

Spare Room Campaign to combat youth homelessness

"I had a stranger in my spare room!"

Recession-busting strategy uses spare rooms to combat youth homelessness.

New figures from youth homeless charity Depaul UK show demand for emergency accommodation has increased by as much as 300% in some parts of the UK.

Depaul UK has launched its Spare Room Campaign in response to the dramatic rise in youth homelessness. The campaign sees Depaul UK team up with local charities across the country to call on the 7.5 million households nationwide who have a spare room to consider making it available to a young homeless person.

The charity supports a network of 37 safe emergency accommodation services across the UK, including Edinburgh and West Lothian, called Nightstops – placing homeless young people aged 16-25 in the homes of over 700 volunteer hosts approved by Depaul UK. A key objective of the campaign is to meet surging demand by doubling the number of hosting households by 2015, equalling 0.01% of UK households estimated to have a spare room.

Martin Houghton-Brown, Chief Executive of Depaul UK, said:-
"The number of young people sleeping rough is accelerating year on year, forcing more and more to sleep in unsafe places, vulnerable to exploitation and harm. These are tough times with homelessness increasing for under-25s as unemployment, increasing rents and cuts to local youth services are leaving many with nowhere to turn.

“Nightstop is a safety net to vulnerable young people at times of greatest need, when they are forced to leave home, most often due to family breakdown, and have no idea where to go. Last year, our network of Nightstops helped over 5,000 vulnerable young people and kept them from sleeping rough, sofa surfing, or in unsuitable accommodation and at risk of abuse. The use of spare rooms makes a huge positive difference to young people in crisis.”

London, for example, which has an estimated 655,000* spare bedrooms (in private rented and owner occupied housing), by itself has capacity eight times over to help the estimated 80,000 young people who each year experience homelessness in the UK.

The Nightstop scheme sees volunteer hosts provide a room, evening meal and listening ear to a young homeless person for one night or for up to two weeks. Once engaged with Nightstop, staff can then work with the young person in partnership with local agencies to help them address issues that caused them to become homeless, providing family mediation and securing longer-term settled accommodation.

Kate Polson, Chief Executive of The Rock Trust, said:- “There has never been a more important time for local people to partner with us and sign up to help Edinburgh and West Lothian’s most vulnerable young people.”

Sir Trevor McDonald, President of Depaul UK, said:-“Nightstop is a community response to a problem which is all too common in our community. This unique service is made possible by the generosity of inspirational people with a spare room and a desire to make a difference in a young person’s life.”

Submitted by [Katriona Harding](#)

