

StMungo's

Frontline

Winter edition 2025

“When it’s freezing outside, there’s a higher desperation for warmth and safety.”

Page 6



“Helping St Mungo’s bring people out of the cold is so rewarding.”

Page 4



“After sleeping rough for 27 years, I’m now part of the St Mungo’s team.”

Page 10



As we head towards the festive season, there's a sense of joy around. But for many people trying to survive on the streets, it's far from a time of celebration.

Thank you for supporting St Mungo's and helping people to leave behind a life of homelessness.

This time of year often involves spending time with the people dearest to you, eating plenty of food and relaxing in the safety of your home.

But sadly, for many people sleeping rough, their biggest priority is to survive another night on the freezing streets. That's why St Mungo's is here to bring people away from rough sleeping and to help them rebuild their lives – during winter and all year round.

A place for everyone

No matter what someone's been through, we try to create a supportive environment for the people we help. One in which they can reflect, share how they're feeling and are reassured there's a brighter future ahead of them.

I see this firsthand when I visit our accommodation services.

You can learn more about this yourself on page 8, where some of our team share how they maintain this support over Christmas, while trying to make it a special time too.

From cooking roast dinners and hosting sing-alongs to being there, most importantly, for those reminded of the trauma and isolation they've experienced during the festive season – our teams and volunteers do it all.

Send your best wishes

This winter, your words could brighten the day of someone living with us. I'd be so grateful if you could send in a message on the paper bauble enclosed. It might be to wish our clients a happy year ahead, or some words of hope to get them through the festive period.

Like last year, we'll hang your decoration in one of our services so our clients can read your kind words. Simply write your message

and send it back to us in the envelope provided.

Your winter Frontline

I hope you enjoy your final *Frontline* of 2025 and see the difference your support makes. On page 4, one of our incredible volunteers, Ed, shares how he gives up his time to find people sleeping rough and alert St Mungo's frontline teams, who can help bring them into safety.

There's Maria on page 6, who explains the urgent work she and her team do to provide emergency accommodation when temperatures hit zero.

And on page 10, you can read the story of Lee, who went from sleeping rough in the cold for years, to being part of the St Mungo's team.

Thank you again for all your support as always. I wish you a happy festive season and, let's hope, a peaceful year ahead.

Emma Haddad
Chief Executive, St Mungo's

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Gifts that change lives

By supporting St Mungo's, your kindness can mean that this Christmas, and throughout the year, people who once faced life on the streets can receive festive treats and essential items as they rebuild their lives.

When someone comes to stay with us, some of the items your donation could help provide are...

Gloves, hats and scarves
Keeping people warm during the winter.

Clean clothes
Helping people feel more comfortable and ready to move forward.

Shower kit
Providing essentials like soap, shampoo and a toothbrush so people can feel cleaner and more confident.

Dog food
Making sure our clients' pets are looked after and happy too.

Home pack
Giving someone fresh bedding and pillows can provide much needed comfort.



“I finish a shift knowing I’ve helped, even in a small way.”

Ed is a St Mungo's volunteer who helps to locate people sleeping rough. He connects them with St Mungo's frontline teams, who can provide the support they need to leave the streets.

What’s your role at St Mungo’s?

“I’m a First Response volunteer.

Every other week, myself and another volunteer head out from 6am to 8:30am. We’re sent a list of people who have been spotted sleeping rough: where they’ve been seen and details of what they look like.

This information comes from local authorities and other services like StreetLink, who have been alerted that someone might need help.

What does a First Response volunteer do?

We look for the people we’re given descriptions of and hopefully get the ball rolling towards the right support.

“It starts with asking them their name, if they are ok and want help, where they usually bed down and if they have any contact details.”

From here, we pass their details on to St Mungo’s frontline teams. They then introduce themselves and work to help the people I’ve spoken to find safety and move away from the streets.

What motivated you to volunteer?

I work in banking and on my commutes over the years I’ve seen the same

– and new, faces on the streets every day. Some I even knew by name.

“I often had a chat with them and bought them a coffee or food, but I wanted to do more.”

That’s when I found St Mungo’s and learnt I could do something practical to make a difference.



Where do you usually see people sleeping rough?

Common places are bus shelters, parks, busy roads and sometimes cars.

Some people are difficult to find – especially in winter, sleeping in obscure places which are warmer but not necessarily safer. Places like abandoned buildings or tunnels.

What are your shifts like in winter?

Extremely cold.

“I’m lucky I get to wrap up, leave my home and drive a warm car. But it makes you think about people so cold, who have been outside for a long time.”

We give them foil blankets and try to get them help quickly.

You see more tents pop up. People trying to survive with firepits and using broken furniture they’ve found on the street.

What’s your most memorable experience?

I met a man who had been sleeping in a tent under a railway arch for six months. It was dark, cold and he was surrounded by rubbish.

“He said no one had engaged with him during the whole six months and he didn’t know how to get out of the situation. We passed on his details, he got the help he needed, and he’s now living in St Mungo’s accommodation.”

for my life, but it’s rewarding too.

I finish a shift knowing I’ve helped, even in a small way. But if we don’t find anyone, we’ve still given St Mungo’s frontline team more time to focus on helping others.

We’re all connecting with the community and supporting people through some really tough times – and hopefully helping them to leave homelessness behind for good.”

How does the role make you feel?

It puts things into perspective and makes me feel fortunate



St Mungo’s frontline teams are out every day, and volunteers like Ed help us reach more people sleeping rough.

Their support allows our staff to focus on connecting people with the essential support services they need.

We’re so grateful for the time and dedication our volunteers give. Whatever their role, they are provided with training and ongoing support throughout their time with us.

“I meet such resilient people – doing their best to keep going towards a happier life.”

Maria is an Assessment and Reconnection Worker at a St Mungo’s accommodation service. She shares how the team provides emergency beds during severe weather, as well as the ongoing support they offer throughout the year.

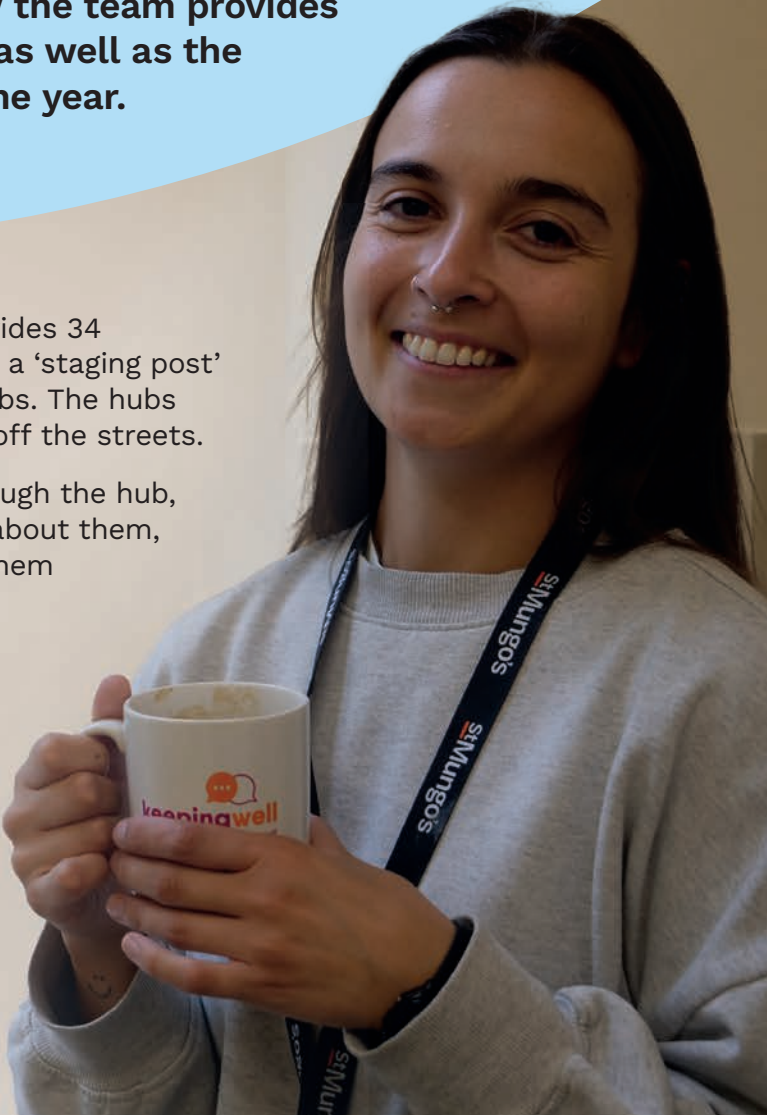
“I work in a St Mungo’s accommodation, which provides 34 emergency, short term bed spaces. We’re known as a ‘staging post’ – which is the next step on from our emergency hubs. The hubs are often the first place people go to after coming off the streets.

If someone hasn’t been found suitable housing through the hub, they might come to a staging post. We learn more about them, identify additional support needs, and aim to find them a permanent home within three weeks of arriving.

More than a roof

St Mungo’s accommodation gives more than a place to sleep. We link people to GP’s, mental health support services and even have a nurse here in the building. It’s all about providing the help to improve someone’s life, as much as we’re able to.

A huge part of that is finding them a home – whether it’s privately rented, a shared accommodation or a hostel. It can be so rewarding delivering that news.



Homelessness in the winter

I meet people who have been through so much, sleeping on the streets with nowhere else to go. No matter the season, we hear all kinds of tough, complex situations which have brought people into homelessness.

“But in winter, there’s a higher sense of desperation to find warmth and support. You see how much harder it is, trying to survive in the freezing cold.”

In the colder months, we see people become more isolated. They might spend more time wrapped up in their rooms. So we host weekly coffee mornings, to bring everyone together and try to encourage them to keep socialising.

Responding to emergencies

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is called by local authorities when temperatures fall below zero degrees, and in times of extreme heat. It’s rolled out to prevent harm or death to anyone who is sleeping rough, through providing emergency accommodation in services like ours.

When SWEP’s active, we receive calls from our frontline teams and other services.

“Then, it’s time to prepare a space with camp beds and bedding. People are brought in from the cold and given a towel to shower, a sleeping bag, some food and hot drinks.”

Every day – and especially in situations like SWEP, it really puts things into perspective. I see how resilient people are, having been through so much, but still standing and trying to make things better.

“That’s helped me become more resilient too, and I try my best for every person I meet.”

Our work at Christmas

We don’t slow down over the festive period but mark the occasion by hanging up



decorations and wrapping a gift for each person staying with us.

“For those who celebrate Christmas, some enjoy taking part in the festivities. But for others, it can bring up difficult memories.”

Either way, we try to keep people busy with buffet food and games, which everyone’s welcome to join. Some go for a walk or meet friends, and others might choose to stay

here – however the day feels right for them.

Ultimately, our goal is to make sure that for the people who stay with us, they never have to spend another winter – or any day, sleeping rough.”

“I’ll always remember the relief on a person’s face when they’ve found stability, can reconnect with family and friends – and hopefully be on the road to a better life.”



Your support makes it possible for St Mungo’s to be here for our clients at every stage of their journey out of homelessness.

Whether someone stays with us for a week, a month, or a year, our priority is to keep them safe and well, and to help them find a home to rebuild their life in.

A St Mungo's kind of Christmas

- The festive season is often joyful, but for some people staying with us, it can be especially difficult.
- Regardless of a person's faith, three of our accommodation services share how they try to make it a happy time, while offering support all year round.



Nana – Service Manager at a women's only service

“We have people staying with us who have been through challenging times and trauma, so we try and make the festive period a special time for them.

This is through care and support, as well as the kindness of others. Companies that support us send volunteers to hang decorations and make our communal areas look festive. They donate food for our roast dinner and presents too – even for the pets! We wrap the gifts and put them under the tree, so everyone has something to open on Christmas morning.

On Christmas Day, some of the team come in to make lunch with our clients and sit down to eat and celebrate together. It's fun here and we jingle our way through the day!

For the team, we know this role is more than just a job. It's about making someone feel seen and understood. We try to maintain a good relationship with people and create a family atmosphere – especially at a time which can be really tough.”

David – Registered Care Home Manager

“For the 29 men who live here, our care home is a home for life and somewhere to feel at peace.

We begin to mark the festive period at the start of December – with decorations and introducing our clients to activities like baking, arts and crafts and a visit to a local pantomime.

Each person receives a gift to open on Christmas Day. It could be a new t-shirt, pyjamas, chocolate or something else they will enjoy.

We also have our annual festive party. There's a lot of food, karaoke and someone to come in and sing us some songs. Santa even visits for the afternoon! On the day itself, we have a full Christmas dinner and make sure there's something for everyone.

I see mixed feelings around Christmas. For some people, becoming homeless meant they lost contact with family – so there's more sadness and reflecting on the past.

Others may go and visit their loved ones on the day. But no matter a person's situation, we try to make it as enjoyable as possible.

Our team show people they don't have to hold in what they're feeling and can talk to us, if they want to. We might not be able to create a fix, but can provide support and be a listening ear.”



Castro – Duty Worker at a service specialising in complex mental health needs

“We're a 17 bed accommodation service, and each person staying with us has different experiences and memories from the festive period.

For some, they have spent years on the streets, not at all in a position to celebrate. There are people who may have been working through their own mental health challenges, and others who have had happier times. No matter a person's backstory, we remember that everyone has their own way of celebrating or even just getting through Christmas.

We make sure to show warmth and care towards people, and we don't need them to fit the mould of a 'typical' Christmas.

Like last year, when we held a pizza evening! It was fun and every year we try to get as many people included as possible.”



“Some days I’d wake up surrounded by snow. But now, I’m working at the place that helped me.”

Lee is a member of the cleaning team at a St Mungo’s emergency accommodation hub. But we met him long before that, when our frontline teams helped Lee off the streets and into safety.

Life before St Mungo’s

“I’m in my 50’s now and feel settled for the first time in my life. But I’ve been through a lot before getting to this point.

I left school at 16 and worked in a warehouse. The people around me were doing drugs, and it’s around this time I started to drink.

Eventually, my dad threw me out of the house, and I lived in a hostel for teenagers.

My parents came and got me a few weeks later, but the cycle started again.

“I became homeless, which was the case on and off for 27 years. The more time I spent out, the more I became addicted to alcohol.”

There was a time I was living in a brand new flat, and two guys came back to mine for a smoke. They said, ‘We’re taking everything’ and cleared the place, threatening to harm me if I told anyone.

I did a runner, but it looked like I’d set the burglary up. I was eventually caught and given three months on remand for dwelling theft. When I came out, I was homeless.

Life on the streets

Sleeping rough, I had nothing to lose and drink was my best mate. I’d need four or five cans when I woke up and would be sick and shaking like a leaf until I’d had a drink.

“Some days I’d wake up in inches of snow, near enough dying, and I’d drink straight away to warm up.”



Sometimes I’d sleep in a graveyard, and squirrels would come at night, nibbling away at our sleeping bags so they could steal the fluffy inner part for their nests!

The help I needed

In 2016, I was found by a St Mungo’s frontline worker, who took me into emergency accommodation.

I stayed there for over two months and then in another St Mungo’s hostel for a while. The team referred me to an addiction recovery charity. I went into detox and haven’t drunk since.

St Mungo’s also supported me to get the flat I’m in now, where I still am today.

Building my confidence

Aside from helping me find somewhere safe to live, St Mungo’s has given me a lot of opportunities.

I took part in the Multi Skills construction workshops, which teach things like decorating and kitchen fitting. My confidence grew – mixing

with people and getting back into the community.

The coordinator said, ‘You’re so good with people here, would you volunteer and help other clients?’. It was such a confidence boost and opened other doors.

I painted hostels to say thank you to the community – including one that I’d lived in! I was volunteering with St Mungo’s frontline teams too.

Being busy and focused meant I wasn’t bored. If I was, I knew I’d start drinking and end up back on the street.

Part of the team

With my recovery going well, I started to look for work, but I hadn’t applied for a job in 27 years.

I got some cleaning jobs, and one day spotted a cleaning role at St Mungo’s. I went for it, thinking I have nothing to lose!

“I got it and reached my dream of working St Mungo’s – it was the place that changed my life.”

Finding happiness

I like my routine now – getting to work early and having coffee with the team once they arrive.

It’s nice meeting clients who move into the hub too. I love my time here.

I’ve not had a drink for a long time now. Drink and drugs don’t bother me anymore, now I’ve finally got something to lose.”



Do something special this winter

As 2025 draws to a close, you might be wondering how to finish the year strong and achieve something incredible in the months ahead.

Challenge yourself!

Step out of your comfort zone and help make this winter someone's last night on the streets. St Mungo's is here to support you in whatever challenge you choose to take on.

Whether you're joining friends for the London Winter Walk in January, aiming for a new personal best in a race, or racking up miles with your dog in our Take the Lead challenge, these are just a few of the events you can get involved in – there's something for everyone.

Have your own individual fundraising event in mind? Get in touch – we'd love to support you!



Find
out
more:



Bucket collections

This December, we're returning to Bristol and London with our bucket collections! Would you like to volunteer and join us?

We'll make sure you're fully prepared with a briefing on the day, and you'll be equipped with a St Mungo's t-shirt and collection bucket.

View dates and sign up:
mungos.org/xmas-volunteering



Thank you for reading this edition of *Frontline*. We hope you enjoyed it. If you have any questions or feedback, feel free to contact us using the details provided.

Supporter Care team

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