

## **‘Firststop’ family mediation service launches to help young people in Tewkesbury Borough**

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### **Tackling youth homelessness at the roots**

A new service, aimed at preventing youth homelessness by addressing family breakdown before it reaches crisis point, has just been launched by Gloucestershire Nightstop in partnership with Tewkesbury Borough Council. Firststop officially launched on Monday, 14 July as an extension of Gloucestershire Nightstop’s early intervention work.

Firststop provides young people aged 16–25 and their families with a safe, neutral space to have open, honest conversations, supported by a trained mediator. It is designed to help families work through relationship challenges that might otherwise result in a young person leaving home.

The service builds on insights from Gloucestershire Nightstop’s research, which highlighted the challenges young people currently face in proving homelessness. The team along with Tewkesbury Borough Council identified family mediation as a vital and effective method of prevention.

Firststop family mediator Clare O’Sullivan says “Engagement is voluntary, and my intention is to support everyone’s needs to be heard and understood and find practical ways to support them. The process is compassionately held and client led, with any outcomes and practical solutions decided upon by all involved, helping families to find solutions that work for them.”



**Clare O’ Sullivan**  
**Firststop Family Mediation**

National and local data from Centrepont consistently show that family and relationship breakdown is the leading cause of youth homelessness in the UK. Early intervention like this reduces pressure on statutory services and crisis responses.

Councillor Alex Hegenbarth, Lead Member for Community and Housing, said: “Every young person deserves the chance to feel heard, supported, and secure — and by creating a safe space for open and honest conversations, we can work towards helping prevent homelessness before it begins.

“We very much hope that the Firststop scheme will help offer support to our young people and their families during crisis.”



**Tewkesbury Councillor Richard Stanley and  
Firststop Family Mediator, Clare O' Sullivan**

**If you are a young person and are facing the threat of homelessness, or the parent/carer of a young person facing homelessness please contact the Tewkesbury Borough Council Housing Advice Team on [firststop@tewkesbury.gov.uk](mailto:firststop@tewkesbury.gov.uk) or 01684 295010, and they will have an initial conversation with you and make the referral on your behalf to Firststop.**

This project currently covers Tewkesbury Borough only.