

Helpful Information and Your Guide participating in Threshold's Big Swindon SleepOut Friday 2nd Dec 2022

On behalf of all at Threshold and the homeless of Swindon, thank you so much for registering your participation in this event. Your solidarity with the mission to end homelessness is much appreciated and your efforts in fundraising to support the life-saving and life-changing work that Threshold undertake in Swindon will allow us to remain at the vanguard of frontline services for the homeless – throughout pandemic lockdowns and at all other times.

We are hopeful that in our 50th Year Anniversary of delivering outstanding public service to the homeless of Swindon we can host our largest ever SleepOut event. We've prepared this guide to highlight important considerations you should be aware of to ensure your safety and fundraising success.

What steps do I need to take to confirm my participation and safety?

- 1) **Select 'GOING' on our Facebook Event** and please tell all your friends, they might really like to support Threshold as well. If you do not already follow Threshold on Facebook, you can keep up with our social campaigns for positive change and witness our social impact initiatives by liking and following **@THLSwindon**. Once you've joined our 'Facebook Event', you'll also be connected with fellow participants on the night and have access to a participant-restricted newsfeed! 😊
- 2) **Create your 'wonderful.org' fundraising page** in aid of Threshold. We've moved all our web fundraising to **wonderful.org** – because they are simply wonderful! They use the latest safest banking technology and they take **NO fees and NO commission**, so **100% of all donations go directly to your chosen charity** 😊 It's very simple to create your own fundraising page. Here's the link to our **wonderful.org** official event: <https://wonderful.org/official-events/14> just click the green '**create a fundraising page**' and follow the online steps. Your friends, family and colleagues can then easily contribute donations to your efforts if they are not able to participate fully themselves. You can encourage their sponsorship through conversations or posts on your own social media pages as to why you are supporting Threshold and are passionate about ending homelessness.
- 3) **Within your family, work or club teams, encourage everyone to register** and join you in participating, the more participants we have each year, then the more awareness and local support for the homeless grows. It's easy register at our website, as you know, so let your friends and family know also: www.thl.org.uk.

Our annual Threshold's BIG Swindon SleepOut event has grown to become one of the largest SleepOut events in the region. Although social contact in the world changed during the pandemic, we're hopeful and optimistic that a great many individuals, families and work teams will join us this year in solidarity with those that are homeless by turning their minds towards Threshold and the work we do face-to-face on the front line, all year round, pandemics or not. Whilst we hope we can all be together in physical proximity again this year, we're all certainly linked by our wish and desire to raise funds to help those that are particularly vulnerable while homeless.

For those who have never slept out before, we share with you some tips and pointers to ensure a 'safe and comfortable' night under the stars (if you choose to sleep outside on the night):

What shall I wear? For your comfort, we advise you wear several layers of clothing, you can always discard clothes if you become too hot. Please wear a beanie or some form of head covering (20% of heat loss is through the head) and gloves to protect your hands. If you have thermal socks, do wear them.

Where shall I sleep and what shall I sleep on? You may find it interesting to source materials to create an impromptu shelter. If you have some cardboard to lay on, or better still a yoga mat or bedroll, this will provide much needed insulation from cold flooring or lawn of the venue. Tents are commonly used by participants in our annual event, and commonly used by those who are homeless and fortunate enough to acquire one. A plastic sheet as a top layer for your blanket, duvet or sleeping bag will, if used carefully, keep you dry in the event of a rainy night should you not be otherwise protected by a form of shelter. Closer to the night of the event keep an eye on the forecast for Fri 2nd Dec. It will almost certainly be chilly. The sun will set on Fri afternoon at 15:54 and rise at 07:46. Low temperatures bring with them a higher risk to personal safety and we cannot over emphasise that you must take all practical measures possible to ensure your personal safety and consider that solidarity with the homeless does not have to extend to placing yourself at the same degree of risk to personal safety that the homeless experience day-in and day-out. Always be mindful, please, of your personal safety and the safety of others on the night!

What happens if the weather is bad? If you have decided to stay outdoors on the night, then this event is a small challenge that will give you a little insight into what it might be like, environmentally, to sleep rough, possibly enduring cold temperatures and wet weather. If, however, the weather is severe – such as windy gales, torrential rain or even snow, **it is very important you do not put yourself or those participating on the night at risk and please move your participation inside!** Please keep in mind that if you make the decision to move inside this is no ‘failing’ of the challenge. The homeless will often move about during the night, constantly searching out safer, warmer spaces to rest. In fact, moving inside from outdoors can provide a safer environment with time for personal reflection on your experience, and how unfortunate it is that others may not have the choice to move indoors at present.

Can I drink alcohol? While we hope you’ll enjoy the event alcohol free, our ‘Big Swindon SleepOut’ is a challenge where you can take some time to reflect on why it might be the case that so many people who find themselves homeless do also find themselves often drinking excessively or turning to illicit substances to mask the emotional pain they are experiencing. Past SleepOut events in Swindon have always been ‘dry events’ for safety reasons - alcohol makes you more susceptible to hypothermia, for a number of reasons. It is your choice - we simply ask that you please consider well your personal safety.

Tips for family safety? Past SleepOut events have been extremely well supported by lots of participants in family groups. We strongly encourage that all children participating are supervised at all times by an adult throughout the event – this is particularly important if a tent is pitched or a decision to sleep outdoors is made. Sleeping out carries risk, our staff and volunteers will be on hand throughout the night undertaking regular checks.

What other preparations should I make? Fully charge your mobile phone, because you’ll no doubt want to know what the time is at some point during the night and take, share and post pics of the event with your friends 😊 Throughout the night we will have hot drinks - tea, coffee or hot chocolate, but please bring along with you some of your favourite snacks if you wish. It’s very important if the temperature drops that you to stay hydrated and have sufficient energy replenishing foods throughout the night.

By taking these precautions into consideration, our annual SleepOut events have proven to be both safe and very popular for all participants, every year so far.

What is the fundraising target? Our fundraising target this year, for this event, is £40,000. This is no small amount of money, in fact it represents double the amount we usually raise from each annual SleepOut. This year has seen Threshold experience an unprecedented call on our service to provide support to the homeless while at the same time we have been unable to conduct the numerous fundraising events throughout the year that provide the vital funds we require to function as usual – in a year when it has been anything but usual.

By taking part in Threshold's 'BIG Swindon SleepOut', although we are not setting targets for individual participant fundraising, we would like you to be assured that every penny you raise and donate does help Threshold to make a meaningful difference in the lives of Swindon's homeless community.

Our team are always on hand to offer advice.

We're so looking forward to your support this year!

Many thanks and
Kind regards,

Michael Keenan
Chief Development Officer