

"It has made things seem a lot more manageable and less chaotic. It helped keep me calm with a sense of security and support."



Chair's Report

July 2023 – June 2024



**The image is for representation purpose only. Courtesy DePaul.*

A year of change... and response

This year is hallmarked by a complex web of changes and challenges we've seen at local, national and international level.

The long-standing 'front-door' for young people seeking advice on their housing moved from a community partner to the local authority and we've needed to respond. The change has accelerated the need to expand the number of ways young people can access our service. We're delighted with the results of our active outreach to new partners. When everything else is a struggle, finding us shouldn't be.

Young people have suffered decades of omission from the national conversation on homelessness. So much so that May 2024 saw the first parliamentary debate on youth homelessness in over 40 years. The results for young people are catastrophic with 135,800k young estimated to reach out to their Council each year, worried about their housing situation. This is the backdrop to further shrinkage in public sector finances, less money in young people's pocket, a worrying decline in young people's mental health, and systems that are under huge strain.

For our young people this means less resources to draw on, longer waiting times for what they need – whether housing, health or wider welfare. **Consequently, our young people are staying with us longer, needing greater levels of guidance, and greater levels of support from our service team.**

Across 2024, we've also experienced a world that we find less and less aligned with our central value of kindness. A world where open hostility has shown itself on our streets.

Discrimination of any kind has real world results. The increase in young migrants and refugees we have worked with across the year is stark; 38% (up from 15% the previous year).

In response, we've developed new working relationships with Voices in Exile and Hummingbird, drawing reciprocally on our strengths, to embrace and meet the needs of these most vulnerable young people. We've also maintained our proactive approach to developing the knowledge of our staff, volunteers and trustees across all areas that have a positive impact on inclusion.



SAMA'S STORY

Granted leave to remain by the Home Office, Sama, age 24, came to Sussex Nightstop following a 'leave notice' from Home Office Accommodation. A quiet and thoughtful young man from Afghanistan, Sama was facing rough sleeping. We could offer a safe place to stay, and **Sama stayed with us for 85 nights until moving into long term housing in February 2024.** He stayed with one host family for 40 of these nights to provide the greatest stability.

After 3 months, Sama moved into permanent accommodation. We helped source household and food items to take with him. Sama attended language classes whilst with Nightstop and was proud to pass his English exam. He is looking forward to working and plans to start an apprenticeship.

Celebrating the resilience of young people

81% of young people who stayed with us in 2023-2024 moved on to a safer, more suitable place to call home

As a service that prevents young people from sleeping rough and a central aim for them to find a safer and more suitable place to call home, we are proud of our ongoing achievements in this area.

Over the last few years our work has been to really utilise the unique and trusted relationship we build with young people to maximum effect, whether we know them for an hour or a few months. This year our staff team has been working harder than ever to make that happen. The pathway for housing advice changing and young people finding us in different ways has led to our staff providing **MORE advocacy, MORE guidance, and MORE hand-holding** of young people through complex housing systems.

Aside from changes in where people go for help, we are also seeing a change in the needs of young people. **Those who are rough-sleeping at the point of referral has risen from 20% to 31%**. And, whilst concerns around mental health remain pervasive and obstinately high across all young people, these are further compounded for young people with experience of the asylum system for whom the trauma is profound. We have invested in our knowledge and skills to respond to this, so that they can access our service and feel safe within it.



- Our volunteers, trustees and staff have taken up 58 learning spaces this year across Young Migrant training, LGBTQ+ awareness, and Neurodivergence training
- Refreshed volunteer guidance on inclusion
- Investment in and increased use of interpreting services
- Following the events of the Summer 2024 we took the step to remove ourselves from the social media platform 'X'

Every single young person who comes through our door comes with their own unique set of skills, strengths and talents. This year is no different and along with the assets they arrive with, there are those they gain whilst they are with us such as organisational skills, self-management of important life areas such as health and finances and being open to taking positive risks.

We want the positive outcomes for young people to stick and this is why we continue to check-in with them after they leave their host placements; providing further guidance where needed and otherwise watching them flourish.

We love the fact that the words they most strongly mention to us when we follow up are:

friends
benefits
housemates
home work
studying family

63% of young people who stayed with our hosts in 2023-24 were working, learning, or training

Life moving on...

'Things are going really well. I'm still working and registered with college to study mechanics.'

A community responding

Our unique strength is enabling and facilitating the desire and drive within the local community to respond to the issue of youth homelessness, in whatever way they are able. Whilst our volunteer hosts make the material offer of a safe place to sleep a **viable idea**, it is in combination with the efforts of our other volunteers - that give their time and expertise to our out-of-hours support line, who help us deliver training, who actively champion what we do, and who participate in our recruitment and events activities - that **makes this idea possible**.

"Makes me feel I am doing a normal decent thing for my fellow humans"

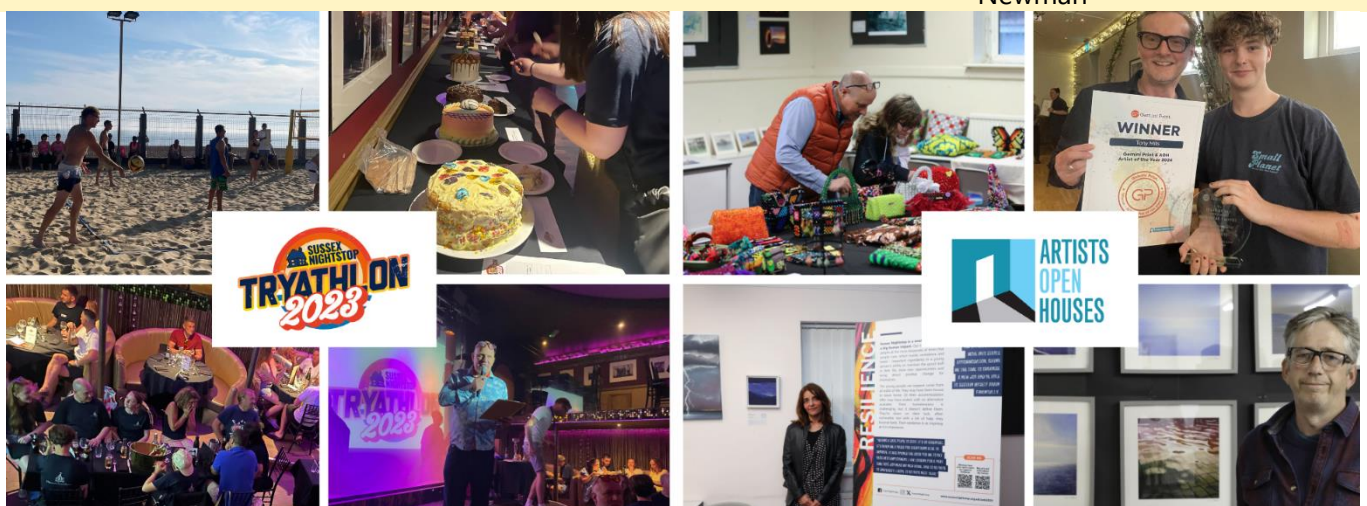
And so, our volunteer recruitment has been a priority for us. We remain unrelenting in our objective to grow and diversify our volunteer host numbers. It's getting tougher. Volunteers are subject to the pushes and pulls within their own lives and are not immune to the external factors that press upon us all. To all our volunteers who have made the decision for Sussex Nightstop to be a part of their life in 2024, we have huge gratitude.

The collective effort of **52 volunteers** over **12,962 hours** → **310 safe nights of sleep** made possible through **18 actively hosting households**

We also reflect on some incredible results made possible by our wider community support. We are constantly **amazed and impressed not only by the generosity of our individual donors, community and corporate supporters** but also their creativity and willingness to get stuck in – whether that's payroll giving, selling Sussex Nightstop jewellery, donating consultation fees, sponsoring one of our events, or donating raffle prizes.

For everyone who ran silly around a volleyball court, sang, quizzed and baked to make our Tryathlon 2023 a huge success

To those artists – student, professional and amateur – that dedicated their work and time to our inspiring Artists Open House collaboration with Cardinal Newman



£47,000 in donations and gifts raised - a huge thank you to you all!

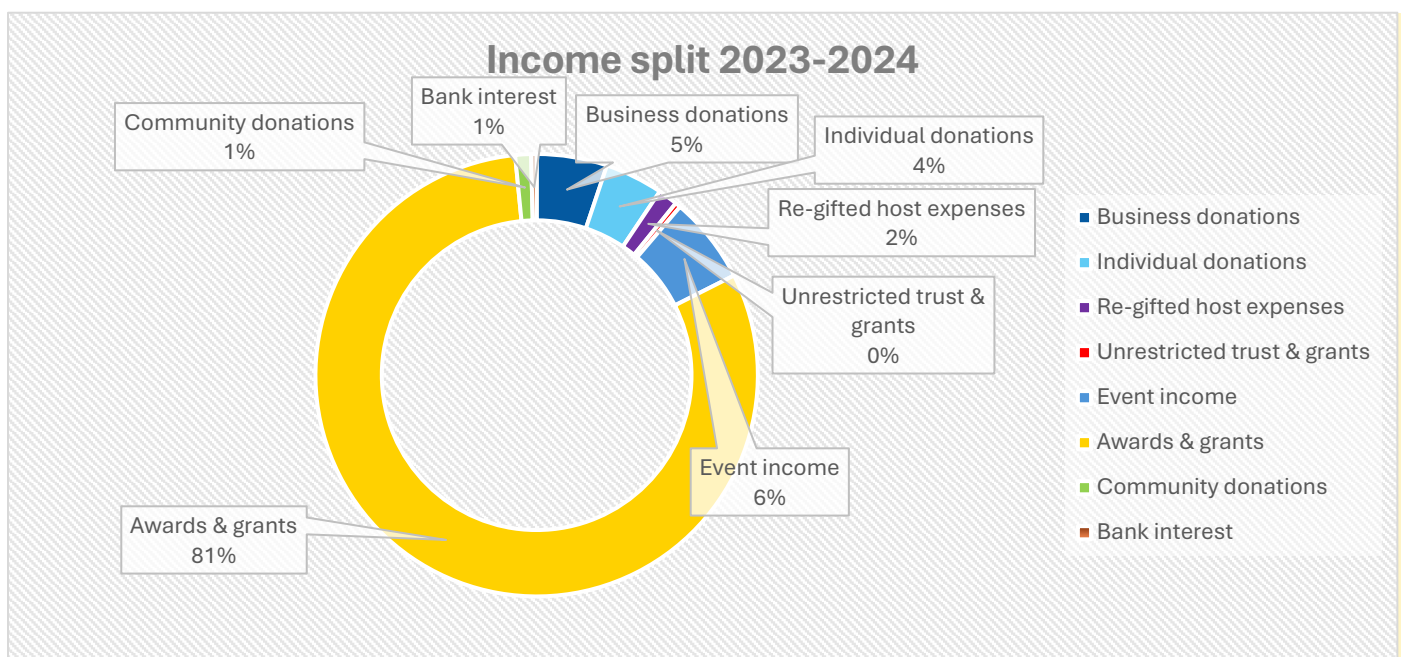
A word from our treasurer

As we entered 2023-2024, we anticipated that demand on our service would grow, and we'd made plans to make judicious use of unrestricted reserves where thresholds allowed to increase capacity within the organisation to respond. We've acted on these plans – increasing the number of hours available to our frontline response.

The developments in our service offer, along with a fundraising strategy that we have been refining over the last three years, has enabled us to generate income of £250,907.

Received in the 2023-2024, this income importantly includes multi-year and other restricted grants related to activities and spending in 2024-2025 and beyond. This strengthens the sustainability of our work and, in being able to forecast for a rolling 12-month period, we are better able to plan our activities in an efficient manner. Managing our finances in this way also means that we can take appropriate mitigating action in a timely manner.

While grant awards continue to be our major source of funds, we are pleased to report that the actions taken in pursuit of our strategy to increase the diversity of our income stream have resulted in a 35% growth in Event Income and Business & Community donations.



Our fundraising success combined with efficient management of costs means we generated surplus of £83,765 for the year, increasing our reserves to £162,280. Of these, £85,050 are restricted with £77,230 unrestricted, which compares favourably with the Board approved reserve minimum of £40,000.

	2023	2024
Income	£143,765	£250,907
Expenditure	£140,047	£167,142
Restricted reserves	£35,905	£80,050
Unrestricted reserves	£42,610	£77,230

We recognise the strong position in which we enter 2024-2025. However, we are not complacent. We are committed to deliver for our clients and the fundraising environment is turbulent. To maintain our services, we have a fundraising target of £347,970 until June 2027.

Looking ahead



Among the big changes of this last year, we took time to take stock and think about how we would like to approach the next three years. We are most fortunate to have an excellent group of people with whom to do this thinking!

The voices of our young people are who we've listened to most.

Thank you to all of them who have taken the opportunities we've provided to articulate so eloquently what's worked well for them about Sussex Nightstop, whilst also pointing us clearly to improvements. We've built these improvements into our plans.

14 volunteers also spent an evening with us earlier in the year, looking at some of the challenges outlined in this report and considering whether our future plans made sense. Their input and response improved our thinking and reassured us that we were on the right track!

The full trustee board and staff team then came together to agree our strategy and reaffirm our group accountability to the organisational values that underpin what we do.

We are confident in our plan. As a primary frontline responder to youth homelessness in the City, our objective is for every young person who comes into contact with us, whether they stay with us or not, to feel listened to and provided with the best information and support in moving out of homelessness and into a more suitable and stable place to call home. First and foremost, we want to open up access through **a new self-referral pathway** and make **every contact count**.

OUR 2024-2027 PRIORITIES	OUR SOLUTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expansion of our referral pathways including self-referrals 	<p>A safe place to stay tonight – in the home of a trained volunteer host</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking out and embedding the voices of young people in what we do 	<p>A young-person centred approach based on trusting and empathic relationships, built through kindness</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evolvment of our support offer reflective of changing needs and demographics 	<p>Effective local knowledge and trusted partnerships; linking to housing, health, education and employment support</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities that support progress against our aim to be recognised as an inclusive organisation 	<p>A practical outlook – clothing, translation support, travel costs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recruitment of a volunteer base offering longer consecutive-night stays; smoothing out supply and demand 	<p>Respectful, welcoming and purposefully inclusive</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising activities that continue to diversify our income • Seeking partnerships and new alliances that maximises our resources 	<p>Staying in touch to help success stick</p>

A team effort

Behind the scenes at Nightstop sits a highly experienced, skilled, dedicated and diverse team of staff and trustees whose small team-size is augmented ten-fold by everyone's commitment and determination to do their best for young people. I thank them for their curiosity and willingness to take every challenge as an opportunity to reflect and improve.

We don't do this alone. I give special thanks to our 'honorary' team members Richard at Archangels Architects and Sam at Mortgage Medics for the above and beyond support you and your teams have given us this year.



I also give thanks to our close partners and peers, with whom our work is made stronger:



A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

We rely on individual, community and corporate donations along with funds from grants and trusts to carry out our vital work and we share the successes within this report with you.



Our future plans are in good hands.

Tim Williamson, Chair, Sussex Nightstop