

Microsoft design IT winner

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LOCAL CHARITY WINS NATIONAL MICROSOFT COMPETITION

A special IT system, which was designed in conjunction with local youth homeless charity, St Basils, has today been announced as the winner of the coveted Microsoft DesignIT award. The charity will now receive £15,000 towards making the idea a reality for thousands of young people in the Midlands.

The brainchild of St Basils fundraiser, Steve Rainbow, the 'Virtual Rucksack' emerged as a result of initial discussions between St Basils and Digital Birmingham, the strategic partnership charged with ensuring the benefits of digital technologies are available to all in the city.



Designed by Birmingham-based BMG Research's business analyst, James Elliott, the system will address one of the biggest difficulties faced by young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Allowing users to create a place online, the system gives young people a safe and secure place where they can store and access important personal information such as national insurance numbers, bank details and work and address histories, protecting them from theft or loss.

A centralised and web-based resource, the 'Virtual Rucksack' can also be linked to other support services such as careers, housing and health. For St Basils, it will provide a digital record of each young person's important details when they require support, both at the point of delivery and between visits.

James Elliott has always been a keen supporter of St Basils, he said "Winning the DesignIT competition goes to show that when IT specialists are able to work closely with the core business, problems can be solved quickly and efficiently. The 'Virtual Rucksack' was designed to make a tangible difference to the lives of thousands of young people in the Midlands and to see it win such a prestigious competition is great.

"Thanks to everyone who voted, the system will make sure that safety and security is a priority in what is a difficult time in a young person's life."

Microsoft's DesignIT competition, now in its third year, aims to help UK charities by inviting IT professionals to come up with ways to solve their IT challenges through innovative and creative ideas. The initiative is designed to highlight and celebrate the creative and positive contributions made by IT professionals outside of their usual work parameters to help a charity.

Bruce Lynn, head of the Server Business Group, Microsoft Ltd said "We know that IT professionals are asked to solve problems on a daily basis, and we wanted to recognise this. James' design is a great example of the ingenuity which is consistently demonstrated by IT professionals across the UK. IT is one of the UK's fastest growing industries and Microsoft believes that it has a responsibility to encourage and recognise the talent within the industry."

Following on from the win, the 'Virtual Rucksack' will be progressed as a joint initiative by Digital Birmingham who will be working with St Basils to develop the project further.

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Editor notes

St Basils:

Based in Birmingham and the West Midlands St Basils is one of the largest agencies in the UK working with young people age 16 to 25 at risk of homelessness or actually homeless. The company recently received the Housing Corporation 'Gold Award' for preventing youth homelessness and sharing its learning and good practice with others.

Appointing St Basils as the 'National Centre of Excellence in preventing Youth Homelessness' the government has committed to a whole programme of research and improvements to be lead by St Basils and to share good practice across the country.

BMG Research:

BMG Research is one of the largest agencies in the UK to specialise in the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of information to realise effective consultation and engagement. Every year BMG Research consults more than 300 000 individuals about all the things that matter to people, including work, leisure, education and the environment as well as exploring aspirations and hopes for the future. The data collected is used by a range of public bodies to assist in the development of their services to the community.

Clients include local authorities, central government, health authorities, the police and the many partners that these organisations work with. They all have one

thing in common: they all know that people matter.

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