

No Second Night Out

Derby City & Derbyshire

An evaluation for Riverside
English Churches Housing Group

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About the authors

The Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit is a dedicated multi-disciplinary research and consultancy unit providing a range of services relating to housing and urban management to public and private sector clients. The Unit brings together researchers drawn from a range of disciplines including: social policy, housing management, urban geography, environmental management, psychology, social care and social work.

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This report is based on research undertaken by the study team and the analysis and comment thereafter do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the research commissioners, or any participating stakeholders and agencies. The authors take responsibility for any inaccuracies or omissions in the report.

Glossary

Term	Explanation
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
HTF	Homelessness Transition Fund. An independent fund that aims to protect essential services for homeless people, encourage innovation and support communities to adopt the 'No Second Night Out' standard. Administered by Homeless Link and supported by Department for Communities and Local Government
NSNO DD	No Second Night Out Derby City and Derbyshire
Priority need	An individual who presents as homeless to the local council can only be provided with emergency accommodation if they are assessed as being legally homeless i.e. have no other form of accommodation in the UK or elsewhere, and have a priority need. Priority need categories include but are not exclusive to pregnant women, care leavers, people responsible for dependent children and other people considered to be vulnerable.
Riverside ECHG	Riverside English Churches Housing Group
Single point of entry	A service made available by the local authority in Derby City for single adults or couples, aged 18 or over, who do not have dependants. Services available include housing advice and assistance for homeless people as well access to hostel accommodation in Derby.
SHUSU	Sustainable Housing and Urban Studies Unit, University of Salford
YMCA	Young Man's Christian Association

Contents

ABOUT THE AUTHORS	2		
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3		
GLOSSARY	4		
CONTENTS	5		
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6		
The Evaluation	6		
Key Findings	6		
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	9		
Background	9		
Overview of No Second Night Out Derby and Derbyshire (NSNO DD)	10		
Structure of this report	11		
CHAPTER 2: METHODS	12		
Phase one: Review of existing project data and other relevant literature	12		
Phase two: Consultation with key service providers	12		
Phase three: Consultation with service users	13		
		CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS: SERVICE PROVIDERS	14
		Operations	14
		Transformation of service	15
		Client-led service	17
		Partnership working	18
		Raising awareness	21
		Capacity building	22
		CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS: SERVICE USERS	23
		Characteristics of the service users	23
		Accessing support	24
		Service delivery	25
		Emergency accommodation	26
		Support beyond accommodation need	27
		Returning to normality	28
		CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	30
		REFERENCES	32

Executive Summary

The Evaluation

No Second Night Out Derby City and Derbyshire (NSNO DD) was set up in March 2013 as part of a nationwide response to the Coalition Government's Strategy to end rough sleeping (DCLG, 2011). NSNO DD works to prevent rough sleeping by targeting support at people who are new to rough sleeping. The NSNO DD outreach team – based within Riverside English Churches and Housing Group (ECHG) - assesses the needs of new rough sleepers and links them to emergency accommodation. This service provides a range of support to homeless individuals across Derby City and Derbyshire.

In May 2014, Riverside ECHG commissioned the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford to carry out a rapid evaluation of NSNO DD. The evaluation was undertaken by reviewing the following data sources:

- Existing secondary data relating to NSNO DD;
- Interviews with seven key stakeholders;
- Interviews with four NSNO DD representatives; and
- Interviews with 14 service users.

The fieldwork took place between May and August 2014.

Key Findings

The following outlines a number of key findings from the interviews conducted with service providers and service users as part of the evaluation of NSNO DD. The findings outlined a number of key successes but also challenges faced by the project since it was introduced.

Service providers

- Interviews with service providers highlighted that NSNO DD is a valued homelessness service currently in operation across Derbyshire. The level of professionalism and wealth of experience provided by the outreach team has enabled a prompt and proactive service that has achieved substantial success since it was introduced.
- The representatives of NSNO DD were complimented for their ongoing commitment to providing a service that responds rapidly to each referral. This attribute was viewed as a result of the project maintaining a critical focus on early intervention, effective decision making, applying common sense and 'being savvy' with available resources.

- The service NSNO DD provides has had to transform considerably – particularly with regards to accessing emergency accommodation. The transformation of the service has included broadening the client profile that is supported by the project, in a bid to maximise service delivery and subsequently the numbers of individuals supported.
- The project has faced challenges in delivering a service based on the original objectives, given the need to work beyond the original remit. A number of service providers recognised that NSNO DD has strived to address gaps in provision, predominantly with specialist support for individuals with complex needs, where services that once fulfilled such roles no longer exist, or are now only funded to offer generic homelessness assistance.
- Working in partnership with other service providers is perceived as critical for the ongoing success of the project. Initially the project was met with resistance from some service providers but this has largely been overcome as a result of the outreach team's commitment to supporting other service providers. A key successful partnership identified by respondents is that which has been established between NSNO DD and private housing providers.
- The outreach team were commended on their ability to complete accurate and comprehensive needs and risk assessments of service users, which has aided the implementation of support plans that have proven successful in practice. A central concern of the project has been to provide a needs-led service that focuses on the individual. In addition, the project has endeavoured to support and empower individuals through advocacy and information provision regarding housing options, rights and responsibilities.
- NSNO DD has demonstrated continued efforts to raise the profile of the service and raise awareness of the wider issue of homelessness across Derbyshire. The outreach team have endeavoured to work closely with a central focus on prevention and education. This has been evidenced through the organisation of open days for the public and other service providers; the creation of two short films; and the outreach team's ongoing presence within the community.

Service users

- In operation, NSNO DD establishes contact with service users in wide variety of ways, including follow up of online referrals, rough sleeper counts, frequently attending hostels and encouraging word-of-mouth referrals among individuals who have previously been supported. This was valued by the service users and has maximised opportunities to support a large number of individuals who have experienced homelessness. A continued need to raise awareness of the service was highlighted by one respondent who stated that had he been aware of NSNO DD, self-referral would have occurred much sooner.
- None of the respondents interviewed have returned to the streets since contact with the NSNO DD project and all have remained in the accommodation arranged by the outreach team following initial contact. Two service users were successfully supported in securing tenancies on the same day as their first contact with NSNO DD.

8 No Second Night Out Derby City and Derbyshire

- All of the respondents offered positive comments on the speed at which the outreach team established contact once a referral had been made. The efficient and rapid approach demonstrated by the outreach team was highlighted by a number of the service users who viewed this as a key success of the project. For those interviewed, contact with a member of the outreach team occurred within a 24 hour period, which fulfilled one of the key aims of the initiative.
- One consistent view across the interviews was that the attitude and personable approach adopted by the outreach team had exceeded service user expectations and a number of respondents likened the communication with the outreach team to that with a close relative or friend, even at the first point of contact. The outreach team were viewed as reliable, trustworthy and honest and many commented on their ability to instil a positive outlook for the future.
- A widely held perception among the service users was that emergency accommodation in Derbyshire was extremely limited and therefore likely to be unavailable – this presents a key challenge for homelessness provision, including NSNO DD, where engaging with individuals, particularly those new to streets is critical to achieving the vision of ending rough sleeping.
- One issue for NSNO DD in linking service users to emergency accommodation was reluctance, and often refusal, by some service users to enter an environment which they perceived as dangerous or detrimental to their wellbeing. This specifically included fears of exposure to drug misuse, criminal activity and alcohol dependency and suggests a need for accommodation and support that is tailored towards the needs of different client groups. This was suggested as a future goal for NSNO DD that the outreach team envision.
- All service users outlined that the support given to them by NSNO DD had been exceptional. For many service users, support extended beyond their need for accommodation and included prioritising other needs such as food provision and psychological support.
- The outreach team were praised by service users for the number of ways in which they advocated on their behalf. This vital aspect of service delivery included examples such as helping people to prepare for housing placement interviews, attending such interviews or other appointments for support, liaising with the local authority or other service providers and challenging negative decisions.
- Service users highlighted that a key outcome for them following contact with NSNO DD had been a return to normality. Encouragement and support provided by the project was responsible for reconnection to a number of services, such as regular contact with medical services, or reconnection with family members.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

In 2011, the Coalition Government outlined its commitment to end rough sleeping in the document: *Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide* (DCLG, 2011).¹ This document outlined a cross-departmental strategy, which focused particularly on preventative work with single people who had recently been made homeless, and who were unable to access other services because they were not in 'priority need'².

- The Government's strategy is underpinned by the recognition that rough sleeping may be avoided if people are able to access support at an early stage, avoiding the potential downward spiral that more entrenched rough sleepers can often experience. The Government's vision was encapsulated in the following aims:
- To support people to move off the streets immediately and access a place of safety.

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government. (2011). *Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6261/1939099.pdf

² The Housing Act 2006 states that a local authority must assess an individual as in priority need before they can be provided with emergency accommodation. Priority need categories include: pregnant women, care leavers, people responsible for dependent children and other people considered to be vulnerable For more information see: http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/help_from_the_council_when_homeless/priority_need

- To support rough sleepers in gaining access to emergency accommodation and the support services they need.
- To support rough sleepers from outside the area to reconnect to a place where they can get housing and support.
- To provide support which will enable service users to secure and maintain accommodation.
- To raise awareness of rough sleeping amongst the public and to encourage members of the public to refer people for help (DCLG, 2011)

In response to the Government's strategy, Riverside English Churches Housing Group (ECHG) bid for funding from the Homelessness Transition Fund (HTF) to deliver a No Second Night Out (NSNO) project in Derby City and Derbyshire. This bid was supported by the following local authorities: Amber Valley, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derby City, Derbyshire Dales, Erewash, High Peak, North East Derbyshire and South Derbyshire.

Funding was provided for a period of 18 months from March 2013 until September 2014. The initiative had the following four key aims:

- To promote and advertise services to the public, other services providers and rough sleepers themselves (including raising awareness of a national website and a 24/7 telephone line).
- Endeavour to contact all new referrals within 24 hours Monday to Friday and 48 hours Saturday/Sunday and to prioritise those new to the street to accommodation providers to use the 72 hour sit up service (the reservation of eight sit-up camp beds – four in Milestone House and four in Centenary House – for NSNO DD referrals).
- Ensure that each referral is passed onto the outreach teams for appropriate action.
- Provide feedback to anyone referring a rough sleeper on the action taken within 10 working days.

In May 2014 Riverside ECHG commissioned the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford to carry out a rapid evaluation of NSNO Derby and Derbyshire (NSNO DD). This rapid evaluation aimed to provide Riverside ECHG with a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the projects, particularly from the perspective of stakeholders and service users. This report outlines the findings of the evaluation.

Overview of No Second Night Out Derby and Derbyshire (NSNO DD)

NSNO DD is based at Riverside ECHG in Derby but covers all the local authorities in Derbyshire (Amber Valley, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derby City, Derbyshire Dales, Erewash, High Peak, North East Derbyshire and South Derbyshire). As stated in a separate report which covers the first year's activity, 'the No Second Night Out initiative is a pledge made

to people new to the streets, and is part of a commitment to end rough sleeping' (Riverside, 2014, p.3).³ This report goes on to detail the four pledges of the NSNO work:

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 once they have been helped off them.
4. Ultimately, no one should arrive on the streets.

The outreach team comprises of three workers based within Derby City. The NSNO team operates a 24 hour telephone referral line based at the Riverside call centre in Liverpool. Additionally, the outreach team accept referrals online via the Riverside website or via email. Access to the dedicated NSNO referral system allows referrals to be made by members of the public, other service providers or organisations and homeless individuals themselves.

The project primarily utilises one of eight sit up (camp beds) beds located across two hostels in Derby City; four are offered from Milestone House, the other four are located at Centenary House. The sit up emergency beds are allocated exclusively for people referred by the NSNO workers. Typically, the outreach team will endeavour to make contact with those referred to the sit up beds at the beginning of each day. This allows NSNO DD to establish the individual needs of the service user, develop an appropriate support plan and identify potential next steps.

³ Riverside ECHG (2014) *No Second Night Out 2013/2014*, Riverside ECHG, NSNO Derby/Derbyshire.

In addition, the outreach workers liaise with the Derby City Single Point of Entry, Local Authority Homeless Teams, various partner agencies, day centres and volunteers, on helping provide accommodation for longer term rough sleepers in combined hub/accommodation units. On a monthly basis the outreach team also complete rough sleeper counts where areas of known rough sleepers can be monitored. Individuals who are known to the team can be offered ongoing support and encouraged to reengage with services. This also provides the outreach team the opportunity to identify new areas of rough sleeping across the county with a view to initiate contact with individuals who are not yet engaged with homelessness support or assistance.

The initial report completed by Riverside after the project's first twelve months in operation presented a breakdown of 644 referrals that had been made to NSNO DD since the introduction of the service in March 2013. A total of 407 service users were registered to the service by the outreach team. Key information from this report showed that:

- The greatest number of referrals to NSNO DD were made in Derby City – this was significantly higher than any other local authority in Derbyshire.
- There were 237 referrals that did not lead to registration with the service. The outreach team identified a number of reasons for the difference including multiple referrals for the same client; poor referral information given; clients not present when sleep sites investigated; clients resolving homeless situation before contact was made; and clients who were unwilling to engage.
- Service users were predominantly male and aged between 26-49 years old.

- A significant number of service users presented with mental health issues, and drug and alcohol dependency.
- The most common outcomes for service users were temporary accommodation; reconnection to family homes; or reconnection to areas outside of Derbyshire & repatriation

Structure of this report

This report provides an overview of the rapid evaluation of NSNO DD. It focuses on the work of the NSNO DD outreach team, explores the experiences of service users who have recently received support from the service, as well as the perceptions of the service from stakeholder organisations. The report is structured in the following way:

- **Chapter 2** outlines the research methods used to conduct the rapid evaluation and describes the three phases of research.
- **Chapter 3** presents an analysis of the findings from interviews conducted with stakeholder organisations across Derbyshire, NSNO DD representatives and focuses on NSNO DD operations and outcomes.
- **Chapter 4** presents an analysis of the findings from interviews conducted with service users and focuses on their experiences of receiving support from NSNO DD.
- **Chapter 5** brings together the conclusions from the findings.

Chapter 2: Methods

The rapid evaluation involved three separate but interrelated phases of data collection:

- Phase one: Review of existing project data and other relevant literature
- Phase two: Consultation with key service providers
- Phase three: Consultation with service users

Each of these phases is described in more detail below.

Phase one: Review of existing project data and other relevant literature

This initial phase involved reviewing available information relating to the NSNO DD project, but also broader homelessness policy. It included an analysis of existing project data both qualitative and quantitative. This included the HTF grant approval and the NSNO DD annual report. External policy documents and reports such as *Vision to end rough sleeping: NSNO Nationwide* (DCLG 2011), *NSNO: Across England* (HTF 2014) and *Making every contact count: a joint approach to preventing homelessness* (DCLG 2012) were consulted in order to contextualise the project within broader homelessness policy.

Phase two: Consultation with key service providers

This phase involved carrying out semi-structured interviews with selected service providers. This was divided between two different groups. The first group of stakeholders consisted of NSNO DD workers. The interviews with staff focused on understanding the aims and objectives of the project; the key indicators of success; perceived successes and challenges of the project; strategic and operational issues; and the policy context within which the project operates. One focus group and a one-to-one interview were conducted with four NSNO DD representatives in total.

The second group of stakeholders consisted of organisations working with NSNO DD. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals representing various organisations across the area. The participants included representatives of local authority housing and homelessness teams, night shelter staff, immigration officers, private housing providers and day care centre managers. These interviews focused on exploring their understanding of the NSNO outreach team; perceived successes and challenges of the project; and perceived gaps in service delivery.

Given that there was a short period available for fieldwork, a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews were carried out. This provided greater flexibility for the individual respondents in terms of availability.

Phase three: Consultation with service users

This phase involved carrying out semi-structured interviews with service users who had been supported by NSNO DD. In order to carry out this consultation, the NSNO DD team identified 15 people and contacted them to inform them that the evaluation was taking place and to invite their participation. Following this initial contact, and with permission from the service users, the research team contacted them to provide further details about the evaluation and to establish whether or not they wanted to take part. A total of 14 people agreed to participate and were interviewed.

As with the stakeholder organisations, service user respondents were offered the option of a telephone interview in order to provide more flexibility. This proved preferable to a number of respondents and a total of eight interviews were completed by telephone. The remaining six service user interviews were carried out face-to-face at two locations in Derby City. The first was the Padley Homeless

Centre, which operates a drop-in service for advice and support for adults aged 18 and over and offers 10 accommodation units for males over 18 years old. The second location was the Derbyshire YMCA accommodation campus where 88 accommodation units are available for homeless individuals aged 16-64 years old. The service users were interviewed about their situation at the time that they received support; their overall experience of receiving support from NSNO DD; their reflections on the impact of the support; and any perceived gaps in the support that was provided.

All of the interviews – service providers and service users - were audio recorded, with the consent of the participant. The service users who participated received a £10 shopping voucher to compensate them for the time taken to contribute to the project.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically with reference to the key aims and objectives of the project.

Chapter 3: Findings: Service providers

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of interviews carried out with the key service providers. This group consisted of seven organisations that operate across Derby City and Derbyshire and four representatives of the NSNO DD project. The analysis focuses on the strengths and limitations of the project relating to service delivery and outcomes, as well as areas for further development. Please note that all identifiers have been removed from the quotes to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

Operations

All of the key service providers interviewed expressed that the NSNO DD project had been a valued homelessness service operating within the Derbyshire area since its introduction in 2013. The outreach team were praised by many of the service providers for the level of professionalism and wealth of experience applied in the delivery of a prompt and proactive service.

The process typically begins with acknowledging referrals made to the project through the online hub; a system which is seen favourably by the outreach team for its ability to accept referrals 24 hours a day. Most referrals to the project are made in this manner and the outreach team stated that technological benefits of this approach increased confidence in

efficient case recording and monitoring, and was also perceived as a vital contribution to their ability to offer support to a higher number of referrals than anticipated. This has been a fundamental success of the project where the number of individuals referred to NSNO DD exceeded the total expected over the 18 month period in just over one year.

Service providers praised the pace of the NSNO DD service, presenting a number of examples where positive outcomes had been achieved for service users on the same day as the referral. The representatives of NSNO DD also commented on the need for the service to respond rapidly to each referral and viewed this attribute as a result of maintaining a focus on early intervention, effective decision making, applying common sense and 'being savvy' with available resources. In relation to the speed of NSNO DD contact and support, one stakeholder regarded the project as an 'emergency service' that they perceived as vital for homelessness across Derbyshire:

"It's essential. Without No Second Night Out certainly Derbyshire are devoid of any real emergency port of call for someone who is suddenly finding themselves having to sleep rough." (Service provider 3)

One major benefit of NSNO DD that emerged from the interviews with service providers was that, as the project operates across all local authorities in Derbyshire, it is not bound or restricted geographically in the same way as other existing housing and homelessness services. The perception was mirrored by service users also who claimed they felt able to access this service regardless of their location at the time of referral.

While non-NSNO stakeholders reflected positively on the geographical coverage, the representatives of NSNO DD voiced that, at times, they had been overwhelmed by the volume of referrals made to the project combined with the wide geographical area their service covered. Working beyond the projected number of referrals with significantly reduced access to resources, such as emergency accommodation, a number of unexpected challenges were presented to the outreach team. In particular, this impacted on the outcomes of referrals made in local authorities that were located furthest from Derby City. The outreach team and a number of key stakeholders perceived this to be as a result of two interlinked issues. The first involved difficulties in arranging face-to-face contact with service users who would often be tough to locate following a referral, and the second issue concerned service user reluctance to move away from their area of local connection once contacted, even on a temporary basis.

In particular, the outreach team were commended for their presence in the community. Many service providers spoke highly of their experiences of working face-to-face with the outreach team and the positive impact this had on the relationship between existing organisations and NSNO DD. This was largely achieved by an ongoing commitment from the outreach team to operate the service from a number of locations across the county, limiting the time spent working from the NSNO DD office based in Derby City.

In addition, NSNO DD reported a key aspect of their service delivery was the completion of monthly rough sleeper counts. These were seen to offer a strategic solution to identifying certain individuals who were yet to establish contact with any homelessness organisation, and also to provide service users who had lost contact with the project the opportunity to reconnect. One stakeholder commented that without the NSNO DD service operating actively on the ground their ability to establish contact with their own client base would present considerable challenges. Accessing service users by adopting this approach was viewed by the outreach team as a means to offer support to those individuals who present with the most complex needs. Examples of service users supported by NSNO DD in this way included individuals with criminal records, which meant that they had restricted access to certain emergency accommodation, entrenched rough sleepers with drug and alcohol dependency, and a number of individuals who failed to have a local connection or recourse to public funds.

Transformation of service

The most significant operational challenges faced by NSNO DD have emerged as a result of considerable cuts to funding across Derbyshire for many of the organisations that offer homelessness assistance. All key service providers offered commentary on the impact reduced funding has had on the way in which organisations now operate, including NSNO DD.

In particular, the reduction in funding has transformed the scope of emergency accommodation available to referrals from the NSNO DD project. Between securing funding for NSNO DD and the introduction of the project Derbyshire witnessed a reduction of over 400 bed spaces. Consequently, the result is a service that operates significantly different to that outlined in the

initial proposals, and also that anticipated by the NSNO DD representatives. Strategically the outreach team identified a critical need to be adaptable and creative in their approach in order to link service users with the limited spaces of emergency accommodation, as summarised by the following representative:

“I think if we hadn’t have adapted then there would be a large portion of people that wouldn’t have received the support that we’ve been able to give them.” (NSNO DD service provider 1)

In addition, working with a much greater number of service users, the client group that NSNO DD supports has also changed. One representative outlined that it was a strategic decision to broaden service delivery by reviewing the client criteria that was originally proposed to guide the service in line with NSNO principles. As this service provider highlighted:

“This is stretching ... the services from when we first started off, we were quite clear about what our aims and objectives were and what the client group was for the project. That’s kind of had to evolve to...it has changed and evolved and I think it’s now tailored towards the client group that is out there rather than towards the true No Second Night Out ones. Our main bulk of our work is with a more complex needs ones that are just bouncing backwards and forwards from the hostels.” (NSNO DD service provider 1)

In a bid to avoid isolation from support, the representatives expressed a commitment to promoting NSNO DD as inclusive to any referral that presented in need of homelessness assistance. This was viewed by the NSNO DD representatives in a positive light in that the service has expanded to

work with much wider scope of people with varying needs. A noted success for one representative was that as a result of this approach a key group of service users that NSNO DD has been able to work with were entrenched rough sleepers battling alcohol dependency. Presented by the NSNO DD as a significant issue, particularly in Derby City, the representative voiced the projects long-term goals to develop the support given to this group of service users. The demand for tailored support to such individuals was emphasised and NSNO DD’s approach was perceived as a solution to reducing the number of repeat referrals this group of service users created. Another representative outlined how the project has already made progress to develop the way in which the project works with this client group, as follows:

“If somebody has been drinking on the streets for years, just getting them to come in and stay the night use our services and start eating and start seeing GPs. What [NSNO DD] has done, [it’s] made some changes to our services, because what [NSNO DD] was finding is, certainly the drinkers erm, they were desperate for a drink and would go out drinking and wouldn’t return. If you can provide the environment to start work and achieve the outcomes you want.” (NSNO DD service provider 4)

In keeping with the core NSNO principle that nobody new to the streets should spend a second night out, the representatives of NSNO DD envisioned one goal for the future of the service as the introduction of emergency accommodation that could be used exclusively for individuals who had no prior experience of homelessness: a client group that was described by the NSNO DD representatives as ‘true’ NSNO service users (i.e. those that met the original criteria of the project). The need for this resource was reiterated by the many service users also, where a number of individuals were reluctant to

accept offers of emergency accommodation based on concerns about the impact such environments may have on their overall wellbeing. As the following representative outlines:

***“I would have liked our own house for the core client, the naïve first time to absolutely limit their contact with hostels and homelessness services to have had our own, little terraced house with a couple of single beds in each, All doable. Not massive amounts of funding and I think that would have improved output.”
(NSNO DD service provider 3)***

A critical impact of the funding cuts to Derbyshire's homelessness provision is that NSNO DD are now challenged in providing a service that offers something additional in Derbyshire. As previously outlined, one of the core principles of NSNO DD is to direct a focus in service delivery, to an extent, to those new to the streets. This was recognised by one representative who identified that, to a certain degree, NSNO DD must now address gaps in provision, predominantly with specialist support for individuals with complex needs, where services that once fulfilled this role no longer exist or are now only able to offer generic homelessness assistance, as highlighted by the following NSNO DD representative:

“You can imagine the amount of services what have been cut in the city. It leaves us with a limited number of options to where people can go. A lot of specialist services have gone. It's left a generic homeless service now a small number of generic services which some of our clients find it very difficult to fit into.” (NSNO DD service provider 4)

Overall, working beyond the original remit, the outreach team stated that the project has faced substantial challenges to their ability to deliver a service based on the original objectives. Fundamentally, this is evidenced in the profiles of the service users engaged with the project. NSNO DD has demonstrated that the service can be adaptable and the representatives foresee this as critical to their approach to continue to develop NSNO DD in the future; however, there were serious concerns in relation to the impact of funding cuts.

Client-led service

For the representatives of the NSNO DD project, a critical aspect of their engagement with service users was ensuring that the process was guided by the individual needs of each service user. As such, it was maintained that each individual referred to NSNO DD was encouraged by the outreach team to take an active role in determining the most appropriate support plan for their needs. As one NSNO DD representative highlights:

***“To me, it's no good us going and saying, you are going to do this and you are going to do that. We have got to encourage the clients to get involved. We want them to discuss their support and their needs. A lot of them, certainly the entrenched rough sleepers, you've got to build that relationship and build that trust start in asking what's gone wrong and what they think could work for them and how we can look at different ways and different methods of working with some people.”
(NSNO DD service provider 4)***

The approach to working with service users in this manner has benefited from the extensive experience of the outreach team who have worked within various homelessness organisations prior to becoming part of the NSNO DD project. This was also highlighted by other service providers who valued the NSNO DD representatives' level of knowledge regarding homelessness assistance.

Various key stakeholders complimented the flexibility of the project in operating a needs-led service that focuses on the individual service user. One service provider highlighted that they have now adopted similar strategic approaches to NSNO DD within their own service delivery. As this service provider highlights:

“It’s a very fluid sort of situation erm, that we deal with and each case can be quite individual. So, I think if anything we improve together and erm, yes, we just take each case individually. We will adapt to whatever we need to do in order to make things work for that person that they are helping. I think they are adaptable and they are fluid. We are as well. We seem to be singing from the same hymn sheet, let’s put it that way. We want to help people.” (Service provider 6)

In addition, the service aimed to empower individuals beyond active engagement in their crisis by additionally working to increase self-awareness of the service users' rights and responsibilities when engaging with homelessness assistance and their access to certain housing provision. One NSNO DD representative stressed that the project had been involved in a number of cases where service users had needed support to challenge negative decisions given regarding their housing options. This was commonly associated with those service users who may have complex needs or restrictions to assistance, for example as a result of a criminal

record. Often, rent arrears from previous tenancies were marked as a barrier for service users trying to access local authority housing. Some service users praised the project for its approach to negotiating appropriate action plans between service users and other organisations such as housing providers. As one NSNO DD representative stated:

“We are challenging the services where probably they wouldn't work with the clients before. Let the clients know what their rights are around homelessness and what they can expect from some of the other agencies.” (NSNO DD service provider 4)

Partnership working

Both NSNO DD representatives and other service providers highlighted the importance of working in partnership to maximise the potential of existing provision across the county. In particular this was perceived as a vital response to limit the impact of funding cuts on continuing service provision. Over the duration of the project the outreach team have endeavoured to build upon former relationships with various key stakeholders that had been established by members of the outreach team prior to the introduction of NSNO DD. Once again, past experience of working within the homelessness sector aided partnership working and enabled the outreach team to focus on expanding the network of stakeholders by establishing new relationships.

The representatives stated that during the initial phases of NSNO DD's introduction they concentrated on offering support to existing organisations. One representative viewed the introduction of the project in this way as vital to the development of the partnerships which exist between NSNO DD and the service providers at present. It was highlighted that the experience of working in partnership with the local authorities'

Single Point of Entry in Derby City has been particularly positive and has proved mutually beneficial for both service providers. From the onset, Single Point of Entry has referred a significant number of individuals to NSNO DD, and in return, the outreach team have afforded great effort to assess each service users' right to homelessness assistance, reducing the number of homeless presentations made directly to the local authority.

In contrast to the current experience of partnership working across Derby City and Derbyshire, it was identified that NSNO DD faced a number of challenges in working with some of the other organisations. One representative felt that resistance to the project was a result of apprehension and uncertainty surrounding homelessness provision across the county at that time. In addition, the representatives stated that NSNO DD was perceived by other organisations as something different operationally to the existing framework of homelessness assistance, presenting a new concept or approach to working with service users. As one of the representatives outlined:

"It just takes time for people to see that we are not a threat to their service. We are there to compliment." (NSNO DD service provider 2)

A key success in the development of working in partnership with others has seen NSNO DD establish a trusted and ongoing relationship with private housing providers who stated that prior to the project tenancies were not offered to individuals who presented as homeless. By working closely with service users and landlords the project has successfully supported a number of individuals into tenancies, based on references provided by NSNO DD. This was highlighted as one example of the

projects commitment to be innovative in their approach to accessing accommodation despite drastic cuts in funding and consequently available resources. As the following representative outlines, this has resulted in a number of tenancies being offered to service users:

"...it's been quite surprising in every house that we've accommodated have been successful, haven't they. Where they wouldn't normally succeed." (NSNO DD service provider 1)

One representative voiced that often service delivery does not involve linking individuals to tenancies, but informing and supporting service users of the stages and pathways involved in the process of rehousing. However, a number of NSNO DD referrals, typically those that were new to the streets, were viewed as able to manage a tenancy immediately. NSNO DD linking such individuals to private housing providers was perceived by respondents as beneficial to all individuals involved, as the following representative outlined:

"...when somebody comes from us, we've got them engaged with health and with departments. There is a lot of interventions that have started already. If we ring up and looking for accommodation they will offer us that accommodation. Previously, before they was very dubious." (NSNO DD service provider 2)

The outreach team were regarded as efficient and accurate in making service user referrals as a result of their approach to completing proficient risk and needs assessments of new service users. This quality was regarded by a number of service

providers as significant in building confidence in the project and developing the ongoing partnerships, as the following comment suggests:

“I think they vet them with a view to having a long standing relationship with us. We are not their worst nightmare and they send nobody bad. They work on the fact that they want to send us good people so that when they ask, you know, is anywhere available we can say, any rooms available we can say yes. We have dealt with others before and they have sent us the wrong people and [we] don’t deal with them anymore.” (Service provider 4)

It was also noted that the NSNO DD project had extended their network beyond Derbyshire attending a number of meetings with other non-NSNO homelessness organisations operating in the bordering counties. One stakeholder regarded this commitment as crucial to understanding how such projects can work together to achieve a greater impact on homelessness both in their own local authorities and on a wider scale. Particular benefits included the opportunity to share best practices, offer advice and inform one another on outcomes and strategies.

Another example of the project’s commitment to offering support to a wider client group included working in partnership with immigration officers to provide support to a number of migrants who had become homeless with no recourse to public funds. This client group was perceived as particularly vulnerable by the outreach team who worked closely with a number of these service users directly at sleep sites. It was identified by NSNO DD representatives and service providers that often the most desirable outcome was repatriation. Indeed, since the introduction of the project a number of service users have been successfully supported in repatriation. NSNO DD representatives highlighted

that a critical aspect of service delivery for this client group was ensuring that individuals were supported at each stage in the process of returning home, for example it was outlined that travel arrangements for each service user should be made to support a full reconnection to family members or friends, not only to their home country. The benefits of working in partnership to support this client group was that NSNO DD were able to identify those that were rough sleeping with no recourse to public funds and other assistance, while immigration specialists were able to provide advice and assistance to help the service users return to their home country:

“It’s a really good set up. It helps people, and it helps people that No Second Night Out have made contact with and worked with like ourselves to help those people as well and without that link a lot of what we would do would be difficult to impossible, because we don’t go out looking for people on the streets that need help. They do. That is the vital link.” (Service provider 6)

In general, effective partnerships between service providers in Derbyshire were viewed by a number of those interviewed as operationally resourceful for homelessness provision across the county. Critically, NSNO DD are perceived as a link between existing service providers, allowing time and resources to be directed in the most appropriate manner, as the following representative outlines:

“I think we are stopping a lot of duplication of services. We are intervening for them so that’s its freeing them up again, to deal with the difficult clients who have a higher support need.” (NSNO DD service provider 4)

Raising awareness

One of the key aims of the project was to demonstrate a commitment to promoting and advertising the service. Key stakeholders commented positively on the continued efforts of the outreach team to raise public awareness, which was primarily achieved through the distribution of NSNO DD materials such as leaflets, posters and business cards.

While the efforts of the NSNO DD were recognised by a number of service providers, one respondent commented on the need for increased and ongoing information provision. The representatives reinforced this shortfall in service delivery highlighting that with additional support from others, such as volunteers, they would be better resourced to provide this in the future. The limitations, in terms of time and resources available to the outreach team, were also highlighted by the service provider:

“I think it’s always difficult, because I would probably say, they could be providing more information about what they are doing. But I can realise working in a local authority we will always ask and put more information out there and we want to know this and we want to know that and that in itself is a job and should you pull resources away from the people that are working on the front line to sort of provide more reporting mechanisms. I think it’s good. It may raise their profile and shows what they are doing. I can also understand the difficulty they have in doing it.” (Service provider 1)

To further promote the service, the NSNO DD outreach team have produced two short promotional videos for the service, which were developed in partnership Clockwork Prism. Each short film includes interviews with the team and service users who offered to share their experiences to further promote NSNO DD and inform others of the processes involved in service delivery. Each film was strategically targeted at two different audiences: stakeholder organisations and young individuals in the community. In particular, the representatives viewed the second short film as critical to the NSNO vision to end rough sleeping, where ultimately no-one should arrive on the streets. The representatives stated the next stage is to disseminate both short films, and arrangements were under way to show the film at local youth groups and schools to continue their commitment to inform younger individuals of homelessness and access to support.

Furthermore, NSNO DD were seen favourably by a number of service providers for the organisation of two public facing events. The first was held in celebration of one year of service for NSNO DD. A number of key stakeholders from across Derbyshire were welcomed to the event, which included talks from the outreach team and an immigration officer on their involvement in service delivery. An annual report was also presented at the event outlining the referral numbers and offered a breakdown of the service delivery over the first 12 months. It was noted by service providers that the information offered may have benefited from a clearer breakdown of the data included between local authorities, and it was highlighted that it would be valuable to their own service to be able to better understand the demographics of the service users supported across the county. The second event was organised in an effort to develop a volunteer programme, and will be discussed further in the next section.

Capacity building

An additional strength of the project is the development of volunteer opportunities within NSNO DD. While identified as being in the preliminary stages, one representative outlined the project's strategy going forward is to welcome support in service delivery from a team of volunteers. At the time of writing 16 volunteer applications had been processed by the outreach team and a number of individuals had gone on to attend inductions and health and safety training sessions. Two of these prospective volunteers were service users who both expressed a commitment to ongoing involvement with the project and were delighted to be involved in the volunteer programme, with one stating that this was as a way in which to offer something back to the service that had only recently supported their own crisis.

The representatives recognised that barriers to the development of the volunteer programme at present are mostly due to the restrictions of the outreach team, which operates with only three employees. As the following representative highlights:

“At the moment, [NSNO GM] have a specific outreach team whereas we are just like everything. It would be nice if we did have [an] Outreach and we have volunteers perhaps doing our role...It would be nice to have separate and properly identifiable roles (NSNO DD service provider 1)

It was outlined that the ambition for the volunteer programme will be to offer two specific services. Principally the volunteer programme would facilitate the introduction of a meet and greet befriender service, which will be operational in Centenary House before being rolled out to Milestone House. This volunteer role offers a point of contact for service users who are accessing the sit up beds – where volunteers are able to provide a meal offer, a change of clothes and toiletries.

Secondly, the call for volunteers resulted in a significant number of applications from individuals who could offer translation services for a number of service users who spoke little or no English. As previously mentioned, the project had faced significant challenges working with individuals who have no recourse to public funds, a large number of whom are from Eastern Europe. This addition to the service would further develop the projects ability to support this client group.

Overall, the findings from the interviews conducted with various service providers outlines a perception that the project had contributed in a positive manner to the existing homelessness provision across Derbyshire. The challenges faced by project are largely seen by service providers as a result of the limitations in both access to resources, such as accommodation and funding, and the capacity of work that can be completed by the three members of the team. Going forward, the representatives and service providers highlighted confidence in the projects ability to develop the service, but this requires continued partnership working.

Chapter 4: Findings: Service Users

The following chapter presents the key findings from the analysis of interviews carried out with 14 service users. Those interviewed outlined their experiences of support from NSNO DD and other Derbyshire services, the impact of support given, and also shared details of their situations prior to contact with the project and their circumstances at present. The analysis explores the strengths of NSNO DD and the challenges faced by the project in terms of service delivery and outcomes from the perspective of those supported. Please note that all identifiers have been removed from the quotes to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

Characteristics of the service users

As highlighted in the introduction, NSNO DD is part of a wider initiative to end rough sleeping that demonstrates a key focus on developing homelessness assistance targeted at those new to the streets. In operation, the project highlighted the importance of broadening the support offered, particularly for a number of individuals with complex needs. The representatives of the project outlined that this had resulted in a service that was not restricted to fitting a certain criteria, as reflected by the following NSNO DD representative:

“...the services from when we first started off, we were quite clear about what our aims and objectives were and what the client group was for the project. That’s kind of had to evolve to.... It has kind of like changed and evolved and I think it’s kind of now tailored towards the client group that is out there” (NSNO DD service provider 1)

As such, of the 14 service users interviewed, eight stated that they had previous experiences of homelessness before contact with NSNO DD. The time respondents had spent as homeless varied from less than one week to over six years. Some had isolated experiences of homelessness in the past where they had supported themselves off the street, or accessed support from other organisations. Others stated that their experiences had been ongoing despite attempts to return to permanent housing.

None of the respondents interviewed had returned to the streets since contact with the NSNO DD project and all had remained in the accommodation arranged by the outreach team. Two service users had successfully been able to secure tenancies on the same day as contact with NSNO DD. In total, four females and ten males agreed to be interviewed for the report.

Accessing support

Of those interviewed, initial contact with NSNO DD was initiated in a number of ways. For many of the service users, information regarding the project had been provided by other homelessness organisations they had made contact with. For some respondents, contact had been initiated themselves face-to-face at day centres or other locations in the community. One service user had been approached by the outreach team while sleeping rough and another stated that he had been assisted by a member of the outreach team during a previous experience of homelessness, prompting efforts to make contact again.

A number of service users highlighted that they had become aware of the project as a result of being informed by word of mouth from other rough sleepers. Some respondents went on to highlight that, in turn, they had made a number of other individuals aware of the support NSNO DD could provide.

Almost half of the service users discussed that this was their first experience of homelessness and a number of those respondents stated that the opportunity to engage with NSNO DD was perceived as somewhat as a result of luck. As the following service user outlines:

“Like I say, it was literally the first time for me. I looked on the internet to find out the places to go for night shelters. They actually told me to go to Centenary House and see what they had got. It was on the off chance that they were there at the time.” (Service user 1)

This presents a challenge for the project where continued efforts to raise awareness are still required. One service user noted that during time spent rough sleeping he had not come across any information about the service, but felt if this had been available self-referral would have occurred much sooner. This highlights the continued need to raise awareness of the service, a challenge also identified by the outreach team.

Additionally, some respondents noted that efforts to seek support had involved searching on the internet for organisations that could help. None of these respondents identified NSNO DD in this way, suggesting that the initiative’s online presence could be improved nationally and on informative sites provided by other services specific to homelessness assistance in Derbyshire.

However, all of the respondents offered positive comments on the speed at which the outreach team established contact once a referral had been made. For those interviewed, contact with a member of the outreach team occurred within a 24 hour period, fulfilling one of the key aims of the initiative.

Service delivery

All service users commented positively on their experiences with the outreach team. One consistent view across the interviews was that the attitude and personable approach adopted by the outreach team had exceeded service user expectations and a number of respondents likened the communication with the outreach team to talking to a close relative or friend, even at the first point of contact. The outreach team were viewed as reliable, trustworthy and honest and many commented on their ability to instil a positive outlook for the future. As one service user outlined:

“...it was just having someone to talk to and somewhere to turn when everything has gone wrong and you have got nowhere to turn, and someone comes along and says, right, we can help you and we can sort this out for you. It’s not as bad as it seems, you know. That is like, yeah, it is, its life changing, because I was at a point where I couldn’t cope any more. I had had enough. I really just wanted to end everything and they just completely changed my opinion of things, you know.”
(Service user 3)

A number of service users commented that after meeting members of the outreach team they felt able to be completely honest about their circumstances, with some stating that this was for the first time. It was outlined that feelings of pride and shame often prevented individuals from seeking support sooner, however first impressions of the outreach team left respondents feeling secure and confident in the projects ability to help.

The duration of contact respondents have had with NSNO DD varied between a few hours to over a year. One service user had been astounded by the speed at which the outreach team were able to secure accommodation. For this individual the outreach team secured the offer of a tenancy with a private landlord within the space of one hour. The efficient and rapid approach demonstrated by the outreach team was highlighted by a number of the service users who viewed this a key success of the project. As the following service user outlines:

“Just simple phone calls, one simple phone call changed one—how I felt. I wasn’t necessarily suicidal or anything. I had just lost my mum as well in that same month. My mum’s death and god, I’ve lost all my possessions and I have got to move house. Simplicity of this phone call – just, it’s like bliss. Like I say, when he made that phone call and I met the guy that works with the landlord and gave me the keys and I says, what about any forms to sign and even the guy said, don’t worry, it will be sorted in the next couple of weeks and all the paperwork will go through. I left and I slept for six hours. I just laid down and you know, I’d not slept on a proper bed. I slept—that is the simplicity of it all.”
(Service user 4)

The level at which NSNO DD has remained involved with each service user also varied and as a result of the outreach team’s presence within the community it was mostly those respondents currently living in temporary accommodation that reported ongoing contact and/or support. A number of respondents who were no longer in contact with the project voiced confidence in the accessibility of the outreach team for further support if needed in the future.

Emergency accommodation

Many NSNO DD referrals utilise one of the eight emergency sit up beds which are available at the two hostels in Derby City. The need for additional emergency provision of this kind was generally perceived as vital by those interviewed.

Two respondents stated that they had failed to make contact with any homelessness organisations sooner due to a perception that emergency accommodation was extremely limited and therefore likely to be unavailable. The outreach team's commitment to prioritise this emergency resource for those new to the streets was valued by many service users who viewed the rapid offer of an emergency bed as a safety net in a time of crisis. As the following respondent highlights:

“You would have to wait to get into one of the rooms up here (Milestone House) you see and that takes time. You know what I mean? Sometimes all the rooms are full. No Second Night Out team offered me a bed that day, that day. You know what I mean? You can't get that service now. You know what I mean? You can't. People aren't that bothered. I see them sleeping on viaducts and sometimes it's like a battleground, there is that many homeless people. You don't ask for the help, because places like you know, these hostels are full and that.” (Service user 8)

One service user commented on having to leave the hostel each morning and consequently leaving too early to make contact with the outreach team. This presents a challenge for the project as this service user spent several days sleeping on one of the sit up beds before establishing contact. The respondent highlighted that he eventually engaged with the service after being encouraged to wait at the hostel by another individual who had already established contact with NSNO DD. As outlined:

“I kept leaving the service so early in the morning I don't know if it was my shame or my embarrassment. I can't say I am anything even towards middle class. But, I don't know, erm, whereas my own vanity or pride I used to leave the service very early in the morning. I had been provided with a bed which the provision was fantastic. At least I had a camp bed and somewhere to stay and I was dry and I was warm and safe.” (Service user 4)

A further issue for NSNO DD in linking service users to emergency accommodation was a reluctance, and often a refusal, by some to enter an environment which was perceived as dangerous or detrimental to their wellbeing. This specifically included fears of exposure to drug misuse, criminal activity and alcohol dependency and further supports the need for accommodation and support that is tailored towards the needs of different client groups, as highlighted by the NSNO DD representatives. The following respondent outlines this perception:

“It was easier to stay outside, rather than put myself into a place or predicament if you will what's involvement in drugs, etc. I would rather stay clear and far away from it. A lot of my friends had died through drugs.” (Service user 13)

Generally, the service users felt that the outreach team shared this concern, particularly with those individuals who were experiencing homelessness for the first time. Overall, the respondents commended NSNO DD's efforts to approach each referral as an individual case, taking the time to identify with the service user what may be the most appropriate housing options available to them.

However, for a number of service users the locations of emergency accommodation deterred them from engaging fully with the service and ultimately accepting offers of emergency assistance. This was observed mostly in the respondents who had a local connection to areas furthest away from Derby City, as the following service user outlined:

“No, no, it’s too far from home. Chesterfield is about its roughly 45 minutes travel. Derby again was a bit further away but Derby has got better links and there is more to do. Derby was better but this is slightly closer. I need to be in Chesterfield.” (Service user 7)

While respondents identified benefits the city centre could offer them, many opted to continue sleeping rough over the prospect of being accommodated there temporarily. The respondents failed to identify any specific reasons for the reluctance; however, it was suggested that a move distanced them from an area of familiarity. In addition, the outreach team also identified the lack of emergency accommodation across the county as a key cause for unsuccessful outcomes with service users.

Overall, as with service providers, service users clearly acknowledged that linking individuals to emergency accommodation in Derbyshire presents considerable challenges. The level of homelessness across the county was perceived by many of the respondents as a substantial challenge for accommodation providers and homelessness organisations; however limited access to emergency accommodation due to funding cuts, and subsequently closures, was viewed as a more significant concern by all respondents.

Support beyond accommodation need

Many service users spoke positively about support given to them that went beyond their need for accommodation. For a number of the respondents this included prioritising several basic needs such as food provision and psychological support, as highlighted by the following service user:

“You know and like he would go out of his way and pick him up and take him and get him a coffee and something to eat and make sure he’s okay and talk to him about what he needs and you know, when you are homeless and you’ve got nothing, that means so much, just for someone to have the time for you.” (Service user 3)

A key concern for many of the respondents was that access to emergency sit up camp beds, was only available overnight, resulting in a return to the streets during the day. The project was given praise by service users on its efforts to provide individuals with information about organisations and services which could be accessed during the day. One service user, who was not familiar with the Derby City area, highlighted the importance of this part of the service:

“They put me onto the Padley Centre where I can go and sit until like four o’clock and I can get something to eat and a coffee and you know. At least I am not just wandering the streets all day. They have actually given me options for things that I can do during the day and tell me where the library was. Sorting out my script with my drug workers. Even took me on Sunday so I didn’t mess up my script. Monday even, sorry. You know like I just can’t tell you how much they have done for me, I really can’t.” (Service user 3)

The outreach team were praised by respondents for the different ways that they advocated on their behalf. This included a number of examples such as helping to prepare for housing placement interviews and also attending these interviews for support, liaising with the local authority on homelessness declarations or outstanding rent arrears and also challenging negative decisions given to the service users regarding their housing options. As one service user outlines:

“When things go wrong and like I had to put an application into the hostel where I was and I didn’t know how to word it or what to say. I wouldn’t have known where to go to get help. You know what I mean? [They] sat there and helped me write it and it’s just—even took me to deliver it and had a word with them like on my behalf.”
(Service user 4)

Additionally, some service users identified specific issues that had been dealt with by the outreach team that were vital to their positive experience of the service. For example, some talked about the importance of gaining access to personal possessions that remained at a previous property. Reconnecting service users with personal items such as clothing brought further reassurance and comfort for those that had been referred to the service. One service user who had left her home as a result of domestic violence, was overwhelmed by the outreach team’s commitment to recover her possessions. It was examples such as this, where the support given by NSNO DD extended beyond service users’ expectations that made them value the project as vital to those experiencing homelessness for the first time. Multiple service

users with past experiences of homelessness also commended NSNO DD for this approach, stating that the personable approach adopted by the outreach team was a distinguishing feature of NSNO DD compared to other services they had experience with.

Returning to normality

It emerged from the interviews that a key focus of the NSNO DD service was to offer the support and encouragement needed to help service users reconnect. For some of the respondents this involved regaining contact with family members or friends, while for others it was perceived as fulfilling more basic everyday needs such as re-establishing regular contact with medical services. A number of service users defined this simply as returning to normality.

For one service user, family trauma had deterred him from seeking help and support in an attempt to avoid becoming an additional burden to his relatives. This had resulted in several weeks of undisclosed homelessness. It was highlighted that NSNO DD had provided encouragement and support in a way in which he then felt able to regain contact with family members, revealing his current situation and further establishing a network of support.

Service users who presented longer or more frequent experiences of homelessness reported poorer psychological and physical wellbeing at the time of contact with NSNO DD. Engagement with homelessness organisations across Derbyshire, including NSNO DD, was seen as responsible for prompting a vital return to regular use of medical services. As the following service user outlines:

“I’ve actually been given an alcohol specialist that is thinking about putting me into a rehab for my drinking. I am actually seeing a doctor again now, which is the first time I’ve done that for a while. You know what I mean? All these things that you would normally do, I am actually doing them. Yes, I still have the drink. I have acknowledged that. From what it was when I was living on the streets to what it is now, it’s totally different.” (Service user 8)

Significant for many of the service users was identifying the importance of re-establishing routine in their day to day life. Examples offered by the respondents included attending appointments, improved personal hygiene and the ability to manage their own finances. Service users felt this was due to the ongoing encouragement offered by the outreach team, as one service user highlights:

“It was getting back into the stability of things. How they got you to get back to living again. I think that’s the one thing that you forget when you’ve been homeless for a while. You know what I mean? You forget how to start living again and that’s what they did. You know what I mean? They got me off my bum and into somewhere where I could start sorting myself out. Obviously, you know, I give them a lot of the credit for helping me, you know. Obviously, it takes yourself, you’ve got to make that decision yourself to ask for help and that. As soon as I asked for it - it was there and it was great. You know what I mean? I can’t fault them.” (Service user 7)

Overall, the interviews with service users outlined that their experiences with the project had been excellent. A number of respondents stated that the outreach team had been faultless in their support and service, going beyond the expectations. As with service providers, service users also recognised limitations in the support that could be given by the three members of the outreach team. As the following service user highlighted:

“The service itself top notch. They are really nice people. I just think they need more volunteers and more staff. There is a lot of people out there, there is.” (Service user 13)

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The aim of the rapid evaluation was to provide Riverside ECHG with a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the NSNO DD project, identifying key successes and challenges faced since it was introduced in March 2013. This chapter brings together a number of findings from the interviews conducted with service providers and service users to deliver some concluding comments.

Overall, the project has been identified as a key contribution to existing homelessness provision across Derbyshire. From the perspective of service providers, it has enabled the continuation of support to a wide range of clients, despite a significant number of specialist support services ending as a result of cuts to funding. The ability of the NSNO DD team to work with a diverse and complex group of individuals represents one of its major strengths. The project has had to work flexibly in order to meet the needs of people who do not necessarily meet the original criteria; for example, people who have previous experiences of homelessness, people who have been sleeping rough for longer than one night, and people with complex needs (including migrant communities). For service users, the key benefit is that they are able to access support regardless of their circumstances. Perhaps most importantly for service users is also the access to a service that has the ability to come to them in a time of crisis, regardless of their location in Derbyshire.

NSNO DD has been successful in developing a fast, efficient and responsive service which has largely been able to achieve its aims of responding to referrals within 24 hours and supporting people to find a safe place to stay. However, the shortage of emergency accommodation is a significant challenge for the team.

Efforts to raise awareness of the NSNO DD project have been largely successful for the outreach team. Open days have fostered better partnerships between organisations and raised the NSNO DD profile across Derbyshire's homeless provision. However, both service users and service providers identified that more work could be done to promote the service in order for them to be better informed of the work carried out by NSNO DD. Indeed, the representatives of NSNO DD highlighted the ongoing need to inform others of the accessibility of the service and the processes involved in their service delivery. Production of the two short films are part of the project's plan to continue efforts to achieve this, working in line with the wider NSNO goal of preventative work in a bid to ensure that nobody arrives on the streets. This was seen as critically important for younger individuals at risk of homelessness prompting the project's engagement with schools and youth groups. A fundamental need for this approach was supported by the interviews with service users where all respondents highlighted that breakdowns in relationships, a number of which had been with parents, had resulted in them becoming homeless.

Partnership working has been critical to the success of the project and the outreach team have developed a number of new partnerships across Derbyshire to broaden access to homelessness support and provision for service users. Two key successes of this have been with private housing providers and immigrations officers. There is a need to ensure continued partnership working between agencies to ensure that clients receive the appropriate level of support from the agencies best placed to provide it.

Possibly the most significant challenge faced by the project has been to deliver the service in line with the original objectives despite operating in a landscape that has changed considerably from when funding was secured. The largest impact on service delivery from the project's perspective has

been a major reduction in the number of emergency beds accessible to the service. In response to the cuts, representatives of NSNO DD have adopted an innovative approach to adapting service delivery in order to maximise the support the project can provide. Overall, the project has appeared to provide something additional to existing provision in Derbyshire, but has also been required to fill gaps in provision left by services that are no longer available. However, importantly, service users who had past experiences of homelessness prior to contact with NSNO DD highlight that the project has been able to deliver something entirely new and different.

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