



Caring in Bristol:

Nightstop

Preventing homelessness
for young people

Key facts

Location

Bristol, South West England

Grant

£115,075

Duration

1 year

Start Date

1/1/14

Client group

Young people at risk of or already sleeping rough

Supported during the period of the grant

156 young people

Contact details

Silver Street, Bristol BS1 2PY

0117 9244444

info@caringinbristol.org.uk

www.caringinbristol.co.uk

Overview

Future Ready funding helped Caring in Bristol build its capacity and develop and pilot a Nightstop service.

A Homelessness Transition Fund grant enabled it to continue the service, offering emergency accommodation, through local host families and support to stay off the streets, to 136 young people in its first year.

Caring in Bristol's Nightstop has now secured Big Lottery funding for the next four years, and is a crucial element of the local youth homelessness strategy.

“We'd have never done it without the Future Ready grant. It's all about development and learning; the organisation has been transformed, from branding, IT and finance to the management group and governance processes. It gave us the confidence to apply for more funding.”

Charity Development Lead, Caring in Bristol

Identifying need and building capacity

A previous Bristol based Nightstop project had closed in 2010, leaving what project partners Kids Company called 'a huge gap' in support for young people.

Caring in Bristol wanted to fill this gap. It was a small unincorporated charity, then called 'Caring at Christmas', which received all of its income from donations. It initially applied for a £25,000 Future Ready Fund grant (matched by the organisation's reserves), which helped it to build capacity, develop and pilot a Nightstop project, attain accreditation from Depaul Nightstop UK, and gather evidence of local need.

The charity rebranded as Caring in Bristol, and became a charity limited by guarantee. The Charity Development Lead, who led the process for Caring in Bristol, says that this funding was crucial: 'the Future Ready grant was a catalyst that sent the charity on a journey.'

After running the project for an initial six months, the organisation successfully applied for £115,000 for one year from the main Homelessness Transition Fund to deliver a full Nightstop project, with three full time members of staff.

At the end of its year of HTF funding, the project went on to secure a £500,000 grant from the Big Lottery, which has secured the project for four years, from 2015 to 2019.

The Nightstop project

The project arranges emergency and temporary accommodation for young homeless people aged 16 to 25. It gives young people a safe place to stay in the homes of trained and vetted individuals through a volunteer 'Host Network'. Bristol Nightstop Hosts offer a warm room to stay in their own home, an evening meal, breakfast, support and compassion. They are recruited, trained, supported and supervised by project workers.

The young people are supported by key workers who also advocate on their behalf, helping them to move quickly on to more permanent accommodation, such as local authority or private rented sector accommodation, to return home or to find another place to stay.

The project is open access, with young people referred from partners across Bristol.

Outcomes

During its first year (July 2013-July 2014) the project supported 136 young people, recruited 32 hosts, and provided 456 host nights. Nightstop arranged suitable supported or private rented sector accommodation for almost half (61) of these young people.

Outcomes for others included returning to their families, being referred to the local authority, being supported to find

accommodation by other agencies, or finding their own solutions. Only one young person reported sleeping rough after being supported by Nightstop.

Preventing homelessness

The project gave young people who had nowhere to sleep that night a safe place to stay, immediately preventing rough sleeping on that night. It then supported them to stay off the streets by finding suitable, more permanent accommodation for them.

“I was working and it stopped suddenly. After one month I had no money for the rent. If Nightstop had not helped, I would have stayed outside (on the street) and it would have been difficult for me.”

Tahir, Nightstop client

Project staff and partners felt that it can become much harder to support someone even after a relatively short period on the streets, and they can be vulnerable to exploitation by others on the street. By providing an immediate response wherever possible, the project helped young people to avoid becoming part of the street community.

Providing time to find a suitable housing solution

Being able to stay with a host family for several days or weeks buys time for the Nightstop workers to gather the evidence needed for a local authority housing application, help the young person find suitable accommodation and support them with other issues they might be facing. It gives the young person time to reflect and make plans:

“Having a place to stay, I could think about what to do next. I could discuss what I was planning to do, and (the staff) could help me. I got a job as a delivery driver and I found a room.”

Tahir, Nightstop client

Psychologically-informed support at a time of crisis

The young people referred to Bristol Nightstop are in crisis, and the provision of psychologically-informed support is crucial to the service. Workers take a flexible, 'fluid and needs-driven' approach, according to the project lead, with support tailored to each individual. This is highly valued by project partners Kids Company:



“We know (the young people we refer) will be well looked after, their thoughts and feelings will be heard and their emotional state cared for. The team are very mindful that they are experiencing a trauma, and there’s a practice acknowledgement of this.”

Director of Post-16 Services, Kids Company Bristol

Staying with a family rather than (for example) in supported housing or a bed and breakfast, is also important, as the Nightstop project lead explains:

“There’s an undeniable positive experience the young people have with hosts. They’re doing such an open, giving thing, and I think that affects the young people. There’s a huge amount of trust in letting someone stay in your home ... It’s not institutionalised, it’s a normal house. When you’ve just been kicked out of home, for kindness to come from a host is a very special thing.”

Charity Development Lead, Caring in Bristol



Partnership working

The project works closely with a range of partners, and takes regular referrals from 1625 Independent People, Bristol City Council and Kids Company.

The Director of Post-16 Services at Kids Company Bristol says that it is helpful that Kids Company and Caring in Bristol share a building. Often the young people have to leave their host accommodation during the day, and they can come to Kids Company’s drop-in service then, where they can receive practical and emotional support. Once they have moved on from their host accommodation, Kids Company can provide long term counselling or therapy, working with the Nightstop keyworker to determine their respective roles in providing continuing support.

Caring in Bristol also shares a building with YMCA, which runs a café on the ground floor that Nightstop is able to use to have conversations and conduct key working sessions with the young people. Food and drinks can be purchased for the young people on a tab, and the Nightstop manager says that the informality and ‘normality’ of this environment are an important part of their ‘young person-friendly’ approach.

Influencing local strategy

Because of his role running Nightstop, Caring in Bristol’s Charity Development Lead now sits on the city-wide strategic young people’s housing development group. Through this he has been able to influence the Youth Housing Action Plan in Bristol.

Learning from Caring in Bristol

- **A grant process that supports learning** – The two-stage grants process (with Future Ready funding preceding main grant funding) provided the opportunity to learn and develop, and was crucial in building organisational confidence and skills to apply for longer term funding.
- **Partnership working** – the project works with a range of referring agencies and support services, ensuring that a wrap-around service tailored to each individual’s needs is provided.
- **Immediate access to accommodation** – the provision of accommodation on the same day that young people are referred prevents them becoming part of the street community and helps them begin to live normally after a time of crisis.
- **A psychologically-informed approach** – the project takes a caring approach that recognises the trauma that the young people have experienced and attends to their emotional needs. Important principles are flexibility, informality, the provision of emotional support, and accommodation within a family rather than an institution.
- **Advocacy** – Support for young people to overcome ‘street level bureaucracy’, understand their rights, and access the housing and support they are entitled to, are of central importance in securing longer-term housing.

Tahir

Helping a homeless young man to avoid sleeping rough and find a job and a home

Tahir (not his real name), aged 24, was living in rented accommodation when he lost his job suddenly. He spent his savings paying the rent, but he was unable to find more work so was evicted. The council referred him to a hostel which was full, and they referred him to Nightstop, which found him host accommodation and helped him find work and his own place to stay.

“(Nightstop) were very welcoming. I stayed in three different places – I’m still in touch with (the host families), I texted them when I got a job.

“(The workers) were very helpful. They did a CV update with me, and I did training. I got

a job as a delivery driver, and I found a room advertised in a shop. I said I wanted to get my taxi badge and (my Nightstop keyworker) told me how to do it – I’ve got it now, I’ve registered with a taxi company and I’ve found a car you can buy on instalments.

“Life is getting better. I’m proud I got a job as soon as I could. Going quickly meant I left space for someone else who’s struggling. If I have a place with two rooms one day, I’d like to (become a host and) have people from Nightstop.”

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