Making the difference to end rough sleeping

A handbook for day centres

Success
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Cover photo: Spires Day centre
Forewords

Homeless Link

Having a home is fundamental to our success in society, without it we fail to thrive or reach our potential. Not having a home is a marker of how we as a society think about those who are most vulnerable and excluded.

However, the nature of services is changing and the perception of and the public value that they create is being challenged. Welfare reform, funding changes, increased localisation and changing demographics have produced significant challenges to the way that things are done; often seen as threats to the way that we commission and provide services. Such circumstances also provide opportunities to rethink how, as homelessness services, we create public value for the people that we serve and the wider population.

Day centres have an opportunity to be at the heart of this change. They offer flexible community responses that genuinely help homeless people, regardless of the funding environment. Often small organisations they are able to be deft of foot in the way they work with individuals; unrestrained by contracts they are able to offer help in innovative and inventive ways. Based in communities they are local. As services and the sector change, this will be increasingly important.

There is a risk though. Small organisations reliant on the generosity of their local communities can struggle to create the capacity to design services effectively, falling back on offering limited support such as food and showers, rather than thinking of how this allows them to reach into the heart of communities and tackle the real issue of homelessness and rough sleeping.

This handbook seeks to provide that resource. It is the culmination of the hard work of many such day centres working with the staff at Homeless Link to understand and then shares what works and what will work. Going forward together; seeking new solutions to ending homelessness, this timely resource provides insight about what day centres could and should be there for alongside practical approaches, based on experience of how to get there. I hope that you will find it useful!

Mark McPherson
Director of Strategy, Partnership and Innovation, Homeless Link

Housing Justice

I would like to commend this handbook which recognises the vital role day centres play in tackling rough sleeping. You may be a new day centre or you may have been running since time immemorial, you may be open every day and see hundreds of people a week or only open for a few hours a couple of times a week and see less than 50 people – whatever your circumstances it is likely that you will find something interesting and useful in this handbook.

In fact it’s great that the unique ways in which day centres can be part of the work to end rough sleeping have been identified here by Homeless Link. This handbook recognises the diversity and independence of day centres – and also the huge possibilities that come from working in partnership with other services. Even though the majority of day centres do not depend on local authority funding, and all have found themselves picking up the pieces and filling the gaps as other commissioned services have been cut, this handbook offers ways in which services can be improved and become more effective. And, vitally, it shows how these changes can take place without detracting from day centres’ independence and diversity, and while still remaining true to their ethos.

We all know it’s easier to help someone if they have a secure roof over their heads, which is why ending rough sleeping should be the priority for us all. We don’t always use the same language but we are all motivated by the one desire to help our guests/visitors/service users/clients to find their way back from the edge to a true home. So I encourage you to use this handbook as a tool to enable you to offer the best possible service to the people who spend time in your day centre.

Alison Gelder
Chief Executive, Housing Justice
Introduction

On any one night in 2014, 2,744 people were sleeping rough in England. The cost of this both to individuals and wider society is huge.

People who find themselves sleeping rough are more likely than the average person to suffer from mental and physical ill health, be involved with the criminal justice system and be dependent on welfare benefits.

Day centres occupy a unique position in the homelessness sector and can play a key role in ending rough sleeping.

Your day centre is one of more than 200 in England. Overall, these services work daily with an average 8,500 people, many of whom sleep rough, or are at risk of sleeping rough. They are able to do this by a diverse range of funding streams, with only 29% relying on local authority funding. With cuts taking their toll on statutory services, day centres and other independently-funded community organisations have started to play a more significant role in providing services for people who sleep rough.

It is vital that day centres and other agencies work together to support people away from the streets as quickly as possible, offering sustainable alternatives to make sure no one slips through the net again and ends up back on the streets.

The aim of this handbook is to show how day centres can play a pivotal role in delivering these services.

Over the next few chapters, we'll look at the vision to end rough sleeping, why it is important and what it entails. We'll explore how this goal relates to your organisational ethos, and the unique role that your day centre can play in achieving it.

We'll also look at the value of working in partnership and becoming part of a network of local services dedicated to ending rough sleeping in your area.

Finally we’ll look at how your existing activities have already contributed to ending rough sleeping in your area, and we’ll discuss additional ways to improve your outcomes and increase the positive impact you have on the lives of the people you support.

On any one night in 2014, 2,744 people slept rough in England. The cost of this both to individuals and wider society is huge.

Photo: Spires Day Centre, Streatham

People who find themselves sleeping rough are more likely than the average person to suffer from mental and physical ill health, be involved with the criminal justice system and be dependent on welfare benefits.
1. Day Centres and the vision to end rough sleeping

1.1 Why the vision is important

Sleeping on the streets is harmful and dangerous, increasing the risk of severe illness, violence and early death.

As you probably see in your work every day, people who become homeless often suffer from complex underlying issues that can be exacerbated by living on the streets.

For as long as someone is living on the streets, they cannot be fully supported through their problems to move forward with their lives.

That is why it is vital that they are supported into safe accommodation quickly, and as a matter of priority.

1.2 The unique role of day centres

Given the unique nature of day centres, you are in a position to play a pivotal role in ending rough sleeping in your area.

- On average, each day centre will see more than 40 people per day with a range of housing needs.
- Most day centres offer open or low threshold access to people who may be excluded by other services – in particular, people with no recourse to public funds.
- Most day centres have no time limits on their services. This enables your staff and volunteers to develop trusting relationships with people who are considered hardest to engage.
- Some day centres serve communities where no other homelessness provision exists.
- Only 29% of day centres rely on local authority funding and none rely on welfare payments. The majority are funded from a diverse range of sources, giving you the freedom to develop innovative responses to changing local need.
- Often the first point of contact for people at risk of homelessness, you are in a position to help prevent homelessness. Many day centres run activities to engage people positively and reduce social isolation and exclusion.

If you leave someone who’s sane headed on the streets to survive constantly... sooner or later they’re gonna get problems, either with drink or drugs cos you’re hanging around with the wrong people and you’re loitering all day and you will get messed up. Either end up committing crime or messed up in the head.

Day centre user, Brighton
1.3 No Second Night Out: four pledges to end rough sleeping

The principles of No Second Night Out have been adopted by many areas across England as the most comprehensive way of tackling rough sleeping locally.

The four simple pledges at the heart of the approach are principles that we believe all homelessness services should commit to as they work together to end rough sleeping.

They describe a basic approach to supporting people who are new to the streets and people who have slept rough long term, breaking cycles of repeat homelessness, and preventing rough sleeping before it begins.

All four pledges are relevant to the work you do with people who sleep rough or who are at risk of ending up on the streets.

No second night out
Where anyone who ends up on the streets should get help so they don’t spend a second night out

Early interventions minimise the length of time people are homeless and its effects. Your day centre can meet this pledge by offering rapid responses to people when they first become homeless. In some areas this has entailed acting as coordinating hubs for local No Second Night Out strategies, and identifying and evidencing local needs and emerging trends to influence local priorities.

No one lives on the streets
Where we see an end to entrenched homelessness and nobody calls the street their home

You and your colleagues and volunteers will often be in a position to recognise and act on the early warning signs of those at risk of sleeping rough and intervene before people reach a point of crisis. You can provide an open access service and direct people to the most appropriate services.

No one arrives on the streets
Where the right support is available early on to prevent rough sleeping before it begins

You and your colleagues and volunteers will often be in a position to recognise and act on the early warning signs of those at risk of sleeping rough and intervene before people reach a point of crisis. You can provide an open access service and direct people to the most appropriate services.

In practice
Read how the Whitechapel Centre in Liverpool has integrated No Second Night Out into its services.

p24
1.4 What the pledges mean in practice

There are a number of key ways in which your day centre is best placed to use its unique local position to help meet the pledges to end rough sleeping. You can:

1. Evidence local need and emerging trends
2. Respond rapidly to the needs of people who are new to the streets
3. Recognise when people are ready to move on from services and support them to do this
4. Work collaboratively with other services, not in isolation
5. Adopt a service model that enables people to move on rather than just responding to immediate need
6. Support people to avoid returning from the streets once they have moved into accommodation.

“We should always aim to support the aspirations of our clients, not just about work, but with housing, hobbies, interests, relationships and in the contribution they can make to our community. If we aren’t, why should we expect them to be?”

Pam Orchard, Providence Row
2. Planning a service

to help end rough sleeping

2.1 Adopt the right ethos
Consider the fundamental culture and values of your organisation:

- How do they support the vision to end rough sleeping?
- How do they inform your beliefs and practices?
- Are there any changes or additional values that you’d like to introduce?

By establishing an organisational ethos that supports the vision to end rough sleeping, it will be easier to ensure that the vision is incorporated at every level within your practice and delivery of services. Consider the core organisational values listed below. Your organisation probably already holds many of the same values, but by understanding why they are important, promoting them at every level and instilling them within your practice, you will help develop a culture that complements and supports the vision to end rough sleeping.

Your core organisational values:
- Client involvement at every level
- A safe and welcoming environment
- Equality and diversity
- Provision of personalised and holistic support
- A service at the heart of the community
- Partnerships as standard
- A place of progress and transformation
- Continual review and improvement.

You may also have values rooted in religious or spiritual beliefs that also form a core part of your organisational ethos. These should not be seen as opposing ideals, indeed many of the values above will be synonymous with those of a faith-based perspective. By incorporating faith-based elements, the ethos can be enriched, strengthening its support for the vision to end rough sleeping.

2.2 Be clear about your aims
Consider the fundamental culture and values of your organisation:

- What are you hoping to achieve?
- What impact do you want your service to have?
- What expectations do you have of those using your service?

The aims of your service should be closely aligned to your core values and based on the specific local context you operate in. When establishing your aims keep the interests of the people you are trying to help, rather than the interests of your organisation, at the centre of your thinking.

Try cross-referencing your aims with each of the four pledges to end rough sleeping. You should be clear both where and how your aims meet the pledges, as well as how your service complements other local provision working towards the same vision.

A reminder of the pledges:
1. No one new to the streets should spend a second night out
2. No one should make their home on the streets
3. No one should return to the streets
4. No one should end up on the streets

Ask yourself the following questions:
1. What need are we hoping to meet?
2. Are we equipped to meet this need?
3. What other homelessness services are available locally?
4. What gaps are there in the support offered by local organisations?
5. How could we work together?
6. What are the key elements of our medium to long-term strategy?
7. What key potential relationships could be formed with other local agencies – are those relationships positive, missing or damaged?
8. How are we meeting the pledges and incorporating them into our medium to long-term strategies?
9. How will we measure the success of our strategy?

Part 3 of this handbook, Develop practice to help end rough sleeping, will help you to answer these questions.
2. Planning a service to help end rough sleeping

2.3 Establishing outcomes to meet your aims

The outcomes planning triangle is a tool developed by Charities Evaluation Services that you can use to make sure that your aims, outcomes and outputs are aligned.

Once you have established the overall aim of your service, think about the outcomes you need to meet in order to achieve this aim. This exercise can be completed for your overall service, as well for individual projects within it.

- The specific aims, or outcomes, are the changes you want to see, the progress you want to make. They often include words that communicate this change such as increased, improved, greater, enhanced.

- Good outcomes must be measureable – how will you know when you have achieved them? How will you prove that the changes have been made?

- Your objectives or outputs / activities, are the things you will do or the services you will provide in order to achieve your outcomes e.g. deliver an advice session, needle exchange or cooking class.

Possible outputs for your service will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.4 The right outputs

The services (or outputs) you provide as a day centre should be directly linked to your core aim(s) and the outcomes you need to meet in order to achieve these aims. Make sure you are clear about the outcomes you expect to achieve from each of your outputs, and how these outcomes help meet the vision to end rough sleeping by fulfilling one or more of the pledges.

A reminder of the pledges:
1. No one new to the streets should spend a second night out
2. No one should make their home on the streets
3. No one should return to the streets
4. No one should end up on the streets

This section considers some of the services that day centres can provide. We will explore some of the outcomes that can be achieved from these activities, along with some of the challenges they may present. This is not an exhaustive list of activities – think about the activities you offer or would like to offer, and perform this exercise in relation to your own service.

- How can you maximise the positive outcomes and mitigate against potential risks and challenges?
- Identify opportunities for your service to build resilience, rather than create dependency.
## 2. Planning a service to help end rough sleeping

### 2.5 The right outputs (cont)

The services (or outputs) you provide as a day centre should be directly linked to your core aim(s) and the outcomes you need to meet in order to achieve these aims.

Make sure you are clear about the outcomes you expect to achieve from each of your outputs, and how these outcomes help meet the vision to end rough sleeping by fulfilling one or more of the pledges.

### Resources and further information:
- Health needs audit toolkit
- Homelessness & health research

### In practice
Read how Beacon House in Colchester is looking after the health of the people it supports.

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#### 1. Meeting immediate needs

**For example:**
- food
- toiletries
- laundry facilities
- shower facilities
- address for mail

**Outcomes that support the vision to end rough sleeping**
- Increased engagement in service
- Less reliance on crime or antisocial behaviour to obtain food
- Improved ability to address deeper issues – difficult to do this if they have basic and immediate needs

**Risks that may challenge the vision to end rough sleeping**
- May create dependency on your service
- May make it easier and more attractive for people to stay on the streets

---

#### 2. Provision of health services

**For example:**
- primary healthcare (dentist, podiatry, GP, nurse etc)
- specialist mental health
- specialist substance use

**Outcomes that support the vision to end rough sleeping**
- Increased access to healthcare tailored to people’s needs
- Better approach to issues that may contribute to homelessness
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Tackle deeper issues better
- Greater understanding of health risks related to rough sleeping
- Better understanding of how to maintain good health
- Reduced harm from drug-taking

**Risks that may challenge the vision to end rough sleeping**
- May create dependency on your service
- May make it easier for people to stay on the streets
- Does not tackle exclusion from mainstream services
- People may not know how to access community healthcare once they have stopped using your service, resulting in greater marginalisation
- Identifies people as ‘special’ needing specific services

---

It’s important that people don’t become dependent on our services. We addressed this last year by developing a move on service - a training and job finding environment, that clients need to be referred into, so they know that there is something else for them to aspire to when they come in. We thought this was important, and it does help in raising their expectations of the service and what we can help them achieve.  

— Trish Green, The Brick
### 2.5 The right outputs (cont)

**A reminder of the pledges:**
1. No one new to the streets should spend a second night out
2. No one should make their home on the streets
3. No one should return to the streets
4. No one should end up on the streets

This section considers some of the services that day centres can provide. We will explore some of the outcomes that can be achieved from these activities, along with some of the challenges they may present.

This is not an exhaustive list of activities – think about the activities you offer or would like to offer, and perform this exercise in relation to your own service.

- How can you maximise the positive outcomes and mitigate against potential risks and challenges?
- Identify opportunities for your service to build resilience, rather than create dependency.

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<thead>
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<th>3. Provision of specialist advice</th>
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<th>Risks that may challenge the vision to end rough sleeping</th>
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<td>For example:</td>
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<td>• housing</td>
<td>• Increased awareness and understanding of rights</td>
<td>• Over-reliance on the service</td>
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<tr>
<td>• benefits</td>
<td>• Improved access to housing / benefits, better ability to manage finances</td>
<td>• May create dependency on the service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• debt</td>
<td>• Increased feelings of empowerment</td>
<td>• Does not encourage or support people to seek advice within the community</td>
</tr>
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**In practice**
Read how New Horizons offers advice to young people who need it.
p25

**Resources and further information:**
- National Homelessness Advice Services (NHAS)
- Shelter
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Law Centres Network
### 2. Planning a service to help end rough sleeping

#### 2.5 The right outputs (cont)

Each of these six activities can offer a range of impressive outcomes that contribute in a positive way towards ending rough sleeping.

It is important to ensure that all your activities are delivered in a way that promotes a move away from the streets and towards independence, rather than simply making it easier for people to maintain their current situation or become dependent on your service.

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#### 4. Support to access employment, training and education (ETE) opportunities

- Increased skills for employment
- Increased opportunities for work experience
- Improved ability to find work
- Increased job prospects from achieving qualifications
- Improved knowledge of options available
- Increased likelihood that people move out of homelessness or do not become homeless
- Specialised service tailored to needs of the people you support

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#### In practice

Read how Spires Day Centre in London supports people to access employment, training and education.

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*One of our key strengths is that we know our service users feel safe and comfortable coming here. This of course provides the perfect setting as a place of learning and is much more suitable to our service users’ needs than a more conventional and formal learning environment.*

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Lucy Barrett, Spires Day Centre

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**Resources and further information:**

- Guidance on Employment, Training and Support (ETE), and accreditation
- Guidance on supporting people into employment
### 2. Planning a service to help end rough sleeping

#### 2.5 The right outputs (cont)

In order to get this balance right, consider asking yourself the following questions when planning or reviewing your activities:

- Are the services you want to offer being delivered elsewhere within the community?
- How can your activities promote independence rather than dependence on your service?
- How can you identify when someone no longer needs your service?
- How are your activities preparing people to survive independently in the community?
- How are your activities supporting people to move away from homelessness for good?
- How can your activities support social inclusion and integration into the community?

<table>
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<th>5. Support to access meaningful activities</th>
<th>Outcomes that support the vision to end to rough sleeping</th>
<th>Risks that may challenge the vision to end rough sleeping</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For example:</td>
<td>• Improved health and wellbeing</td>
<td>• May create dependency on your service</td>
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<tr>
<td>• sports</td>
<td>• Increased confidence, self-esteem, social skills and social networks</td>
<td>• May disencourage people from moving-on and seeking other opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• arts</td>
<td>• Increased skills for work</td>
<td>• May create further marginalisation as people are provided with 'special' activities rather than engaging with mainstream groups</td>
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<td>• trips</td>
<td>• Increased motivation to change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Improved social inclusion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Increased opportunities for positive social interaction</td>
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#### Resources and further information:
- Get Creative arts project

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### In practice

Read how the Booth Centre in Manchester helps people get involved in artistic and cultural activities.

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### Arts activities can be a catalyst to find out about that person’s needs, whether they are entrenched or living in a squat. If you get them involved with some art activity then you can have a conversation and find out what the issue is and how to help them move forward.

Carole Fox, Sifa Fireside Centre Manager

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### 6. Support to develop independent living skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes that support the vision to end to rough sleeping</th>
<th>Risks that may challenge the vision to end rough sleeping</th>
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<tr>
<td>• People are better equipped to live independently</td>
<td>• Services may already be available within the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• People are less likely to become homeless or return to homelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increased ability to cope with practical problems</td>
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#### Resources and further information:
- The Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning (RUBLE)
- What’s the best way to help vulnerable people earn money?
3. Delivering practice to help end rough sleeping

3.1 Meet real needs

Meet the pledges by ensuring that people in need receive the right help at the right time.

The impetus for many day centres is often the alleviation of the hardship of others, for example by providing free food, clothing or shelter. This may be prompted by visible street activity such as rough sleeping or begging, or by concerns about the impact of changes in wider society such as cuts in public spending, welfare reform and rising unemployment.

However, it is crucial that your service is meeting a real need in your local area, rather than a perceived need. For example, a service offering free food will always experience high demand, but this may reflect an underlying need for welfare benefits and budgeting advice rather than a need for the food itself.

Ensure you are meeting real and not perceived needs by:

- Collecting and using information about the people you support
- Understanding your local area
- Developing effective partnerships

The decisions you make about the day to day running of your day centre will have a significant impact on the outcomes and the successes of your service. Whichever outputs you choose to deliver, your service must be run effectively, safely and efficiently.

You will need to develop policies and procedures covering a range of areas. We have designed the following sections to get you started.

The Whitechapel meets people’s immediate needs, which improves their basic health and wellbeing but more importantly they can get engaged with classes and interventions. The Whitechapel also provides a space for partner agencies to deliver services, which wouldn’t be possible without the space they offer.

Kath Wallace, Interim Divisional Manager Commissioning & Safeguarding, Liverpool City Council
3. Delivering practice
to help end rough sleeping

3.2 Collect and use client information

Meet the pledges by enabling continuous improvement and greater impact in moving people off the streets, keeping people off and preventing people ending up there.

Historically, collecting information about clients hasn’t been a high priority for day centres.

It’s understandable. Your energies are likely to be so focused on the challenge of meeting people’s immediate needs that it is easy to overlook the benefits that collecting information can have for their service and for the people they support.

However, taking the time to collect simple data about what people need and the outcomes you achieve with them will pay dividends for your service and enable you to better meet those needs in future.

Why should I collect information?
There are many benefits to collecting, understanding and using data effectively, including:

- you will be able to properly assess people’s needs and make informed risk assessments
- you will have an improved understanding of people’s needs and how to respond to them
- you will spot trends and patterns in needs and respond quickly and effectively to new developments
- you will be able to use data to evidence the need for changes to management, trustees, etc
- you will be able to quantify and demonstrate the impact your work has for the people you support
- your fundraising bids will be more effective.
- you will be able to create effective campaigns and influence local decision makers, including commissioners, funders and politicians.

What information should I collect?
There are three kinds of information that day centres should collect – needs, outputs and outcomes.

- **Needs** - housing, physical and mental health, and more
- **Outputs** - the services you provide, including the number of particular sessions run, numbers of people attending, how many hours spent keyworking etc
- **Outcomes** – the impact your service is having

Your centre should also collect feedback from clients - see section 3.6 Involve and empower.

Collecting needs and outputs
Homeless Link developed a set of standard data collection questions for day centres, which can be downloaded from the day centres resources section on our website. This is a minimum set of standard questions that day centres who were involved in our Proving Your Worth data project agreed should be collected.

You should check your current data collection process to ensure you are meeting this standard. The standard data collection list is not an exhaustive set of questions and there may be other things you want to collect that are relevant to the specific groups of people who come to you for help.

Collecting outcomes
Having an outcomes based approach is essential for demonstrating the impact of your service and for being able to create a service that is constantly improving itself to meet people’s needs.

Think back to section 2.3 Establishing outcomes to meet your aims and the way that outcomes are linked to your organisation’s aims. Outcomes are the most important data that day centres can collect as they show your true impact.

Funders and commissioners place a high degree of importance on services being able to show their outcomes. There are various approaches to collecting outcomes but one of the most effective tools for day centres is the Outcomes Star system.

Understanding and using your data
Collecting client information also gives you the opportunity to carry out data analysis, which can reveal patterns and trends that observation may miss. This can provide a more nuanced understanding of the problems in your locality and the gaps in service provision.

Although collecting data is important, it won’t make a difference to the people you support unless you do something with it. Doing basic analysis of the data you collect will help you to:

- evaluate the impact of your services
- develop your service to meet people’s changing needs
- develop response to local gaps in service provision
- make effective funding bids
- influence local policy

In practice
Read how St Petrock’s in Exeter uses client data to inform and improve its services.

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Resources and further information:
- Day centres resources on the Homeless Link website
- In-Form - client relationship and service management for housing and homelessness organisations
- Show Your Impact (Homeless Link)
- Inspiring Impact
- Pro Bono Economics
- Charities Evaluation Service (CES)
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3.3 Understand your local area
Meet the pledges by ensuring that the right model of support is in place for local needs.

You should recognise where your service fits within a network of local provision working towards the same vision to end rough sleeping. Map out all the services that exist locally. Think about Local Authority teams, health services, outreach teams, emergency services, accommodation providers and other voluntary and community agencies/groups.

• What do they provide?
• Who do they help?
• What is their strategy with regards homelessness?
• How might you refer someone to another service?
• Do you have a named contact to liaise with?

The context of homelessness also varies greatly across England, with different primary needs and issues depending on the region. Examples of local issues that impact on homelessness include: proximity to a transport hub, rural areas with dispersed housing/services, a seasonal work economy, housing used for summer tourist lets, and the presence of a prison or hospital.

The structure of the local authority, how local authority funding has been allocated or cut, the type of accommodation available, and issues with neighbouring authorities can also affect the way you are able to set up and deliver a service.

In order to support people experiencing homelessness, it is crucial you understand your local area and what it already offers. Take the time to think about what is different about your area and what shapes the context of homelessness. This will help your service to be more in-tune with the needs of your community.

Resources and further information:
• Day centres resources on the Homeless Link website
• Brighter Futures - mapping assets to your community

3.4 Develop effective partnerships
Meet the pledges by ensuring an efficient and coordinated response to moving people off the streets and helping them stay away from the streets for good.

When working with people new to sleeping rough it’s important to respond rapidly to their needs, linking them up as quickly as possible with all the relevant agencies that can provide support. This process can be speeded up by establishing close working relationships with these agencies, with agreements in place around sharing information and making referrals. Think about whether you can invite other services into your centre so that people can access all the support they need under one roof. Day centres often find themselves in an ideal situation to provide a ‘hub’ or ‘one stop shop’ providing many different services. This can speed up communication between agencies and ensure that people are supported in the most efficient and holistic way.

Consider your own partnerships:
• How are these working?
• How could they be improved or expanded?
• Which services do you have capacity to provide?
• Where do the expertise and resources lie elsewhere?

The list below suggests a range of ideas for how to maintain effective relationships with external agencies:

• Maintain open and transparent communication – reply to emails and return phone calls promptly.

In practice
Read how services in Brighton are developing better local partnerships to help people move off the streets. p28
### 3.5 Develop a community approach

**Meet the pledges** by ensuring that your work is strengthened and supported by the wider community.

All too often, people who use day centres are marginalised from wider community they live in. People who sleep rough can sometimes be treated with suspicion by other members of the community and sometimes day centres appear to mirror this division and sit outside mainstream services. A setup like this does not help you to support people. It is vital that your service builds a positive reputation within the local community, proving the value and the positive contributions that both you and the people you support can make. This will serve to break down barriers and raise awareness of the issues that people are experiencing.

As a community organisation, your community is the biggest asset your service has. Your service should develop a strategy for reaching out to individuals and organisations in the community to assist in your aims. There are many different ways to go about this. Some day centres have established successful community volunteering programmes, or put on exhibitions and performances that members of the public can attend. If you have rooms that are not always in use, consider allowing other community groups to access your space – you may be able to form financial agreements that brings in some revenue, or form reciprocal arrangements that benefit you and the people you support in other ways.

Consider the wider effect of your service on the surrounding area:

- What can you do to minimise any antisocial behaviour committed by people using your service?
- How can you facilitate positive interaction, mutual learning and celebration of diversity?

### 3.6 Involve and empower people

**Meet the pledges** by building confidence and giving people a voice, motivating them to recognise alternatives to a life on the streets.

The views, skills and talents of the people you are set up to help should be at the centre of all that you do. By involving the people who use your service, you are giving them a stake in how your centre is run; a sense of responsibility and a realisation that they are valued for who they are.

The best day centres have clients involved at every level of their service, from board of trustees to service delivery. Many day centres offer volunteer roles to their service users, which helps them to boost their confidence, move closer to employment and deliver better services for your centre.

Your centre will also run more effectively if you gather and use feedback effectively. Consider how you collect feedback from people using your service:

- Do you offer a variety of ways for people to tell you how they feel about the service you offer them?
- Do you involve service users in the gathering of feedback?
- What do you do with this feedback once you have it?
- How do you communicate the changes you make as a result of this feedback?

Similarly, by challenging and supporting people to develop the confidence they need to regain control of their lives, you will inspire increased self-esteem and resilience to withstand the pressures they are facing.

Consider how you involve people who use your service in making decisions about the support you offer:

- Keep in touch – schedule regular feedback and catch-up / review sessions.
- Share information – develop an appropriate system by which to share relevant information about people.
- Have agreements in place that set out clear commitments and responsibilities of both parties (see an example Service Level Agreement, linked below). Review this agreement regularly.
- Establish single named contacts from both organisations who can liaise and make arrangements.
- Establish a clear referral process with timescales in place.
- If an agency is coming into your organisation to provide a service, make sure they have appropriate work space.
- Provide partner organisations with an induction to your service – make sure they understand relevant policies and procedures covering safeguarding, risk management, health and safety, confidentiality etc.
- Make sure all your staff are aware of the service that your partner organisation is providing, and encourage them to promote it among people using your service, making referrals where appropriate.

### Resources and further information:

- Day centres resources on the Homeless Link website
- No Second Night Out for day centres
- Webinar: How Can Day Centres Help to End Rough Sleeping?
- Working Together toolkit: developing relationships with Jobcentre Plus

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**Homeless Link**

**Making the Difference to end rough sleeping - a handbook for day centres**

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3.7 Create a welcoming environment

Meet the pledges by encouraging initial engagement, helping people relax and accept support.

Your day centre may be the first place of support that someone accesses after a night on the street. People should enter your service knowing that they will be welcomed and not be judged.

Physical design features such as uplifting colour schemes, an open reception area and lots of natural light can help create a positive and welcoming environment.

First impressions gained from the attitudes of staff, volunteers and from people who use your service will have a huge impact on how someone feels about visiting you for the first time.

If you want people to accept your help and engage in efforts to move them away from the streets, these first impressions need to be positive.

Imagine you are someone coming into your day centre for the first time:

• Who is the first person you speak to?
• What questions do they ask?
• What information is displayed on the walls?
• What sounds can you hear?
• What is your first impression of the service?
• How does this make you feel?
• What would improve your first impressions?

While there will be a limit to what change you can make to the physical structure of your premises, small changes may be possible to help people new to the service feel welcome and at ease.

Resources and further information:

- Day centres resources on the Homeless Link website
- Participation toolkit (FEANTSA)
- The Partner Programme (Cathedral Archer Project, Sheffield)
- Your Vote Matters (Homeless Link)

You could display a welcome sign in different languages, have information about the help you can provide clearly visible, or paint your walls light/bright colours.

You may want to think about the first contact new people have with staff and other people using the service. How could first impressions be improved?

Some services have developed ‘buddy’ schemes where people already using the service are trained to welcome and show new people around. Others make sure they offer people a cup of tea or something to eat before they engage in a formal assessment session.

In practice

Read how the The Connection at St Martins in London is creating new opportunities for the people who use it. p31

In practice

Read how the Booth Centre in Manchester is making sure that first impressions count for the people they support. p31

Resources and further information:

Psychologically Informed Environments (PIES)
- PIEs Guidance
- St Mungos Broadway & PIEs
- Pie Link
- Blog: The Power of PIE

Trauma Informed Care
- Report about Trauma Informed Care in the USA

Miscellaneous
- CRASH
3.8 Safety and risk management

Meet the pledges by creating an environment where people can feel safe and able to focus on what they need to do to move away from the streets.

People who have experienced homelessness are often highly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, crime and ill-health – especially if they have spent time on the streets. They should be able to rely on your service as a place of safety, respite, acceptance and respect.

Promote a common understanding regarding expectations of behaviour. Where inappropriate behaviour occurs, it should be dealt with in an effective and fair way according to clear policies and procedures with sufficient flexibility to respond on a case-by-case basis. Staff and volunteers should demonstrate clear professional boundaries, and these should be upheld at all times, along with procedures relating to safeguarding and protection of vulnerable people from abuse.

Risk assessments should be carried out regularly. They will help you to manage risk, so that you can carry out your activities as safely as possible, rather than acting as a barrier to work taking place. Consider the following questions:

- When people come to you for support, do you make them aware of the behaviour you expect of them? How is this communicated?
- What are the consequences of challenging behaviour? Is everyone concerned aware of these? Are they written into your policies and procedures?
- Do you have risk management plans in place? How often are these reviewed? Who is involved in reviewing them?
- Where are your policies & procedures relating to the protection of vulnerable adults? Are all your staff and volunteers aware of their responsibilities regarding safeguarding?

- Have your staff and volunteers received training around professional boundaries, safeguarding and risk? Do you have procedures around responding to incidents? Are staff clear about how to minimise risk to themselves and others?

While certain policies and procedures are essential, creation of a safe environment is also linked to the general ethos or ‘feel’ of your service. You may decide on rules regarding certain issues such as use of drugs/alcohol on your premises, offensive/discriminatory language, violence and aggression. However, whether these rules are adhered to will largely depend on the respect people have for your service, your staff and other people who use your service. If someone senses that staff have low expectations regarding their behaviour, or think of them in a negative way, they may respond by aiming no higher than those expectations. Try to create a culture of respectful behaviour:

- Involve the people you support when writing policies and procedures – remember that they want a safe environment just as much as you do, and are more likely to follow rules if they have been involved in writing them.
- You may need to enforce rules from time to time, but be sure to do this fairly and consistently. Make sure the rules are clearly explained to everyone at their first involvement in your service. How can you check people’s understanding?

In practice

Read how Julian House in Bath manages safety and risk for staff, volunteers and the people they support.

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- Ensure that your staff and volunteers hold positive attitudes towards the people who use your service. Move people away from an ‘us and them’ mentality.
- Maintain high expectations of people’s behaviour.
- Provide opportunities for the people you support to take responsibility and demonstrate positive behaviour e.g., providing tours for visitors, helping to deliver activities, providing support with administrative tasks.
- Encourage staff to interact with people who use the service in a relaxed and informal way e.g., participating in arts or sports activities, running trips, holding a group cooking session.
- Be careful not to over-commit or offer false promises. Disappointment can cause anger and resentment, whereas honesty and transparency can enable positive and trusting relationships.
- Be clear about what your service can offer, how people can access support and what is expected of people.
- If you have strict opening and closing times, or if certain activities are only open to certain people, make sure you communicate these and your reasoning to everyone. Transparency and consistency will help establish and maintain positive relationships.

3.9 Personalised and holistic support

Meet the pledges by encouraging aspiration, supporting people to achieve their goals and move away from the streets for good.

It is vital that everyone you support is treated as an individual with different needs, interests and talents. Support should be focused on individual goals and aspirations rather than purely identification of issues and the meeting of needs.

While individuals may display common issues such as problems around mental health and substance use, these issues will manifest themselves differently in each person, and people will respond in different ways to different forms of support. Individuals are more likely to engage in support if they have something positive to aim for and a reason to change.

Encourage your staff and volunteers to listen to people and tailor their support to each individual.

As well as providing services that meet immediate need, try to also offer activities that challenge and inspire hope, confidence and aspiration. Activities may be arts-based, sports-based or focused on the development of skills and the move towards independent living and/or employment.

Wherever possible take these activities out of your centre into the local community – encouraging participation in a public setting can help regain a sense of inclusion and confidence to engage positively in the community.

Consider the support you provide to people:

- Does everyone have a dedicated keyworker or support worker?
- How do you find out the strengths, abilities and interests of people you support?
- How do you ensure that support is tailored to meet individual needs?
- How much choice do people have about the type of support they receive?
- Do you develop an action plan with everyone you support? Are these action plans SMART?
- Can staff be flexible in the way they deliver their support?

Resources and further information:

- Personally speaking: Review of personalised services for rough sleepers 2013
- Embedding personalisation
- Personalisation approach

Anybody trying to do this shouldn’t underestimate the power of the fluffy stuff. The arts, the crafts, the photography, the fishing. I’m shocked by the results we’re getting with big rufty-tufty tattoo covered guys with broken noses who want to thump you most of the time sitting down making candles, and loving it!

Cath Stamper, York Road Project
3. Delivering practice
to help end rough sleeping

3.10 Create a place of progress and develop a structured approach

Meet the pledges by motivating people to make positive changes, moving away from the streets and not returning.

Your service plays an integral role in helping people to build confidence and resilience, supporting them to find the motivation and strength they need to change and move away from homelessness for good.

Establishing a culture of progress, development and transformation can be tricky – especially as some people cannot think about moving forwards when they have basic needs that must be met first.

However, in providing for these basic needs, there is always a risk of making it easier for people to survive on the streets, and therefore reducing their motivation to move away.

There are several services that have developed innovative ways to tackle this problem, offering a structured approach that combines activities to engage people by meeting immediate need and targeted support to help people move forward.

The goal to end someone’s homelessness for good should be made clear at first contact, and you should be able to articulate the role of each of your activities in the context of this goal. Consider your service:

- How do expect people to engage in support and activities?
- What level of commitment do you require and how do you make this clear to everyone?
- Does your service follow a structure that supports progress and transformation?
- When might it be appropriate to operate as a drop-in, and when might it be better to offer appointments and structured support sessions / activities?
- How do you react to people who do not want to engage in support and take up opportunities?
- How can you avoid putting people off by being too structured?

In practice
Read how Elim in Somerset has adopted a structured approach to deliver more constructive support for people. p33

Resources and further information:
- Day centres resources on the Homeless Link website
- Training course: Day Centres, Places of Acceptance, Empowerment & Change

I would advise other centres to talk to their service users, but be prepared to be surprised. Service users were split on the subject of structured access but some of the most angry in the transition period are now the most grateful. If things go wrong you can change things, our service is ever changing. Don’t be afraid to shake things up every now and again.

Quote from Elim Connect case study (see case studies section)
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to help end rough sleeping

3.11 Motivate your staff and volunteers

Meet the pledges by ensuring a rapid, effective and coordinated response – moving people off the streets, keeping them off and making sure nobody new arrives on the streets.

Everyone involved in running your service should be working towards the same goals.

Your staff and volunteers are the people who will come into direct contact with the people you are trying to help, providing the vital support that could help them move away from homelessness for good. It is vital that they display the same levels of motivation, positivity and hopefulness that you want to engender people.

All staff should be clear about your service’s role in the vision to end rough sleeping and how they contribute to meeting this vision.

Strong leadership is essential in ensuring a unified response, and all staff should feel valued and involved within decision-making processes.

Work in a high pressure frontline service can be both physically and emotionally demanding – ensure that you show appreciation of this and the efforts that your staff and volunteers make. Adequate support, supervision and training are essential in maintaining motivation, and even with tight budgets and limited time, these should always be prioritised.

Consider the support you provide to your staff and volunteers:

- Does everyone have a role description that states clearly what is expected of them?
- Is everyone aware of how their role fits into the overall vision and aims of your organisation?
- How often do you hold one-to-one support and supervision sessions? Are these always regular?
- How do you identify the training and development needs of your staff and volunteers?
- Do you have a budget allocated to staff development?
- Are you able to hold an away day for the whole team?
- How useful are your team meetings? Do they include reflective practice?
- Do staff get adequate breaks/time for lunch?
- What can you do to ease the stress that your staff and volunteers face when working in a high pressure environment?

Resources and further information:

- Day centres resources on the Homeless Link website
- Managing Volunteers guidance (Homeless Link)
- Managing and Retaining Volunteers Guidance (NCVO)
- Investing in Volunteers
- Time Banking

In practice
Read how Spires Day Centre in London keeps its staff and volunteers well trained and motivated. p34
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3.12 Secure funding and build a strong, sustainable organisation

Meet the pledges by offering an effective response, sustained support and lasting impact to move people away from the streets for good.

In order to establish your organisation as a valuable service achieving lasting impact within your local community, it is essential that you have the resources to function effectively.

In a period of rising demand and reducing resources, it is increasingly necessary to develop new and innovative solutions to rough sleeping in your area.

Funders are becoming more focused on outcomes, so consider how you can prove that your outcomes are being met and evidence the impact of your service.

You may need to diversify your funding streams and explore new financial models that require changes to your focus, culture and ways of working.

Such changes may be daunting to plan and implement, however they are challenges that can result in the development of more sustainable and forward-thinking services.

Organisational planning
Before approaching potential funders you should have
• a clear vision and mission and clear organisation and project objectives
• an organisational strategy with short, medium and long-term goals.

Understanding the context
Understand and respond to:
• the latest trends in the homelessness sector
• external trends that effect your service users – e.g. welfare reform
• the current fundraising landscape in your area – e.g. changes to public funding structures.

Fundraising
To write successful fundraising bids your organisation should:
• identify funding opportunities that will help to support your organisational aims and strategy
• understand the aims of potential funders and commissioners.

Sustainability:
• diversify your organisation’s income streams – don’t rely on one source of funding
• closely manage your funding streams – have plans in place for when funding ends
• develop the skills needed to ensure your service successfully deliver on funding agreements.

Evidencing need and showing demonstrating your impact
• understand your client base – assess their needs and listen to their feedback
• understanding local strategies for ending rough sleeping and where you fit in with other services locally
• use mixed methods of data collection – e.g. quantitative and qualitative to measure and evidence impact.

Influencing work and the media
• increase the profile of your organisation by working with local media
• make links with local policy makers and use evidence to influence policy.

In practice
Read how York Road Project in Woking has worked to raise its local profile to attract new funds.

Resources and further information:
• Day centres resources on the Homeless Link website
• Sustainable funding guide and resources (NCVO)
• NCVO Funding Central
• Speak Out: a guide to local influencing (Homeless Link)
Whitechapel Centre, Liverpool  
No Second Night Out

The Whitechapel Centre is a well-established day centre in Liverpool that leads the No Second Night Out response to rough sleeping in the Merseyside area. Using dedicated outreach and day services that respond to referrals made online or through a dedicated telephone service, Whitechapel are able to ensure that nobody who is new to the streets in Merseyside spends a second night out. This rapid-response approach helps to ensure that people who are new to the streets don’t get entrenched in a street lifestyle, which can make moving off the streets much harder in the long run.

The Whitechapel Centre’s No Second Night Out Hub assesses the needs of people who are new to the street – looking at their housing and support needs, identifying suitable accommodation options, undertaking homeless prevention work and where appropriate helping to reconnect people to places where support is more readily available, both inside and outside the UK. The Whitechapel Centre also offers a weekly GP Surgery, drug and alcohol support services and a structured programme of activities.

Kath Wallace, Liverpool City Council’s Interim Divisional Manager for Commissioning & Safeguarding writes:

“We commissioned the Whitechapel Centre to deliver a range of services to help us meet our own objectives of preventing homelessness, delivering a No Second Night Out service and moving people indoors whenever possible.

“As a result, the Whitechapel Centre has become a key partner of the city, delivering the city’s No Second Night Out response and providing a range of services for rough sleepers including re-enablement, day support and a range of floating support services.

“Working with the Whitechapel Centre has allowed us to manage the flow of people who are new to the streets more effectively and has limited the volume of people rough sleeping generally by engaging the more complex rough sleepers and helping to move them into hostels and other accommodation.

“Working with a day service has been beneficial as there is only so much that can be achieved with outreach services – people need a safe, un压ured space to form relationships with staff. The Whitechapel meets people’s immediate needs, which improves their basic health and wellbeing but more importantly they can get engaged with classes and interventions. The Whitechapel also provides a space for partner agencies to deliver services, which wouldn’t be possible without the space they offer.”

Beacon House, Colchester  
Provision of health services

Beacon House is a day centre in Colchester that specialises in healthcare services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Mental & physical health problems can present a barrier for people leaving the streets and Beacon House offer drop-in healthcare services, delivered by on-site nurses, operating out of a dedicated clinical area.

Beacon House nurses are skilled in dealing with the kinds of health problems faced by people who sleep rough and their services include flu vaccinations, a sexual health clinic, needle exchange, HIV and disease screening. Other wellbeing services are also available, including showers and a laundry service, a stop smoking service and a foot care specialist. The drop-in style approach enables Beacon House to engage some of the most hard-to-reach clients who may otherwise find it difficult to access healthcare.

Beacon House aim to move service users into mainstream services, rather than becoming dependant on the centre and to help with this their healthcare services are complemented by life skills classes, IT skills, occupational therapy interventions and support around cooking and budgeting.

Debra Wyrill-Ryan, Senior Commissioning Support Officer for Essex County Council, writes:

We commission a nurse led clinic, based in Beacon House, and as part of the contract, they run an outreach clinic in Clacton and offer support over the course of a year to soup runs.

The PCT originally commissioned the service at Beacon House, primarily to improve access for homeless people to primary care – to get them registered and into mainstream health care services. Beacon House is also part of a holistic approach to
New Horizons
Provision of specialist advice

What advice do you provide?
At New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC) we provide advice and advocacy on accommodation, sexual health, legal issues, social services, local authority decisions, welfare benefits and mental health issues. We also sign post young people to immigration, debt advice, other day centres, alcohol and substance misuse, counselling and anger management, domestic violence, sexual violence and rape support.

How do service users access advice?
It is a drop in so young people can just come down and make an appointment. Referral by their family, friends or them themselves, other agencies and phone calls.

How do you tailor your advice / approach to your client group?
Each young person has a needs assessment. We can make appointments that fit in with their lives for example if they are working we can pre-book. We have several different teams to work with varying client needs, for instance we have a project dedicated to young offenders and care leavers. We have a complex case worker, nurse, and a sex workers project. We can organise translators for a certain languages. We have disability access to the centre and can signpost or refer into various other services. We deliver advice and assessments in prisons, escort people to court and can make resettlement and home visits.

Do you link in with other mainstream advice providers – e.g. Shelter, Solicitors etc
Yes, we have SLA agreements with accommodation providers, these include several YMCA’s. We work with Look Ahead, Bethany House, One Housing, Cardinal Hume, Shelter from the Strom, Simba, Albert Kennedy Trust, Camden Cold Weather Shelters, Depaul UK.

We are in partnerships funded by London Councils (The London Youth Gateway which includes Depaul, ALS and Stonewall Housing) and the Homelessness Transitions Funding with the Pilon Trust.

We also work with legal services such as Coram Voice, Just for Kids Law, Hodge Jones and Allen solicitors. YMCA, Connexions services and Law Centres.

What sort of positive outcomes does your advice service achieve?
Accommodation resettlement, EET, health and legal, advocacy and our PRS move on. We also help to sustain tenancies, advocate on behalf of offenders and care leavers.

Is your advice just one off or do you provide case work?
We have an assessment for all young people who access the centre. After the assessment we refer internally to the various projects (Nurse, IT, EET, Fitness and health, Leisure, Literacy, ESOL, Numeracy etc) If we cannot assist the YP we will sign post where appropriate or refer externally to other services. We continue working with YP until they are resettled completely.

What do you think are the benefits to your service users of providing an advice service in-house, as opposed to sign posting?
We believe we provide a more rounded holistic service. The YP don’t have to keep repeating their story to many workers in different projects. We can build up better relationships quicker and therefore trust becomes more apparent earlier on in the process.
Spires Day Centre, London
Support to access employment, training and education

Based in Streatham, south west London, Spires is a day centre that each year helps over 750 homeless and disadvantaged people in the community to access services and activities that promote the skills, health and wellbeing needed to ensure they don’t return to the streets once they have moved on.

Spires specialise in offering adult learning opportunities for people in the community who are often excluded from conventional learning. The Spires Adult Learning Centre, funded by the London Borough of Lambeth, offers courses that are run in a variety of formats to ensure they are in keeping with their ‘no barrier to learning policy’. Even clients with the most vulnerable and chaotic lifestyles can still participate. They deliver easily accessible courses whilst also offering clients the opportunity to learn in a positive and supportive environment to acquire skills that will enable them to progress further with either more training or employment opportunities.

To complement this approach, Spires offer an Access to Volunteering course and a Volunteer Training Programme, which has helped former service users to move into volunteering an employment opportunities homelessness / social care field.

Lucy Barrett, Director of Spires, writes:

At Spires we find that many of our clients talk of having had negative experiences of formal education and feel that adult learning isn’t for them. Even for those that have previously achieved qualifications and had successful jobs, the experience of homelessness and long term unemployment has often served to deskill and isolate. In fact as many studies illustrate, a lack of education and work can often be the major causes and consequences of homelessness; eroding skills and self-esteem and acting as practical obstacles to finding and keeping a home. Engaging in activity and learning and developing new skills are a sure way of breaking this cycle.

Of course being a day centre, we realise that one of our key strengths is that we know our service users feel safe and comfortable coming here. This of course provides the perfect setting as a place of learning and is much more suitable to our service users needs than a more conventional and formal learning environment. Courses are kept as flexible as possible, from regular drop-in classes to our 16 week accredited Volunteer Training Programme and all of our tutors are trained to understand the needs of our clients and how best to support them to progress towards their long-term goals.

We also understand the importance of our learners having a say about the courses we offer – after all there is no point putting on a class that no one is interested in! Holding regular Learner Forums and having service users who act as ‘Learner Champions’ all provide a positive way for clients to engage with the learning opportunities on offer and to also be able to put forward their own thoughts and ideas for future courses – whether it’s wanting help with their reading skills, learning how to send to email or taking part in a women’s self-defence class!

Whatever they may be, all of our classes are designed to give our service users the opportunity to gain the skills and confidence required to get them back on track, achieving their own goals and on their journey back towards lifestyle stability and employment. In the past day centres have often been accused of keeping their service users stuck where they’re at – our Adult Learning Centre is proof that this belief is outdated and untrue.

The impact of our provision helping our service users to move on is easily evidenced with majority of our learners reporting improvements in their confidence and well-being, and many moving on to other learning, volunteering or employment opportunities either here at Spires or other organisations.

Lesley Robinson, Head of Adult Learning for London Borough of Lambeth, writes:

Working with Spires is great because we can reach out to support and engage some of the more disadvantaged people in the borough. Spires as a specialist organisation is well placed to help us do that.

The provision that we commission Spires to deliver ranges from employment focused provision such as online job searches, volunteer training programmes and digital learning to more soft skills. Spires deliver creative courses – including arts, music, and gardening as well as life skills courses such as cooking on a budget. Courses are delivered either through structured courses or open access drop in, which helps to fit in around the different lifestyles of people who use the service. Spires are constantly making this provision more flexible and effective – as they learn what people want and gain more experience.

By working in partnership, Spires have learnt from other adult learning institutions in the borough and they in turn have learnt from Spires. Spires have a deep understanding of their client group and have shared this expertise with other adult learning institutions across the borough. As a result, other institutions have expanded their engagement of homeless people and set up partnerships with other homelessness charities in their own right.

What is good about working with a day centre is that they are able to offer progression opportunities. Some of the learners from the volunteer course have gone on to work at Spires. It has been really good working with Spires and we are keen to maintain the partnership.
The Booth Centre, Manchester  
Support to access meaningful activities

The Booth Centre, a day centre in Manchester, offers a weekly activities programme in which creative activity and involvement with local cultural venues has featured heavily. One such activity sought to encourage their clients to visit local museums and galleries by helping them to create 'Back to the Future: The Booth Centre's Over 50's Museum Guide'.

In order to create the guide, the group visited several museums and galleries, allowing participants to challenge their perceptions on how they would be received and answer questions such as would they have to pay, would everyone else be dressed smartly and would they be clever enough to go in?

The guide contains a range of information, including a short summary of the museum or gallery, how to get there using public transport, opening times and whether or not refreshments are available.

By having all this in one place, group members and other Booth Centre clients have access to all of the information necessary to visit any of the sites independently.

Similarly, Booth Centre clients have benefited from a longstanding partnership with prominent Manchester institution, the Royal Exchange Theatre.

As well as running a regular theatre group within the day centre, the Royal Exchange has also run its ‘Progression Group’, encouraging participants to get more involved with cultural opportunities within the city, such as attending mainstream workshops as part of the theatre's adult programme, planning an exhibition for the theatre's hall (with creative support from Manchester Museum), attending performances at the Royal Exchange and being mentored by professional artists.

St Petrock's Resource Centre, Exeter  
Collect and use client information

Mel Hartley, Project Manager for St Petrock's, writes:

Collecting accurate data on an on-going basis is vital in ensuring that St Petrock’s develops effective, flexible services that are responsive to local need, and in securing the support that is needed to sustain them.

Within St Petrock’s resource centre, data is collated from two key sources. Firstly, general statistics relating to service usage are recorded by project workers in a desk diary on a daily basis. Data collected includes the numbers of men and women accessing the centre, the numbers of people accessing specific facilities (showers, laundry, computers etc.) and the numbers of assessment and key-working sessions delivered. The numbers and types of meals served from our centre kitchen are similarly recorded by kitchen staff.

Individual assessments are also carried out by project workers with every client. Details collected on our standardised assessment forms allow us to build a more in-depth profile of those using our services. Information collected includes a client’s age, residency status, rough sleeping, accommodation, financial, employment and criminal justice histories. Details of specific needs (i.e. mental health, physical health or alcohol/substance abuse issues) are also recorded. A closedown sheet is subsequently completed for each client to record the outcome of their case and the type of accommodation (if any) to which they have moved on.

Information from both sources is collated on a single spreadsheet, which provides a breakdown of data on a weekly, monthly and annual basis. The spreadsheet provides detailed insight into the numbers, backgrounds and needs of our clients and the efficacy of our services in meeting them; crucially,
It enables us to identify and monitor trends over time. This on-going feedback allows us to review, adapt and develop our services effectively in response to changing needs.

In early 2014, we became aware that the unusually high number of clients accessing our centre was part of a long-term increase in demand. Our statistics indicated that this trend was significant and sustained enough to merit a thorough re-evaluation of our morning open-access sessions.

Using data relating to the composition of our client group, staff analysed the merits of introducing sessions for rough-sleepers only. After monitoring kitchen data, we revised our meal policy to ensure that the needs of clients accessing the centre for housing advice were prioritised. The review also highlighted a sustained increase in the percentage of female clients accessing the centre; we are currently exploring options for developing women-only services. Having a comprehensive statistical overview of the project has enabled us to focus our limited space and resources to ensure that the needs of specific groups are met.

Feedback from clients also plays an important role in guiding service development. Clients are able to make comments and suggestions via a feedback form and box within the centre. An independent evaluation in 2012 included a survey to ascertain clients’ perspectives of the help they most sought from St Petrock’s; this was used to shape subsequent key-working sessions. We also carried out a personalisation audit, which included a client focus group and individual client interviews. Subsequent changes to service delivery included making further information about other local services available in the centre and increasing access to laptop facilities.

In a competitive funding environment, we have also found that the availability of clear, consistent data is invaluable when putting together funding bids for the project. Data relating to the composition of our client group provides strong evidence of the extent of local need, enabling us to develop focussed strategies and rationalise them. Our outcomes data enables us to demonstrate our proven track record in helping clients to access accommodation and supporting them to sustain it. It also helps us to identify clear measurable targets for proposed projects and means that mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on them are already in place.

St Petrock’s benefits greatly from the support of the local community in terms of volunteer hours, monetary and good donations. Updates regarding our client numbers and outcomes are circulated in our publicity literature, via social media and when writing letters of thanks to donors. Our latest Annual Report included a statistical snapshot of each area of our project and infographics to help illustrate our work. This presentation of data increases supporters’ sense of involvement in and commitment to our work; it provides tangible evidence of the difference their contributions help to make. For example, using data from our daily meal sheets, we were able to highlight that our kitchen had served 8579 meals over the course of the year - an achievement that boosted team spirit among volunteers. Providing statistical profiles of our client group is also effective in increasing understanding of the issues surrounding homelessness in the local community.

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**Day and Street Services Working Group, Brighton**

**Develop effective partnerships**

Brighton and Hove has historically had a large number of people who sleep rough, rising to 43 on a single night for the 2012 street count. In 2013, a group of services who work in partnership with Brighton and Hove City Council as part of the Day and Street Services Working Group (DSSWG) came together to try to understand why the number remained high despite sustained efforts to find accommodation for people sleeping rough.

The organisations found that people sleeping rough were using a range of services throughout the city, sometimes giving different information about themselves and therefore being offered different solutions from each service. There was also a strong seasonal dimension to rough sleeping, with substantial numbers of people new to the city coming during the summer months.

As a result of this work, in May 2013 the DSSWG set up a coordinated way of working for the outreach team, CRI RISSRT, BHT First Base Day Centre and Project Anti-Freeze – the Coordinated Agency Interventions to End Rough Sleeping (CAIERS) – to share resources, knowledge and expertise. They combined their information about people they thought to be rough sleeping and identified that there were 110 people sleeping rough known between them at that time. The three organisations allocated each of the named 110 rough sleepers to a category to indicate their experience of sleeping rough, recognising the different needs of clients – from category 1 for those spending their first night out, to category 8 for those who had disengaged from services and had spent a significant time rough sleeping. Each category also provided a target timescale to works towards to achieve a positive accommodation outcome based on those needs.

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**Homeless Link**

Making the Difference to end rough sleeping - a handbook for day centres | 28
Each week, the three organisations combine their information about whom they are working with, providing updates about progress and issues with individuals via a simple database. Each person sleeping rough who is new to the list is allocated a single key contact from one of the agencies. Whilst clients can work with any agency they choose the assigned worker is kept informed of work that other organisations are doing with them. Representatives of all the agencies come to a weekly forum to form an action plan for how to progress with those people who have stayed on the street longer than their target timescale, given their individual needs and options. The approach has helped the organisations keep better track of each person and makes it easier to follow up on agreed interventions.

Having segmented the rough sleeping population into groups, the three organisations developed different approaches to address accommodation issues. People in the first category were channelled through No Second Night Out (NSNO), managed by CRI, which successfully moves people new to rough sleeping off the street within a few days. CRI’s assertive outreach team worked particularly with people in the last two categories, who needed more intensive support to their period of rough sleeping and obtain appropriate accommodation.

Under the CAIERS scheme the day centres can now use CRI’s reconnection budget to help return home the high numbers of people who are sleeping rough for short periods who come to Brighton and Hove from outside the area.

CAIERS identified a group of around 30 people who had extensive periods of sleeping rough, some of whom would not engage with the outreach team or attend any sessions at the day centres. They had previously had very limited success in helping these individuals move off the street and into accommodation. CRI is now piloting a personalised approach with 8-9 people with complex needs to move them into housing using a Housing First model.

For other people entrenched in sleeping rough, people in category 7 or 8, BHT, CRI and Sussex Police are piloting an Emergency Assessment Centre (EAC). The Centre aims to find accommodation solutions for those who have not previously been willing to engage with existing services. It runs on designated nights at BHT’s First Base, with the police bringing people to the EAC who are sleeping rough and known to be disengaged or not known to services. The EAC offers a range of services in one place including mental health assessments, an alcohol nurse, a GP, and a homeless person’s officer from the local authority. On their first night of the pilot, two people who had been entrenched in sleeping rough were admitted to hospital via the Centre to deal with serious chronic health issues.

In the first six months, CAIERS worked with 688 people who had slept rough, of which half are known to have a positive accommodation outcome. Of those, nearly a quarter had been relocated or returned home. Because of the detailed combined information, the approach to tackling rough sleeping in Brighton and Hove has become more evidence-based and more open to innovation.

The Step Up programme - The Connection at St Martins, London

Involve and empower people

Step Up is a service user volunteer programme developed and run by The Connection at St Martins, a homeless day centre in Westminster, London. By creating volunteer opportunities for service users, Step Up helps clients to build the confidence and skills needed to move away from homelessness and into accommodation and employment, within the safe environment of the day centre.

The Connection at St Martins initially developed the Step Up programme in January 2011 as a way of improving client participation at the centre and since it began, 60 service users have applied for positions, 57 have taken part in training and interviews and 25 have taken part in volunteering.

Although the Connection is larger than many day centres nationally, they have kept smaller centres in mind when developing the Step Up programme. For this reason, smaller day centres will find the Step Up's approach and resources helpful when starting their own service user volunteer programmes.

**Step Up’s Key Approaches**

1. **Mirroring Formal Application Process**
2. Developing specific volunteer roles
3. Non-judgemental approach
4. Removing Barriers
5. Support for Volunteers
6. Monitoring Progress
7. Asking for Feedback
8. Integrating the programme into the wider service

**1. Mirroring Formal Application Process**

The Connection is keen that service users move on from...
homelessness and using the centre and into accommodation and employment, which they are able to sustain. An important part of getting service users ready for life away from the streets is helping them to build confidence and skills that will be useful in applying for jobs and volunteer roles. With this in mind, Step Up has made the application process for service users who want to apply for volunteer roles as close as possible to those they would encounter when applying for positions outside the centre.

As with any job, vacant positions are advertised – on posters around the centre – and interested service users have to follow the instructions on the adverts to get an application form. The application forms have deadlines they need to be in by and successful applicants are invited to an interview. Interviews also take place on a set date with an interview panel. Interviews also need to be in by and successful applicants are invited to an interview. Interviews also take place on a set date with an interview panel. Interviews also take place on a set date with an interview panel.

2. Developing specific volunteer roles
In keeping with this approach, the Step Up programme has created specific volunteer roles, related to current services at the centre. A formal description of each role is drawn up so potential candidates know what is expected of them before they apply. The current roles available at the centre include:

• Kitchen Assistants – one day a week over a six week placement. Some people have continued beyond the 6 week placement. Volunteers get food hygiene training.
• Day Centre Assistants – volunteer Day Centre Assistants show new service users around the building. There is no period of placement for this role, which carries on as long as is mutually beneficial.
• Reading Coaches – 1-2-1 support to help other service users with literacy.
• Painting and maintenance - helping to repaint interview rooms in the centre
• IT Teaching Assistant – supporting students on ECDL training

Step Up have also taken the step of formalising roles that service users were doing informally to help out at the centre. For instance, Step Up formalised a role that a client was doing informally to help other service users with ECDL training. By including them in Step Up the service user was able to access the training and support offered by the programme.

3. Non-judgemental approach
Although the formal approach is important in building confidence, Step Up recognises that this process may be challenging for many service users. As a result, they take a non-judgmental approach to participants who change their mind during a placement or feel that they can’t handle the application process at the time.

Step Up participants who change their mind or are unsuccessful in their application are encouraged to keep working with their keyworker and to try again in the future.

It is important an important part of the Step Up programme that clients are in control and feel able to change their minds without feeling judged or criticised.

4. Removing Barriers
The Connection realise that many homeless service users can face barriers when seeking employment and volunteer opportunities so Step Up has concentrated on removing barriers to participation, as far as possible. For instance, appropriate clothing is made available for kitchen and painting roles and showers are made available to kitchen volunteers prior to a shift.

None of the Step Up volunteer roles requires CRB checks and the staff who run Step Up take the view that no barriers are insurmountable in allowing service users to get involved.

Staff coaches also play a role in helping volunteers to overcome barriers during their placement by helping with applications if there are literacy problems, for instance.

5. Support for Volunteers
Once recruited, volunteers receive training appropriate to their role such as food hygiene training for kitchen volunteers. Volunteers also receive training on the dual role of being a client and a volunteer.

An innovative part of the Step Up support plan is to partner each volunteer with a ‘staff coach’ to mentor them through the programme. Participants are allowed a say in which member of staff mentors them and both staff and volunteers have found this process rewarding and beneficial. In order to help staff with their mentoring role, they are given training so they can support their volunteer as much as possible.

6. Monitoring Progress
Staff Coaches also help volunteers to monitor their progress by using an Outcomes Star inspired chart to map volunteer development. Monitoring their progress helps volunteers to reflect on their achievements but also helps Step Up to show the value of the service to the wider day centre and other services who are thinking about using the Step Up model.

7. Asking for Feedback
In keeping with the client participation ethos, Step Up encourages feedback from volunteers and ran a survey at the end of the first year. Feedback is also monitored through the 1-2-1 sessions with Staff Coaches. Feedback about the programme has been very encouraging from both volunteers and staff and Step Up continues to develop the programme around the feelings of service users.

8. Integrating the programme into the wider service
Another key aspect of the Step Up programme is the way it has been integrated into the whole service, rather than
running alongside the usual day centre activities. For instance, Key Workers and other staff are consulted when a service user applies for a role as Step Up does not want a volunteer opportunity to have a negative impact on anything else key workers or other staff are doing with a service user.

**Booth Centre, Manchester**  
*Create a welcoming environment*

**How important is it to the Booth Centre that the environment is welcome?**  
It doesn’t matter how wonderful your service is; if people do not want to come in the door, if they don’t feel welcome, if they don’t feel that they belong, you may as well shut the doors and go home. The Centre is for people who have experienced multiple exclusion and the trauma of homelessness. For them to feel welcome is paramount in creating an environment where people can take part and move on with their lives.

**What makes the Booth Centre welcoming to service users?**  
When designing the new building, service users were asked what they valued most about the Centre and how they would like this to be expressed. They were also asked what could be done differently to make people feel valued and accepted, but also what would motivate them to take part in the activities that the Centre offers. A number of clear themes emerged that were incorporated into the layout of the building. People wanted bright, open spaces where they did not feel enclosed. The Garden was a key feature of the Centre and everyone wanted this to be expanded, with space to carry out activities and the opportunity to create a vibrant green space. It was important that the Centre reflected the skill, ability and positive activity of the people who use the Centre. The use of installations showcasing images and artwork of people who use the Centre are integral to its design.

**How did you involve service users in designing the environment at the new centre?**  
More than anything else, service users wanted to be involved in the design, creation and running of the new building. To feel that they were a part of the project was the key message that we were given when introducing the aim of finding a new home. To achieve this it was important to go beyond simply asking for ideas. The focus was on achieving total involvement and ownership of the new building.

To do this we had to ensure that we did more than just run some focus groups and have a general discussion. People were asked for ideas before we even began to seek funding. Individuals were involved in presentations to prospective funders. Group and individual work was carried out to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to express their ideas. Throughout the whole process people were involved through visiting prospective sites, having the opportunity to feed into the design when the building was found and to have their ideas incorporated as refurbishment took place. Without the help of the people who use the Centre, we would never have been able to move and the amount of work that people undertook to complete was truly phenomenal. Since then our supported volunteering programme has massively increased and now the service user volunteers lead the way in creating opportunities and developing the opportunities to get involved.

**How did you balance creating a welcoming environment with safety concerns?**  
Our experience has been that the more welcoming an environment is, the less likely there is to be any safety issues. Ensuring an open and supervised environment, with well supported staff that are able to prevent problems before they arise, minimises potential risk. Alongside this, it is important that all staff and volunteers get to know the people who use the Centre. Creating safe and positive relationships allows space in which difficult behaviour can be challenged in creative ways, minimising the impact on all involved. We have always found that when people like being at the Centre, feel that they belong and the Centre belongs to them, they are immensely unlikely to want any harm to come to it and the people who use it. There are always practical considerations such as ensuring all staff are able to get support when needed, but these merely reinforce the safe and welcoming nature of the Centre.
What sort of environment did you want in the centre – e.g. calm, energetic, focused etc – and how did you achieve this?
The Centre is about much more than simply being safe and welcoming. It aims to move people away from the street, to give them a vision for the future and the means to achieve it. As such there is a focus on positivity and movement. There is an energy that comes from involving everyone who uses it. Alongside this, it is very much a learning organisation where people work together to create new solutions and opportunities.

This is expressed through the way the service has been redesigned around the ideas and ambition of the people who come in. The activities that the Centre runs are creative and challenging. This can be daunting for people when they first attend. The welcome nature of the Centre helps to overcome this, as does the focus on creating positive relationships. However the interior design of the building plays an equally important part. In displaying throughout the building positive images of the people who use the Centre, their talent and their achievements, the idea that success is possible becomes much more real. At the same time it reflects the importance and humanity of everyone at the Centre and shows how much they are valued.

What tips would you give to another centre who was considering re-designing their environment?
Decide early on what you want to achieve in the new environment; the aims and objectives, what you will be doing in it and how you may want to develop it in the future. Focus on these while you develop the project. It is much easier to incorporate ideas at the beginning and you do not want to find yourself with a new building that does not meet your needs. Involve everyone who uses the Centre as much as possible, in as many ways as possible, across the entire project from start to finish.

Challenge your own perceptions and be open to the ideas of others, particularly the people who the will be using your service.

Do not be afraid to try out new ideas and to try something different.
other specialist services working in the project, building better support networks for service users and opening communication pathways between agencies. The Assertive Outreach Team, bridges the gap between the streets and the drop in while bringing extensive knowledge about service users. A multi agency approach, with planned client meetings and joint key working sessions help ensure clear pathways for service users, help towards reducing inappropriate referrals and manage client expectation. Service users should have the opportunity to access appropriate housing and a scatter gun approach to referrals can set a client up to fail leading to disengagement and resentment.

Risk assessments should be constructed using information from a variety of agencies as service users may well present in different ways, depending on the environment. Sharing information and having shared principles among staff from all agencies, help service users to have a clear understanding and confidence in the options being offered to them. Having well trained staff that have strong boundaries, good knowledge and great communication skills, combined with compassion help reduce the risk further. Encouraging service users to be involved in the design of the project, take pride in the service they use and become involved in their own support ultimately reduces the risk in the project.

Elim, Somerset

Create a place of progress

Elim Connect's SLAP (Street Level Access Programme) provides support to people challenged by complex and multiple needs – such as homelessness, addiction, mental health or other life-controlling issues. Service Manager, Emma Rossi, spoke to Homeless Link's Day Centres Specialist about their approach to service user access arrangements and how this has changed over time.

Why did Elim Connect move to a structured access approach?

Historically people would come into the centre and just hang out but lots of complicated people hanging around together isn’t always healthy and we didn’t want to be just another hangout. Everything else in life has structure so we felt it was important to introduce some basic rhythm to the lives of our service users. Many complex individuals don’t have any structure in their life so the centre introduces this in a soft way.

What are your current access arrangements?

We have drop-in sessions every day except Saturday. Drop-ins are at 1pm and last for one hour and rather than being open access this are a ‘doing’ hour, for new people referring in and for existing service users to see case workers, collect mail, book showers, drop off and collect laundry, and use the phone and computers.

There are currently two completely open access points. A community lunch every Wednesday between 12 noon and 2pm, and Friday afternoon between 3 – 5pm. The Friday sessions help us to hook up with people before the weekend, especially in the winter and a third open access point is planned – a Monday morning breakfast – to check on people after the weekend.

Open access sessions are primarily for befriending so we can engage people who aren’t quite ready to commit to one-to-one work and build relationships so at some point if they want to work with a caseworker on something they can. There is no obligation to do anything at open access sessions.

Do you run activity groups as well as the drop-in and open access sessions?

We run activities every day, usually in the afternoons and we have a good take-up on these sessions. We target our activities at different levels – we run soft skills activities, such as a film club, pottery and art groups as well as more practical groups like cookery, healthy eating. We recognise how important computer skills are now and run computer sessions where service users are supervised and have people on hand who can teach them things.

We are service user led on activities and will take ideas and run with them wherever possible. Our music group is the best group at the moment. We ran a small pilot to engage people interested in music who couldn’t necessarily play with a bolt-on of people who are musical. From this group we plan to put on a mini festival next year with pottery and cookery groups involved alongside the wider community.

What have been the benefits of moving to a structured approach?

People have become more respectful. People respond positively to boundaries and this encourages them to not take advantage. For instance, when we first started doing laundry we did it for free and people took advantage. We introduced a £1 cost and this changed the way people used it for the better.

Moving to a structured approach has also made us realise how essential befriending is and how much of the good work we do comes out of establishing relationships.

It is important to have the open access points but it is also much
Spires Day Centre, London

Motivate your staff and volunteers

Rebecca Sunter, Volunteer Coordinator for Spires Day Centre, writes:

The contribution of volunteers at Spires is invaluable – we couldn’t function without them. In fact, volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff team totals 12 and at present we have 60 volunteers per week volunteering in the day centre and for our women’s Streetlink outreach project! We’re a small local charity and our volunteering opportunities help to involve the local community in our work with homeless and vulnerable people in Lambeth, giving the community a stake in what we do.

In our approach to recruiting volunteers we try to get a balance between continuity and fresh faces and ideas. Our volunteer demographic is very wide - for example - we have ex-service users, students, ex-offenders and many people experiencing long-term unemployment currently volunteering at the centre. We believe people can learn from each other, so our volunteer team is made up of people who bring a diversity of experience and knowledge.

We recruit new volunteers via different methods such as through Volunteer Centre’s in South London and through the London University Volunteer Centres, particularly LSE & UCL. We also use Twitter and Facebook to promote opportunities but much of the time we are very lucky and people phone us having heard about us through the grapevine!

Volunteers are recruited to specific roles to ensure we get the skills we need and that they get the most out of their time volunteering with us. Outreach volunteering, for example, is a specialist volunteering role, where female volunteers go out with our women’s workers and distribute condoms and engage with women who are street-based sex-working in Brixton. As Spires is small there is flexibility to create roles to suit people’s skills, which is why we ask on the application form for details of any other skills and talents that volunteers may have. Some people will want to start in one role and move into more in-depth volunteering roles, which is great!

Some volunteers stay with us for many years, whilst others move on into further education or employment in just a few months. Both routes can be a great measure of our success!

Managing risk is important when recruiting volunteers, especially when working with vulnerable people, so we ask people why they want to volunteer on the application form and where they heard about Spires. We also make sure volunteers aren’t by themselves with clients and we do DBS checks on applicants, particularly those volunteering with our Women’s Space or outreach team.

To support our volunteers we provide a comprehensive induction and tour of the centre along with a volunteer handbook. Volunteers have tasks allocated to them each day and I’m on hand to give them extra support if they need it.

We also take advantage of free training available in the area for our volunteers and we have in-house adult learning, which volunteers can take part in. We run volunteer forums, often in a workshop format which I facilitate and this gives volunteers an opportunity to discuss issues and get to know each other.

We recognise that volunteering can be the first step on the road to employment but that many people in the community need help with taking that step. Spires run two accredited volunteering related courses – a ten week course the ‘Introduction to volunteering’ programme which is geared towards vulnerable young people aged 18-25 – and our sixteen week Spires Volunteer Training Programme which is an in depth...
Cath Stamper, York Road’s Project Director, writes:

Whilst the past few years have seen cuts taking their toll on the homelessness sector, at York Road we have managed to turn our fortunes around. This change has been underpinned by a clear, three-year business strategy, which has enabled us to be both aspirational and realistic, and a clear mission statement and objectives, which have enabled us to sell ourselves to prospective funders.

When looking for funding, I tap into what’s around. It’s about looking outside, what’s on the agenda locally, what’s available locally to you. You’ve got to understand your local authority’s homelessness strategy - if you’re in line with them they’re more trusting. A big chunk of our money has come from proving our worth to the local authority and we received funding from the local Police and Crime Commissioner for our work helping to reduce offending in the area.

When looking for funds, I’m always asking, how much do we need? Can we deliver? Does it fit in with our core aims? Because every single one of these pots of money gives you another report to write. If you’re managing six little pots at the same time it’s important that you’re on top of the reporting. If you don’t manage your funding streams effectively you’re not going to get repeat funding. One of the questions that always appears on funding application forms is, ‘how do we know you can manage this?’ You want to be able to evidence that you’ve managed somebody else’s money before so it’s really important that you’re organised.

When approaching funders, it is also important to make sure you can prove there is a need for the project and that you can evidence your impact. I ask my staff for evaluation sheets before, during and after projects. As a worker, you might have seen the difference a project makes but if you are going to tell your funders that 50% of clients have improved self-esteem, you need to be able to prove that. Organisations need to build information gathering into the actual delivery and get whoever is responsible for gathering it to buy into the process. Do they know why their doing it? If not they won’t do it, including them in the process gives them ownership.

Something else that has helped us to bring in funds and strengthen our organisation has been community engagement. We haven’t always done this well but now that York Road is embedded within the community rather than marginalised from it, it’s brought in so much more money. We’ve done all sorts in the community to raise our profile - our choir performed when the Christmas lights were switched on, we’ve done gigs; we’ve supported other charities to raise money. It’s made us much more visible and raised awareness. It also meets the need for clients feeling less isolated from the community so it’s ticking boxes all the way through. I actually had a member of the public say that, ‘we feel less excluded from you’. As a result, we’ve seen members of the public walking in the door and making donations.

Working with local media has been a really important part of raising the profile of York Road. I’m on the radio, I’m in the paper – literally all I do is talk about what we do! At Christmas I did interviews with the local press, TV and radio and as a result one of the larger donations we received came from somebody who normally donates to a large national charity who didn’t know we existed previously.
What we do
Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England. With over 500 members, we work to make services better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

Let’s end homelessness together

Homeless Link
Gateway House, Milverton Street
London SE11 4AP
020 7840 4430
www.homeless.org.uk
@Homelesslink
www.facebook.com/homelesslink