

Sleeping rough for rough sleepers

Information and Advice

What is St Petrock's Big Night Out?

St Petrock's Big Night Out is an event that enables anyone of almost any age to raise funds for St Petrock's work helping homeless people in Exeter, and have some fun at the same time!

It gives you the chance to have a night sleeping out under the stars, in a location of your choice, and to reflect on what it would be like if you had to sleep rough out of necessity rather than for fun.

It's not obligatory to be outside as there are a range of options, including for those whose health prevents them from sleeping outdoors.

How does it work?

We're inviting people to sleep outdoors on **Friday 12 April** in venues across Exeter and beyond to help those who have no home and have to sleep out every night. You can choose how and where you sleep out, depending on how bold you want to be:

- In your garden, shed or garage.
- Out in the countryside (make sure you get the landowners permission if needed!)
- In your workplace, with teams sleeping in the car park or grounds.
- Schools and colleges can run their own events in a classroom or hall (doors and windows open please!), or even in the school/college grounds.
- Clubs and societies, scouts, guides ... you name it, you can take part too.
- We'd love it if churches and youth groups got involved!
- Or how about a night on the sofa or the floor? Sofa surfing is a very common form of homelessness where people rely on the generosity of friends and family who allow them to sleep on their floor or sofa rather than sleep rough.

We'll check in with everyone via a Zoom meeting at 9pm, with opportunities to win some lovely prizes! And we'll check in again by Zoom at 7.30am to see how everyone has got on. Our aim is that everyone taking part can feel part of something special as we all come together to make life better for those in our community with nowhere to call home.

People of all ages can take part. However, if you're under 18, please make sure you get your parent or guardian's permission, especially if you are going to sleep out anywhere other than at home. We recommend that under 14s are accompanied by an adult to make sure everyone is safe and well.

A Rough Sleeping Experience?

St Petrock's Big Night Out is a bit of fun, and nothing like genuinely sleeping rough because you really are homeless. In the morning you'll go inside again into the warm, you'll dry out (if you got wet), have a shower and a change of clothes, have a nice breakfast and a cup of coffee and – best of all – on Saturday night you get to sleep in your own bed again!

So, we want to stress that Big Night Out is very different to genuine rough sleeping. St Petrock's clients experience abuse and assaults, and frequently get very wet and very cold so they rely on having St Petrock's as a place they can dry out and warm up again. Worst of all, they have to spend day after day on the streets knowing that there will be no warm bed to sleep in when night falls.

But we still hope the experience of Big Night Out will give you a bit of an insight into what it is like to be homeless.

Like most things, St Petrock's Big Night Out is more fun with other people. So how about organising a group of people to join you? Sleeping out is a great team-building event for workplaces (managers **MUST** take part!) but also a brilliant way to build community at schools, universities, colleges and church groups, whilst raising money for a fantastic cause.

Three main things:

Stay **SAFE**, have **FUN**,
be **PRACTICAL**

Top tips for a good Big Night Out

St Petrock's Big Night Out isn't like being genuinely homeless, and we want everyone taking part to be safe. By all means make it more hardcore if that's what you want, but make sure you have precautions in place so that if things go wrong, or if the weather is particularly horrible, you won't come to any harm.

Remember – every year many rough sleepers die of hypothermia, and many experience violence, so please don't put yourself in harm's way. That's why we insist you **MUST have adequate clothing and shelter, and we strongly recommend **NOT** to sleep out in a town/city centre or other public place.**

Be Safe

- Only sleep out in a safe location, such as a garden, fenced car park or school grounds for example. Make sure you have permission!
- Make sure you have shelter. Depending on the weather, you could go for a simple roof overhang, rig up a tarpaulin, or use a tent. To keep dry, people who have to sleep rough use all these options if they can. If it's going to be very cold, windy or wet, consider using a shed or garage.
- Keep warm. It is very hard to get warm once your core body temperature starts to fall, so stay warm, especially in the evening before you bed down. Lots of thinner layers are better than one thick layer. Wear something windproof to stop the wind cutting through your clothing, and make sure you are wearing warm socks and shoes/boots. When it is time to bed down, use a decent sleeping bag, and blankets if it's cold – remember St Petrock's Big Night Out is supposed to be fun, not an ultra-endurance test!

- Take a rollmat (or some sheets of cardboard if you want a more authentic experience!) to give you a bit of comfort and to insulate yourself from the ground.
- Have plenty of hot drinks and snacks to hand. If you're cold, you'll burn up more energy, so snacks and hot drinks are great to keep you warm and to keep your morale strong.
- Have an emergency plan. If it's wet or cold, and especially if it is wet and cold, it is easy to get hypothermia. So, make sure you can get inside somewhere warm if you need to.
- Make sure you have a charged mobile phone in case you need to call for help. This is especially important if children or older people are taking part.
- If the weather is EXTREME, we will postpone St Petrock's Big Night Out until another date.
- Depending on your location and who is taking part, consider having a rota of responsible adults to make sure someone is awake throughout the night to check people are OK.

Have Fun

- Rough sleepers don't get to sit watching TV in their living room, so you might choose to start your St Petrock's Big Night Out event in the early evening for a fuller experience, particularly if you are doing it with friends or work colleagues. How about starting at about 7pm?
- On Friday 12 April, sunset is about 8pm, so unless you go to bed really early it will be a long evening before you bed down! So, plan some fun things to do to pass the time.
- You could have a barbeque – added bonus of having a fire/charcoal to keep warm around! (but don't sleep near a fire or barbeque for obvious reasons).
- Have some music on or watch a film on a laptop.
- If you are a church or church youth group, or other faith group, why not plan in a time of worship and prayer for those who are homeless?
- Take loads of photos and upload to Twitter or Instagram, tagging in **@StPetrocks** with hashtag **#StPetrocksBigNightOut**
- If you'd like to pass the time by watching a heartwarming homelessness-themed film we can recommend A Street Cat Named Bob, age guide 12, which can be rented from many of the film streaming services. Or you can buy a DVD from most High Streets or online.

Be Practical

- Some really basic stuff folks: Make sure you have access to a toilet all night!

Fundraising

As well as giving you a night to remember (hopefully for many positive reasons!), St Petrock's Big Night Out is your chance to actually change lives by raising funds to support St Petrock's work with people experiencing homelessness.

There are two easy ways to do this:

Online via JustGiving.com – easiest and best for most people

- A link on our webpage takes you to our Just Giving #StPetrocksBigNightOut page. You'll need to set up an account and link your fundraising page to ours by clicking on the 'fundraise for us' button. Then follow the instructions. Don't forget to select 'St Petrock's Big Night Out' in the event section, to complete the linking process!

- **IMPORTANT** – send everyone you know an email telling them what you're doing and why, and inviting them to sponsor you, with a link to your JustGiving page. Post it on your social media three to four times in the run-up to 12 April.
- Send out a final invitation to sponsor you the day after the event with a photo or two. You'll be amazed how many people need that final nudge. Most people will find they get about 50 per cent more sponsorship after the event!

On Paper – better for those who hate online stuff

- Print off the sponsorship form as many times as you need to.
- Ask your friends, family, colleagues, golf buddies, classmates ... everyone to sponsor you!
- Collect up the money after the event.
- Forward the cash (or a cheque/bank transfer of that amount) to St Petrock's AND make sure you send your completed sponsorship forms to St Petrock's, 10 Cathedral Yard, Exeter EX1 1HJ so we can collect the GiftAid.

Whichever way you decide to do sponsorship, if you are doing BigNightOut as a group of work colleagues or as a company team-building exercise, ask your company to match your donation – it's amazing how many businesses will do this.

Competitions

We will be awarding prizes for the...

1. **Most 'exotic' location.** Prize: Two complimentary tickets to Powderham Castle's Let's Rock 80s festival.
2. **Most elaborate shelter.** Prize: Four complimentary tickets for Scott Cinemas.
3. **Participant furthest from Exeter.** Prize: £50 voucher for Petrock's Place.
4. **Biggest amount raised by an individual.** Prize: A complimentary family of four annual pass to Canonteign Falls.
5. **The most resplendent hat.** Prize: A 30 minute portrait session in Budleigh, Exmouth or Woodbury by Freeride Media.

Please send your competition entries to bignightout@stpetrocks.org.uk

Don't forget to add our social media banners to your accounts (see link on website page), and please share your pictures and videos on social media, with the hashtag #StPetrocksBigNightOut and tag us in. We're on Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) and LinkedIn!

Finally... thank you SO much for caring about homeless people, from us all at St Petrock's