Voice and Power for Homeless and Vulnerable People through New and Emerging Technologies

Your Entry

Please do not exceed 1500 words in total.

1. Your contact details

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<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Action Homeless (Leicester) Ltd</th>
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2. Name of the project you are entering for The LankellyChase Digital Empowerment Awards

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<th>Project</th>
<th>Down Not Out</th>
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3. Award category you are entering

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Voice</th>
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4. Describe your project in one sentence

Down Not Out is a news agency run by and for homeless, vulnerably housed people and other marginalised groups, providing access to media related courses and offering opportunities to develop and amplify their own voices to tell their own stories and to raise awareness and challenge stereotypes.

5. Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg homeless agency, housing organisation etc)?

Down Not Out works across Action Homeless’ range of housing projects and forms part of a wider support programme at Engage, a centre packed full of services for up to 350 people who are experiencing homelessness. DNO also have a base at Apex Works, a charity which helps adults who face some barriers or difficulties to finding training, skills and employment. DNO regularly attend events and run workshops in different areas of the city in order to engage with homeless people from across Leicester.
6. **What are the project’s objectives?**

To create a stronger voice for homeless and vulnerably housed people through a media training programme aimed at challenging stereotypical attitudes and images of homelessness.

To support individuals to find their own voice and tell their own stories by helping them develop the confidence, self-esteem and skills to support independent living and which are transferable to accessing further education, training, volunteering and employment opportunities.

To create a news agency and a team of community reporters to report on homelessness and the factors contributing to people becoming homeless.

To raise awareness in the local and wider community about homelessness.

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7. **What are the project’s activities?**

DNO runs courses for those with experience of homelessness, providing media training which equips participants with transferable skills, but also helps build confidence and nurtures talent. DNO provides a safe, stable and enjoyable environment in which the participants’ efforts and talents are encouraged and celebrated.

DNO hosts weekly media training, editorial meetings and ‘raDNO’ radio shows offering opportunities to try different activities, including; writing news, collecting news, writing blogs, updating websites, creative writing, poetry, photography, film making, podcasting and internet and FM radio programmes. Sessions are available for children and young people and are also delivered in the local prison.

Participants showcase skills through the production of a DNO blog, a periodic newspaper and radio shows.

DNO also works in partnership with Action Homeless to deliver tenancy training sessions to prepare homeless people to make formal housing applications.

Participants can access other media training delivered at BBC Leicester and by the Media Trust and informal ‘News Cafe ‘taster’ sessions.

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8. **What has been the impact / achievement of the project?**

Down Not Out has had a huge impact locally, both for homeless people in Leicester and the wider community. A key achievement has been the increase in self-confidence and development of key skills for those who have taken part in the workshops and radio broadcasting. Not only has this enabled those people to access new opportunities that they may not previously have had the confidence to pursue, but means that they have the transferable skills necessary to undertake further training or to secure employment.

- DNO ran 55 media training sessions which were attended by 169 people
• DNO ran 37 ‘Confidence through Broadcasting’ sessions attended by 39 people
• 10 DNO volunteers became regular raDNO presenters and 29 appeared as guests
• 71 people reported an increase in confidence and self-esteem through media training
• 56 people received tenancy training
• 74 people reported that they had gained the skills necessary to make formal housing applications and moved on to independent living.
• 1 person produced an article for The Guardian Professional website
• 1 person attended a writing course at The Guardian at the paper’s request

Through contact with Down Not Out, homeless people and those at risk of homelessness now have a better understanding of the support available to them in Leicester and where they can go to access this.
• DNO has 253 followers on twitter including 15 rough sleepers
• 1,800 people have visited the DNO office
• DNO delivered 17 media training sessions in HMP Leicester which were attended by 52 prisoners
• DNO created 1 orderly job for a prisoner

Crucially, homeless people now have access to a range of platforms where they can express their opinions and this has resulted in a stronger and louder voice for the homeless community. Down Not Out have developed a credible and sustainable voice for homeless people which is recognised by key policy makers and service providers.
• DNO blog has posted 707 articles about homelessness and has had 4123 visits
• 21 people have contributed work to the DNO magazine and newspaper
• DNO produced 148 raDNO shows, each with approximately 4000 listeners

More generally, the project has enabled a better awareness and understanding of homelessness issues amongst the public. This has been vital in Down Not Out achieving its aim of challenging stereotypical attitudes and images of homelessness.
• DNO has distributed 3000 copies of 2 magazines and 3000 copies of two newspapers
• DNO created Junior DNO, a partnership with a local children’s and young people’s consultancy, with 14 young reporters covering events and creating content about homelessness.
• DNO produced three films including an innovative strategy film, ‘A Chance for Change’ for Action Homeless
• DNO were highlighted on a month long FM licence with a station reach of 60,000 people
• DNO produced 2 calendars showcasing the artwork and writing of prisoners produced within the education department.

Finally, Down Not Out has paved the way for a range of new partnerships and has established a network of contacts across Leicester and beyond. DNO are part of Leicester City Council’s Homeless Reference Group and have worked with other homeless service delivery partners such as Shelter and the YMCA. DNO have formed relationships with BBC Leicester, local community radio stations, universities, colleges, youth groups,
government job programme delivery partners, ex-offender projects, local filmmakers and artists.

9. How is your project evaluated?

DNO uses self and externally commissioned evaluation. The first 18 months were self evaluated with an end of first year report to The Big Lottery. These included the collection and use of monitoring data which was used in answering the questions of the quality, value and direction of the project and to manage the performance against those agreed with the funder. Data collected allowed DNO to explore the reasons why things were or not working well and to make responsive and timely changes and adaptations to circumstances with proposed changes agreed after providing evidence of consultation and need from staff, volunteers and stakeholders – for example, an under spend in the first year led to the development work with the prison, young people and filmmaking about rough sleeping. A main aim of DNO was to be non-reliant on grant funding at the end of the project and budgeted for the external evaluation for this end. A consultant was commissioned and conducted independent interviews and workshops with staff, volunteers and stakeholders and delivered a report outlining the best direction for DNO to establish itself independently with a business plan to support this. This has been included in the final report to the lottery.

10. How would you spend the prize money to develop the project?

DNO will extend its outreach by hosting audio workshops in 5 local hostels to tell the stories and develop the voices of 50 homeless people. We will purchase a raDNO internet radio licence and digital recording equipment to make production of outside broadcasts more immediately accessible to our host radio station.