

Funding needed: Up to £100,000 per annum for at least three years

May 2008



- n Youth homelessness is a costly, damaging and growing problem
- n St Basils helps young people to avoid homelessness and move on with their lives
- n Further funding could help it to improve the lives of more vulnerable young people
- n St Basils is an excellent and well-run charity achieving impressive results

Issue: Youth homelessness is a costly, damaging and growing problem

Youth homelessness is a wide and complex issue, including everything from a 16 year old who has had a row with his mum and is sleeping on his friend's sofa, to a 24-year-old drug addict in a hostel. Only 16-17 year olds and young mothers stand a decent chance of getting accommodation from the local authorities. Others will have to rely on their friends and family, or end up in a hostel. The costs associated with housing and supporting homeless young people are huge—it costs local authorities around £7,000 to house a young person for a year.

The biggest single cause of youth homelessness is family conflict. A common scenario is that of a teenage boy not getting on with his mum's new boyfriend, leading to rows and, eventually, the boy having to move out. Other young people end up homeless after choosing to leave home: they may have misconceptions about what living alone is like, or assume that they will get housed by the council if it all goes wrong.

But homelessness is often just one of a number of problems facing these young people. For example, 40% of St Basils' clients have no or very few qualifications; many have histories of truancy and some have brushes with the law. Homelessness can deepen and exacerbate these problems. For example, it is hard to go to college or hold down a job without a settled home.



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Telling it like it is

Becky is one of St Basils' 'peer educators'. She goes into schools to talk about the realities of homelessness.

'They [the pupils] ask things like why are you homeless, why couldn't your mum look after you and so on. I've done a lot of sessions and got the experience behind me, I am more confident. We are now talking about doing sessions in Youth Offending Institutions and with care leavers. I can share my experience to prevent them from ending up in the same situation as me.'

'My advice is to stay at home as long as you can. Get things sorted first like a job and accommodation. Don't get pregnant thinking you will get a flat—that doesn't happen.'

Response: St Basils helps young people to avoid homelessness and move on with their lives

St Basils works with 16-25 year olds in Birmingham who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Around 3,500 young people approach it for advice and other services each year, and just under a thousand are accommodated in its projects. NPC is particularly interested in its work to prevent young people from becoming homeless in the first place, through activities such as:

- **Schools work:** St Basils takes trained formerly homeless young people into schools to educate teenagers about the realities of housing problems and homelessness. It delivered this to over a thousand young people last year.
- **Family mediation:** It works with young people at risk of homelessness due to family conflict, by offering family mediation services to them and their families. Over 250 young people used this service in 2007.
- **Housing advice:** St Basils gives housing advice to young people through a drop-in centre in the middle of Birmingham. It also works with the local authority to give advice to young people approaching the council for housing help.

It also helps to move people out of homelessness, for example through 'Life Skills' courses, on issues such as budgeting. These lead to accredited qualifications and give young people a better chance of being able to maintain their tenancy. Increasingly, the charity is sharing knowledge with other agencies through conferences and publications. St Basils is a registered charity and also a housing association. It has 173 staff. The bulk of its £5.8m annual income is statutory (around 90%). This is normal for a housing charity.

Results: Further funding could help it to improve the lives of more vulnerable young people

St Basils collects detailed data on the young people it supports and works hard to understand the impact of its services.

Some results of the homelessness prevention work include:

- **Housing advice:** Following St Basils' work in a local neighbourhood housing office, there is a 92% decrease in the number of young people needing emergency accommodation. The local council believes that this was mostly due to St Basils work.
- **Schools work:** St Basils tries to measure the short-term impact of its work in schools asking pupils 'When do you think is the best age to leave home?' before and after the session. On average, 55% showed a marked difference in the age that they thought it was right to move home—the mean age rose from 16 to 19. A further 40% showed some smaller shift in their opinion of a sensible age to leave home.
- **Family mediation:** Of the 267 young people who received mediation from St Basils in 2006/2007, 95% report that they have had a 'positive outcome' as a result of the service they received. A positive outcome can be, for example, where a conflict has been resolved between family members.

St Basils is held in extremely high regard by the rest of the sector for the quality of its work. Its work preventing homelessness won an award from the Housing Corporation, who funded it to document its approach and share it with other agencies.

Feedback:

'Our mediator really understood where we were coming from and helped us to see each others point of view. By talking things and reaching compromises our relationship improved greatly.'

Mark, 16, who benefited from family mediation

'I am going away with renewed faith in possibility; my passion and belief in youth empowerment have been confirmed.'

Delegate at St Basils youth-led conference

'The high regard in which St Basils is held by public and voluntary agencies, some of which are competitors for grants, donations and influence, is remarkable.'

Housing Corporation

Geographical coverage

Local ————— National

Focus of approach

Individual ——— Community ——— Services ——— Society

Life stage

Innovation or pilot ————— Established approach

Replicability or scalability

Little scope ————— Considerable scope

Annual income (£'000s)

2005	2006	2007
5,506	5,498	5,803

Staff

Full-time	Part-time	Volunteer
136	31	36

Recommendation: St Basils is an excellent and well-run charity achieving impressive results

St Basils delivers high quality services to thousands of vulnerable young people in Birmingham, and is regarded as a beacon of good practice nationally. It has developed some interesting services to complement its housing services. Only some of these attract statutory funding. Therefore St Basils relies on private donations to support its services that build on its existing services and expertise.

One of St Basils particular strengths is its staff. The chief executive, Jean Templeton, is an inspiring leader, and is supported by an enthusiastic and ambitious team. The management are currently looking for opportunities to expand its services in order to help more young people to escape and avoid homelessness.

St Basils is also distinctive for the effort it puts into giving its young people a say in how the charity is run. Each service has a 'youth representative' who makes sure that the young people using it are happy. At the governance level, alongside the trustee and management board, sits the 'Youth Advisory Board'. This is made up of 15 young people currently using St Basils' services (and also one former user), and serves as a source of criticism, ideas and inspiration.

Examples of how St Basils could use donations include:

- £10,000 could support the activities of the Youth Advisory Board for one year.
- £100,000 could allow it to continue its innovative 'Life Skills' programme.

NPC considers St Basils to be a low risk charity. Given its size, stability and ambition, donors can feel comfortable investing significant funds into this charity.

St Basils is an effective charity reducing youth homelessness in Birmingham.

www.stbasils.org.uk

New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) is a charity that advises all types of donors on how to ensure their money has high impact.

This document describes one of the charities recommended by NPC in its report on homelessness in the UK. For more information see our report *Where the heart is* at www.philanthropycapital.org. Names and potentially identifying details in case studies have been changed.

To discuss this or any of our other recommendations, please contact Harry Charlton on 020 7785 6309.

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Glossary

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Funding needed	amount or range of funding required
Results	impact of this charity's work on people's lives – NPC looks at results in terms of three dimensions: Breadth – number of people affected Depth – intensity of results for each individual affected (greatest depth means a life-saving intervention; lowest means a minor interaction) Change – degree of systemic change brought about by this work; equivalently whether it tackles causes (high) or treats symptoms (low)
Risk	level of risk threatening the delivery of specified results
Difficulty of fundraising	level of difficulty associated with fundraising for this charity (may be due to unpopularity of field of work or lack of fundraising capacity)

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Geographical coverage	charity's area of work – local, regional or national – or a number of these levels
Focus of approach	main groups with which the charity works: Individual – working directly with individuals, providing services and support to improve their quality of life Community – working with communities and/or families, providing activities to strengthen community life Services – working with organisations, funders and policymakers to improve services Society – working at a national level to change attitudes and tackle causes
Life stage	organisation's developmental stage – from pilot/start-up to mature, established organisation
Replicability or scalability	potential for replication of the charity's model, or growth of the charity itself

Good giving principles

- **Pro-active selection of charities based on results:** Donors should support charities that are achieving excellent results for the people that they serve, rather than charities that have the most effective and professional fundraising teams or the lowest administrative costs (all organisations need administrative costs in order to be effective; low admin costs may in fact be a sign of an inefficient organisation).
 - **'Light touch' engagement with charities:** In most instances we recommend that donors minimise the demands on the time and resources of the charities they fund. In practice, this means not imposing arduous reporting requirements and limiting visits and contact with charities.
 - **Funding organisations, not projects:** As a donor, it is tempting to stipulate that a grant can only be used for a particular project, because this makes it much easier to see the direct charitable impact of the donation. However, we believe that this practice can limit the impact of the donation. Firstly, it may cause charities to propose projects that meet the donor's objectives but which stray from their core mission. Secondly, if circumstances change then charities are unable to respond. We believe that the charities we recommend can and should be trusted to make decisions in the best interests of the people they serve, and so in general we recommend that donors fund organisations, not projects. Practically, this means giving unrestricted funding.
 - **'Just right' donations - not too big, not too small:** Judging the right size for a donation to a charity is an art, not a science. If a donation is too big, there is a risk that rapid growth will create significant organisational problems, particularly when the donation runs out. At the other end of the scale, if a donor makes a small donation and requires a charity to go through application and reporting processes then the administrative burden may outweigh the benefit of the donation. Of course, small donations with no strings attached are always welcomed by charities. Our researchers works with charities to understand their financial needs, and recommend a suitable size for a donation. In general, we work on an assumption that contributing more than a third of an organisation's annual income may create problems. However, if a charity is looking to grow significantly and it has a robust strategy for growth, a larger grant may be entirely appropriate.
 - **Multi-year support:** We recommend that donors should provide multi-year support for charities, rather than giving them a lump sum in a single year. Choosing the right length for a grant depends on the specific case – as a guide, grant-making trusts often give three-year grants. Multi-year support gives charity leaders the opportunity to make long term plans to improve their organisations and build projects that will create and sustain improvements in the lives of the people they serve. It also allows donors to build longer-term relationships with the charities, if they wish.
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