



Boris Johnson hails the role of volunteers in tackling homelessness

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, encourages Londoners to volunteer to tackle homelessness at a special event in London held by homelessness charities Crisis and Housing Justice.

The event, *Tackling Homelessness, Changing Lives*, held at Methodist Central Hall on 24th November, celebrated the role volunteers can play in working with the capital's homelessness organisations to transform the lives of homeless people this Christmas and beyond, following the Mayor's commitment to end rough sleeping in the capital by 2012.

Speaking at the event at Westminster Central Hall, the Mayor of London Boris Johnson said that whilst much has been achieved so far to help two thirds of the most entrenched rough sleepers off the streets, meeting this ambitious goal will not only require the Government and the homelessness sector to work together, it will also require the harnessing of the immense potential of the thousands of people who volunteer across London and give their time and skills to help homelessness charities.

Research from Crisis has highlighted the vital role played by volunteers. From 2008 to 2009 10,000 Crisis volunteers contributed the equivalent of £3.7 million worth of time to help transform homeless people's lives. Housing Justice estimates that last year alone volunteers in London's winter shelters gave 70,000 hours of their time at a value of around £715,000.

A new directory of volunteering opportunities across the homelessness sector, [*We Need You: Volunteer to tackle homelessness and change lives*](#), was also launched at the event.

Leslie Morphy, Chief Executive of Crisis, said: "This time of year is when people think about giving something back and make resolutions for the New Year. Volunteering is a great way to do this. We rely on 10,000 volunteers giving up their time every year at Crisis, at Christmas and throughout the year. We know they transform the lives of homeless people with their dedication and generosity because we see it day in, day out. At the moment we particularly need volunteers who have a range of specialist skills"

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, said: "I am proud of the work we have done to end rough sleeping in the capital by 2012. We have made real progress in helping two thirds of the most entrenched rough sleepers off the street, but there is still more to be done.

"Volunteers do a fantastic job in making this city a better place and have a crucial role to play in helping us to end homelessness, particularly by mentoring rough sleepers so they do not return to the streets. I want to encourage any Londoners who have a desire to make a difference, to consider signing up to the many volunteering opportunities that are available."

Alastair Murray, Regions Co-ordinator at Housing Justice, said: "Churches and faith groups are showing their commitment to tackling rough sleeping by organising caring responses at the local level, like shelters and drop-in centres. As well as being there for people in need, churches can mobilise people and resources in the community, helping to tackle poverty and other factors that can cause homelessness"

Jason Warriner, a senior nurse in sexual health & HIV, volunteers for Crisis Christmas. He said: "Volunteering at Crisis is enjoyable, fun and challenging – you not only use your present skills and knowledge but also gain an insight into the health of homeless people and work in community settings that will enable you to develop your practice. No health problem is too big or too small."

Crisis' volunteering research also highlighted the difference volunteering made to people's understanding of, and interest in, homelessness. Eight out of ten volunteers (83%) said that volunteering increased their understanding of homelessness issues. Their experiences also prompted them to rethink their ideas about who homeless people are and the causes of homelessness. In addition, over two in three volunteers (71%) said that their sense that they could make a difference was increased.

The booklet [*We Need You: Volunteer to tackle homelessness and change lives*](#), by Crisis and Housing Justice gives a taster of some of the opportunities that are available to volunteer across the sector with a directory of over 10 organisations looking for volunteers.

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About Housing Justice

Housing Justice is the national voice of Christian action to prevent homelessness and bad housing. We believe that human dignity is challenged by the lack of a decent home, and aim to mobilise Christians united in their determination to work with and for homeless and badly housed people.

Our vision is of a society where everyone has access to a home that truly meets their needs

We enable local groups and churches to provide practical help to people in housing need. At the same time we work for change in housing policies at national and local level. We do this by embracing partnership with people of all faiths (and none) who share our values of social justice and compassion.

About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. We are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change. Our innovative education, employment, housing and well-being services address individual needs and help people to transform their lives. We are determined campaigners, working to prevent people from becoming homeless and advocating solutions informed by research and our direct experience. We have ambitious plans for the future and are committed to help more people in more places across the UK. We know we won't end homelessness overnight or on our own. But we take a lead, collaborate with others and, together, make change happen.