

How to Help the Homeless this Winter

We guess that if you are bothering to read this you are the kind of person whose heart goes out to those in need, especially in cold weather or in the period before Christmas.

You may already be wondering whether it is a good idea to give cash or better to offer a cuppa and a sandwich. Might it be better to use your money to buy a copy of The Big Issue from one of the vendors on the street, as this offers them greater dignity and a better chance to turn around their lives through work and managing their own money?

Organisations which help homeless people are usually very appreciative of gifts of money, food and time to support their work. However sometimes, especially just before Christmas they can be overwhelmed with inappropriate offers of help. Turning up at five 'o' clock on Christmas Eve with half a dozen frozen turkeys, or ringing at short notice to ask if you can volunteer to serve Christmas lunch to the homeless can cause more problems than it helps solve and lead to disappointment all round. So if you want to help please make sure you enquire at least a month in advance.

So here are some suggestions of ways you can offer effective help not just at Christmas but throughout the year.



TOGETHER
LANCASHIRE

A joint venture of Anglicans, Methodists and Church Urban Fund

Contact Tel: 01254 658914

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Donations

We think that your money can be wisely and effectively used if channelled through specialist charities working with the homeless, because they offer high quality and effective support. If you want to raise or give money to such groups locally it will be well used and much appreciated

If you want to give things instead of money the following items can be particularly useful

- Non perishable foods (especially items that require a minimum of preparation and cooking and don't need a can opener).
- Toiletries etc.
- Clothing, (particularly warm and waterproof outer garments, new underwear and socks)
- Sleeping bags and other bedding - please check first whether the organisation wants to distribute such items.

Volunteering

If you have time to spare on a regular basis many of the projects working with homeless people are glad of unpaid help in befriending and serving homeless people and in background support of their work, throughout the year. Most organisations serving the homeless and vulnerable expect their regular volunteers to attend training courses before you can start work, and in many roles it is necessary to ask for a DBS check on criminal records.

Listening, Learning and Campaigning

Find out about the ministries & services that are available to homeless people locally. Inform yourselves about the lives of homeless people by talking to them and listening to the stories they have to tell. Homelessness has many different causes, and there is no single solution. It's often linked to poverty, family breakdown, domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse and getting into trouble with the law. The more you understand the lives of homeless people the more you are likely to understand the issues they face.

If you are concerned about homelessness you may want to write to your MP or councillors or get involved with campaigns run by **Housing Justice** the national voice of Christian action in the field of housing and homelessness or **Shelter** who have been leading the struggle against homelessness for many decades.

PTO for local information and contacts

SERVING HOMELESS PEOPLE IN PRESTON

The Preston Homeless Forum - co-ordinates activity of all the groups working with homeless people, including the City Council. They have ensured that there is at least one centre offering food and friendship on each day of the week somewhere in Preston.

Their website www.homelessinpreston.org.uk is full of useful information and you can download and print out an up to date information leaflet listing all the ways homeless people can get advice and practical help.

There is currently no immediate direct access Nightshelter provision in Preston, except in very cold weather when a Winter Watch scheme operates.

If you meet a homeless person who needs help, you should refer them to
the Foxton Centre (see below)

Local organisations who would appreciate your donations and offers to help as a volunteer

The Foxton Centre - offers a one stop support service for homeless people including advice and support to get re-housed as well as a community café four days each week. Foxton also works in partnership with Central Methodist church to run the **Lune Street Drop In each Sunday evening**.

Telephone No: 01772 555925

Email: info@thefoxtoncentre.co.uk

Website: www.thefoxtoncentre.co.uk/

Luv Preston works with St Wilfrids RC church to run a drop in and free meal each Tuesday evening.

Telephone No: 01772 298107

Website: www.luvpreston.com

The Salvation Army runs a drop in and free meal each Friday lunchtime and several other support services for homeless and vulnerable people. It also manages the largest food bank service in Preston (People need a formal referral from an approved agency)

Telephone No: 01772 555425

Website: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/preston

Fox Street Community (which for many years did operate as a night shelter) provides all-year round supported accommodation for 20 adult men, and is run by Methodist Action North West. They still welcome offers of donations and volunteering

Telephone No: 01772 554930

Website: www.methodistaction.co.uk