

## Evaluation of Solihull Youth Hub (SYH) – Summary of Key Findings

### 1. Scope of the Evaluation

SMBC has worked with SCH, St. Basil's and partners to evaluate the pilot, taking into account evidence from:

- A review of performance against targets (Key Performance Indicators for the service)
- Evaluation of performance and delivery against the expected outcomes for the core service
- Evaluation of the 'Enhancement' areas funded through the government trailblazer grant
- A review of the changing operational context since the pilot was launched and the way that the service has adapted to meet these challenges (e.g. new legislation, loss of supported accommodation units)
- An exercise to estimate the cost savings and added value of SYH
- Partner feedback
- Service user feedback

### 2. Performance & Outcomes

#### 2.1 Core Services

The Core SYH service operates as follows:

- a) Access to SYH is through referral from a partner agency, self or family / friend. Once a referral has been received St. Basil's will contact the young person and carry out an initial assessment.
- b) The initial assessment captures and clarifies the circumstances of the approach, establishes threat of or actual homelessness and offers triage advice and immediate solutions to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, providing immediate support for crisis cases (i.e. homeless on the day).
- c) A full assessment is booked for all those who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or in housing need and whose situation has not been resolved through the initial assessment and triage process. The full assessment usually takes place in person within 5 working days of the initial assessment and includes completion of a risk tracker and a more detailed investigation of individual and household circumstances, including support needs.

Headline findings from this process for 2017/18 are set out in the table below:

<b>SYH Overall Performance 2017/18</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Basil's were successful in preventing or relieving homelessness for 67% of the 526 young people who had initial assessments; whilst 71% of these cases went on to have full assessments, some young people have their homelessness prevented or relieved through the initial assessment and triage advice without the need for a full assessment</li> <li>• 75% of the 374 who completed full assessments had their homelessness prevented or relieved (in line with the KPIs set)</li> <li>• 134 young people were interviewed on the day of presentation (crisis cases) with 82 (61%) supported to remain in their existing accommodation and 38 (28%) supported to find alternative accommodation.</li> <li>• A range of prevention tools were used (mediation, home visits, advocacy and conciliation) to support young people and their families. Combined these methods contributed to 25% of the homelessness prevention and relief outcomes for those who completed full assessments.</li> <li>• A total of 167 young people were supported into suitable accommodation through SYH; 45% of the successful prevention and relief outcomes for those who had full assessments. 49% of these placements were through the young person's accommodation pathway that St. Basil's manage through the SYH.</li> <li>• 51 young people were referred to SCH to make a homeless application; this is a 59% reduction in homelessness applications for this cohort compared to the previous year</li> <li>• 15 young singles were accepted as homeless; a 32% reduction in acceptances for this client group compared to 16/17.</li> <li>• 11 young singles were placed in temporary accommodation.</li> <li>• An overall 17% reduction in homelessness applications compared to the previous year and a 2% reduction in acceptances</li> </ul>
<b>SYH Outcomes relating to Children's Services &amp; Skills (CSS) 2017/18</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of 93 16/17 year olds (18% of total demand)</li> <li>• Of the 93 initial assessments 31 had their homelessness prevented and 34 relieved (a 70% prevention and relief rate).</li> <li>• Only 15 cases were referred for joint assessment; 0 of these required section 20 accommodation or on-going intervention</li> <li>• Of the 15 joint assessments, 6 were supported to remain at home with extended support from SYH (e.g. mediation), 4 were found suitable supported accommodation through the youth pathway and 5 disengaged during the process</li> <li>• Assessment of 38 care leavers (7% of total demand), 27 of whom were under the age of 21</li> <li>• Of the 38 assessments 18 were crisis presentations (i.e. they were already homeless at the time of approach); in 17 cases their homelessness was resolved by negotiating an extended stay with their excluder or finding alternative accommodation, in 1 case suitable accommodation was offered but refused</li> <li>• 23 care leavers (61%) were found suitable accommodation through SYH</li> </ul>

Performance information for year 1 shows a number of successful outcomes, with progress made against all targets and required outcomes. Performance was below that expected for a small number of KPIs and in all cases this has been shown to have been beyond control of the youth hub staff. Where applicable mitigating actions were agreed and original service delivery plans modified or through subsequent review revised targets and processes have been agreed to support future provision.

SYH is clearly meeting the intended aims of supporting higher numbers of young people to avoid homelessness and make planned moves, which is a better outcome for homeless individuals. In addition youth hub staff have worked well with partner agencies to successfully prevent and relieve homelessness in a large majority of cases and this has had the effect of reducing the time and resource needing to be spent by housing and children's services to provide a statutory response to the needs of vulnerable young people.

## 2.2 Trailblazer Enhancements

In addition to the core services the funding allocation through the *Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers Programme* enabled SYH to provide a number of service enhancements over the 2-year pilot. This included employing an Early Intervention Co-ordinator and Data Officer to support partnerships and performance reporting, including the development of a business case and exit strategy beyond the end of the pilot. The funding also enabled the Council to commission a number of 'psychologically informed programmes' (PIE) to support young people and their parents, carers and staff who work with them to improve their skills and build confidence and resilience.

Key performance / outcomes across these service areas are summarised below:

### SYH Trailblazer Enhancements – Outcomes

- Strong partnership arrangements have been put in place around employment, education and training, drug and alcohol support, improving health and well-being, responding to mental health needs, providing tailored support in relation to specific needs e.g. domestic abuse, mental health and early help working with the Council's Engage service.
- These partnerships cover a range of different arrangements from direct referral processes for individual young people (with 72 referrals to partners made during 2017/18) through to tailored training and more informal signposting and awareness raising processes, including some partner services running surgeries or offering support from the youth hub.
- In terms of data there has been a focus on ensuring strong reporting processes were built into the governance structure for SYH and the role has enabled the production of the detailed information required as part of the trailblazer programme and service KPI's on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis; following an unsuccessful appointment at the start of the pilot mitigating actions were agreed and the role has been covered by an existing data and performance manager from St. Basil's central services.
- 44 staff across 5 different teams received PIE training (a 3 day foundation course) and following the training 99% of participants gave positive feedback, 98% stated that they had gained understanding of how they could implement PIE in their role and 100% said they had gained knowledge of PIE tools that could be used with their clients
- Following regular attendance at the reflective practice groups 96% of participants provided positive feedback, 94% believe that attending the monthly groups has helped them to regularly use PIE tools & materials in their role and 100% feel that the group has supported them to reflect on their work from different perspectives
- Reflective Practice (RP) attendance for the 2 Solihull cohorts is 59%, this is not significantly different from other organisations including St Basils (which ranges from 63% to 71%) but is disappointing given the level of investment and key partners will agree an action plan to mitigate against the risks to attendance and build on individual feedback for future delivery.
- St. Basil's have delivered on the target to run 2 MST courses per annum, however the issue has been finding 15 young people to take part in each session, meaning that the target of 30 in year 1 has not been met; there were a low number of referrals for the programmes arranged and those young people that did attend were not consistent in their attendance. Morris House had average attendance of 54% from 6 young people in total (ranging from 1-9 sessions) with 83% attending the residential. Mildenhall had an average of 34% attendance from 5 different young people (ranging from 1-8 sessions) with 0% attending the residential.
- For Parenting Young People St. Basil's ran a number of focus groups and co-design sessions with parents and spoke at length to commissioners and referral organisations to inform the final design of the programme and over the 2 years are delivering 3 groups of eight sessions for up to 20 parents; as with MST referrals and attendance has been low; a total of 32 referrals received with 18 starting the programme and 11 still engaging at the end of the programme

In the main there were positive results from these additional services; strong partnerships have been developed, a robust governance and performance reporting framework put in place and the PIE programmes have resulted in enhanced support, learning and development for individuals.

PIE for staff is now embedded in the core youth homelessness service with an established process for regular reflection and staff support to help them implement PIE techniques as part of their roles. Although it has been noted that if the programme is to continue there are issues to resolve in relation to attendance at the reflective practice sessions and making sure all staff are experiencing positive sessions with clear results which make them want to continue to attend.

Original performance targets were not achieved in relation to the numbers expected to attend the MST4Life training or the PYP programmes. Whilst the courses were still delivered as planned, with revisions to meet local circumstances, and the individuals who did take part all reported positive outcomes it is clear that referrals and uptake were a big issue in piloting these programmes in Solihull.

This may have been a result of basing targets on the results from pilots and programmes delivered in Birmingham which is a large city with significantly higher numbers of young people and a greater number of partners to refer people through or due to the fact that in some cases alternative services already existed to meet need in Solihull. Nevertheless there was valuable learning from the pilot work, and there are clear exit strategies in place for these programmes when the pilot and trailblazer funding ceases on 31/03/19.

### **3. Cost Savings & Added Value**

#### **3.1 Solihull Community Housing (SCH)**

It was originally forecast that the reduction in demand from 16 – 24 year olds would lead to savings for SCH which could be reinvested into the provision of SYH. SYH has achieved the projected reduction targets for homelessness applications and homelessness acceptances. Using an established cost tool the reduction in homelessness applications achieved for 16 – 24 year olds during 2017/18 represents a cost saving of £196,445 to SCH. There was also a 42% reduction in the number of housing options interviews carried out by SCH in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17 and TA placements for this age group reduced.

However implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) from April 2018 changed the statutory process for making homelessness applications and introduced new duties relating to homelessness prevention and relief. This has resulted in increased pressure on the Home Options service. There are also higher than projected costs for continuing to deliver SYH due to the fact that St. Basil's are discharging the statutory HRA prevention and relief duties on behalf of the Council.

Additional funding for SCH from Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) has been agreed to support the increased demand and resource required to respond to the new duties. Diverting any funding from the SCH service at this time would therefore lead to more pressure on resources for the Housing Options Team and taking from the increased FHSG invested into the service.

Should SYH services return to SCH through the TUPE process it is likely that initial operating costs would increase. In addition value would be lost through the specialist role and additional functions that St. Basil's have brought to the process. Many of the specialist functions would need to be reviewed, with a likely reduction in the overall value of the model since SCH do not have the expertise or structures in place to support delivery and management of the youth hub and youth pathway services.

#### **3.2 Children's Services & Skills (CSS)**

Detailed work was carried out with the Children's Assessment Team (CAT) team relating to the joint assessment process for 16/17 year olds. In-depth case reviews of the 15 young people referred for a joint assessment during 2017/18 were undertaken by officers from St. Basil's, Housing and Children's services.

The review concluded that without SYH there were likely to have been 4 16/17 year olds requiring accommodation under section 20 of the Children's Act and 2 16/17 year olds requiring additional support put

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in place for the family (St. Basil's were able to put in place temporary crisis solutions and give additional support to stabilise the family and enable a move back home).

Based on the average cost of semi-independent accommodation for 16 & 17 year olds (£360 a week) this would give a cost of £18,770 per young person per annum that was avoided through the work of SYH.

This provides the business case for continuing SYH and for CSS permanently contributing to delivery because without it is likely that costs would increase by £75,000 from the current position.

### **3.3 Added Value**

SYH is supporting high numbers of young people that previously fell through local gaps in provision or only presented at a later date when a crisis had developed and when interventions were likely to be at a higher cost. SYH provides a universal service; referrals and assessments were higher than originally projected during year 1 and young people have been referred from a wide range of partner agencies as well as self and family / friend referrals (which made up 42% of all referrals).

It is important to note that St. Basil's offer an enhanced service to homeless young people, which includes providing a single point of access for all young singles requiring housing advice, co-ordinating a holistic needs and risk assessment process, managing a referral process into existing commissioned accommodation and support services (the youth accommodation pathway) and working with partner agencies to co-ordinate support for difficult / complex cases.

During the pilot St. Basil's have also managed delivery of the 2-year programme of psychologically informed training. This training is developing as an important tool in supporting staff working across housing and homelessness and Solihull has benefited from an established process that is a nationally recognised model of good practice.

SYH also provides a holistic approach to assessing and supporting the needs of young people which ensures more sustainable outcomes for young singles e.g. access to employment, education and training, support to address physical and mental health issues and to improve emotional resilience.

This is key because during 17/18 of the 526 young people who completed initial assessments 48% disclosed mental health problems, 33% learning disabilities / difficulties, 27% substance abuse issues and 18% reported an offending history. Where additional support is required and the young person is not engaging with any other agency, referrals are made with the young person's consent. St. Basil's have developed robust partnerships with a number of local agencies to support this process and during 2017/18 a total of 72 referrals were made to partner agencies to support the varying needs that young people presented with.

Whilst it has not been possible to attribute a financial value to this work it is clear that risk areas and support issues are being assessed, monitored and addressed in a much more comprehensive way through SYH, with high positive prevention and relief outcomes being achieved for this cohort of young people. This has the potential to save other public service costs that would have resulted if homelessness and support issues had escalated e.g. health and wellbeing services, DWP, prisons and probation etc.

## **4. Consultation**

### **4.1 Partners**

Feedback from partner organisations and stakeholders in the process has been positive. Discussion at the SYH operational meeting in September 2018 concluded that the group were supportive of the model continuing, did not want to revert to previous delivery arrangements and had generally seen an improvement in joint working and more positive outcomes for young people since the launch of SYH. It was also agreed that the monitoring and governance framework in place has offered an effective reporting and escalation process for gaps or development areas and has been instrumental in bringing relevant partners together for this group of young people.

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SCH were consulted re: their views on the pilot and preferred approach to continued delivery. They responded to state that they are comfortable that the pilot has met the intended outcomes, that the data generated has been full, comprehensive and enabled a more detailed analysis of the circumstances and needs of this client group and that relationships established between St. Basil's and the Housing Options Team have been positive. For these reasons they would support continued operation of SYH. They also noted the challenges re: availability of suitable and affordable accommodation for young people, the difficulty in meeting a small number of the KPI's and the need to improve joint working and address performance reporting issues following the introduction of the HRA from April 2018.

St. Basil's were also consulted about their experience of working in Solihull to deliver the pilot and their recommendations for continued delivery. Overall they reported positive experiences of working to establish and embed the youth hub pilot, with key successes relating to the development of effective working relationships with partners within a short space of time, creating a more streamlined approach to preventing homelessness for this client group and a better customer experience for the young person. They have delivered a holistic service that has in the main been able to meet the housing and support needs of all young singles regardless of statutory duties and this put them in a good position to be able to respond to the service development required to support implementation of the HRA from year 2.

St. Basil's involvement in piloting SYH has demonstrated that without a clear focus on prevention and partnership working it will be difficult to meet the needs of all young people presenting as homeless or in housing need within the borough. Year 1 of the operation of SYH has highlighted the significant lack of appropriate accommodation options for young people in Solihull. Feedback from SYH staff has been that without a holistic housing offer which meets the diverse needs of young people, a long term, sustainable solution is not achievable.

The conclusion from the work with the CAT team was that the joint assessment process is working well in Solihull, that CSS benefit from the availability of additional prevention options and that the pathway for managing access to accommodation and floating support has been key to improving outcomes for 16/17 year olds and preventing the need for more costly statutory interventions. There have also been improvements to the process and support in place for care leavers who are homeless or at risk of becoming so and feedback from the Child Asylum and 16+ team has supported this.

## 4.2 Young People

Consultation has been carried out at a focus group session with young people living in supported accommodation in the Borough. All young people who attended the focus group (5) reported a positive experience, with feedback praising the support provided and the welcoming environment of the hub.

This is supported through the regular customer feedback forms that young people using SYH are asked to complete. In 17/18 those who responded (31) stated that they understood the outcome of their appointment, 96% said they were very happy or happy with the process and 100% said they would recommend the service to others.

Below are details of 4 cases that SYH have supported during 2017/18. They demonstrate well the complexity of the presenting issues and the level of partnership work that has taken place and been co-ordinated by staff at SYH and the positive outcomes achieved for the young people.

### Case Study 1

**Background:** Referred by SOVA (charity supporting individuals with complex needs), 17 year old Male, Cannabis user, diagnosed with a number of learning disabilities / difficulties.

B was referred from SOVA after a number of sessions were held to help prevent him from offending. He also had some negative associates and owed money which was impacting upon the offending behaviour. SOVA were satisfied that B would benefit from Mediation to improve his relationships within the family home. Relationships were strained due to his diagnosed Mental Health and Learning Disabilities / Difficulties and there were indications that he would eventually be asked to leave.

**Support offered by SYH:** Mediation was conducted and additional support needs were addressed to enable B and family to understand each others views around the issues of conflict. A referral was also made to Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS).

**Outcomes:** Issues at home have improved and B and family have reported dealing with potential issues in a much calmer way which has had a positive impact on all family members. Support has also been provided through the St. Basil's Parenting Young People Programme.

B is working on maintaining his college placement and completing qualifications to enable him to improve his chances of getting work and understands the importance of this. B has also engaged with the support offered from SIAS. Options have also been discussed for a planned move instigated by B and SYH will continue to support with this.

### Case Study 2

**Background:** 18 year old male with substance misuse issues. Family asked him to leave due to the company he was keeping and the impact it was having on siblings and the family dynamic.

**Support offered by SYH:** The focus with the YP was improving self-esteem so as to limit risky behaviour and engagement with negative associates. He would consistently return to St Basils even when accommodation was not needed to simply sit and talk with staff and engage with support sessions, sharing concerns about the criminal activity he was involved in.

**Outcomes:** The YP has since engaged with SIAS and SOVA in order to help support him through substance misuse and get him into employment. He has completed a qualification to enable him to work on building sites and has left shared accommodation to move back into the family home. The family are being mediated through this transition to enable the relationship to maintain. The stability within the family home has been positive in enabling him to stay grounded and out of trouble.

### Case Study 3

**Background:** 17 year old female, Child in Need and related issues, referred by Children's Services. L was referred to the hub after being excluded from the family home due to an incident which she was arrested for and as a result family refused to allow her to return home. L had previously lived in supported accommodation however the placement had broken down due to rent arrears.

**Support offered by SYH:** A joint assessment was arranged within 24 hours of L's referral. Youth Hub staff liaised directly with her previous landlord to negotiate a return to one of their properties. This was agreed as long as L engaged with support and also set up a payment plan to pay back her arrears (which was actioned following the joint assessment)

L also agreed to engage with Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid and to book a GP appointment.

**Outcomes:** L moved in to a new supported accommodation placement and sustained this tenancy engaging with support. She later re-approached for further support due to a change in circumstances and a second risk assessment was completed. L had scored a red risk for 7 out of 10 areas in her first assessment however in her second there were no red risk areas identified.

### Case Study 4

**Background:** 17 year old female, diagnosed with bi-polar and autism, in full time college, referred by boyfriend's family.

D had to leave the family home due to domestic violence and was sleeping on the sofa at her boyfriend's parents. D suffered historical abuse and neglect.

**Support offered by SYH:** A safeguarding referral and a joint assessment was completed with D. Youth Hub staff signposted D to her family support worker to make a claim for benefits. She was also referred on to SIAS to receive support relating to the effects that drug use and abuse had had upon her.

D was referred to supported accommodation. It was agreed that D could remain with her boyfriend's family while she waited for a place and hub staff maintained regularly contact with D and her boyfriend's family during this process.

**Outcomes:** D moved in to supported accommodation and regularly engaged with support staff, sustaining her tenancy and succeeding with independent living. She was subsequently successful in securing a place at Birmingham University and has been supported by staff at the supported accommodation to apply for student finance and source student accommodation. D has also been supported to find accommodation during the summer months when she is required to leave student halls of residence. An agreement is in place for her to be accommodated at a St Basils scheme during this period.

## 5. Recommendations

Given the impact of HRA implementation from April 2018 and the fact that funding is not guaranteed beyond 2019/20 it is recommended that the youth hub pilot is extended for a further 12-month period.

This will be an extension of the pilot and reflects the fact that HRA implementation halfway through the 2-year pilot changed much of the original focus and impacted upon the contractual relationship between St. Basil's, SCH and the Council. Some of the additional trailblazer elements that were government funded have been recognised as important contributors to the model moving forward; the PIE training for staff, the data officer and the senior partnerships officer are all recommended to remain part of the model for 2019/20. On a longer term basis however it is expected that a number of these arrangements will be mainstreamed. There will be no direct funding to continue the PIE programmes for young people or parents in 2019/20 but exit strategies are in place for these services and this will be kept under review during the final year of the pilot.

An additional year for the pilot will give time to address the outstanding issues, monitor performance against a revised set of KPI's and establish on-going funding options for the model. It will also enable a single commissioning strategy to be developed, which will also take into account the future delivery of the accommodation and support services that make up the youth pathway and the needs of young people in these areas.

During the 12-month pilot extension and beyond there are a number of recommendations and areas of development that will need to be taken forward by St. Basil's, SMBC, SCH and other partners involved in supporting young people:

- 1) Monitor performance against a revised set of KPI's and embed new reporting arrangements to accompany HRA delivery and to support government returns and local reporting processes
- 2) Review working practice and processes including interface with SCH, joint protocol for the assessment of homeless 16/17 year olds, support for care leavers and other formal referral processes and customer pathways
- 3) Review and further development of partnerships to reflect services changing, ending and new services being implemented; this should include re-establishing links with services that can offer surgeries within the hub and developing the thinking further to look at options for more formal co-location with close delivery partners e.g. SCH, Children's Services, Employment support etc.
- 4) Addressing the lack of appropriate accommodation options for young people in Solihull – supported, emergency provision and statutory temporary accommodation
- 5) Addressing the lack of accommodation services and support for high risk / complex individuals which often means those in most need are left without appropriate solutions
- 6) Linked to the above the need to procure good quality, affordable accommodation and support within a Supported Pathway Model catering for different levels of need from high need 24/7 provision to supported move-on
- 7) To review processes in place for monitoring longer-term outcomes for the YP supported – i.e. to follow-up and report on the outcomes of referrals made by SYH in order to ensure that young people are accessing support to address the issues raised through the assessment process.
- 8) To build on the cost-modelling developed as part of the evaluation process and review methods for capturing reduced costs, VFM and added value provided by the commissioning of the youth hub and youth pathway services

**For a full copy of the SYH evaluation or for further information on any of the above information please contact Gemma Thompson, Housing Strategy Officer, Managed Growth & Communities (x8187).**

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