



Love one another as I have loved you John 13:34

Parish Resource Pack for World Homeless Day

10 October 2026



Introduction



World Homeless day is 10th October and the day serves as a highlight good works, benchmark progress and advocate for improved policies and funding to help prevent and end homelessness. It also aims to raise awareness about the needs of people who are currently experiencing homelessness and promote work in local communities to alleviate suffering and prevent death.

Having adequate shelter is a basic human right; one that the Church teaches as part of respecting and recognising our humanity. Ensuring everyone is able to access a safe, stable and adequate home is a way to work towards the common good and ensure that all our brothers and sisters are treated with dignity and respect.

Key drivers for homelessness include:

Lack of Affordable Housing increased mortgages and rent along with stagnant wages and a lack of social housing.

Economic Inequality including those struggling to cover basic living costs.

Family Breakdown including relationship breakdown, domestic violence, and family disputes and young people leaving care.

Mental Health and Substance Misuse can both contribute to homelessness and be exacerbated by it.



Many people experiencing homelessness are 'hidden', staying in temporary accommodation, sofa-surfing, or living in overcrowded or inadequate housing situations. Data is limited due to the complexities of reaching this population, however, there is evidence to suggest some population groups, such as women, young people and ethnic minority groups, are more likely to experience hidden homelessness than others

The numbers of the autumn 2025 rough sleeping count reveal a 3% increase in overall rough sleepers in the England with a total of 4793. This is the highest level since records began in 2010 and includes an 8% increase in female rough sleepers. While it doesn't seem like a huge number, it does not include anyone in temporary accommodation (whether B&B's or overnight shelters/crash beds or sofa surfing), only those who were visible and by their bedding on the night of the count.

Across the diocese is a mixed picture with small increases in Southampton, Portsmouth, Windsor and Maidenhead, and Test Valley and decreases in Reading, Bournemouth and West Berkshire.

The Church, "sharing the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or affected in any way," feels it has a serious obligation to join with those who are working, without self interest and with dedication, to find concrete and urgent solutions to the housing problem and to see that the homeless receive the necessary attention and concern on the part of public authorities. John Paul II, Letter to Pontifical Commission Justitia et Pax



For more information or to discuss how you might support people struggling with homelessness or housing issues contact us at caritas@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk



Prayer and Reflection



...whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society... they are a supreme dishonour to the Creator. (Gaudium et Spes #27)

St Benedict Joseph Labre is the patron saint of people struggling with homelessness. A novena prayer can be found at <https://www.praymorenovenas.com/st-benedict-joseph-labre-novena>. Feast Day: 16 April.

A variety of prayers can be found at <https://housingjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Homelessness-Sunday-Prayers.pdf>

Biblical reflections for discussion from The God Who Speaks includes the passage on the rich man and Lazarus. Luke 16:19-31 <https://www.godwhospeaks.uk/three-biblical-reflections-for-discussion/>

The theme for World Day of the Poor 2026 is 'The Lord is the refuge of the poor' (Ps 14:6). Pope Leo XIV asks us to consider how are parishes are a refuge for the poor. Do we know how to respond to the needs of people who come to us? Read the full message at <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/poor/documents/20260613-messaggio-giornata-poveri.html>

Scripture references:

Isaiah 58:6-7

Proverbs 19:17

Luke 9: 57-58

James 2:15-17

Liturgy



Suggested prayers for the faithful

Priest: United in faith, we bring our prayers before our heavenly Father [on this World Day of Homelessness], mindful of those who lack the security and warmth of a home.

Reader: For the Church, that she may be a sign of God's love and compassion and a welcoming sanctuary to all. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Reader: For those currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness, that they may find safe shelter, nourishment, and the support they need to move their life forward in dignity. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Reader: For civic leaders and policymakers, that they may enact just laws and programmes rooted in dignity, solidarity and compassion for people who are experiencing marginalisation and disadvantage. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Reader: For charities, outreach workers and volunteers, that they may be strengthened by grace and guided by wisdom as they work to accompany and support our brothers and sisters in their time of need. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Reader: For our local community and parish, that we may open our hearts to all we meet, sharing our resources and hospitality and always putting caritas – love - into action. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Reader: For each of us gathered here, that the Holy Spirit may move us to see Christ in the face of every person we encounter and respond with generous love. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Reader: We entrust our prayers to Mary, Mother of Mercy asking her to pray with us, and for us, Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee...

Priest: Father of all, you desire that none should be lost or forsaken. Hear our prayers, and grant to those without homes the warmth of your presence and the loving support of your people, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*





Parish Actions



- Connect with any local homeless shelters and support agencies to learn about what is available locally and where there are gaps in provision. Can your parish help fill a gap, perhaps in collaboration with other churches? This can include access to overnight accommodation, hot food, haircuts, drop in centres.
- Advertise volunteering opportunities for local initiatives.
- Hold collections. Drop in centres often need food items, laundry supplies, toiletries, and also hats/gloves, new socks and underwear in a variety of sizes.
- Hold some emergency food supplies for people who come to the church door. Remember that people may not have access to cooking facilities. High calorie snacks and tinned meat, fish and instant coffee are popular items as well as packs of baby wipes. Know where to signpost someone on to for more support.
- Find out the drivers for homelessness in the area and ask if the can the parish do anything to prevent someone falling into homelessness. There are moments in life that can increase the risk such as leaving the armed forces, leaving care system, prison or family breakdown. Who is already working in this area and can you help?
- Ask for change. Certain policies increase risks in homelessness including priority lists, insufficient housing benefit and a lack of local connection in a particular area.
- Consider developing any unused residential properties to provide social housing.
- Contact your local school. Families who are struggling financially often lack basic furniture such as beds for their children, white goods or have no carpets/rugs to cover concrete floors. All this impacts how children manage at school.
- Pray for people and consider holding services for those who are struggling with homelessness.

Additional Information and Resources



The reasons for people being forced to sleep rough are many and varied, and often very complex. It requires people with professional training to identify the needs and risks associated with someone who is rough sleeping. When we see someone out in the cold and wet, we often want to help so here are some points to consider

- Treat people with dignity, respect and in a non-judgemental way at all times.
- Chat and listen to the person if they want to talk but ask first and don't push them for information they don't want to share.
- Do offer the person items they might need such as toiletries, socks, underwear, hats, bedding, coat or other items they might need to help them to keep warm .
- Offer to purchase food or drink - but ask if what they might like and if there are any allergies to consider.
- Assist with travel costs if your budget allows for short journeys as the person may be able to sleep at a friend or relation's house if they can get there.
- Please only approach someone if you feel safe to do so.
- It is not recommended to try and physically wake up someone who is deeply asleep, as you don't know how long they've been asleep for or how they will react to the shock of being woken up.
- If you think the person you are concerned about appears to be under 18, in danger or at risk of harm, call the appropriate emergency service, such as the police or ambulance service on 999 if it's an emergency, or 101 for a non-emergency.



For further information please contact caritas@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk.

For safeguarding concerns, please contact safeguarding@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk.

Continued

For someone over 18 and not in immediate danger, you can report the person sleeping rough to **StreetLink** on 0300 500 0914 to get them additional support.

Shelter can help with a variety of issues around housing and homelessness <https://www.shelter.org.uk/>

Local council websites often have links to their homelessness services.

Basingstoke and Deane: <https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/housing-homelessness-advice>

Bournemouth Council: <https://www.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/housing/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping>

Bracknell Forest: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/housing/homelessness-advice/homeless-or-risk-homelessness>

Dorset Council: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/housing/homelessness>

East Hampshire District Council: <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/housing/homelessness>

Eastleigh Borough Council: <https://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/housing/housing-and-homelessness/homelessness-advice>

Fareham Borough Council: https://www.fareham.gov.uk/housing/help_with_housing_homelessness/homelessness.aspx

Gosport Borough Council: <https://www.gosport.gov.uk/housing/options>

Hart District Council: <https://www.hart.gov.uk/housing/homelessness-and-housing>

Havant Council: <https://www.havant.gov.uk/housing-advice-and-homelessness>

Isle of Wight Council: <https://www.iow.gov.uk/article/1749/Homelessness>

New Forest District Council: <https://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/993/Help-for-Homeless>

Portsmouth City Council: <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/housing/looking-for-a-home/if-you-are-at-risk-of-becoming-homeless/sleeping-rough>

Reading Borough Council: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/>

South Oxford District Council: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/housing/are-you-homeless/>

Southampton City Council: <https://www.southampton.gov.uk/housing/housing-help/homelessness/homelessness-advice/>

Test Valley Borough Council: <https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice>

Vale of the White Horse District Council: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/housing/are-you-homeless/>

West Berkshire Council: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/homelessnesssupport>

Winchester City Council: <https://www.winchester.gov.uk/housing/homelessness>

Wokingham Council: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/housing-and-tenants/housing-needs/homelessness>

Guernsey: <https://citizensadvice.org.gg/resource/homelessness/>

Jersey: <https://www.gov.je/home/housingadvice/service/pages/homelessinformation.aspx>

Case Study 1



Breakfast at St Ed's: A warm welcome, a simple meal, a lifeline

Every other Saturday morning in Southampton, a simple breakfast is making a real difference to some of the city's most vulnerable residents. The Breakfast at St Ed's project in Southampton offers a free breakfast a to those who are homeless or in insecure accommodation with limited cooking facilities.

Homelessness is a key issue in Southampton. In the city's autumn 2025 street count, 24 people were recorded as sleeping rough, a figure widely recognised as an underestimate and one that does not include those living in hostels or temporary accommodation. Tragically, 27 people experiencing homelessness died in the city last year.

Parishioners from St Edmund's Church , led by Canon Michael Dennehy, teamed up with Caritas to address a gap in local support. They identified that while food provision was available on many days, every other Saturday morning remained uncovered- so 'Breakfast at St Ed's' was born.

The project, supported by the Caritas Mustard Seed Fund, opened its doors in September 2025. During its first year, the initiative welcomed 501 guests (plus 4 dogs), serving 789 meals - including 488 breakfasts and providing 301 takeaway food packages.

Behind every breakfast is a dedicated team of volunteers who transform the church hall into a warm and welcoming space. Guests can enjoy hot drinks, juice and cereal on arrival, followed by freshly prepared porridge, soup, bacon rolls or cheese and ham rolls, cereal bars and fruit. For those unable to sit inside, takeaway food bags are also provided.



Case Study 1 cont...



Breakfast at St Ed's: A warm welcome, a simple meal, a lifeline

The project has also built strong community partnerships. Through Southampton University students' 'Wonky Bowls' initiative, volunteers receive donations of freshly made homemade soup, fruit and food items to support the breakfasts, helping provide nutritious foods which are often missing from the diets of people facing homelessness.

Additional support has come from the Companions of the Order of Malta, whose donations of aprons (for the volunteers), and for our guest mugs, hygiene products and practical supplies have helped create a welcoming and respectful environment for guests.

More than a breakfast service, Breakfast at St Ed's is a community built on compassion. It offers not only food, but also conversation, connection and a reminder that no one should have to face hardship alone. Through the dedication of volunteers and the generosity of supporters, Breakfast at St Ed's is proving that sometimes the most powerful response to a complex problem begins with a warm meal and a friendly face.

You can donate to support this project at <https://donate.mydona.com/cdp-st-edmund-and-st-joseph> and select Homeless Breakfast project.



Case Study 2



Hope Into Action, Reading

Hope into Action Reading is a franchise of the national charity Hope into Action UK, and empowers local churches in Reading to open homes for those experiencing homelessness in the area. They now run 5 homes across the city.

Believing that the church is ideally placed to be at the forefront of addressing the need of homelessness and they partner with local churches to provide housing for those who find themselves without a home. In Reading, they partner with English Martyrs and St James and William of York parishes who provide volunteers to support their tenants through prayer and friendship.

Tenants are people who are experiencing homelessness and need additional support. This includes those who have experienced relationship breakdowns or mental health crises, fleeing violence or persecution, those in recovery from addictions and those with an offending history.

In 2025/26

- 100% of tenants maintained their tenancy
- 100% maintained abstinence or reduced their drug/alcohol use
- 100% with previous custodial sentences did not return to prison
- 88% saw improvements in positive social relationships
- 71% found employment, attended training or volunteer regularly
- 71% engaged with faith and spirituality
- 75% of move-ons were positive to more permanent, appropriate and independent housing

For more information visit <https://www.hopeintoactionreading.org.uk/>. To donate to their work visit <https://donate.justgiving.com/charity/hopeintoaction/donation-amount>.

