

A photograph of three young people (one man and two women) laughing and talking in front of a wall with peeling paint. The image is overlaid with a teal tint. The man is on the left, wearing a dark hoodie and pants. The woman in the middle is wearing a light-colored hoodie and jeans. The woman on the right is wearing a dark hoodie and jeans.

rock trust

ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Upstream: Preventing Youth Homelessness

National Pathfinder Proposal



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Rock Trust | Who are we?

Established in 1991, the Rock Trust is Scotland's youth homelessness charity. With over 30 years of experience, we have become the experts in our field, championing the rights of Scotland's most vulnerable young people. We use innovative approaches to create bespoke housing and support models to help vulnerable young people transition into adulthood.

Rock Trust works with over 600 young people between the ages of 16-25 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless each year. Our role is to advise, educate and support them to build the personal skills and resources required to make a positive and healthy transition into adulthood, whilst avoiding or moving on from homelessness.

As the experts in youth homelessness in Scotland, Rock Trust staff are best placed to deliver interventions to vulnerable young people. Our dedicated youth workers are trained specifically to work with at-risk young people. We employ a psychologically informed approach so that we understand the thoughts and feelings behind young people's behaviour and choices, empowering us to work creatively and constructively to support each individual to thrive. This enables our staff to build safe, trust based relationships with young people.

Rock Trust's vision is an end to youth homelessness in Scotland and we believe the best way to achieve this is to stop homelessness occurring in the first place. This information pack provides details of our flagship prevention model, Upstream. For further information or to discuss commissioning a service please get in touch. We would also like to hear about any unmet needs or challenges you face in your area and would be keen to work with you to develop an existing service or design a completely new one.

Youth Prevention in Scotland

In Scotland young people between the age of 16-25 account for almost 12% of the overall population, however they comprise nearly 25% of all homeless applications. This makes them the most disproportionately overrepresented group within the homeless community. Consistently, relationship breakdown is the main cause of youth homelessness.

Despite having some of the most robust homelessness legislation in the world, there were still over 8000 homeless young people in Scotland last year. This simply isn't acceptable.

There is, however, an appetite for change. The Scottish Government facilitated the formation of an independent group, the Prevention Review Group (PRG), with the aim of advancing our nations approach to preventing homelessness. The PRG, which brought together academics, local authorities, health and social care and people with lived experience, worked under the premise of three foundational principles:

- 1. There should be collective responsibility across public services to prevent homelessness**
- 2. Intervention to prevent homelessness should start as early as possible**
- 3. People facing homelessness should have an appropriate degree of choice in where they live and access to the same accommodation options as other members of the public, with protections in place to prevent them from becoming homeless again.**

Traditionally homelessness prevention services provide support to individuals after they have made a homeless presentation to a local authority. Unfortunately, in many cases, this is too late and individuals and their families have already reached crisis point and relationship breakdown is inevitable. Despite labelling this activity as prevention, it remains a reactive approach.

We believe that, in order to tackle youth homelessness in Scotland head-on, a proactive prevention approach must be employed. An approach which we are collectively responsible for. An approach which identifies those at risk at the earliest possible opportunity. An approach that provides whatever support is necessary to help each young person avoid the misery and trauma associated with homelessness.



Upstream | Our Prevention Approach

Upstream is an innovative schools-based preventive model that utilises a universal screening tool to identify and support students at risk of homelessness. Why schools-based? The answer is simple - almost every homeless young person we work with attended school at some point. The 'universal' nature of the programme (indiscriminately involving every student in a year group or school) differentiates Upstream from existing schools-based interventions. This helps us to identify students who may not otherwise have come to the attention of school staff through traditional measures (such as attendance records) or those who face barriers in accessing additional support. In fact, evidence from Upstream Australia found that for 50% of those identified as at 'high risk of homelessness', school engagement was good. The screener acts as an assessment and allows us to pro-actively identify those in need and connect them with relevant supports before crisis point.

The Upstream concept originated in Australia (formerly The Geelong Project and now renamed Upstream Australia), and demonstrated a 40% reduction in youth homelessness in the three years following implementation. It has since been adapted for use in Canada and more recently Wales, where the screener has been developed to assess 4 key areas where early intervention can be critical in reducing the risk of future homelessness: Housing, Wellbeing, Resilience and School Life.



School Life: Including satisfaction, relationships, aspirations and behaviour



Housing: Including stability, satisfaction, safety, relationships and homelessness



Wellbeing: Utilising the Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale



Resilience: Utilising the Children and Youth Resilience Measure

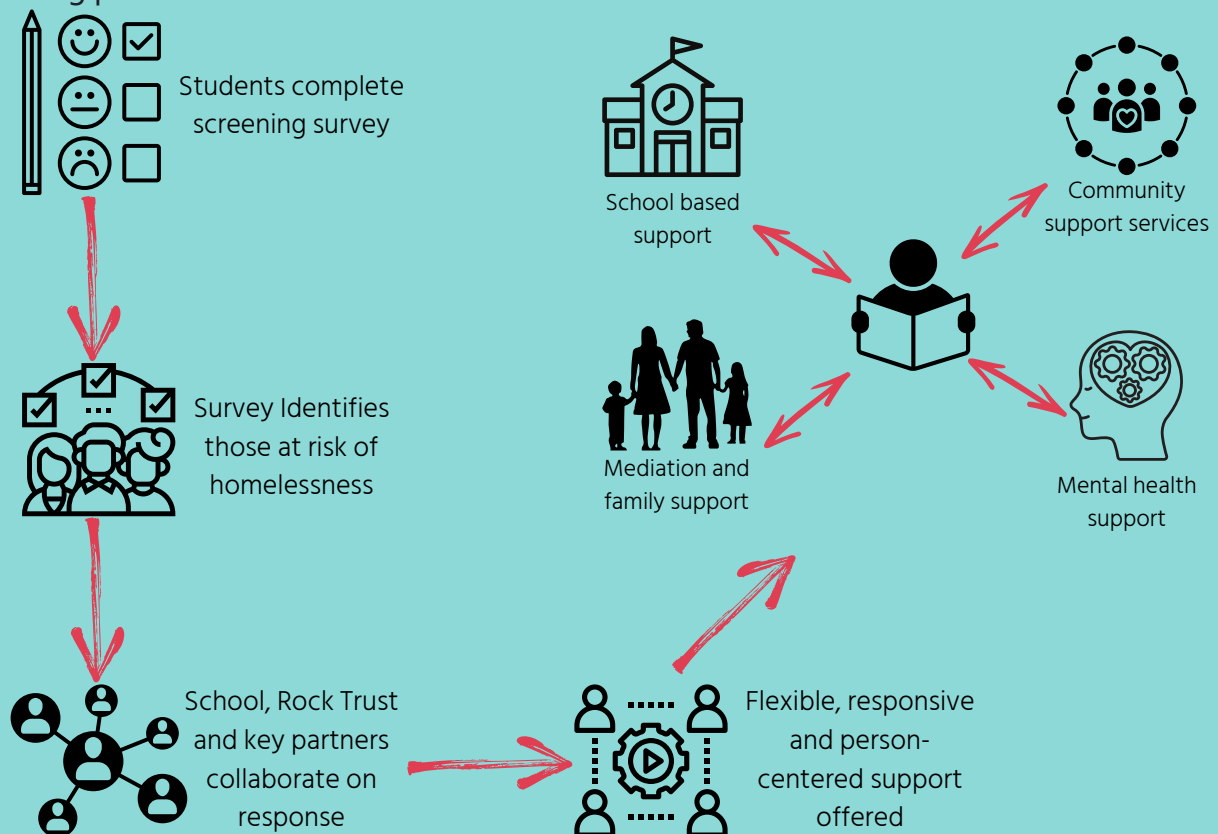
Evaluation of the Geelong project in Australia found that school engagement was good for 50% of pupils identified as at 'high risk of homelessness'

The first three years of The Geelong Project saw a 40% reduction in the number of homeless young students and a 20% reduction in early school leaving

Upstream | The Model

Rock Trust's Upstream Service Manager will work closely with key contacts in Education and Homelessness across our three participating local authorities (Edinburgh, Perth and West Lothian). Each area will be allocated a dedicated Rock Trust Upstream Project Worker who will be responsible for delivering the universal screener in the participating schools. The Upstream team will work with participating schools to ensure there is access to the required multi-disciplinary support - this should include early intervention support and mediation.

1. Parents/guardians are informed of the project and can opt-out if they do not consent
2. Every pupil in the target year groups is asked to complete the online screener during school time with limited input from staff
3. Using anonymized unique identifiers, the data is processed and pupils are placed into 1 of 4 groups:
 - a. Little or no support required
 - b. Low-level concerns. These pupils may benefit from the attention of the school's pastoral team for monitoring
 - c. Possible need for early intervention support
 - d. Possible requirement for crisis support or safeguarding issues exist.
4. Upstream staff, schools and other relevant professionals review the survey results and decide how to most effectively respond to the issues raised in the screening process
5. Where further support is required, parents are asked for explicit permission
6. Multi-disciplinary support is provided to those who demonstrate a vulnerability in the screening process.





Monitoring and Evaluation

The Upstream programme is innovative and forward thinking and it is therefore important we evaluate the difference the initiative has made. For this to be as robust as possible we would recommend impartial, external evaluation. Internally, Rock Trust uses a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure we can clearly evidence the impact our services have on the lives of young people.

Rock Trust employ the following methods to capture information:

- Views database: This allows us to capture detailed demographic info, monitor trends in young people accessing our services, organisational and funder outcomes and to accurately measure the impact of our work.
- CRM database: This enables us to communicate consistently with all of our partners and hold information in one central place.
- Participant satisfaction surveys: These determine young people's satisfaction with their accommodation and support package.
- Personal Plans: Rock Trust services use the Personal Plan as a tool to support young people to identify their strengths, set goals, acknowledge progress made and identify what specific actions will help them progress to where they want to be in various aspects of their life.
- Focus Groups: To gain feedback from young people about what's working well and what we can do better to inform project developments.
- Interviews and Case Studies: To capture stories of change and tell the stories that matter most.

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Any questions? Get in touch

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