

Creating Social Value Through Sustainable Development



On April 8th, I have the privilege of being asked to take part in Gloucestershire's Social Value Week 2025 event at UOG alongside fellow third sector leaders within Gloucestershire. The event will see leaders, changemakers, and professionals gathering to discuss how we can drive sustainable change through the principles of Social Value and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At Gloucestershire Nightstop, we see first hand how these global commitments translate into real, life-changing impacts for young people facing homelessness.



Aligning Gloucestershire Nightstop with SDGs

Youth homelessness is not just a housing issue—it intersects with poverty, health, education, and economic opportunity. At Nightstop, we work tirelessly to address these challenges in alignment with the SDGs, ensuring young people have safe accommodation, vital support, and the tools to build independent futures.

SDG 1: No Poverty

In 2023/24, 69 young people were prevented from experiencing homelessness thanks to Nightstops intervention. With 85% moving on to stable long-term accommodation, we are breaking cycles of poverty by providing stability and financial support. However, national and local research highlights that many young people continue struggle to prove homelessness due to challenges specifically the requirement for contact with the person with whom their relationship has broken down, limiting their access to support.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

Homelessness takes a toll on mental and physical health. More and more of the young people we see are being treated for diagnosed mental illness. We have access to the homeless GP team locally to ensure immediate accessible healthcare, but research indicates that many young people face significant barriers to accessing mental health services, often due to long waiting times, moving around and stigma.

SDG 4: Quality Education

Education is a key driver of opportunity. Last year, 24 young people accessed skills development through Daystop, enabling them to re-engage with education and employment pathways. However, specialist research findings including Centrepont and DePaul UK stress that limited appropriate and affordable housing support for care leavers, young Black individuals, and refugees contributes to educational instability and exclusion.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

We support young women and LGBTQ+ individuals, ensuring their safety through gender-sensitive service delivery. Host training raises awareness and addresses issues for LGBTQ young people. We have also actively engaged with the local LGBTQ community and recruited members as hosts. However, we still see young people hide their identities when seeking housing due to fear of discrimination, and specialist provisions remain scarce, with the nearest LGBTQ+-specific youth housing support located in Bristol. Young LGBTQ+ people are twice as likely to experience forms of hidden homelessness like sofa-surfing or sleeping in cars than their non-LGBTQ+ peers, new research by AKT 2025 has found.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Through financial advice and CV-building workshops, we help young people enter the workforce. We have examples of service users having gone on to work in housing, public service, and the voluntary sector—demonstrating the long-term impact of our interventions. However, research highlights a key barrier: pay discrimination for young people, who are often paid less than older workers despite facing similar financial pressures, rent doesn't cost less because of age, nor does a bag of shopping yet young people are paid less for doing the same work and receive less support towards rental costs.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

We received 103 referrals last year, reflecting strong trust in our ability to serve marginalised young people. Advocacy remains a priority as we work to dismantle barriers challenge access to housing and employment. Our research findings emphasise that many young people do not know their rights or available support.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

With 4,302 hours of emergency accommodation provided, we play a critical role in preventing youth homelessness from escalating. Our partnerships with community members, statutory and voluntary organisations and private organisations help secure long-term solutions, but rising housing costs and a lack of affordable options remains an ongoing challenge.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Collaboration is at the heart of our mission. 83% of our referrals came through partner organisations, ensuring a coordinated approach to youth support. We also distributed £5,802 in Juliet's Purse grants, removing financial barriers to stability by supporting deposits and arrears. As part of our next steps, we intend engaging with policymakers to strengthen early intervention measures and create a cost-benefit case for systemic change, in terms of affordable housing for young people

The Social and Economic Impact

Research from 2018 shows that every young person supported by Nightstop generates £1,500 in government resource savings and £4,600 in social value. Newer research from our recent study, in collaboration with Trueology, highlights the need for a Live and Work Scheme to support young people transitioning to independence. We intend to step up work with district housing leads, commissioners and advocacy groups to develop a business case for sustainable youth accommodation models across the county complementing the pathways that exist for care leavers and those exiting the criminal justice system.

Looking Ahead: A Call to Action

Social Value Week will reinforce that true change happens when communities come together. Whether you're an individual, business, or policymaker, there is a role for everyone in preventing youth homelessness. By supporting Gloucestershire Nightstop, you contribute to a future where no young person faces homelessness alone.

Key initiatives for the coming year include:

Collaborative working and action-learning projects to refine service models. Collaborative working to address systemic discrimination in housing support. Prototype development for a youth-focused housing initiative based on our research findings.

Together, we can make a difference—one safe night, one opportunity, and one future at a time.