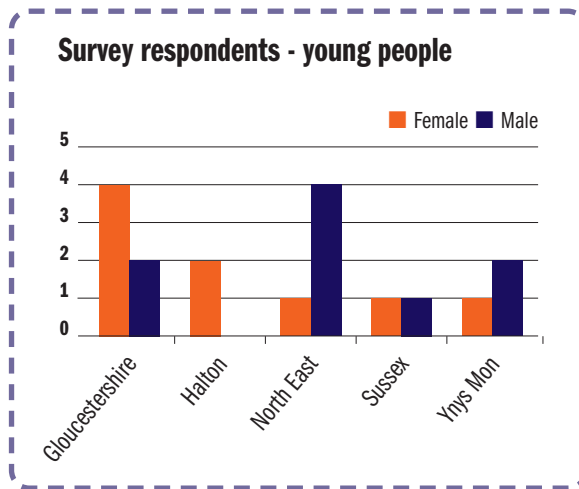
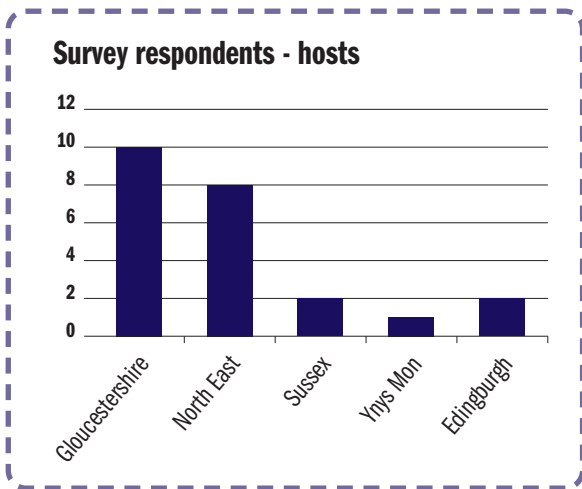


Figure 2 – survey responses from hosts



We then undertook telephone interviews with eight young people who had stayed with a Nightstop host in the last few months (see Table 1 for geographical breakdown of interviewees). We intended to interview some parents of these young people but they (the young people) did not feel comfortable with this. Names and contact details of interviewees were provided by the Nightstop projects themselves (we then randomly sampled from this list, although, ultimately, whether we could make contact with the young people determined whether they were interviewed).

This sampling method does give rise to the possibility of some bias, but the feedback received from interviewees was representative of what young people said in the questionnaires, which was a more random sample.

Table 1 - Interview respondents (young people)

Project	Female	Male	Total
Edinburgh		1	1
Gloucestershire	1		1
Halton	1	1	2
North East	1	1	2
Sussex	1		1
Ynys Môn	1		1
Total	5	3	8

The Nightstop services

Nightstop was first established 1987 in Leeds by a group of churches in response to the then vastly growing problem of youth homelessness and rough sleeping. Soon word began to spread and services established throughout West Yorkshire and beyond, when a network of Nightstops was formed (known as the National Nightstop Network).

In 1995 the national young people’s charity, Barnardo’s, funded a development worker who helped to establish Minimum Standards of Practice and Care. The network became an independent charity (Nightstop UK) in 1999 to act as an umbrella body for Nightstop projects, in order to accredit, grow and

trademark services, assure standards and safety. Nightstop UK was taken over by Depaul UK in 2007 (henceforth referred to as Depaul Nightstop UK).

Nightstop services are typically run by charities and are most often part funded by local authority homelessness departments, with some voluntary sector funders also contributing towards costs. This voluntary sector funding is increasingly important as local authority cuts bite and some pull back from funding services outside their statutory duties.

“It is the case in our area that a large proportion of our 18+ clients would not be given any alternative accommodation due to the lack of move-on options.”

(Nightstop Project Worker)

Accreditation by Depaul Nightstop UK is required in order to run a Nightstop service. The organisation develops a quality plan; then a Quality Standards Assessment is carried out by Depaul Nightstop UK before young people can be placed on the service. After their first year of providing the service Depaul Nightstop UK carries out a second assessment where they talk to staff, managers, referral agencies, hosts and, if possible, young people. Nightstop services are then re-accredited by Depaul Nightstop UK every three years (unless a reason for a more immediate assessment is flagged up).

Hosts themselves have at least one formal one-to-one session each year with a Nightstop worker, which includes a check of their home. Support for hosts is ongoing with 24 hour on-call services and a phone call after a young person has stayed. Hosts also undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check every three years.

Nightstop and the pathway to settled accommodation

Over 80 per cent of the young people we surveyed (15 out of 18) had experienced homelessness prior to staying with Nightstop and more than half of these (eight out of 15) had stayed with a host before. They were typically staying with Nightstop whilst more settled accommodation could be arranged, although only five out of 17 young people we surveyed said that they were moving on to settled accommodation after their current Nightstop stay.

The projects we spoke to highlighted the fact that Nightstop works best when there are protocols for joint working between statutory and voluntary sector agencies to tackle youth homelessness.

“There is very little else for non-priority needs young people in our area ... [One authority] appears to be setting the standard for 16-17 year olds because they've hardly used a B&B in the past few months. They have a crashpad¹ service in operation now, which is very helpful; usually young people have to have a few nights in Nightstop before they can access that. Nightstop is part of their Joint Protocol and it seems to be working well.”

Half of the six projects we evaluated offered young people a longer stay with a host. However, due to cuts in funding and staffing this was being scaled back in one of these areas.

¹ Crashpad is emergency accommodation that can be provided for two-six weeks. It is often based in a hostel but easier to access than a traditional hostel place, although some Nightstop and supported lodgings services offer a crashpad-type service in a host's home.

CASE STUDY



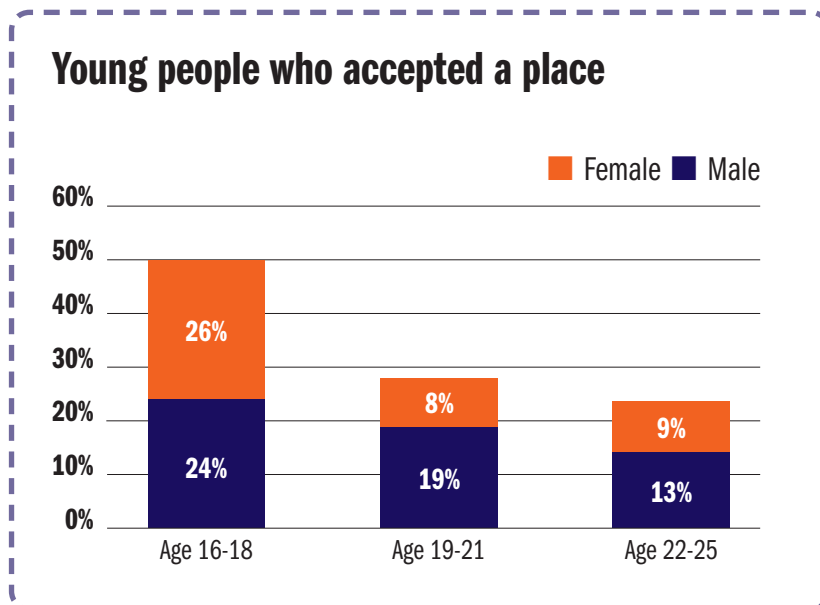
Peter* had been arguing with his family after his sister returned from University and together they decided that it would be best for him to leave the family home. He immediately went to stay with a friend, but the stress of sofa surfing and running out of places to stay was making him ill so he was referred to Nightstop. Peter stayed with two hosts for five weeks and immediately felt relieved, as “it was like a second home.” Nightstop helped him find accommodation in a YMCA hostel and now he is living with his girlfriend and enjoying family life. Peter has also kept in contact with his hosts and credits the improvement of his relationship with his family to Nightstop as they arranged mediation.

Nightstop 2010 in numbers

The following data was provided by Depaul Nightstop UK for all Nightstop services:

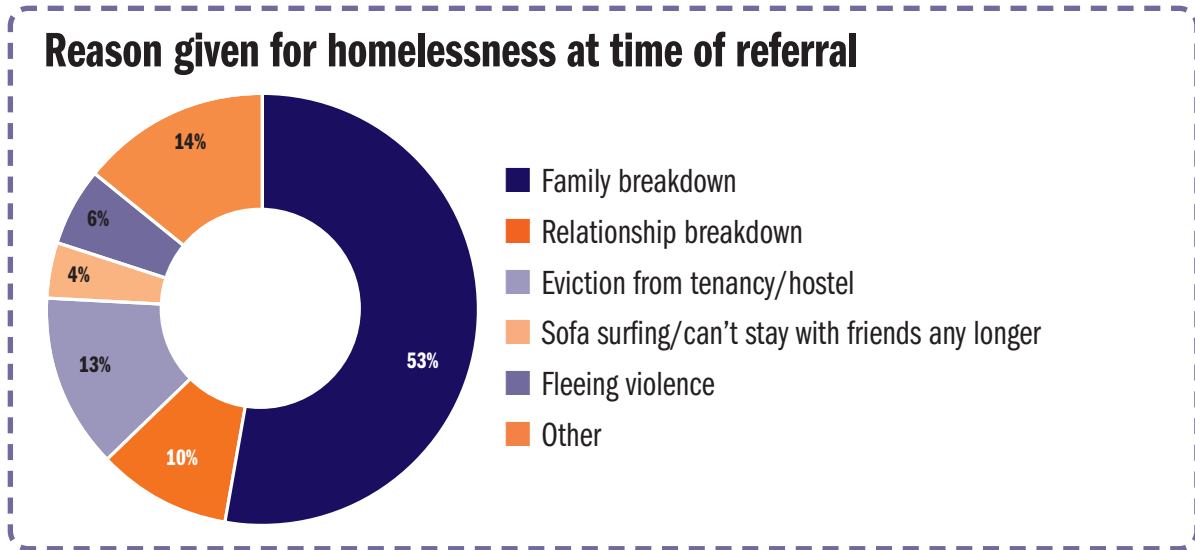
- There were 6,528 referrals to Nightstop in 2010.
- 2,033 young people were provided with 8,166 bed nights in 2010, an 18 per cent increase (in bed nights) on the previous year.
- 57 per cent of young people accommodated were male; 50 per cent were age 16-18 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Age and gender breakdown of young people who stayed with Nightstop



Family breakdown was given for the reason for homelessness by just over half of young people (53 per cent) at the time of referral (see Figure 4), with eviction from tenancy or hostel accounting for the next most common reason (13 per cent).

Figure 4 – Reason given for homelessness



- 17 per cent of young people (344 out of 2,033) had been in the care system.
- 87 per cent of young people who stayed with Nightstop in 2010 classed themselves as White British, compared to 97 per cent of hosts (and 87.5 per cent of the UK population).
- There were 876 volunteers and 529 hosting households in 2010.
- Volunteer hosts donated a combined 122,490 hours of their time (based on an average 15 hour stay).

The six projects evaluated

Table 2 – Overview of Nightstop projects

Service and local authority area covered	Organisation	No of young people in 2010	Bed nights in 2010	Approx population ²	Funding
Halton Nightstop Runcorn & Widnes	Halton YMCA	31	521	119,300	Local authority
North East Nightstop Tyne and Wear & County Durham	Depaul UK	327	1,012	1,631,000	Local authorities & Northern Rock Foundation
Edinburgh Nightstop Edinburgh City	The Rock Trust	13	30	486,120	Local authority
Ynys Môn Nightstop The Isle of Anglesey	Digartref Ynys Môn	27	93	68,600	Local authority
Gloucestershire Nightstop County wide	Independent charity	221	1,273	594,000	Local authorities and County Council
Sussex Nightstop Est Nov. 2010. Currently covering Brighton & Hove. Planning to extend into Sussex.	Sussex Central YMCA	3	3	259,000	Local authority and Big Lottery Fund

² 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics

Of those we evaluated, the Nightstop service that placed the highest number of young people in 2010 was North East Nightstop (327, an average of three bed nights); they also cover the largest geographical area and population. Gloucestershire Nightstop reported more bed nights (1,273), at an average stay of six nights. However, the longest average stay was reported by Halton Nightstop, at 17 nights per young person.

The service covering the geographical area with the smallest population is Ynys Môn (The Isle of Anglesey), but they were not the least active. Edinburgh Nightstop provided 30 bed nights to 13 young people, even though the population of the city is approximately seven times the size of The Isle of Anglesey. This is because their risk assessment criteria seem to be higher than other Nightstop services (they wouldn't place a young person with offending history with a host, for example) and due to the availability of other temporary accommodation within the city.

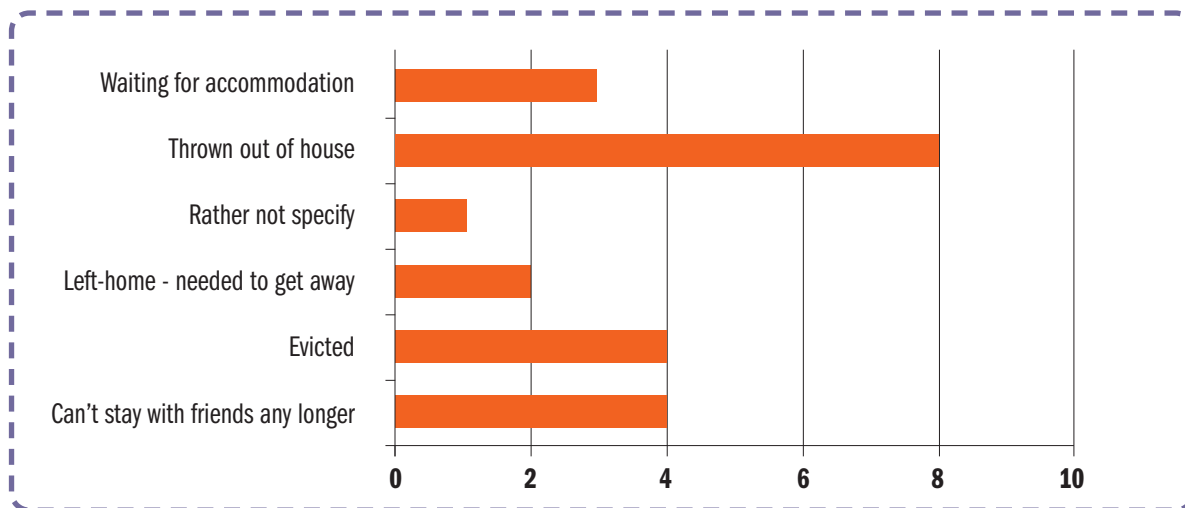
Therefore, the number of bed nights provided and young people accommodated is not solely influenced by population or geographical area but by links with referral agencies, local policies and the provision of other services available in the area.

Pathways through Nightstop

Family breakdown

The biggest issue that led survey respondents to Nightstop was being thrown out of their family home (eight out of 18 respondents stated this), with a further two young people stating that they left home as they needed to get away (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 – The route to Nightstop (some respondents gave multiple answers)



In an in-depth study of the experiences of families and 16-17 year olds who are homeless for DCLG, Pleave *et.al* (2008) confirm that youth homelessness is caused largely by relationship breakdown – 70 per cent of 16-17 year olds surveyed said that this was the reason for applying as homeless.

Over three quarters (78 per cent) of those who cited relationship breakdown as the reason for their homelessness said this was because of a breakdown in the relationship with their parents. Furthermore, they found that nearly half (45 per cent) of all the young people affected by relationship breakdown reported that violence had been involved.

Una Barry MBE, Deputy Chief Executive of Depaul UK, highlights the impact that family breakdown can have on a young person and how we should respond:

“What we must remember is that when a young person is forced to leave home they are not just homeless, but may have suffered some form of trauma, such as neglect or abuse, or long term family tensions. They are likely to have behavioural, emotional and/or psychological problems, which will require a great deal of care and support.”

CASE STUDY



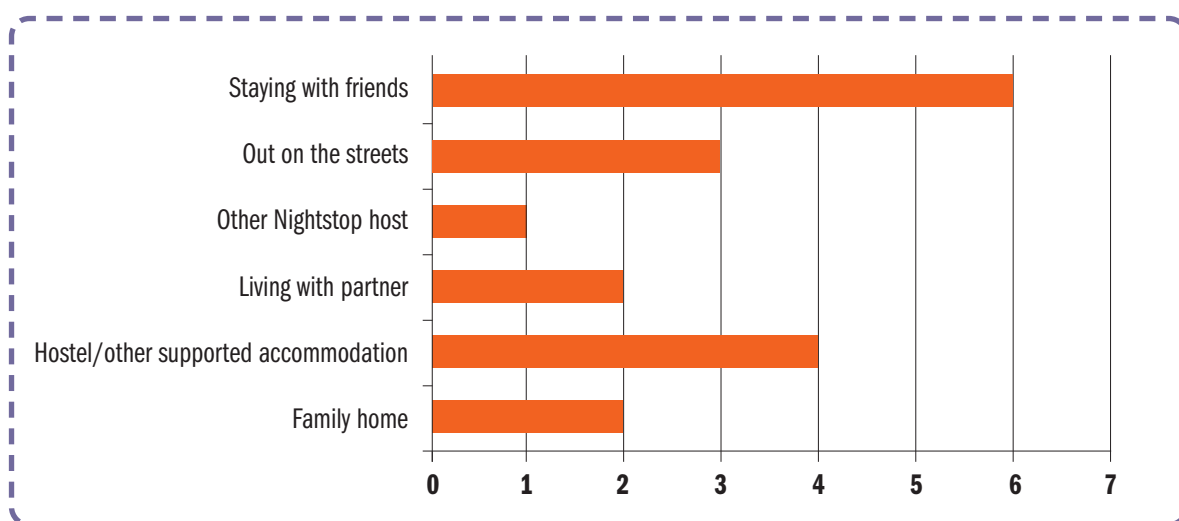
After being “kicked out” of her house by her “horrible” step-dad and staying in a train station for a few nights, Anita* was 17 years old, pregnant, and didn’t know where to go. Nightstop was able to place her with a host but Anita mentioned that the hosts were almost “too nice” as she wasn’t used to such kindness. Nightstop helped her find alternative accommodation for around four weeks and then she moved on to a hostel. Anita did say that she wished she could go back to the host’s home to live, but she was now going to live for a short time with her Nan as she was due to give birth at the time of the interview. Anita is looking forward to moving into her own place after her baby is born.

Living situation prior to Nightstop

As Figure 6 illustrates, seven out of 18 young people we surveyed were referred to Nightstop by the local authority (six by the Housing Department and one by Social Services). The respondents were fairly evenly split between those who had stayed with a Nightstop service before (nine young people) and those who had not (eight young people), although only one had stayed with a host immediately before their current Nightstop stay, indicating a fair degree of movement between hosts, their family home and other forms of emergency temporary accommodation.

Three quarters (14 out of 18) of young people we surveyed had not lived in settled accommodation immediately before they stayed with Nightstop (only four were living with family or a partner prior to Nightstop), indicating that Nightstop is not the first rung on the ‘homelessness ladder’ for young people who stay. Six said that they were staying with friends (often referred to as ‘sofa surfing’). Three young people said that their living situation immediately prior to Nightstop was on the streets.

Figure 6 – Living situation immediately before Nightstop



Depaul Nightstop UK's monitoring paints a similar picture, with 11 per cent of young people who stayed with Nightstop in 2010 having slept rough the night before.

Quilgars *et al.* (2011) estimate that around 3,800 young people age 16-24 sleep rough in a year (just under five per cent of the authors' estimation of annual youth homelessness figures). However, DCLG's survey of 16–17 year-olds accepted as homeless in England (Pleace *et al.*, 2008) indicated that 22 per cent of young people in this age group who are homeless had experienced rough sleeping at some point in the past.

Quilgars *et al.* (2008) highlight research on the dangers of young people sleeping rough:

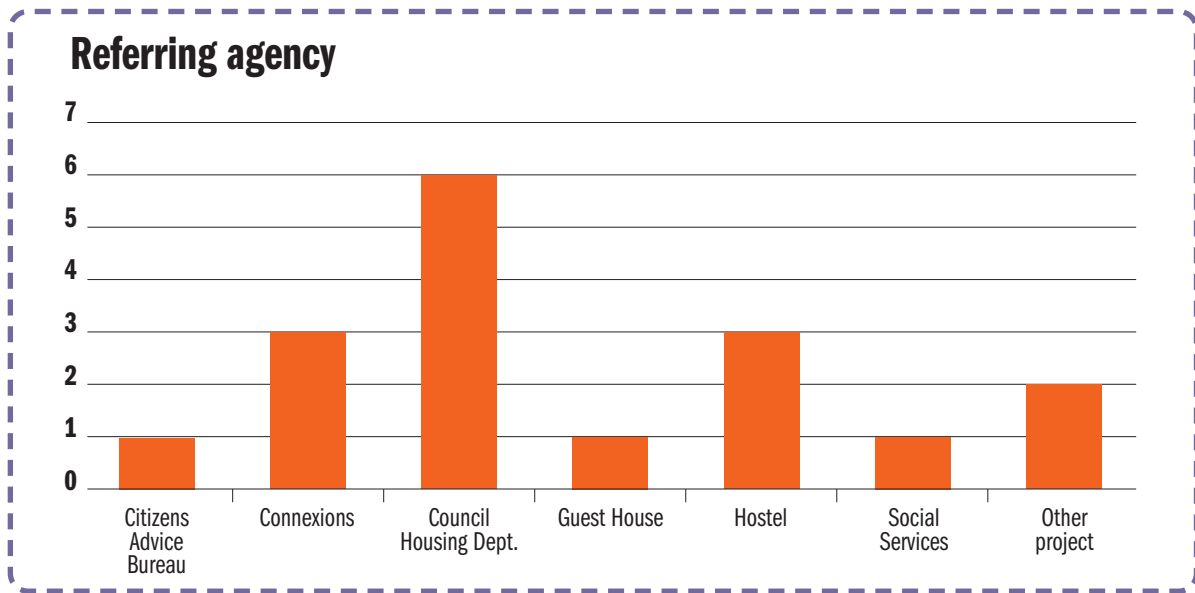
“Research suggests that young people are highly vulnerable to sexual assault, violence and crime if they spend any time on the street ... [There is also] a link between running away and involvement in child prostitution. Others may commit crimes, which can range from petty theft through to involvement in the illegal sex industry – with all the attendant risks, in order to survive.”

Referral agencies and local alternatives to Nightstop

The agencies referring young people to Nightstop vary between local authorities. Six young people we surveyed had been referred through the local authority housing department, three through Connexions and three through hostels (see Figure 7).

Although only one young person we surveyed had been referred by Social Services, the number is likely to increase as a 2009 House of Lords ruling confirmed that Social Services have a responsibility to accommodate 16-17 year olds who are homeless. The impact of this ruling had already been noticed on The Isle of Anglesey, as Ynys Môn Nightstop indicated that that they now get more referrals from Social Services than the Housing Department.

Figure 7 – Agencies that referred survey respondents to Nightstop



The Nightstop services we spoke to identified very few local alternatives to Nightstop in their area and some said that under 18s were still being placed in B&Bs, despite guidance from DCSF and DCLG that “the Secretary of State considers that Bed and Breakfast accommodation is unsuitable for 16 and 17 year olds”.

“ There’s B&B accommodation for under 18s, a male night shelter, nothing for females. ”

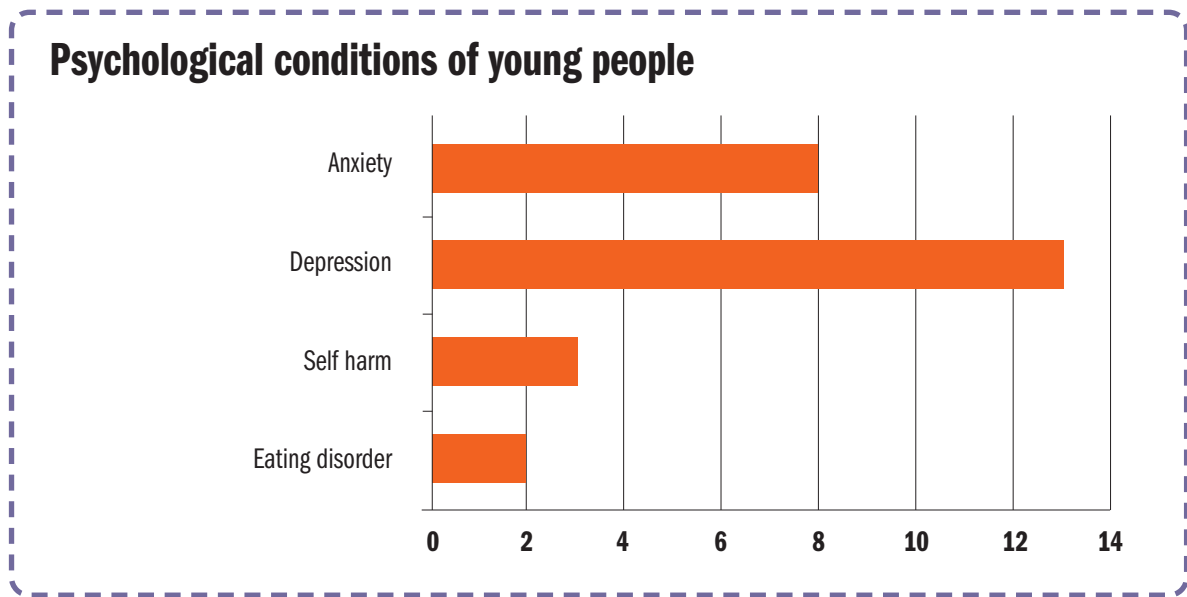
(Nightstop Project Worker)

This evaluation did not set out to establish a picture of the availability of emergency temporary accommodation for 16-25 year olds who become homeless throughout the UK; however we were able to establish that the alternatives to Nightstop are scarce. There are large areas of the UK where Nightstop services have not been developed (see the map on page 6), so the opportunities for young people to access safe and suitable temporary emergency accommodation in these areas will be even more limited.

Vulnerability of clients

The young people who stay at Nightstop typically have multiple needs. Over 80 per cent of the young people we surveyed (15 out of 18) said that they had at least one (self-defined) psychological condition, with seven out of 18 citing that they had two or more. Figure 8 illustrates the conditions that young people coming to Nightstop have experienced (respondents could choose more than one).

Figure 8 – Self defined psychological conditions reported by youth survey respondents



Almost three quarters (13 out of 18) said that they experienced depression, with eight saying that they experienced anxiety and three said that they self-harmed. Furthermore, five (out of 18 respondents) said that they experienced excessive alcohol use and three stated that they had taken illegal drugs.



CASE STUDY

After leaving foster care and then getting evicted from her flat, Hannah*, age 20, was staying in a night shelter for around six months. She was using drugs while at the shelter, but was overwhelmed with the presence of older drug addicts and alcoholics and having to leave the shelter by 8:00 every morning, so she knew she had to leave. Her friend then told her about Nightstop, so she turned up at their offices and was quickly placed with a host.

Hannah was able to stay with the same host for about a month and commented that the “family I stayed with was actually better than some of the foster families I stayed with and they didn’t even get paid for it.” They helped her find a job, gave her a “real” (double) bed to stay in and she stopped taking drugs. Commenting on her stay at Nightstop, Hannah said, “I don’t know where I would be now if it wasn’t for Nightstop. They helped me a lot more than they think they did...”

Research has shown that mental and physical ill-health, stress and youth homelessness are inextricably linked (Pleace *et al.*, 2008). Two of the young people we interviewed explained the impact of homelessness on their health:

“ [I was so] stressed...because of the situation, I’m now 19 and I’m going grey...I had stress bumps on the back of my head.”

(Male, age 19)

“ [When I was at the Night Shelter before Nightstop] you have to leave at 8:00 in the morning and be in at 8:00 in the evening, I just felt tired all the time...The only thing I had to do was get stoned. I had nothing to do. I was a wreck all the time... And all they gave us to eat is a sandwich ... That’s all I ate all day ... I probably lost 2¹/₂ stone while I was there.”

(Female, age 20)

Furthermore, to understand the root causes of stress and mental ill-health in young people who have experienced homelessness we must look at their typical childhood. The DCLG survey of 16-17 year olds who are homeless (Pleace *et al.*, 2008) paints the picture of the trauma and disruption faced by these young people during their childhood:

- 67 per cent had parents who separated or divorced during childhood.
- 58 per cent missed a lot of school.
- 51 per cent said that a step-parent moved into the family home during childhood.
- 47 per cent said that they ran away from home and stayed away for more than one night during childhood.
- 44 per cent said that their parents had mental health problems.
- 40 per cent said that their parents were violent towards each other during their childhood.
- 18 per cent said they had been ‘looked after’ by the local authority as a child.

Education, training and employment

More than half of the young people we surveyed (10 out of 18) were not in employment, education or training (NEET). The remaining 45 per cent were actively trying to hold down a job or attend college whilst dealing with their homelessness and staying with Nightstop. This corroborates with Depaul Nightstop UK’s data, which shows that 51 per cent of young people referred in 2010 were in employment, education or training. Young people we interviewed spoke of the disruption that being homeless made to their studies:

“ I was taking my bags into college out of cars and going into the next place. I had to wait at college until 5:00 when everyone finished at noon just to wait to be picked up. While I was at college, had to wait for a phone call to see where I was going that night. Sometimes I wouldn’t know until 3:00 or 4:00 that day.”

(Female, age 18)

Support with the next move or return home

Four of six the services we spoke to offered family mediation in order to try to repair family relationships and secure the young person's return home when appropriate (although take up varied from area to area). In *Can We Afford Not To?* (Insley, 2011), our evaluation of Reconnect, Depaul UK's homelessness prevention service, we evidenced the success rate of family mediation in repairing family relationships and the savings it can deliver:

“ Reconnect is successful at preventing family breakdown and equipping families with the tools to enjoy home life. Depaul UK's monitoring shows that Reconnect prevented homelessness in 82 per cent of clients who were referred in 2009 because it was a risk. In many cases, just three sessions were needed at an average cost of £363, compared to an average saving of £9,493 per person. ”

When a return home is not appropriate or possible, many Nightstop services will take the lead – in the morning following a young person's placement with Nightstop – in securing their next move into settled accommodation (in partnership with referral agencies when possible).

Gloucestershire Nightstop explained the lengths that they go to ensure that young people's next move is safe and appropriate:

“ If the council doesn't find something, we will. We won't let them go without somewhere to stay. ”

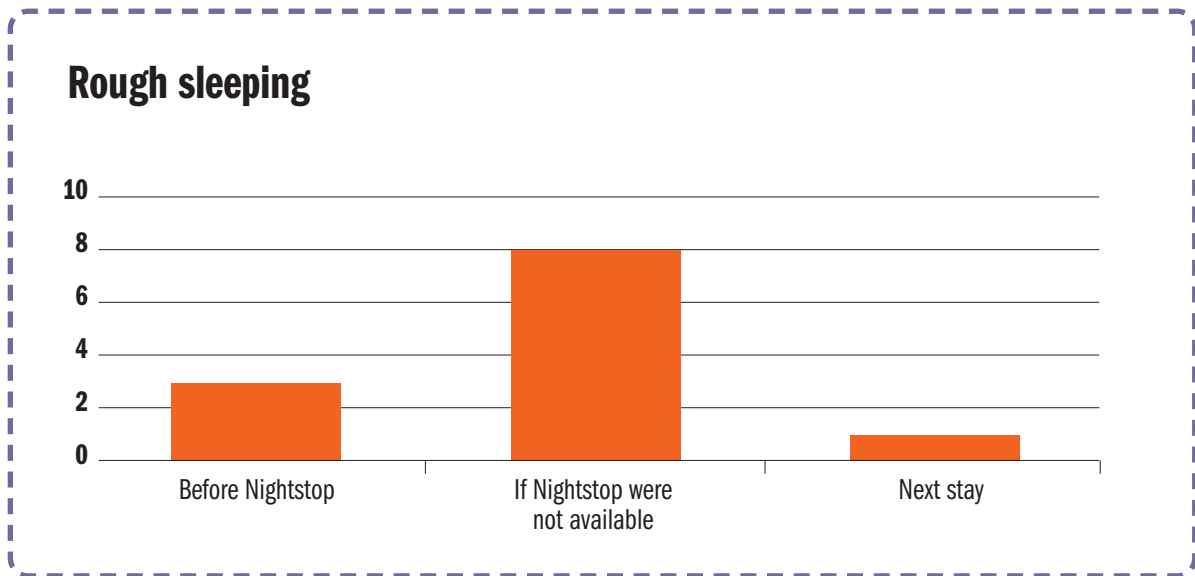
(Nightstop project worker)

Impact on homelessness

To determine Nightstop's impact on rough sleeping and sofa surfing, we asked young people where they were living before Nightstop, where they would have stayed without it and where they expect to go next:

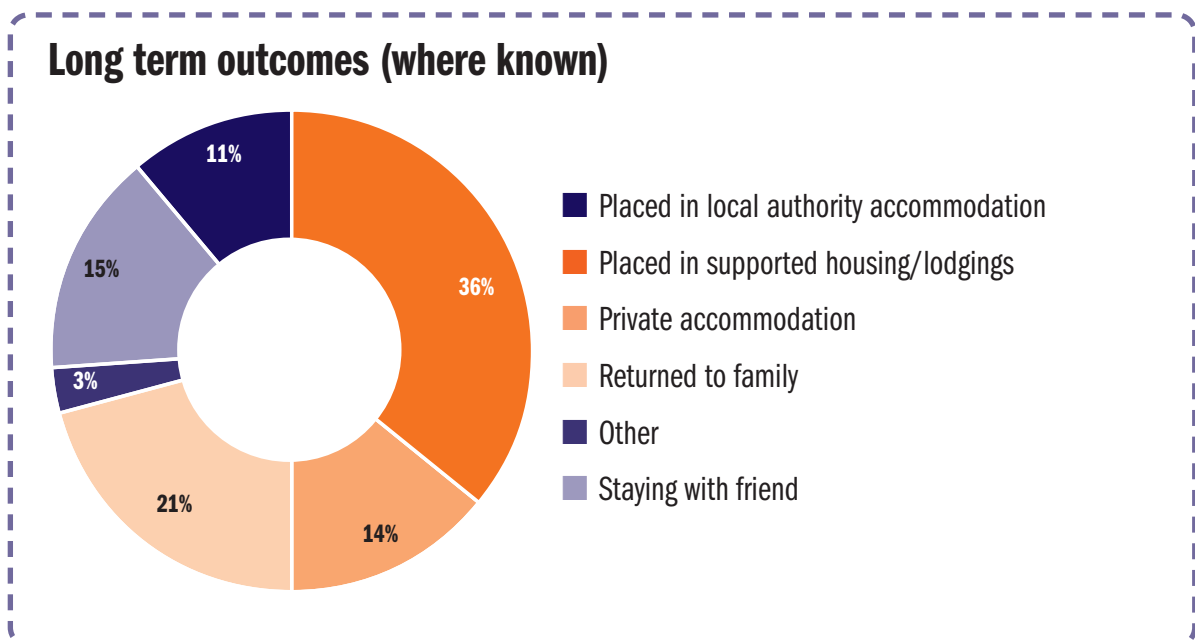
- Six young people were staying with friends before Nightstop and five expected to stay with friends if Nightstop were not available. Just two expected that their next move would be to stay with friends.
- Three young people had lived on the streets immediately prior to Nightstop and without the service eight would have expected this to be the case. Only one young person told us she expected her next move to be rough sleeping (although the project informed us that she stayed with friends), see Figure 9.

Figure 9 – Nightstop’s impact on rough sleeping



Nightstop Depaul UK’s own data paints a similar picture. Long term outcomes were tracked for 1,108 young people in 2010 (55 percent of those who stayed with Nightstop) and are outlined in Figure 10. This data demonstrates that just over one third of young people (36 per cent) are placed in supported housing or lodgings after Nightstop and 11 per cent move into local authority accommodation. Just over one fifth (21 per cent) return to the family home and 14 per cent move into privately rented accommodation.

Figure 10 – Long term outcomes



The hosts

Typical profile

The hosts who responded to our questionnaire are typically age 55-64 (many reported being 'empty nesters' i.e. their children had left home), living in a suburban setting. The average length of time hosting was just over 2.5 years. Just under half (10 out of 23) host as a couple, with eight hosting on their own and five as a family.

21 out of 23 hosts described themselves as 'White British'. Although this is not representative of the UK as a whole, the ethnicity of hosts does seem to match the young people in these areas who were staying with them over the two-week period of our questionnaires. Furthermore, it should be noted that the areas that we are evaluating are not particularly ethnically diverse.

Just over half of hosts (13 out of 23) live in a suburban area, with the remainder distributed between rural and urban areas.

“ The host’s house was absolutely stunning ... it was in the middle of nowhere and was nice and quiet...Obviously in the city it is, like, loud, it was nice to have a decent night’s sleep.”

(Female, age 20)

Recruitment, selection and training of hosts

Just over half of hosts we surveyed (12 out of 23) told us that they heard about Nightstop through their church or a connection with another organisation. 22 out of 23 hosts said that the initial information they received was adequate (the host who disagreed said that this was because they weren't aware of the service).

Given the vulnerability of the young people staying in their home, there is rightly a robust selection process for hosts. When someone expresses interest in becoming a host, the Nightstop service would usually visit them in their home to give them information about the service. If they wish to proceed, potential hosts then fill in an application form, give two references and undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check (for all in the household over 18 years). Their home is then assessed (by a Nightstop project worker) and they attend a training course. The host's application is then typically reviewed by a local manager or committee for final approval (or not).

Training is delivered (usually over a few sessions) by each local Nightstop service. Core subjects include child protection, health & safety and emergency procedures. Additional training is then sourced, based on local need and hosts' requests; it might include drugs awareness, first aid or how to respond to challenging behaviour.

All hosts we surveyed thought that the training course adequately prepared them for hosting a young person in their home.

Evaluation findings

Nightstop's aims

1. Young people who are homeless have a safe place to stay.
2. Prevention of young people from sleeping rough and entering into the long-term chaotic lifestyle associated with homelessness.
3. Young people who are homeless feel safe and make healthy choices.
4. Young people who are homeless look forward to a positive future.
5. Family relationships improve due to the respite/breathing space provided by Nightstop.
6. Different sections of the community make a positive contribution to young people's lives.
7. Young people who are homeless feel part of a community.

Attainment of outcomes

Below we have given our independent assessment of whether outcomes have been achieved, from the information available during the evaluation.

Aim 1: Young people who are homeless have a safe place to stay.

Outcomes achieved:

- We asked young people what was the biggest benefit they got from Nightstop. Three quarters (13 out of 18) told us that it was somewhere safe to stay, with eight telling us it was help with their next move and two stating that it was getting a break from home (some respondents gave multiple answers).
- We asked young people to rate how safe they felt in their previous living situation and then how safe they felt staying with the Nightstop host. Young people rated their previous living situation on average 3.28 out of 5, in terms of feeling safe. This is compared to an average score of 4.88 out of 5 in the host's home. 15 out of 18 respondents said that they felt safer at Nightstop than in their previous living situation (the remaining three said they felt just as safe in both situations). Given that the young people are effectively staying with strangers, this uplift in feeling safe is noteworthy.

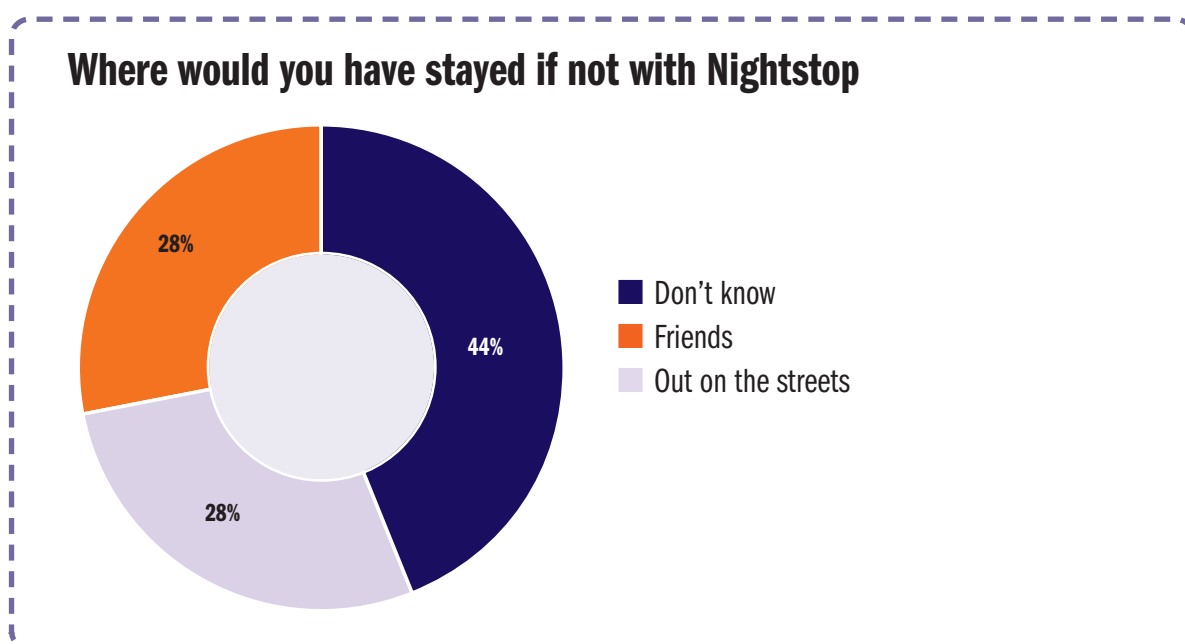


Aim 2: Prevention of young people from sleeping rough and entering into the long-term chaotic lifestyle associated with homelessness.

Outcomes achieved:

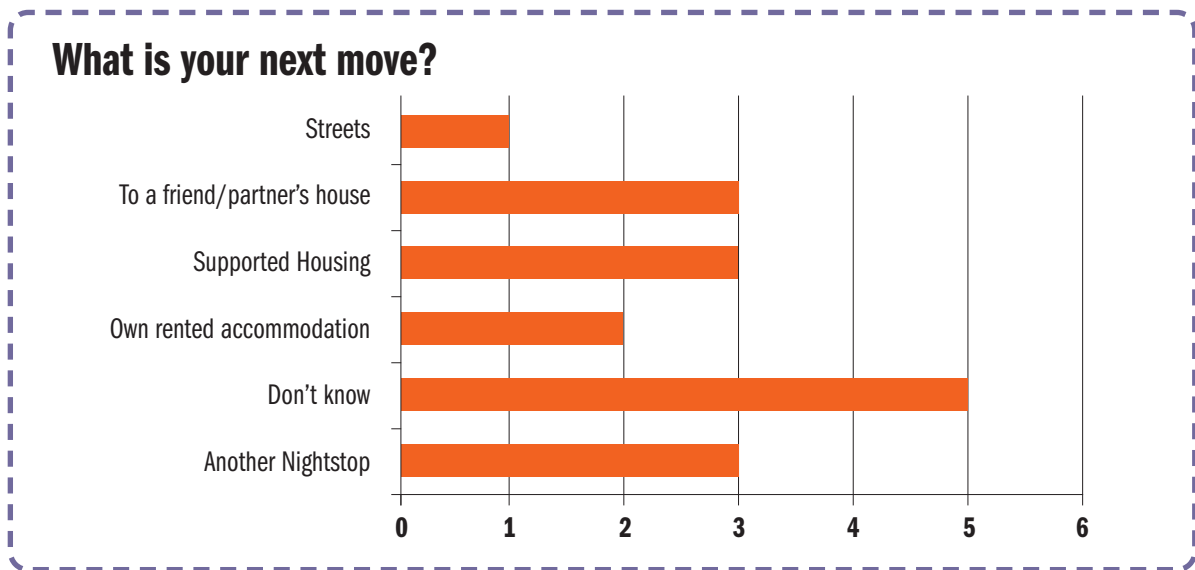
- We asked young people where they would have stayed if not Nightstop (see Figure 11). Nearly half (eight out of 18) said that they would have stayed on the streets and another third said that they didn't know. Only one third had an alternative place to sleep that night that was relatively safe (staying with a friend) if they had they not been able to stay with a Nightstop host.

Figure 11 - Where young people would have stayed if not Nightstop



- Three survey respondents said that they had slept rough on the previous night before they stayed with Nightstop.
- As well as aiming to provide somewhere safe to stay in the immediate future, Nightstop staff in some projects also take the lead in finding the young person somewhere safe to stay in the coming weeks and months (particularly if the local authority is not meeting this need). 80 per cent of young people surveyed (15 out of 18) thought that they got enough support with their next move.
- Figure 12 shows where young people were planning to stay next. Three were moving to supported housing and two were moving into their own privately rented accommodation; three said they were going to another Nightstop household. However, five respondents said they did not yet know where they were staying after their current host. Only one young woman said that her next move was out on the streets, because her Nightstop place had been withdrawn (due to a lack of availability of hosts; the project informed us that she went on to stay with friends that night and did return to Nightstop later that week).

Figure 12 – Where young people were going after Nightstop



Aim 3: Young people who are homeless feel safe and make healthy choices.

Outcomes achieved:

- Further to the outcomes specified in the first aim, we asked young people how welcome they felt in the host's home; the average response was 4.89 out of 5. Two people scored how welcome they felt as 4 out of 5, the remaining 16 respondents gave a score of 5 out of 5.
- Young people we interviewed reported that the stability of 'home life' albeit for a short period had led to a positive impact on their outlook and wellbeing:

Interviewer: *“You said at the shelter you were basically getting stoned every day, did that stop at Nightstop?”*

Hannah*: *“Yeah. And also the hosts helped me get a job as well... [They] helped me prepare for an interview and everything. Fantastic family.”*

Aim 4: Young people who are homeless look forward to a positive future.

Outcomes achieved:

- We asked young people how positive they felt about their future before and during their Nightstop stay. The average score was 2.5 out of 5 before Nightstop and 4 out of 5 when they completed the survey during their stay with the host. No respondents reported feeling less positive during their stay than before; four reported feeling equally as positive (or not).

“ [Nightstop] basically gave me a second chance ... There was somebody there to look over me. I was going to be alright, there was people to look after me and help me where I needed the help. ”

(Male, age 19)

- We asked young people if they had a magic wand what one thing they would change about their situation; nearly all responses were about finding a place to call home (which is very illuminating given the open-ended nature of the question):

“Somewhere more permanent to stay and a half decent social worker.”

“Have a roof over my head.”

“My own home instead of lodging.”

“To be back home with my family.”

“Having custody of my son.”

“I [wish I] had money (a lot) to be able to afford my own place and living expenses.”

“More support for under 25s who become 100% homeless.”

Aim 5: Family relationships improve due to the respite/breathing space provided by Nightstop.

Outcomes achieved:

- Four organisations we evaluated have a family mediation service (or regularly refer to one). Unfortunately we weren't able to speak to any parents, so can only comment on improvements in family relationships from the young peoples' perspectives. Although a breathing space wasn't cited as the primary benefit of their stay with Nightstop, this was particularly important to two young people who responded to our questionnaire and two people we interviewed.

““ I think now that our relationship is stronger now...We don't argue anymore. I sometimes go back [to my family's house] to stay for the night.””

(Male, age 19, who was referred on to family mediation by the Nightstop service)

Aim 6: Different sections of the community make a positive contribution to young people's lives.

Outcomes achieved:

- We asked hosts what they get out of hosting a young person who is homeless in their home. It is interesting to note that in this open ended question all responses can be divided into two answers:
 - 65 per cent of hosts (13 out of 20 who answered the question) pointed to the altruistic benefits of helping young people.
 - The remaining seven hosts (35 per cent) said that they enjoy the company of young people.

““ A sense of being able to help young people through a crisis in their lives. The chance to meet some fascinating and admirable people.””

- We also asked hosts if they felt they made a difference in young people's lives. All except two answered very positively that they had (the remaining two said they weren't sure or it was too soon to tell).

“ I feel I have been able to give them encouragement that things will get better, and to give them a larger perspective on life.”

Aim 7: Young people who are homeless feel part of a community.

Outcomes achieved:

We asked young people what, if anything, they are going to do differently as a result of their Nightstop stay. Their responses (listed in full below) indicate a desire to be more settled within their community:

“I now have a job and volunteer work; I am now an active member for the community.”

“Try to look for a hostel get a permanent place to stay. Get a job. Pay rent. Live life.”

“Accept any other accommodation that is offered to me.”

“Work with the services involved with Nightstop.”

“I am going to stick at everything that I am doing to make sure I can get into supported accommodation and try and gain custody of my son.”

“Look for job, try to get into an accommodation.”

“Appreciate smaller things. i.e. a cup of tea.”

“Budgeting.”

Feedback on Nightstop from young people

We asked young people if they could think of anything that could have improved the Nightstop service. Their responses are listed in full below:

“No, it's spot on.”

“No, it was blooming amazing.”

“Longer placement in one place to offer security.”

“If I didn't have to get out so early and go in so early.”

“If it was possible to leave my bags at the host's house.”

“Yes, if you offer a Nightstop place to someone, don't change your mind and give it to someone else.” *

* This young woman was placed with Nightstop for one night and could not be placed for a second night as another young person, considered more vulnerable (under age 18), had been referred to the project and only one host was available for that night. She went on to stay with friends that night and came back to Nightstop later that week.

We have explored some of these issues, together with feedback from the young people we interviewed, below.

Lack of awareness of Nightstop

Only 40 per cent of young people experiencing homelessness that we surveyed (seven out of 18) had heard of Nightstop before being placed in a host's home. More funding to promote the scheme was suggested in various answers by five hosts.

With the closure of Connexions services, combined with cuts to mental health and other youth services (who refer young people to Nightstop), we are concerned that young people may be even less likely to know about Nightstop in future. In the context of increasing youth homelessness, Depaul Nightstop UK and the local Nightstop services may want to consider promoting the service to a wider range of potential referral agencies, hosts and to young people at risk directly, funding permitting.

Lack of availability and moving between host homes

In 2010 across all Nightstop services 2,263 young people could not be offered a place with a host; in 35 per cent of cases this was because there was no host available, indicating a shortage of hosts in some areas (most of the remaining young people who could not be offered a place were outside of Nightstop's criteria).

The project workers in Sussex Nightstop, which has been open for just a year, are acutely aware of the limitations of not having enough hosts available:

“It's currently our policy to arrange Nightstop on a night by night basis, we can't guarantee that a young person will be back with the same host or have accommodation the following night, due to the small number of hosts we have and number of young people who could be referred each day.”

The disruption of having to move around every day was the biggest frustration that young people had with the Nightstop model, as explained by one interviewee:

“Every day was with new people. I'd have to get up every day and go to housing services to find another place to stay for that night. I had a broken foot at the time and was carrying a massive bag around with me.”

(Female, age 17)

The project worker did support this young woman with transport to and from the hosts' homes. However, she explained the long-term implication of this disruption on her living situation. Her preference was to find settled accommodation in the immediate area (of the Nightstop project, where her family, friends and college were also based), but she became so frustrated with the displacement of staying with different hosts every day that she decided to move in with extended family in a different area. This meant that she was removed from the waiting list for local settled accommodation and had to move to a different college. Above all, this young woman spoke of the frustrations at the lack of influence she had over where she lived.

Most of the young people we spoke to stated how beneficial Nightstop was in the pathway to finding settled accommodation. Nightstop Plus (where young people can stay with a host for up to three weeks) seemed to deliver the biggest outcomes in terms of the positive changes in young people's life. Unfortunately though this is being scaled back in one area due to a lack of funding (for host expenses, the management and support of longer hosting relationships and recruitment and support of additional hosts to meet demand from new referrals).

The only complaints about the service came from young people who were moved around every day. Four young people who participated in the research (three interviewees and one survey respondent) spoke about the impact of having to take their bags with them every day (three of whom were attending college). One project explained their policy to us:

“ We have a policy that young people don’t leave any bags at the hosts address; because of the nature of the service they may not be placed with the same host again ... and it also puts volunteers in a vulnerable position as there is then the risk of allegation of theft from the young person. ”

(Nightstop Project Worker)

This policy seems perfectly reasonable when young people are likely to be moved every day. However, to have the policy in place to protect the hosts from allegations of theft seems over-cautious. Trust – that the young person won’t steal the host’s belongings and that the host won’t steal the young person’s belongings – must exist for the model to survive and thrive.

Living with strangers

Only one young person we interviewed (out of eight) said that they didn’t like the idea of Nightstop as they felt uncomfortable staying in a stranger’s home. Another said that they found it a little daunting at first but then soon warmed to the situation when the host became more talkative with them.



“ I was scared of staying in some random person’s house ... It felt warm and welcoming after I settled in, but at first I was scared. She [the host] didn’t really talk in the beginning to let me come around, but once I came around we had good chats.”

(Female, age 18)

Perhaps providing more information on the hosts that the young people are going to be staying with would put their minds at ease.

One young person we interviewed suggested the young people could be asked to complete a form about their likes and dislikes so that this could be passed on to the Nightstop host.

Feedback from the hosts

We asked hosts to rate on a score of 1 to 5 how helpful Nightstop staff are; the average score was 4.76 out of 5. Three hosts gave feedback on what more Nightstop could do to support them:

“ More funding. The payments for hosting needs to be a minimum of £15 per night. As an evening meal, full English breakfast, use of washing machine, bath/shower is the norm-most nights.”

Nightstop services set their own levels for hosts’ expenses, from £10-25 per night.

“ The one thing I have a bit of grievance about is that they [Nightstop] are unwilling (usually) to reimburse the young people’s mobile top-ups, which can make it difficult for me to keep in touch with changing situations.”

“ More information as to what happens to the young people.”

The hosts clearly feel a responsibility towards the young people and are keen to ensure that they are supported in the long term.

When asked if they had ever felt uncomfortable by the presence of a young person in their home, 15 out of 23 (65 per cent) said no. In their survey responses, seven hosts flagged up eight incidents between them, ranging from a minor theft to a lack of personal hygiene in a young person who stayed with them. Just eight incidents over 57 years’ of combined experience of hosting demonstrates the relevance of the training and robust risk-assessment process when placing young people with a host.

When asked what they get out of hosting (in an open question), 13 hosts gave answers that they mostly enjoy helping young people, whilst seven hosts’ answers suggested that they mainly like young people’s company.

“ A sense of being able to help young people through a crisis in their lives. The chance to meet some fascinating and admirable people.”

“ What I do is simple; I treat them as if they are a part of my family; I enjoy their company and feel privileged to meet them.”

We asked if the hosts had felt they had made a difference in young people's lives. 17 out of 23 responded that they had made a positive difference in some way.

“ Sometimes things just seem right. 1 girl was with me for 3 months. We still see each other - she no longer self-harms and is not anorexic and is working and happy.”

Two of the young people we spoke to during the interviews said that they were still in touch with the hosts they stayed with (or their family members).

“ I have listened, sometimes late into the night. We have tried to ensure them a safe and peaceful sleep.”

The emphasis on a peaceful night's sleep is interesting; especially given stress that young people told us they felt whilst they were homeless and the prevalence of mental health issues as outlined in Figure 8 (page 17).

Project's concerns about the impact of funding cuts

As well as flagging up a lack of funding to grow and develop the Nightstop service locally, two services also flagged up concerns about the impact of the recent wave of cuts on referral agencies and the closure of Connexions services:

“ This worries me because I don't believe they no longer have homeless clients, there's just nobody to do the referrals anymore!”

(Nightstop Project Worker)

Cost of Nightstop services

The cost of the Nightstop services reviewed was between £40-120k per year, depending on the number of bed nights provided, geographical area covered, and other services delivered (for example, one service delivers mediation in conjunction with the Nightstop service). For some Nightstops the cost per bed night is around £90, but this figure does depend on usage and can go up if the number of referrals are low.

However, the primary advantage of Nightstop is not that the service is inexpensive, but that it is safe and suitable accommodation available for young people when needed urgently. Nightstop can be more costly than Bed and Breakfast accommodation in the short term, but B&B offers young people less support in times of crisis and there is clear guidance from central Government that it is not considered suitable for 16-17 year olds except in an emergency and only then for a maximum of six weeks.

In addition, what can happen in some local authorities is that a young person is left in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for longer periods. In their 2008 extensive study of 16-17 year olds experiencing homelessness, Pleace *et al.* estimated that the average total period of time spent in temporary accommodation was 6.9 months (although the average wait is likely have reduced recently). It is likely therefore, that the time-limited nature of Nightstop ensures a clear focus by Nightstop staff and referral agencies on quickly securing the next step for young people, removing the likelihood of them languishing in Bed and Breakfast or other temporary accommodation for long periods.

Recommendations

1. Increased partnership working with referral agencies and wider availability of information about Nightstop to young people at risk of homelessness.

The awareness level of Nightstop amongst young people is low, with very few self-referrals being reported.

Furthermore, Nightstop services have reported that a consequence of the recent wave of cuts has been a reduction in the capacity of referral agencies, which leads to concerns that young people will fall through the net and drift into sofa surfing then rough sleeping when their options run out. We recommend, therefore, that Depaul Nightstop UK and local services consider how they can best promote Nightstop, in partnership with other agencies, including (when possible) to young people at risk of homelessness directly (although caution must be given to ensure that the safety and comfort of Nightstop does not become an incentive to leave home).

Our research also confirmed that 16-17 year olds are still being placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation in some areas. We therefore recommend that Nightstop services work with Social Services teams (as well as housing departments) to offer Nightstop as a safe alternative to B&B for young people.

2. Working in partnership with agencies to support a return home, where possible.

Most of the young people we interviewed did not leave home by their own choice; they were forced to leave by their parents after family relationships had broken down. However, many family relationships were evidently repaired by having the benefit of some 'breathing space' and/or through formal support such as family mediation (one in five young people staying with Nightstop in 2010 – whose situation was known - ultimately returned to their family home).

Our evaluation of Reconnect, Depaul UK's homelessness prevention service, showed that improvements in family relationships following family mediation have *"a knock-on effect on other areas of a young person's life; including improving their engagement or entry into employment or education, their ability to deal with challenging situations, and avoid negative or damaging relationships."* (Insley, 2011)

We therefore recommend that all Nightstop services seek to collaborate with or provide family mediation or reconciliation services (funding permitting) to capitalise on the value of some ‘time out’ of the family home (as this is widely considered the best place for a young person to live in terms of attainment of positive outcomes).

3. Increased joint working with statutory agencies to support the young person’s next move after Nightstop.

Although most Nightstop services we spoke to do work in collaboration with statutory agencies to secure the young person’s next move, this works better in practice in some areas than others. However, our research discovered that half of young people who were staying with Nightstop at the point of our survey were expecting that their next move would be to stay with friends or didn’t know where they were staying after their current Nightstop host.

We heard from Nightstop services that supporting young people’s next move works most effectively as part of a joint working protocol. We therefore recommend that all local authorities develop joint working between accommodation agencies and other services that can help young people’s transition from emergency temporary accommodation to supported and then ultimately settled accommodation. Furthermore, that young people’s complex support needs are simultaneously addressed.

4. Depaul Nightstop UK supports services to recruit more hosts and increase the number of projects offering Nightstop Plus, to avoid young people being moved around daily.

The young people we spoke to reported the most improvement in terms of their outlook, health and wellbeing when they stayed with one or two hosts for a few weeks. In contrast, the stress and disruption caused by having to move from household to household every day was evident in a small number of young people we spoke to. The single biggest thing that young people wanted Nightstop to improve on was not to be moved around so much.

Although some services are facing the reality of a significant lack of hosts and therefore having to move young people every day, most Nightstops we spoke to aim to keep the young person with a host for around three days (depending on the availability of hosts). Whilst this model may have been appropriate when more funding was available for supported accommodation projects and numbers of young people experiencing homelessness was in decline, it would appear that young people now need to stay with Nightstop longer.

More hosts who are available to accommodate young people on a slightly longer term basis (i.e. a few days to a few weeks, as opposed to one or two nights at a time) seemed to be needed in most Nightstop services we spoke to. A national awareness campaign, run in conjunction with local volunteer recruitment campaigns is likely to have the biggest impact on increasing the number of hosts available.

5. Bringing down the unit cost of some services

This evaluation did not seek to undertake a detailed benchmarking exercise of all Nightstop services. We therefore recommend that Depaul Nightstop UK considers undertaking a wider and more thorough

benchmarking exercise to help services understand and control their unit costs; then advise on how the service can be delivered more efficiently when costs are high.

6. Proactive development of Nightstop in areas not yet covered.

The map of services on page 6 provides a clear indication of the areas where a Nightstop service exists and the gaps in services. Although Depaul Nightstop UK has undertaken some work in the past to encourage the development of services (particularly in areas where there is high use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for 16-17 year olds), the gaps in services indicate that more could be done.

Depaul Nightstop UK could therefore consider undertaking a mapping exercise to identify the authorities who would most benefit from a Nightstop service, then work with funders, statutory and voluntary agencies to extend services where needed. In order to maximise cost-effectiveness we recommend that boundary areas of existing services be widened, where possible, rather than creating new services.



Conclusion

In the face of adversity, the hopes and aspirations of most young people experiencing homelessness that we spoke to were very humble, mostly wanting their own place; somewhere to call home. Their resilience in the face of circumstances that most of us would find crippling was clear to see.

When a young person becomes homeless the system is not perfect, but most young people we spoke to were on a path to finding settled accommodation. However, there are gaps in provision, when young people need to wait to get into supported accommodation.

The very nature of Nightstop, as emergency temporary accommodation, means that staff and hosts need to 'be ready' for a referral. In services covering a smaller rural geographical area this means that the unit costs can be higher than other forms of temporary accommodation (although in many areas there are often no alternative forms of temporary accommodation). However, as this evaluation has confirmed, Nightstop is far more suitable for young people who are experiencing homelessness and positively prevents young people from rough sleeping or sofa surfing when they become homeless.

This is Nightstop's primary benefit – finding young people somewhere safe to stay for a few days or weeks, in a volunteer's home, whilst more settled accommodation is found. However, Nightstop is not simply an accommodation search agency – the fact that young people are staying in hosts' homes makes them feel safe and welcome; they report feeling healthier, less stressed and more positive about their future.

The hosts, too, benefit from helping young people and enjoy their company. It is a perfect example of a community based solution to a local need.

“ From someone who's been on Nightstop, to anyone else out there...it definitely helps. Even though at the time your life is in the gutter, it does pick up once you've been with Nightstop, it does get a lot better.”

(Male, age 18)

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*Names have been changed. All images used in this report are of young people that Depaul UK has worked with. The young people pictured are not the subject of the case study stories.

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Depaul UK helps young people who are homeless, vulnerable and disadvantaged. We are passionate about what we do, working in the very heart of local communities.

We protect young people by finding them a place to call home.

We prevent young people becoming homeless by rebuilding family relationships and offering through the gate support to young offenders.

We provide young people with the chance to fulfil their potential through education, volunteering and training.

Depaul UK is part of Depaul International, a group of charities working to tackle homelessness around the world.