



Dorset Nightstop

The origins of Nightstop

In 1987 the first Nightstop was set up by a group of churches in Leeds, who were concerned about the plight of young homeless people in their area. Over the years other areas around England have recognised both the need for, and the success of, the Nightstop concept. Nightstop is now a national concern with projects across the UK.

Action for Children administers the Nightstop Dorset service from offices based on Portland. Action for Children is a national charity supporting the most vulnerable children and young people in the UK through a wide variety of projects.

What is Nightstop? How does it work?

Nightstop provides emergency overnight accommodation for young homeless people, between the ages of 16-25, in the homes of volunteer hosts who have been trained in regard to homelessness issues and who have also been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. Any resident in your household who is aged 18 or over will also be subject a DBS check. Please note if you have any guests to stay this will preclude you from being able to host during this time.

Not every young person is suitable for a Nightstop. Young people who are under the influence of drugs, alcohol and/or solvents at the time of the referral or who are, again at the time of the referral, displaying violent or aggressive behaviour or showing signs of acute mental health problems will not be referred to the scheme that day.

We also are unable to provide a Nightstop for young people who are absconding custody or seeking a bail address.

Young people only stay for one night at a time, and will have to be re-referred for a subsequent Nightstop. The maximum number of nights a young person can stay on the scheme is 3 nights within any given period of homelessness.

In exceptional circumstances, a young person's nights may be extended at the discretion of the Nightstop coordinator and/or project worker.

Who can become a volunteer? What do volunteers do?

Nightstop volunteers are ordinary people who want to reduce the problems facing young homeless people:

- Our hosts have a spare room in their home, which can be used to keep a young person off the streets one night at a time.
- Our drivers are able to provide safe and comfortable transportation from the referral agency to the host's home for the placement.
- Our young person's workers assist in the promotion of Nightstop to schools; help to set up forums to recruit other young people to be involved with Nightstop.

There is no specific criterion necessary for a person to volunteer for Nightstop, however those who have criminal convictions against children or have come to the attention of the social services because of their behaviour towards children will be automatically excluded.

The young people who use Nightstop can be vulnerable, for many this is the first time they have left home and are doing so under difficult circumstances. Young people often feel confused and hurt, which calls for great sensitivity and compassion on the part of anyone offering help in the form of emergency accommodation.

What do volunteers receive for being volunteers?

Without volunteers, we would not be able to operate the Nightstop scheme. In conversations with Nightstop volunteers they remark that the work they do can be occasionally testing, but for most nothing has been so rewarding.

Realising that Nightstop is not a money making scheme, and that we do not offer volunteers wages for their time, energy and dedication, we do however offer an expense reimbursement for hosts in regard to meals, gas/electric, travel etc., for drivers we reimburse mileage and reasonable expenses in line with Action for Children's standards.

Volunteers receive training and on-going support & supervision from Nightstop staff, including opportunities for further training, social events to meet other Nightstop volunteers & share experiences.

All volunteers who have a young person staying on a Nightstop receive telephone support. All Nightstop hosts are also listed on the 999 emergency line, meaning that should there be an emergency while a young person is on a Nightstop and the host contacts 999, the police have all Nightstop host's addresses and contact details and the call will be prioritised so that officers are aware of whom they might meet.

Volunteers provide a tremendous service to young people and their community, and many have discovered their own lives have been enriched by the Nightstop experience.

Why are referral agencies necessary? What do they do?

Referral agencies are our initial link between young people and the Nightstop scheme.

We have a diverse grouping of agencies as to enable us to reach as many young people as possible who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. Often, at Nightstop, we have found that it takes a lot of courage to ask for assistance with a personal matter such as housing, or more, directly “where am I going to sleep tonight?”

If we can condense the number of agencies a young person needs to engage with to access our scheme, we often find that the referral process is smoother and more comfortable for the young person at an often trying time in their lives.

Nightstop does not accept self referrals. If a young person wishes to access our scheme, he or she needs to be referred by an approved referral agency. All approved referral agencies have signed agreements with our scheme.

We also provide on going training for front line staff of referral agencies as to

- Appropriately and confidently explain what Nightstop is and what a young person can expect if they stayed on a Nightstop;
- Appropriately complete a face to face risk assessment/ referral form enclosing the name of *at least* one reference on the young person’s behalf;
- Act as a conduit between the Nightstop staff and the young person in regard to follow on risk assessment/ referral form questions as well as delivering placement details when and where appropriate.

At Nightstop we have two aims: first, to provide short term accommodation for a young person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness and second, to assist that young person in seeking longer term accommodation—that assistance often connects back to our referral agencies.

Who to contact?

For further information please contact

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VOLUNTEER PROFILE - Host

Access to suitable private accommodation, providing an evening meal, bed for the night and breakfast in the morning

Warm & friendly with an understanding of issues faced by young people in accessing suitable accommodation

A sense of humour and approachable nature with an ability to set out appropriate boundaries

Willing to listen

Can make an agreed commitment to the scheme and offer at least 3 days per month of availability

Can work within Nightstop's policies and procedures, particularly Child Protection and Confidentiality

VOLUNTEER DUTIES - Host

To provide safe overnight accommodation and support for a young person accepted onto the scheme

To help a young person feel relaxed and comfortable in what can often be a distressing situation

To introduce the young person to the household

To make the young person aware of essential routines within the household

To act upon any relevant information they may receive as a volunteer host in conjunction with the Nightstop staff.

To attend supervision, training, and support meetings which will be primarily needs led

VOLUNTEER PROFILE - DRIVER

Holding a valid UK or EU driving license

Access to an appropriately insured vehicle

Warm and friendly with an understanding of issues faced by young people
in accessing suitable accommodation

Have a sense of humour and approachable nature
with an ability to set out appropriate boundaries

Willing to listen

Can make an agreed commitment to the scheme

Can work within Dorset Nightstop's
policies and procedures,
particularly Child Protection and Confidentiality

VOLUNTEER DUTIES - DRIVERS

To provide safe transport for a young person
from the referral agency to the host household

To help a young person feel relaxed and comfortable in what can be a
distressing situation

To introduce the young person to the hosting household and act upon
relevant information in conjunction with Nightstop staff

To attend supervision, training, and support meetings which will be primarily
needs led