



Church  
Homeless  
Charity

Winter 2025  
**Newsletter**

[churchhomelesscharity.org.uk](http://churchhomelesscharity.org.uk)

# Welcome

Thanks to the kindness of supporters like you, we're able to offer grants for individuals in crisis — and grants for transformative group activities for people in homelessness accommodation.

Our partners across England share with us how essential these moments of connection are — they offer residents a chance to relax, find warmth in socialising, gently try new things, and begin to rebuild the confidence that is often lost after incredibly difficult experiences.

## Here are just a few of the group projects we've supported recently

At a veterans' scheme in North Yorkshire, our grant has helped create a weekly activity programme centred around the shared joy of baking and preparing and enjoying meals together. These sessions have gently encouraged veterans — including those deeply affected by PTSD or isolation — to socialise and find purpose. Staff have seen a noticeable lift in mood, with one resident sharing that baking “really picked me up and put me in a better headspace.”





A young families scheme in Wakefield received a grant to buy yoga and pilates equipment for their new weekly sessions. The classes are introduced at a gentle, beginner level, ensuring that everyone feels comfortable and encouraged to participate. Staff told us the sessions have been invaluable in helping residents wind down before bed, improve physical comfort, and build positive, supportive relationships. One participant shared that it's become a highlight of their week.

In Romford, our grant funded art workshops led by visual artist Liz Atkin, whose work is informed by her personal, lived experience of mental health challenges. Residents from two supported schemes took part, learning new techniques before collaborating on a large seascape that will be exhibited locally. The workshops offered people with severe mental health needs a creative outlet, and a moment of pride in work that will be displayed both in the gallery and back at their accommodation.





## Why we're focusing on women this winter

In this newsletter, we're focusing on the growing number of women across England who are finding themselves without a place to call home. Some have fled abusive relationships. Others are facing insecure tenancies, job loss, or spiraling debt. For women with children, homelessness can mean spending months - even years - in unsuitable temporary accommodation, often far from support networks.

Many women say they avoid hostels because mixed-gender spaces feel unsafe. Instead, they move from sofa to sofa or sleep in unfamiliar places, trying to stay out

of sight. This is where the risks grow: exploitation, unsafe relationships, and an increased chance of becoming trapped in homelessness long-term.

**Last year, thanks to supporters like you, we were able to give 267 women a grant that helped them take a real step forward. Grants that provided care when it was needed most - from essentials for a new flat to emergency support when leaving abuse. One in four told us they were fleeing harm.**

This Christmas, we're asking for your help again. A single grant can change the course of a woman's story. With your support, she can move from surviving to rebuilding.

## Helping women rebuild, one grant at a time

# Shelly's story

Shelly lost her home years ago due to alcohol misuse and later tried living with her mum. However, without proper mental health support and while still struggling with drinking, she was asked to leave. Shelly then spent a long period rough sleeping, losing almost everything she owned.

Due to many years of alcohol and substance dependency, Shelly was admitted to hospital where she spent five weeks.

Upon discharge, she arrived at supported accommodation with the clothes she was wearing and little else.

A grant from Church Homeless Charity helped Shelly buy new clothes, trainers, and toiletries, as well as a few personal items to make her room feel more like home. Having spent so long without her own belongings, these simple essentials made a huge difference - helping her feel more comfortable, cared for, and ready to move forward.

With her self-esteem growing, she is now focusing on her recovery and taking small but meaningful steps toward a more stable and hopeful future.



**This was like a new start. I feel more confident, optimistic, and I have a fresh outlook on life.**





# Helping women move from survival to stability: an interview with KMEWO

We spoke with Avan Dawood, VAWG Service Manager from Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO), which supports women from Middle Eastern and North Africa communities who are experiencing homelessness, destitution, or domestic abuse. Avan shared how Church Homeless Charity grants help women rebuild their lives after trauma.

## How did you first hear about Church Homeless Charity?

I was introduced through a family support worker. She saw that I was looking for funding to help our women survivors – just some small, practical support, and she told me, “You have to speak with this charity.”

That was the key for us. We agreed that we didn't need a big amount of funding, but some kind of support that could really help these women in crisis. It was the start of a really good relationship.

Since then, when we work with a woman who is homeless, destitute, or fleeing domestic violence and unable to support herself, we can complete the grant form straight away. The approval comes quickly, and we transfer the funds directly to the client.

For us, the amount is not huge – but it really changes a woman's life. We are so grateful for CHC and of course, your donors.

## What kind of situations do the women you support face?

We see many different types of cases. Some women are in very controlling relationships – their husbands want to control everything, and there's often pressure from the family not to leave, even if the relationship is abusive.

Sometimes religion becomes a serious issue. For example, if a woman is in a relationship with someone from a different faith, her family might not accept it. We've seen cases where women are in danger because of this.

We have to act quickly to protect these women and support them in the safest way possible.

## How do you begin supporting someone in that situation?

When a woman comes to us, we always start with emotional support. That's the first step – to listen, to observe what she's been through, and to build trust.

Most of the women we see have mental health difficulties because of what they've endured. Some have been in abusive relationships for 20 years or more. They often tell us they didn't even know that organisations like ours existed.

Once we build that trust, we can refer them to counselling in their mother language and invite them to our wellbeing groups. Over time, you really see the difference – they become different people when they start to feel safe, supported, and valued.

## Why is practical help, like small grants, so important alongside emotional support?

When someone has practical problems, and you can help sort them out (hostels, ID, debt, food, clothes, travel etc) it really eases their life. That's part of building trust too.

Small, practical steps make a huge difference. They allow her to breathe, to start again, and to believe that life can change for the better.

For women who have fled violence or lost everything, a small act of kindness can be the first step towards hope.



*Avan Dawood and Debra Colley, Marketing Manager at CHC during her recent visit*

# Mina's story

Mina has been subjected to coercive control, as well as verbal, emotional, and financial abuse perpetrated by her husband. He threatened her with deportation (as she was on a spouse visa) and displayed aggressive, intimidating behaviour.

Due to the severity of the situation, she was forced to leave the family home, leaving her and her children homeless. Mina was unable to access benefits and survived day-to-day without financial support. This put Mina in a highly vulnerable position.



I am extremely grateful to Church Homeless Charity for the grant I received during a very difficult time in my life. When I had no access to benefits and was homeless, this support helped me meet some of my most urgent needs. I used the grant to buy clothes and essential items, cover travel costs, and pay off part of my debt.

It gave me a sense of relief and self-worth at a time when I felt completely stuck and unsupported. This help made a real difference and allowed me to take important steps forward as I worked to rebuild my life.

Thank you for providing this crucial support - it truly meant a lot.



\*Names altered for privacy

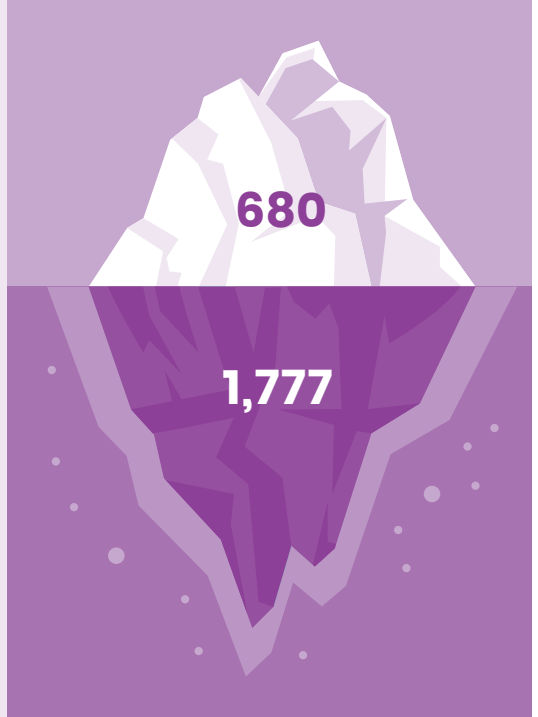
# Women's homelessness: in numbers

## Women sleeping rough on a single night

*(latest figures, autumn 2024).*

Approximately 1,777 women sleeping rough (identified in the multi-agency Local Insights meetings led by Single Homeless Project.) Of which only 680 women officially recorded (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government figures).

Government rough sleeping snapshots typically look at rough sleeping as sleeping in shop doorways and other visible areas. And tend not to include the women who keep moving at night, or take shelter in places like 24 hour restaurants and A&E waiting rooms.



## Approx

# 380

## women died homeless in England in 2024.

The Museum of Homelessness, who compiled the data (as the Government no longer publishes official data on the numbers of deaths of homeless people), said that the figure is 9% higher than the year before.

# 43

- the average age of death  
for a woman experiencing  
homelessness in the UK.  
Almost half that of the  
general population.

Photo: Kath checking clothing donations at the scheme.

## A place to feel safe again: inside Women's 394

Women's 394 is a project in Manchester offering safety, stability and personalised support to women experiencing homelessness and multiple complex needs.

When we visited recently, we spoke with Area Manager Eleanor Watts MBE and Service Manager Kath Meighan who generously shared details of their work.



## Can you tell me a bit about the project?

**K:** We moved into Women's 394 in June. It's a beautiful Victorian building with welcoming communal spaces. The environment makes such a difference. Our residents deserve somewhere that feels calm, safe and like home.

## What challenges does the project face?

**E:** Women rough sleep differently and it's harder for the outreach teams to find them. They'll sleep in A&E. They'll sleep at punters houses just to get a bed for the night. One of the challenges is actually finding them to bring them into the accommodation.

After that, it's a challenge for us to support them how they want to be supported and making sure that they get into a routine.

**K:** The women referred to us often have multiple complex needs: drug or alcohol issues, mental health difficulties, trauma, domestic abuse, physical health problems or involvement in sex work. Some have recently had their children removed.

Many arrive with understandable mistrust. Our first job is simply to help them feel safe and settled. Once they feel secure, we can begin supporting them with the issues they want to work on.

## How does support differ with an all-female service?

**K:** The needs look very different from mixed or male-only schemes. Many women have experienced severe domestic abuse or deep trauma. Accessing mental health services has become harder, so we now run an informal mental health drop-in on site - it meets women where they are and removes barriers like travel and digital poverty.

We always start with a triage. If substance use is part of someone's life, we link them with the right services - but importantly, we bring those workers into the building. Many women don't have phones, so bringing appointments onsite stops them missing out.

A lot of residents have no benefits in place and no ID or bank account. We help get all that sorted. When women arrive with only the clothes they fled in, small grants from CHC help them rebuild the basics: toiletries, clothing, essentials that restore dignity and confidence.

## How does CHC help you as a scheme?

**E:** Where CHC comes in is actually the move on. We couldn't help women move on without the charity because the homes they are going into – they're missing white goods, carpets, everything. We say if someone's been rough sleeping, then going to home with nothing, it's just a brick tent, not a home.

**K:** CHC has supported us in so many practical and meaningful ways. Something as small as a smartphone can be life-changing when all benefits are digital.

CHC has also funded group activities, helping women rebuild confidence and social connections. One woman told me she'd never seen the sea, so we arranged a beach trip. CHC

funded fish and chips and even a few coins for the arcade. Watching the women run on the sand and splash in the water was unforgettable.

We also held a garden party to celebrate the new building – decorations, food and laughter made the space feel like a true home.

Sometimes CHC helps make individual dreams possible. One resident, a domestic abuse survivor, wanted to learn lash extensions. CHC funded a £199 course. She completed all 12 weeks and has since moved on – but still returns to offer treatments to current residents. That confidence came from having someone believe in her.

You've helped us in so many ways – thank you.



*Area Manager Eleanor Watts MBE (left) and Service Manager Kath Meighan (right)*

# Pamper day

Staff at Women's 394 wanted to give residents a day of relaxation and confidence-building, especially after the important move into a new building that, for the first time, included communal and outdoor space.

The team planned a special 'pamper day' in the garden. The event offered massage and beauty treatments, a clothing swap, nutritious food, music, and plenty of opportunities for women to share time and build relationships.

A grant from Church Homeless Charity funded gazebos, outdoor furniture, food and drink, decorations, and a face painter, helping transform the garden into a warm, celebratory space. The day was a huge success, bringing together current residents and former residents like Joy, who maintained her positive social links after transitioning to over-55s housing.

Staff noted genuine joy among attendees – and know the positive impact on wellbeing will resonate long past the event.



**The day was a wonderful success and couldn't have happened without CHC. It helped us welcome women into their new home with care, connection, and a chance to truly relax.**

Kathryn Meighan, Service Manager

## Leah's story

Leah had to leave home after her mother refused to accept her trans identity, leaving her with no choice but to move out.

After spending time in a crisis shelter, Leah was preparing to move into her own unfurnished flat - an important step toward independence, but one that came with financial concerns.

A grant from Church Homeless Charity funded a new mattress and bed, ensuring Leah could move in comfortably. Without this support, she would have had nothing to sleep on in her new home, a challenging start to an already stressful step out of a supported living environment to independent life.

The funding has made a huge difference, easing the pressure of setting up her first home and helping her settle with comfort and dignity.



I am looking forward to starting my new life with a good night's sleep.





Scan here to get the guide

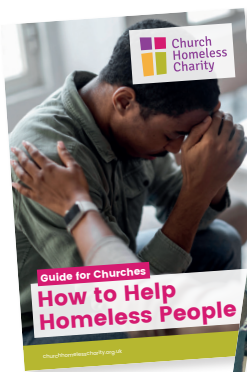
# How to help homeless people guide

This October, for World Homeless Day, we campaigned to raise awareness on how everyone can play a part in supporting homeless individuals. As part of the campaign, we released *How to Help Homeless People*, a comprehensive guide designed to empower people with practical advice, resources, and answers to common questions. We've created two versions—one for individuals and another tailored specifically for churches.

The guide is still available for anyone who missed it and wants to make a difference but might not know where to begin. Our goal this year was to spread positive awareness, bust myths, and most importantly, to help get homeless people the support they need. The guide is filled with

useful resources, from how to engage safely with people on the streets to where to direct them for further help.

We believe that a small action from each of us can add up to a big impact. If you or your church community would like to download the guide, it's not too late.



# What we do

We are a small yet highly efficient charity, reliant on the generosity of our donors. Every contribution you make allows us to provide timely, tailored grants to individuals in England – around 3,000 every year.

## Fundraising

If you would like to fundraise for us, please reach out and we'll support however we can.

To get started, either send us an email: [info@churchhomelesscharity.org.uk](mailto:info@churchhomelesscharity.org.uk) or set up a Just Giving page by heading to our page and clicking 'Fundraise for us'.

*Set up a Just Giving page*



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