



Preventing Youth Homelessness





'Trying hard and being well meaning is not enough, we want to get the results that help change young people's lives'

St Basils is a youth agency which uses housing as the medium to work with young people aged 16 - 25 to enable them to find and keep a home, to develop their confidence, skills and opportunities and to prevent homelessness. To do this we provide a range of services to young people in Birmingham and some of the surrounding areas of the West Midlands.

We believe that all young people have a potentially challenging journey to make from being a child to becoming a young adult. Most young people can make this journey successfully without the risk of being homeless and without specialist help. However, some young people are more vulnerable and have fewer resources or support at their disposal and for them becoming homeless during that transition is a very tangible risk with long term consequences.

We know that homelessness or the threat of homelessness is a major barrier to young people making a successful transition and that it adds further risks and complications, young people and services should not accept homelessness as inevitable for any young person.

This drives us to focus on preventing homelessness in the first place and on preventing repeat episodes of homelessness once the first one has occurred.

- Each year we help over 4000 young people achieve some of the key results they need to avoid homelessness.
- St Basils provides a variety of supported accommodation, ranging from direct access to mother and baby accommodation.
- We provide floating support to young people in their own tenancies
- When young people we work with leave in a planned way, 90% of those sustain their tenancies for at least 12 months.
- In one area of Birmingham we helped to prevent 150 young people from entering bed and breakfast accommodation during a 9 month period.



The big picture

St Basils works with young people to enable them to find and keep a home, to develop their confidence, skills and opportunities and to prevent homelessness

The impact: (the long term change we want to achieve with young people) Young people are able to make the smoothest possible progress into adult life. They will be able to develop and sustain social, emotional and practical networks, form and sustain positive relationships and have the skills and resources to meet their full potential.

The outcomes : (the smaller changes that add up to our Impact) Young people make positive choices and have the knowledge, skills and networks that mean they do not become homeless in the first place. Where some one does become homeless they will have the resources, skills and experiences that reduce the risk of future homelessness and sustains their independence.



Our customers are mostly young people aged between 16 and 25, who are either at risk of being homeless or who are homeless. A newer customer group are young people aged 13 to 19 where we focus on helping them to think about how they can make the challenging transition into adult life and reduce the risk of becoming homeless during the process.





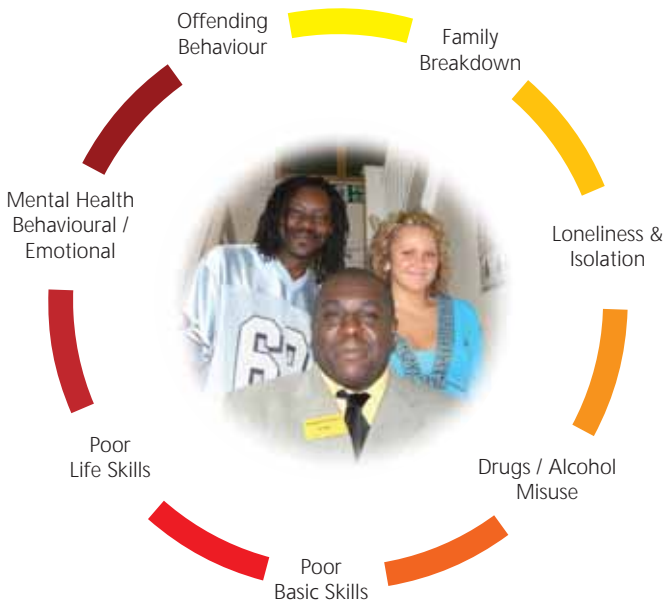
Some of our assumptions and ideas about change

The following are examples of the assumptions and ideas that underpin our work with young people, we could refer to this as our theory of change, or how we think change happens for young people and how we can contribute to that process. It is not a single theory but is based on a mixture of best practice, experience and the views of young people.

- The journey to becoming an adult is a challenging one for all young people, but for some the challenge is either too big or too complex to make that transition without support.
- Leaving home too early increases the risk of a young person becoming homeless.
- Homelessness is not inevitable even for the most chaotic young people, we believe we can move to a point where homelessness can be dramatically reduced and crisis avoided.
- Where a young person does become homeless this adds to the challenge of making the transition to sustainable adult life. Homelessness never makes it easier for people.
- Growing up is about making changes to your world and to how you relate to it.
- It is young people who have to make some of the key changes needed in order to make sustainable lives as adults, these include changes in how they feel, how they act and how they think.
- Families, communities and services have an important part to play in helping young people to make changes in the way they feel, act and think. This does not mean telling young people what to do but creating the conditions that promote positive change.
- Families, communities and services have an important part to play in helping to create change in the material conditions that young people have to deal with during their transition into adult life.
- The more young people can be engaged in deciding about their own lives, their environment and their communities the more likely they are to successfully move into independence.
- When young people have tangible evidence that they can succeed and change their own world for the better they make rapid progress on their journey.
- The more young people can contribute to the running of St Basils the more effective and relevant we will become and young people will see that they can influence the world around them.
- Young people need to understand their experience both from an individual perspective (the inside) and from a collective perspective (the outside) by joining these two perspectives together, young people can develop a critical analysis of the world they live in.
- Positive social networks reduce the risk of further exclusion, increase the range of resources and skills available to a person and help to smooth out the inevitable ups and downs of growing up.
- Services and networks that reflect a young person's cultural and emotional world make it more likely that they will form positive relationships and find positive role models.
- Services that are seen by others as socially valued can contribute to a young person's sense of self worth and promote positive change.

A roof is not enough

We believe that the young people we work alongside need help to create change in many areas of their lives.

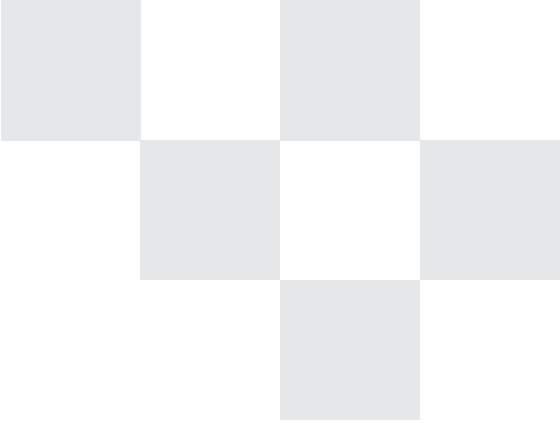


How we do it

St Basils' services are all based on prevention, this means both primary and secondary prevention. To achieve the outcomes we want, we work alongside young people and provide a continuum of services that range from mediation, education and advice as part of the primary prevention through to accommodation, life skills and floating support as part of the secondary prevention.

All this work is based on the principles of sound assessment and planning and will only work if we take young people seriously and build strong working relationships with them. We work alongside young people not at them! We work with young people as partners in their individual support, service delivery and development and governance for example our Youth Advisory Board (YAB).





GOVERNANCE

Youth Advisory Board (YAB): The Youth Advisory Board provides a dynamic and action focused opportunity for young people at St Basils to contribute to the running of the organisation. The Youth Advisory Board has a membership of 15 young people elected by their peers who are advisors to our Board of Directors and provide advise and expertise to the Directors and senior management team.

The YAB members are involved in internal quality assurance inspections, policy and strategy

decision making activities, delivering peer-led training and advocating on behalf of all St Basils service users. YAB has won the National Housing Federation INBIZ Award for Customer Engagement.

The YAB recognises and values the unique expertise that young people bring to service direction, delivery and improvement. It contributes to sustainability, cohesion and future-proofing for communities as well as for the organisation.

Continuum of Intervention



Principles that we work by

Our seven Principles to Work by describe what we believe in and helps us describe what this means to all who work with us.

These are:

- Young People First**
- Everybody Counts**
- Strength and Unity through Diversity**
- Working and Learning With Others**
- Delivery and Effectiveness**
- Accountability**
- Forward Thinking**

Our Services

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION SERVICES

Link Home Options and Housing Advice Service: St Basils Link works with young people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, to provide access to appropriate accommodation.

The support young people receive:

- Assessment of the individual's needs.
- Assessment of the housing options available to them.
- One-to-one support including agreement on an on-going action plan.
- Access to accommodation in the Birmingham area.
- A list of available accommodation that is updated daily.
- Benefit advice.
- Access to specialist services.
- Referral to St Basils family mediation services.
- Access to Life Skills training.
- Access to local furniture projects.

The Link works with around 3500 young people each year of which St Basils accommodates approximately 1000. The rest are referred to other accommodation providers and / or appropriate specialist services.

Home Options: Home options is a housing advice service for young people in area based neighbourhood offices. We provide a wide range of housing advice which is aimed at reducing the risk of homelessness and diverting young people from bed and breakfast accommodation. In effect it helps young people to delay the point at which they leave home by linking young people to a range of preventative services such as mediation.

In the initial 9 months of the Home Options prototype, staff working in one neighbourhood office were able to help 150 young people avoid moving into emergency accommodation and to help them access alternative support services. St Basils Home Options scheme operates in partnership with the Youth Offending Service and Birmingham City Council and is operated from St Basils Link Housing & Advice Centre.



FAMILY MEDIATION

The Family Mediation and Support service is funded by a variety of funding sources to assist in the Birmingham Youth Homelessness Strategy.

The aims of the service are to:

- Prevent homelessness by reducing crisis situations and/or promoting a planned move.
- Reduce the impact of poor relationships within families.
- Support young people to remain in the family home or stable accommodation, where suitable.
- Enable young people to make positive choices about their lives.
- Divert young people from using substances, which may put them at risk of becoming homeless.

The objectives of the service are:

- To provide Mediation and support to young people aged 13 –25, who wish to resolve conflict and improve/ rebuild relationships with people of importance to them.
- To assist in developing young peoples social and support networks.
- Provide Mediation and support to young people aged 13-19, who have substance misuse issues and /or offending behaviour, which are impacting on their relationship with their parent/carer which may result in them becoming homeless.
- To provide advice and guidance to young people and their parents/ carers around risk behaviour i.e. truancy, school exclusion.

Peer Led Work: St Basils recognises and embraces the skills and knowledge that young people can learn from each other. Young people are encouraged to lead on workshops, group activities as well as operate peer education projects. These have been around issues such as sexual health and drugs & alcohol – creating positive changes in young people's attitudes and practices.

LEARNING, SKILLS & WORK

STaMP (Schools Training and Mentoring Project): The STaMP project focuses on working in schools directly with young people and with the staff who support them. The key outcomes for the project are to ensure that young people have accurate information about finding and keeping a home and that professionals have robust tools that they can use to identify and support young people at risk of homelessness. Key to delivering these outcomes is the role of young people who have been homeless, in particular by acting as peer mentors and trainers.

STaMP won the Life Long Learning Award for Learning in Communities and the CIH Midlands Branch Innovation Award.

Life Skills Award: This is an accredited award that is run through St Basils and makes a unique contribution to young people developing confidence, skills and direct experience of success.

The modules cover topics that are directly relevant to young people, for example sexual health, drugs, cooking, budgeting, solving problems, contributing to the community etc.

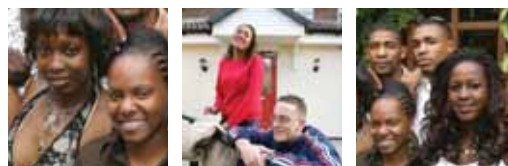


When young people complete the course they have an accredited qualification. This has practical implications; FE providers recognise the portfolio building skill required to complete the work and landlords look favourably on the course as essential life skills for sustaining tenancies have been met – thus reducing the risk of become homeless again.

Information, Advice & Guidance: All young people at St Basils are offered a free comprehensive information, advice & guidance service. Young people work with qualified staff to develop an action plan that highlights the appropriate route for them to take in order for them to fulfil their aspirations.



Our Services



ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORT

St Basils has supported accommodation projects in Birmingham, Solihull and Redditch accommodating hundreds of young people every night of the year. Young people are offered a package of support in all of our projects which includes intensive key working, access to support services i.e Resettlement & Floating Support; Learning, Skills & Work and Prevention Services.

Emergency / Direct Access Projects: 24 hour access to accommodation is available at three of St Basils Projects and is accessible through St Basils Link Housing & Advice and our emergency accommodation help lines.

Young people can stay at these projects for up to three months. During this time, young people are offered intensive advice, guidance and support that enables them to move on to the most appropriate accommodation that suits their individual needs.

Intensive Support (24 hours): These projects are staffed on a 24 hour basis and provide high levels of support to enable young people to learn independent living skills and develop their confidence and include our Foyer. These projects offer intensive support on education and training and life skills through regular key work sessions:

Supported: These projects provide high levels of support to enable young people to learn independent living skills and develop their confidence. These projects offer intensive support on education and training and life skills through regular key work sessions. However, these projects are not generally staffed during evenings and some weekends.

Semi-Independent: These projects have flexible levels of support and are seen to be the last step before moving to independent accommodation. Young people receive access to all St Basils services but by now the young people will be engaged into some kind of education, training and / or employment and are waiting for an offer of independent accommodation.

Mother & Baby Projects: St Basils works with young single parents and those who are pregnant. St Basils offer services to young people and over 40 young children. Young people are offered a full service including a resettlement programme in order to find suitable accommodation for them and their children.

St BASILS RESETTLEMENT CENTRE & FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICES

St Basils Resettlement Centre is based in the city centre and is the base for St Basils Floating Support Services. The centre also provides a central base for young people city wide to access groupwork and activities, which contributes towards their preparation for independent living. St Basils floating support services has access to permanent accommodation to enable a young person to move on from supported accommodation. The properties are offered via a consortia of Registered Social Landlords and via a service level agreement with the local authority to interview and re-house eligible young people.

St Basils Floating Support services offers support to young people in specialist areas which include:

- Floating Support for Care Leavers.
- Floating Support for Young Families.
- Floating Support for Lesbian and Gay young people.
- Floating Support for young people with Mental Health issues.
- Floating Support for young refugees.
- Floating Support for young people at risk and from BME groups.
- Intensive Floating Support.

A Floating Support Service is also provided in Solihull and Redditch for vulnerable young people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Our Credentials

- Housing Corporation Assessment – 4 green lights for Governance, Viability, Management and Development
- Housing Corporation GOLD Award for Tackling Homelessness 2006
- Chamber of Commerce – Diversity in Employment Award 2006
- BME Spark highly commended (services to vulnerable people in BME communities 2006)
- National Housing Federation INbiz Award for Customer Engagement 2005
- Investors in People recognition 2005
- Level B in Birmingham for Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework
- Audit Commission Inspection 2003 – Top rating for quality of service and commitment to continuous improvement
- Federation of Black Housing Organisations (FBHO) National Diversity Award
- Matrix Quality Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance
- Foyer Federation Accreditation
- Ofsted Accreditation for our nursery at Edmonds Court
- Chartered Institute of Housing Branch Innovation Award for STaMP (Schools Training and Mentoring Project)
- Community Legal Services Quality Mark



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