



# Festival of Kindness

## 2024 Report





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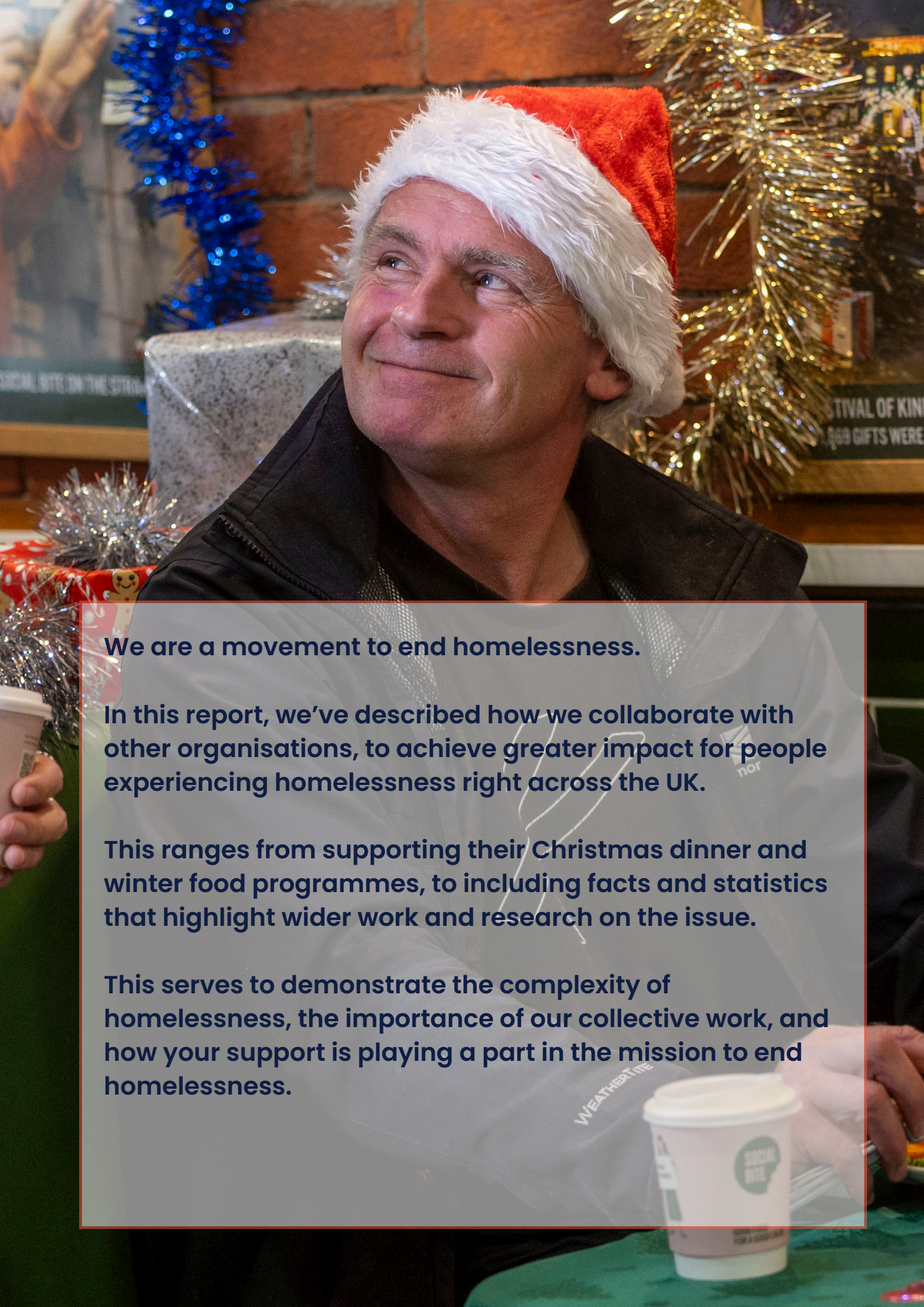
**WE BELIEVE IN  
A SOCIETY WHERE  
NOBODY SHOULD  
HAVE TO BE  
HOMELESS.**



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**We are a movement to end homelessness.**

**In this report, we've described how we collaborate with other organisations, to achieve greater impact for people experiencing homelessness right across the UK.**

**This ranges from supporting their Christmas dinner and winter food programmes, to including facts and statistics that highlight wider work and research on the issue.**

**This serves to demonstrate the complexity of homelessness, the importance of our collective work, and how your support is playing a part in the mission to end homelessness.**





## Thank you from our co-founder Josh Littlejohn MBE

On behalf of the team at Social Bite, I would like to thank everyone who donated, volunteered, and contributed to making 2024's Festival of Kindness campaign a success.

For ten years, Social Bite has been opening our coffee shops in Scotland to host Christmas meals for people experiencing homelessness. We wanted to offer a place of friendship, safety, and warmth at a time that so many find difficult. In 2020, in the wake of the pandemic, we wanted to do more to help society's most vulnerable, and we launched the Festival of Kindness with the aim of providing additional support in the form of gifts where people would otherwise go without, meals throughout the winter, and emergency accommodation with wrap-around support during the coldest months of the year. Thanks to your incredible generosity, this UK-wide relief effort has now distributed **over 1.4 million meals**, gifts, and essential items to people nationwide.

But the mission continues. The cost-of-living crisis is affecting us all, but for homeless and vulnerable people, the impact has been devastating. The growing economic challenges faced by society have led to worsening homelessness statistics, impacting more individuals in deeper and longer-lasting ways. At the time of writing this, over 4,000 people are living in temporary accommodation in Glasgow. Last year, over 11,000 people had no choice but to rough sleep in London. The UK tops the global lead tables, with the highest rate of homelessness in the developed world; one in every 200 households is living in temporary accommodation.

Social Bite's vision is a society where no one should have to be homeless. While the challenges ahead are immense, your support gives us hope. Every donor is important and incredibly valued, and everything you have given has contributed to ending homelessness.

There are so many stories I could share. To the little boy who donated his pocket money to our Tree of Kindness in London: thank you. To the volunteers who packed rucksacks, paired socks, and carried bags of donated gifts up and down stairs: thank you. To the companies who held Christmas jumper days, bake sales, and secret Santas: thank you. And to anyone who has contributed what they can: thank you.

Thank you for being part of this movement of kindness to spread festive goodwill and much-needed support to people who are homeless and vulnerable this Christmas all over the UK.

**To every person, community group, school, college, university and company who collected toys, games, jackets and other items of warm clothing and donated these to our 5 Trees of Kindness.**

THANK YOU!



## Festival of Kindness in numbers

**Over  
310,000**

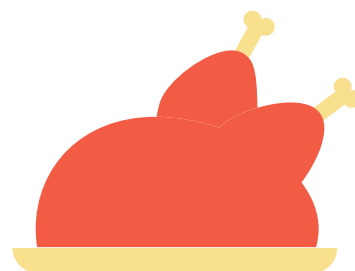


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Gifts, meals and essential items distributed to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and food poverty

**237,866**



Free meals funded UK-wide over the winter period



**195**

Towns, cities and communities across the UK where your support reached people through grass-roots projects providing Christmas dinners and winter meals

**805  
volunteers**

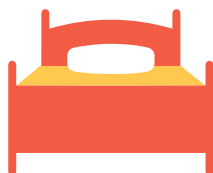


gave

**3,045  
hours**

of their time to make Festival of Kindness happen

The number of nights emergency accommodation funded:



**865 nights**

THANK  
YOU!

**To all our volunteers, your dedication is helping to break the cycle of homelessness in your local area. We're proud to work with you to make the festive season a little brighter for your local community.**



# About Social Bite

**We are a charity and social business providing homes, jobs, food, and support to help people transform their lives and leave homelessness behind for good.**

We began life as a sandwich shop on Edinburgh's Rose Street in 2012 and we became dedicated to ending homelessness when a Big Issue seller named Pete plucked up the courage to ask for a job. We now have a network of coffee shops and a charity that provide people with food, support, housing and employment opportunities.

Following the success of the first Social Bite Village in Edinburgh, we're now on a mission to build more villages in South Lanarkshire and Dundee, too. These villages are just one of several innovative projects we're driving to help thousands of people to break the cycle of homelessness.

**By supporting the Festival of Kindness campaign, you've helped to drive meaningful, long-term change through these initiatives:**

## COFFEE SHOPS WITH A DIFFERENCE



Enjoy good food for a good cause at our social enterprise coffee shops in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen or London. Our coffee fuels more than just your day: every purchase helps provide jobs, homes, food and support for people experiencing homelessness.



## PAY IT FORWARD

We operate a pay it forward system in all of our coffee shops, where you can pay for a hot meal for someone experiencing homelessness. Our pay it forward programme has powered our free food service for more than a decade.

## UK-WIDE IMPACT

In addition to our own support programmes, we partner with more than a hundred organisations providing grass-roots support for people experiencing homelessness across the UK.



We form local partnerships in the hearts of communities nationwide with organisations who share our mission and values, to reach people in need with tangible support at Christmas and throughout the winter.

## SOCIAL BITE VILLAGES

Social Bite Villages are an innovative alternative to unsuitable temporary accommodation (such as B&Bs), which are costly and ineffective, with poor social outcomes. We provide dignified, high-quality living spaces in a stable and supported environment, offering the right conditions and opportunities for people from situations of homelessness to build independent lives.





# What is the Festival of Kindness?

The Festival of Kindness is an annual campaign that harnesses the power of community to spread joy and kindness, and provide vital support for people who are homeless and vulnerable at Christmas and throughout the winter. Our goal in 2024 was to provide **300,000 Christmas dinners, winter meals, gifts and essentials for people in need.**

The Festival of Kindness 2024 saw people nationwide donate money for meals, gifts, essentials and accommodation as well as bringing gifts from a wish list directly to city centre Trees of Kindness, and volunteering their time to help deliver this UK-wide relief effort. It was amazing to see people from all walks of life come together with acts of kindness that collectively resulted in exceeding the goal and providing an incredible **310,410** Christmas dinners, gifts, essential items, and meals throughout the winter and beyond. Thank you.



THANK  
YOU!

Preston Street Primary School, who generously collected donations from staff, pupils and families and rounded it off with a wonderful carol performance around our Edinburgh tree. There wasn't a dry eye in the house!





- Our stunning city centre Trees of Kindness were open daily in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and London throughout December.
- Almost 14,000 gifts from a wish list were dropped off by kind-hearted supporters – from warm clothing and toiletries, to toys for children in homeless accommodation.
- Together with generous donations of stock from corporate partners, and donations for gifts through our website, we were able to distribute an amazing 72,544 gifts and essential items to people experiencing homelessness and hardship this Christmas.
- We were also able to fund 865 nights of emergency sheltered accommodation for people experiencing homelessness in Glasgow, Edinburgh and London over Christmas and the winter months.

**We were able to provide almost a quarter of a million meals for individuals, families and children experiencing homelessness and food poverty, including:**

**701 hot Christmas dinners with all the trimmings** served on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Social Bite coffee shops in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

**10,638 ready-made Christmas meals and ingredient packs** prepared by our coffee shop teams and distributed to community partners for their Christmas dinner events.

**Over 83,000 meals provided through the winter and beyond** through Social Bite's free food programme.

**Almost 150,000** Christmas dinners and winter meals delivered through our network of over 200 individual charity projects across the UK



# Trees, gifts, meals and shelter





# Trees of Kindness

This year, we once again installed our spectacular 10 metre-high city centre Trees of Kindness in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and London. They were open seven days a week throughout December for; supporters and members of the public to drop off gifts and essentials from a wish list, donate money to fund meals and support, and volunteer in shifts to help with the campaign. We then distributed the gifts that were donated to people experiencing homelessness and hardship, in time for Christmas.

The trees have become a symbol of kindness, and donating at the trees has become part of people's Christmas routine. This year we were once again astounded by the public's generosity. Over 800 gifts were donated to our Edinburgh tree in one day alone, and there are countless stories of amazing acts of kindness and empathy. Throughout this report you will see examples of how people have gone above and beyond to support the campaign and extend generosity and kindness to people experiencing homeless.



THANK  
YOU!

**Corporate supporters donated an incredible 37,449 gifts and essential items to the Trees of Kindness in Scotland and London**



# Edinburgh's Tree of Kindness



For the first time this year, the Edinburgh Tree of Kindness was based on Castle Street and became a focus point for members of the public to donate gifts and essential items to the campaign.

Over the winter period, Edinburgh faced a crisis, the numbers of rough sleepers in the city increased due to a variety of reasons. The Edinburgh tree responded to that with a focus on collecting warm clothing, new high-grade sleeping bags, hats and gloves to provide some short-term comfort; we also worked with charity partners in the city to support with longer-term solutions to break the cycle of homelessness. See page 25 for more information.

## You supported the campaign by...



- Donating **£6,383.76** directly to the Edinburgh tree, which helped to fund Christmas dinners, winter meals, gifts and essentials.

- Volunteering over **381 hours** at the tree to engage with the public, take donations, and share Social Bite's mission.

- Donating **32,273** gifts at the Tree and funding **11,074** more.



## We shared the gift of kindness by....

Partnering with **33 amazing local charities**; the Edinburgh Tree of Kindness directly supported over **7,000** people across Edinburgh, Fife, and the Lothians.



- Delivering **2,209** Xmas meals in the local area.
- Providing **44,470** gifts and essentials to local, vulnerable people.

THANK YOU!

**To the Linten Adie Community Choir who donate all their performance fees to Social Bite and opened our Edinburgh Tree of Kindness.**

**To the Scotland Garden's Scheme based on Castle Street, who provided space for Edinburgh Tree staff welfare and the storage of gifts from the tree.**



# Glasgow's Tree of Kindness



In the heart of the west end, the Glasgow Tree of Kindness had its most successful year ever!

Glasgow is currently in the midst of a temporary accommodation crisis, with over 4,000 people living in temporary accommodation in the city in December 2024. Social Bite responded to this challenge, working with several local charity partners in the city to fund emergency, crisis accommodation and support to people rough sleeping. See page 25 for more information.

The people of Glasgow were incredibly generous, donating fantastic amounts of gifts and essential items to be distributed by local charities.

## You supported the campaign by...



- Donating **£8,689.54** directly to the Glasgow tree, which helped to fund Christmas dinners, winter meals, gifts and essentials.

- Volunteering over **408 hours** at the tree to engage with the public, take donations, and share Social Bite's mission.
- Dropping off **3,231** donated gifts and essential items to the tree.



## We shared the gift of kindness by....

Partnering with 13 amazing local charities; the Glasgow Tree of Kindness directly supported over **4,000** people.



Delivering **4,124** Xmas meals in the local area.



THANK  
YOU!

**Visit West End and the Grosvenor Hotel Glasgow who offered fantastic support, including storage and staff welfare to help to make the tree such a success, and our fab Glasgow Tree volunteers, like the team from Softcat.**



# Aberdeen's Tree of Kindness



The Aberdeen tree provides a gateway to the north of Scotland, allowing us to support people from more rural communities experiencing poverty and homelessness.

Last year, Aberdeen saw a 69% increase in the number of households living in temporary accommodation and the number of children in temporary accommodation doubled in that same period.

## You supported the campaign by...



- Donating **£4,249.63** directly to the Aberdeen tree. The most the tree has ever received- thank you. This helped to fund Christmas dinners, winter meals, gifts and essentials.

- Volunteering over **62 hours** at the tree to engage with the public, take donations, and share Social Bite's mission.
- Giving **1,357** gifts and essential items to the tree.



## We shared the gift of kindness by....

- Partnering with 7 amazing local charities; the Aberdeen Tree of Kindness directly supported over **2,000** people.



- Delivering **1,195** Xmas meals in the local area.

THANK  
YOU!

**The staff at the Bon Accord Centre who provided amazing support to help make the tree such a success!**



# Dundee's Tree of Kindness



The Dundee Tree was situated on Union Street, the heart of the city centre. We are thankful to all the local businesses who supported the tree especially Thorntons Solicitors the Star & Garter pub and Walker The Jeweller.

Over the years, the Dundee Tree of Kindness has enabled us to make bonds with the local community, which has strongly influenced our decision to open a new Recovery Village in Dundee, supported by the WM Sword Charitable Trust- for more information go to: [Social Bite, Dundee Village](#)

## You supported the campaign by...



- Donating **£921.28** directly to the Dundee tree which helped to fund Christmas dinners, winter meals, gifts and essentials.

- Volunteering over **89 hours** at the tree to engage with the public, take donations, and share Social Bite's mission.



- Dropping off **1,056** gifts and essential items

## We shared the gift of kindness by....

- Partnering with **6 amazing local charities**; the Dundee Tree of Kindness directly supported **899** people in Dundee and Perth



- Delivering **826** Xmas meals in the local area

THANK  
YOU!

**Walker The Jeweller who were wonderful neighbours to the Dundee tree and volunteers from the team at Insights.**



# London's Tree of Kindness



For the last four years, the tree has been based outside Charing Cross Station, across from the Social Bite coffee shop on the Strand. The tree has been incredibly well supported by visitors and the local community.

Westminster has continuously reported the highest rates of rough sleepers of all London boroughs. In 2023–2024, **2,102** people were seen to be rough sleeping. The average waiting time for a local authority family home is around **11 years**, meaning that many people will spend their lives waiting for a secure, permanent home.

## You supported the campaign by...



- Donating **£2,612.26** directly at the tree to help fund Christmas dinners and winter meals for people who are homeless and vulnerable across London.

- Volunteering over **275 hours** at the tree to engage with the public, take donations, and share Social Bite's mission.

- Donating **13,441** gifts at the Tree and funded **4,989** more.



## We shared the gift of kindness by....

- Partnering with **17 amazing local charities**; the London Tree of Kindness directly supported almost **3,000** people in the city.



- Delivering **1,616** Xmas meals in the local area.
- Providing **18,430** gifts and essentials to local, vulnerable people

THANK  
YOU!

**To the Clermont Group and Network Rail, who kindly hosted the Tree of Kindness in prime space outside Charing Cross Station.**



# Giving the gift of kindness

This year, we distributed over **72,000** gifts and essential items to people in need throughout Scotland and across London. We did this through our own services and through our network of **80** charity partners and grassroots community projects. These organisations were chosen because they align with Social Bite's mission and values and work within the following areas:

- Homelessness and housing support
- Poverty and food insecurity
- Accommodation support
- Addiction
- Employability
- Mental health

**[Click here](#) to explore a map of charities supported through the Festival of Kindness**

We ask charities to provide a 'wish list' of items that people experiencing homelessness and poverty need and value over the Christmas period, with dignity and lived experience being at the heart of the campaign.

Supporters and members of the public are then invited to donate gifts and essential items from the wish list at our Trees of Kindness in the run-up to Christmas.

**Watch: [the 'journey' of a gift donated at a tree](#)**

**The trees form a crucial part of the campaign, one that wouldn't be possible without the support of the following partners:**





# Giving the gift of kindness

Donated items are then sent to a storage facility. In Scotland this year it was Livi Self Storage and in London it was an empty retail unit in Covent Garden. Here, staff and volunteers check, count, and match donations to the local charity wish lists (see image below). Volunteer drivers deliver the items directly to the local charities and grassroots projects for them to distribute to people in need in time for Christmas.

Barbara Haig (Babs), Innovation and Distribution Lead at Social Bite, reflects on the importance of the Festival of Kindness campaign:



*"One of the most touching parts of my job is reading the handwritten Christmas cards, many from children who've taken the time to include drawings. We make sure these cards are given out at night shelters, ensuring everyone has one at their place alongside their food and presents. It can be emotional, but it's such a privilege to be a part of it. There's nothing glamorous about Christmas distribution—it's messy, involves heavy lifting, and long hours—but it's the best feeling in the world when we finally get that last order out the door, just in time for Christmas."*

[Read more](#) about Babs' reflections on the importance of Social Bite's gift distribution during the festive season.

At Social Bite, we ask that donations be new items. When people ask us why, we explain that it's about dignity and equality; alongside this, we do not have the facilities to dry clean or repair donations; the turnaround time is very quick! Sometimes, just hours between gifts being donated to the trees and going on to a charity partner who will place it in the hands of someone in need. But fundamentally, we believe that everyone has the right to receive something new purchased with someone in mind, and it underlines our belief that 'there is no them and us, only us.'

**We would like to thank the companies who provided large quantities of gifts and essentials by donating stock:**



**MACKIE**



Baxterbear®

**Thank you to all corporate and individual volunteers who were vital in helping us count, sort and distribute donated items. We couldn't have done it without you!**

**THANK YOU!**





## Festive backpacks

We distributed 605 backpacks with essential items and 125 gift bags directly to people who attended our free food services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

We wanted to ensure that the items were practical and useful to the people receiving them, so we collaborated with people who regularly attended our Social Bite 'Scran' food service to make a wish list of items.

[See what's inside our backpacks here](#)

THANK  
YOU!

**A special thank you to volunteers from Andron who organised and packed each and every backpack, and to NatWest Group teams who wrapped gifts which were then distributed from our coffee shops on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.**



# Christmas meals

Alongside our weekly food provision, every Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, Social Bite coffee shops in Scotland provide **free Christmas dinner with all the trimmings, a gift, and loving company for people who are homeless and vulnerable.**

It also provides an opportunity for someone to make friends, access support, and begin their journey towards ending homelessness. **In 2024, with your support, we were able to directly serve 701 Christmas dinners in our shops.**



[Read more](#) about 'Scran' (our free food service) and the importance of food at Social Bite from Euan, our Development and Support Worker in Glasgow.





# Christmas meals

## We asked our friend N. to tell us what Christmas at Social Bite means to her:

*"Every day, I came to Social Bite to eat. I came for breakfast, and I would come back in the afternoon. Every single day. I was always made to feel welcome. Social Bite means a lot to me. When you're going through homelessness, you don't have anything. You have nothing. I really like the service they provide and I like the people at Social Bite. They're a very helpful charity. Before, I would be very hungry and didn't have access to food. For me, without Social Bite I don't know where I'd be. They helped me a lot. They are very supportive people. Amazing people.*

*"I also go to the charity at Christmas time. Christmas is amazing at Social Bite. Last year, I went to the Social Bite Christmas Eve food service. There was lots of food. Lots of drinks, tea, coffee. The family who hosted me in Southside a few years ago have kept in touch. They met me at Social Bite on Christmas Eve, brought gifts and we enjoyed a hot Christmas meal together. The following day, Christmas Day, I was home alone and lonely. I called the Social Bite Support Worker in Glasgow, Euan, and asked if I could come to the coffee shop again. He said, "of course!" Unfortunately, I couldn't afford a taxi because rates on Christmas day were double. So, I walked for an hour each way to get to the Social Bite coffee shop, just to be around supportive people.*

*"You know, Christmas is a time where everyone is getting presents. Receiving gifts from Social Bite at Christmas, it feels like getting gifts from my family. My own family are far away, but when I come to Social Bite it feels like home. It's my first home on coming to Glasgow. Social Bite is part of my family. It means so much to me. I love Social Bite, I love Social Bite to pieces."*

**[Read more](#) about 'Scran' (our free food service) and the importance of food at Social Bite from Euan, our Development and Support Worker in Glasgow.**





## UK-wide impact

Social Bite extends its mission by partnering with remarkable charitable organisations throughout the UK, enhancing our outreach and impact while nurturing a culture of collaboration.

Our extensive network and partnerships with grassroots organisations and charities reaches diverse locations in over 190 towns, cities and communities across the UK; the charities are chosen because they align with our mission and support people in their community experiencing homelessness or living in poverty. Thanks to our amazing corporate supporters, this year we donated over 149,000 meals throughout the UK.

This Festival of Kindness, we offered grants to 20 charity partners, enabling them to deliver winter meals to the people they serve, fostering opportunities for individuals to access vital support and strengthen community bonds:

*'The winter grant scheme from the Social Bite has helped hundreds of people these last few years, providing them with either a warm meal, food vouchers, or food hampers over the winter period. We are so grateful to be part of this wonderful initiative.'*

### Saint Vincent De Paul Society



Caring in Bristol



Shekinah, Plymouth

Thanks to funding from Social Bite towards winter food provision, Seaview in Hastings was able to make a significant change to a guests life:

*'Client X is an older gentleman, he has been able to access free nutritional meals at Seaview daily, enjoying hot and cold drinks too whilst accessing the laundry facilities. This gentleman was vulnerable and being exploited, so having the free meals was essential. Seaview made a referral to Adult Social Care which has resulted in a safeguarding plan being put in place. In addition, a deep clean of the flat and unwanted possessions were removed. Client X reports that Seaview has really helped him rebuild his life and given him a sense of purpose. He feels that his life matters to others at Seaview and he tries to ensure other people feel welcome when they come to Seaview.'*



# Charity partner spotlight:

## Upper Room, London

Alongside festive meals in our coffee shops in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, we also partner with a network of 57 grassroots organisations in Scotland and London to provide reheatable meals and Christmas dinners for distribution to their local communities. Over 10,000 people received a free Christmas meal during Festival of Kindness 2024.

The Upper Room (UR), a charity based in West London, has been one of our valued partners since 2021. UR4 Meals Manager, Ashley Robinson, has helped facilitate the charity's receipt of donations and Christmas meal ingredients. Ashley highlighted the vital role that support from Social Bite plays in helping The Upper Room provide meals to the community.



*'It gave many people [sic] a Christmas that otherwise they would not have had. It helped to tackle the loneliness and isolation that so many experience. Christmas can be a time of reflection on loss, trauma, and difficulties for our service users. Having a safe space with a warm meal, friendly volunteers, and additional support makes a huge difference to their physical and emotional wellbeing.'*

THANK  
YOU!

**A big thank you to Ashley and the team at The Upper Room for contributing to this report.**

### **What does your charity do?**

The Upper Room is a West London charity dedicated to supporting homeless and vulnerable people through food aid, employment support, and social reintegration programmes. We believe in empowering individuals to improve their lives and build a better future.

### **Why is The Upper Room so needed at Christmas?**

The Upper Room is especially needed at Christmas time because it can be particularly difficult for people experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, and social isolation. We offer a free warm space, providing relief from often harsh weather conditions. For many, our Christmas dinner is the only chance they have to share in festivities.

### **What items did you receive from the Festival of Kindness campaign in 2024?**

We received a selection of Christmas gifts and meal ingredients for 250 meals.

### **Why is it important that the food donated is good quality?**

Traditionally, people experiencing hardship have limited access to anything beyond high calorie, low nutrient food. Thanks to the good quality food Social Bite provides, we are reversing this trend, ensuring that our service users can dine with dignity.

*'The fact we can provide a full Christmas dinner to so many experiencing hardship or living in poverty means so much, helping to break the cycle of isolation.'*



# UK-wide impact

By supporting the Festival of Kindness, you're helping real people across the UK who are experiencing homelessness and food poverty receive the vital support they need from grassroots charities

A few highlights from projects changing lives in their communities:

In Northern Ireland, a homeless drop-in centre provided Christmas dinners and nutritious home-cooked meals to people in need

In the North East people living in supported accommodation came together to cook a Christmas meal and access crisis food support during the winter months.

In the Midlands, support workers gave emergency food vouchers to people facing destitution, so they could cook warm, nourishing meals over the Christmas period.

In Wales, a youth charity brought together young people living in supported accommodation to share celebratory meals during the winter, including occasions such as Christmas, birthdays, and Eid.

In London, winter night shelters offered respite from rough sleeping, where people could share a meal and access wider support to help break the cycle of homelessness



# Emergency winter accommodation and support

One of the objectives of the Festival of Kindness, alongside distributing meals and gifts, is to provide shelter and support for people in need over the winter months.

Since 2021, we have provided funding to charities in Scotland and London for emergency accommodation, supported accommodation, and support for people experiencing homelessness over the winter period. This winter, Social Bite funded over **850 emergency beds** for people in Scotland and London.

Each of the charities embodies our mission, vision and values and is responding to the homelessness crisis within their own community.

## Our accommodation partners for 2024 were:



### Simon Community Scotland

*"The grant funding from Social Bite will save lives. It will allow us to purchase emergency beds for people rough sleeping in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Alongside this, we can support people with in-depth casework and safety planning, which will help to stop that person from coming to harm.*

*In the long term, it will help us to break the cycle of homelessness by helping individuals build relationships, access healthcare, and develop support plans that will help them find the right support and a safe space."*

**Fiona Williamson, Head of Services**



# THANK YOU!

## How you have supported the campaign

It's been wonderful to see so many individuals, community organisations and companies joining the mission to end homelessness by supporting the Festival of Kindness. Here are a few special stories that we'd like to highlight.

### Community support



Isaac (5) and his parent Craig who raised over £1,100. Craig has shared how they supported the campaign:

*'On the way home from school one day, I was talking to Isaac about homelessness. He didn't realise some people did not have homes and thought it was really sad, so he wanted to do something to help. He finds running hard, so it seemed like a good challenge - running 1000m every day of Advent. He never once gave up or even moaned. Some of his school friends from Year 1 wanted to get involved too, and ran a couple of runs with him. I am so proud of Isaac, and so pleased that his efforts have made a difference.'*



A special thank you to Patsy, our oldest supporter. At 103 years young, Patsy still knits warm mittens and sells them to raise funds to support the mission to end homelessness.



Tilly who raised £226. Her family kindly shared how Tilly joined the mission to end homelessness.

*'I asked Tilly what we could do to celebrate Christmas, and she said she wanted to bake cakes to help homeless people. She decided to bake and sell cakes. She worked hard shopping, baking, decorating and delivering cakes to family and friends over a week.'*

## Corporate partners

Each year, our corporate partners go above and beyond to play a key part in the Festival of Kindness. Their contribution raises not only significant funds, but vital awareness amongst colleagues, customers and suppliers.

Their support includes:

- Corporate financial donations
- Donating gift-in-kind (such as stock or space)
- Colleague fundraising
- Customer-facing campaigns to raise funds and awareness
- Volunteering
- Gift-drives

Over 150 businesses (from nationwide groups to local branches) lent their support during the Festival of Kindness 2024. There are examples throughout this report, but here are a handful more:

- Mitchells & Butlers (with brands including Toby Carvery, Harvester, Browns, Miller & Carter, All Bar One and many more) placed tent cards on tables in their 1,700 restaurants and pubs throughout the UK, inviting guests to add a donation to their bill, to buy someone experiencing homelessness a Christmas dinner.
- itison Invited their members to buy a voucher that would pay- forward a Christmas dinner, or dinner and gift, for someone experiencing homelessness. An amazing 49,931 vouchers were purchased, bringing the total to 900,000 since the partnership began.
- UNIQLO customers were invited to donate £1, £3 or £5 at tills in stores across the UK. The company also donated 10,000 thermal clothing items from their HEATTECH range.
- NatWest Rewards customers were encouraged to donate through the app, with £5 enough to buy someone homeless a Christmas dinner.
- M&G plc and Just Eat gave generous corporate donations to fund Christmas dinners and winter meals for people experiencing homelessness and food poverty across the UK.
- Sky Cares and NSL (part of Marston Holdings) provided free transport and volunteer drivers to help distribute thousands of donated gifts across Scotland and London, to help get them to people in need in time for Christmas.

# THANK YOU!







## How volunteers supported the campaign

The Festival of Kindness is a collaborative campaign where people come together to spread some Christmas magic. Volunteers are at the heart of every aspect of the campaign and we could not do it without them!



# THANK YOU!

## How volunteers supported the campaign

Thank you to all our volunteers who took on a variety of roles including:

Volunteering at our five trees of kindness to engage with the public, take donations, share Social Bite's mission and thank people for their donations.

Dropping gifts to charities and community organisations in Scotland and London.

Sorting gifts donated to the trees and matching them with requests from charity partners.

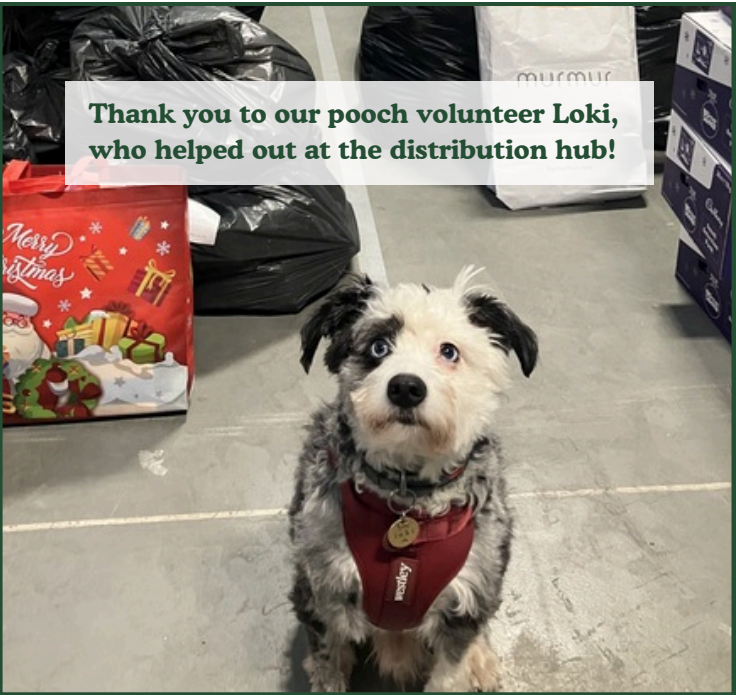
Collecting donations at the trees and driving them to our central distribution hub in Livingston – thank you to NSL and Sky for your support with this.

Organising and packing gifts and essential items into backpacks for distribution at our coffee shops on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Volunteering at our coffee shops on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, welcoming guests and supporting with our free food service.

Lynell, a volunteer at our Edinburgh coffee shop, shared the importance of volunteering over the Christmas period:

*'The best bits were moments spent chatting with people – everyone was so warm and engaging. I now find myself smiling and wanting to take the time to share a few words when I see someone on the street who may be experiencing homelessness. Everyone has stories that led them to where they are today, and I'm more compassionate now. My whole perspective has changed and I'm truly grateful to have learnt the lesson of never judging a book by its cover.'*



**THANK YOU!**

**A big thank you to every company who enabled their staff to access volunteering days using their company's time to support the campaign.**



# THANK YOU

**From all of us at Social Bite, a huge thank you for supporting Festival of Kindness. Our team may be small, but together with you we can create a big difference to end homelessness.**

Already we know that 2025 is a tough year. Across the UK, over 150,000 children are living in temporary accommodation, and every 16 minutes, a UK household finds themselves in a situation of homelessness that they never asked for or expected.\*

We continue to believe in a society where no one should have to be homeless. Your support not only helped people at Christmas and through the winter, it also ensured we can run long-term projects all year round such as:

- Offering free food, no questions asked, in our coffee shops year-round. More than just a meal, each and every hot drink, breakfast, lunch or dinner is an opportunity to access support that could turn someone's life around.
- Building two new Social Bite Villages, providing people with a safe place to call home and designed to help break the cycle of homelessness.
- Employment opportunities through our Jobs First programme, placing people who have experienced homelessness into meaningful work.
- Providing wrap-around support, helping people to work towards a stable, independent future.

**We have been truly humbled by your support and generosity. Thank you.**

\*Source-Shelter









# Locations where Christmas dinners and winter meals were provided, thanks to your support.





# A movement of kindness - one gift at a time

**Barbara (Babs) Haig, Innovation Lead at Social Bite. Shares her experience of distributing gifts and essential items to people in need during the festive period.**

This is not just a physical gift, it makes people feel valued, they feel a sense of dignity, care and hope, reminding them that they are not forgotten and offering a moment of warmth and connection during a time that can feel particularly isolating.

As Innovation Lead at Social Bite, I'm proud to share my experience of the Festival of Kindness campaign. We partner with over 100 charities to distribute hot meals, gifts, and essential items to people experiencing homelessness or living in poverty. Every year, I'm amazed by the generosity we see and the dedication of everyone involved.

During the Festival of Kindness, I take on a distribution lead role, which is very hands-on and practical. My team and I work with charity partners across Scotland and London, asking them to send us wishlists of what they need to make Christmas special. These lists cover festive essentials like food, ingredients, and other items to help make a difference for people they support.

I see first-hand how much pressure charity partners feel; they want to make this time as special as possible. It's incredible to see how everyone at Social Bite pulls together to fulfil these needs—whether it's our communications team spreading the word or our kitchen staff preparing thousands of reheatable meals.



One of the most touching parts of my job is reading the handwritten Christmas cards, many from children who've taken the time to include drawings. We make sure these cards are given out at night shelters, ensuring everyone has one at their place alongside their food and presents. It can be emotional, but it's such a privilege to be a part of it. There's nothing glamorous about Christmas distribution—it's messy, involves heavy lifting, and long hours—but it's the best feeling in the world when we finally get that last order out the door just in time for Christmas.

We also help our charity partners organize meaningful events, like Christmas parties for families in deprived areas or gatherings for people who are isolated in temporary hotel accommodation. It's all about creating a sense of warmth and connection for people who might otherwise be alone.

I remember the first year and the shock I felt at the sheer generosity as donations poured in. Each year, we carry that support with us through the cold warehouses and busy days but we work in service to others which is so important, especially during the hardest times for people who are homeless or in poverty.



# Building relationships - one meal at a time

**Euan Brock, Social Bite's Development and Support Worker in Glasgow, explains why free meals are so important to the people he works with.**

Christmas isn't a happy and joyful time for everyone and in fact can be quite the opposite. Providing Christmas meals and presents at our coffee shops in Scotland can genuinely help someone suffering from homelessness and/or isolation to see a glimmer of light and that there is still a community that welcomes and cares for them. Seeing the joy in someone's face receiving their Christmas meal and present and getting that hug of appreciation means everything. The atmosphere at these events is like no other and it can help build a relationship with someone in this situation to receive support from us into the new year and beyond. This will be my 7th Christmas Eve and Day at Social Bite, and they continue to get better for people accessing the service every year thanks to the support we receive.

People can become homeless for a variety of reasons but sadly homelessness is becoming more common. What with rising living costs, increases in energy prices, and the cost of putting food on the table. Alongside this, many people are living in food poverty and struggling to see the end of the month, even though they're housed and employed.

**It doesn't matter what someone's circumstances are – we don't ask. Everyone is welcome at Social Bite.**



Food and drink are a tool of engagement, and without it people might not know about the wider services and support we offer. Attending a free food service helps to build a trusting relationship with me and the other support workers. Some people can find that hard if they've been through traumatic events, or if they're suspicious of people in an authoritative role.

Conversation and inclusion are so important to prevent isolation and loneliness becoming silent killers. It's a major part of what we do at Social Bite.

We're able to welcome people with a smile, a hot meal and a simple "how are you today?" It can make someone's day if they haven't spoken to anyone or have been ignored on the street all day. A simple "how are you?" can save lives. Anyone funding these meals should know that they're part of the solution on the road to end homelessness. Sometimes, free food helps someone who still needs to wait a couple of days, or even a week for their next payment to come in.

**The hot meal and drink provided will help people through those days to not face the hardest decision of buying food or putting themselves in debt.**

**This can stop a cycle of homelessness before it's even started.**



## Edinburgh, Fife and the Lothians Charity Partners



- Drylaw Rainbow Club Day Centre
- The Sober Scene
- Calder Residents Association
- Settlement Projects
- GAF Media
- Lanthorn Community Organisation
- Missionaries of Charity
- Knightsbridge (The Vennie)
- No 11 Recovery Hub
- LIFT
- AUGB Edinburgh

## Dundee and Perth charity partners



## Glasgow charity partners



- Baltic Street Adventure Playground



## Aberdeen charity partners



- We Are With You
- Companions of the order of Malta

## London charity partners



- Zenoch Community Hub
- Chelsea Methodist Church

## UK wide food charity partners



Imagine a World Without Homelessness



A route out of homelessness