



FESTIVAL OF KINDNESS 2025

Tree of Kindness

Volunteer Role & Briefing

Thank you for signing up to volunteer with Social Bite for our 2025 Festival of Kindness campaign. Volunteers are at the heart of the Festival of Kindness, and we couldn't do it without you! We have created this handy guide for all you need to know for your role as a volunteer at the Trees of Kindness.

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Background to Social Bite

Social Bite is a charity on a mission to end homelessness.

We provide homes, jobs, food and support to empower people to transform their own lives.

Our vision is a society where no one should have to be homeless. We challenge the status quo by pioneering solutions that create lasting change.

Social Bite began life as a small coffee shop in Edinburgh, Scotland, in August 2012. We became involved in the homelessness issue when a young homeless man named Peter came into the coffee shop one day to ask us for a job. **When we offered this young man employment, this was the origin of an unexpected 10 years of charitable work and campaigning on the homelessness issue.** We believe in the power of supportive employment to transform people's lives; our ongoing aim is for 1 in 4 of our team to have come from a background of homelessness.

We started to offer more jobs to people experiencing homelessness as we got more engaged in the issue. After a few months, we introduced a **“Pay it Forward”** system in the coffee shops where customers could buy some food in advance for people experiencing homelessness to get later on. **Good food** has always been at the heart of what we do. This has led to us becoming a major employer of people experiencing homelessness and extreme barriers to employment, as well as one of the largest providers of free freshly made free food in the UK to those in need. We normally provide over 180,000 items of food and hot drinks every year through our network of coffee shops and distributed over 800,000 food packs during the recent pandemic.

Over the years our work has been visited and supported by George Clooney, Leonardo DiCaprio, Sir Chris Hoy, Catherine, Princess of Wales, Malala Yousafzai, Martin Kemp, Emma Willis, and many others.

Since Social Bite began, we have always been about inviting people to join the movement to end homelessness in whatever way they can, whether that is volunteering, paying forward lunch for someone else, donating skills or resources, or taking part in one of our mass-participation events. From 2016 to 2018, we organised mass participation fundraising sleep out events called **Sleep in the Park**. These events have seen over 18,000 people sleep out to call for an end to homelessness. The events have raised over £8 million which has been invested in a range of flagship projects to try and bring an end to homelessness.

With funds raised from Sleep in the Park events, in 2018, we launched The **Social Bite Village**. For this project we took on some vacant council-owned land in Edinburgh and built a small village made up of 11 two-bedroom prefabricated houses and a large community hub. Today this village is home to a vibrant community of people helping each other get back on their feet. We partner with the Cyrenians to provide dedicated on-site support with links to employment, education and community activities.

We also created and launched **Scotland’s Housing First programme**. For this programme we secured 830 mainstream flats across 5 cities to provide permanent homes to Scotland’s rough sleepers and alongside The Scottish Government, we helped to fund wrap-around support to help people sustain their tenancies. More than 1333 people have now been given homes with support, and the response has been adopted by all local authorities in Scotland.

In 2019 our Co-Founder, Josh Littlejohn MBE, established the charity The World's Big Sleep Out which took our work global, by organising an international campaign called The World's Big Sleepout, which took place in 52 cities throughout the world. The events saw 60,000 people sleep out on a cold December night to raise awareness and funds on the issue of homelessness. The World's Big Sleep Out closed both Times Square NYC and Trafalgar Square in London for this, with Will Smith and Dame Helen Mirren telling a bedtime story to participants that slept out. Social Bite hosted the local Edinburgh event in Princes Street Gardens.

Festival of Kindness Campaign

We are a movement of kindness and believe that everyone should have a safe place to call home. Each year we give out hundreds of thousands of items of food and hot drinks to people who are homeless or in poverty through our venues and network of community partners and have helped provide homes and jobs for over 1,000 homeless people through our innovative nationwide housing and employment projects. Starting in 2014 we have opened our shops every Christmas Day and Christmas Eve to host festivities with all the trimmings, for people who might not have anywhere else to go. Since 2020 our annual **Festival of Kindness** collects gifts and donations throughout the festive period to support for people who are vulnerable or experiencing homelessness.

The Festival of Kindness campaign is Social Bite's flagship Christmas campaign, aiming to fundraise and support people who are homeless and vulnerable across the UK through the winter with the provision of over thousands of Christmas meals, winter food packs, gifts, and essential items.

Last year was our fifth year running this campaign, where we provided over 450,000 meals, gifts and essential items:

1. Distributed 9,072 Christmas meals (across Scotland and London).
2. Funded 330,000+ meals across the UK.
3. Distributed over 110k Christmas gifts and essential items across the UK.
4. Raised over £1.8m through donations, partnerships and pledges across the campaign.

Link to Campaign Page: [Festival of Kindness](#)

Gift Wishlist & Donated Gifts

We publish an annual Wishlist (at the Tree sites and available online) of items that are wanted and needed by people experiencing homelessness, or those who are vulnerable at this time of year. We then distribute the donated gifts and essential items, along with thousands of Christmas Meals, to people experiencing homelessness, families, and children living in poverty across the UK, in time for Christmas. Supporters will also be able to make donations at the Tree installations via Tap to Donate machines, cash buckets, or online via QR codes if they prefer.

Donated Gifts

- Gifts Must be unwrapped (this is especially important for security purposes).
- Gifts must be new (not second hand).
- No Alcohol, vapes, tobacco, medicines, or controlled substances.
- No food items (except non-perishable items such as selection boxes / pot noodles)

Gift Wishlist

These are items we ask members of the public to donate to us. Please encourage the donation of these types of gifts:

- Warm gloves & hats (*children & adults*)
- Warm Clothes (*children & adults*)
- Winter Jackets & Raincoats (*children & adults*)
- Underwear (*children & adults*)
- Walking Boots / Trainers
- Soaps & Toiletries
- Beauty & Grooming Products
- Blankets
- Children's Toys
- Family Board Games
- Arts & Crafts Sets
- Books
- Hot Water Bottles
- Thermos Flasks
- Sleeping Bags

- Torches
- Earphones
- Power Banks
- Mobile Phone Top-up & Sim Cards

How to Prepare

- Familiarise yourself with Social Bite and the Festival of Kindness by reading through this guide. For some members of the public this might be the first time they have interacted with Social Bite, or they may not know much about the work we do. This is a great opportunity to let them know a little bit about Social Bite, tell others about why you support us, and why our cause is close to your own heart as well. Don't worry, we don't expect that you know all the different details of the various projects and campaigns that Social Bite produces. If you are unsure, you can always direct people to the Social Bite website where they can find out more.
- Make sure that you are signed up on the rota (for larger teams of volunteers, check with the Volunteer Coordinator that you have been signed up by them).
- Ensure you know the location, date and timings of your shift(s).
- Check the weather forecast for the location where you're volunteering, as you will be outside for the duration of your shift and is best to prepare.
- Let our Volunteer Coordinator know of any accessibility requirements you may have.
- Read this guide.



Your Role

- Engaging with the public at the tree site – talking about Festival of Kindness, the campaign's goals, how people can be involved, talk about Social Bite's background and work – in a warm, welcoming manner.
- Accepting gifts and essential items that are donated by members of the public at the tree.
- Supporting any member of the public looking to donate to the campaign via a contactless machine or QR code. (Volunteers will be shown how to use the contactless machine when you arrive on site so you can confidently demonstrate this to a member of the public).
- Directing members of the public the printed on-site Gift Wishlist and explaining how they can donate a gift or essential item for someone who is vulnerable or experiencing homelessness.
- Thanking all supporters for their donations and support of Social Bite.
- Supporting with the distribution of flyers at the Tree and engaging with members of the public to direct them to the Tree of Kindness

What to Wear

The tree sites are all outdoors, in winter, and as such can get very cold and damp while working. We encourage you to wrap up warm, wear layers and comfy, warm footwear. You may wish to bring gloves, scarf, hats and/or waterproof clothing. Hand and foot warmer as well as hot water bottles to wear in your clothes are all welcome. You will be given a Social Bite hi-vis to wear over your coat whilst working.

What to Bring

- A full water bottle.
- A flask/cup for hot drinks if you have one.
- Any snacks you may need for your shift.
- A positive attitude - remember that you will be the face of the campaign for many supporters (you can also share on your own social media that you are volunteering to support Social Bite and the Festival of Kindness!)

LONDON & BIRMINGHAM ONLY

It is a mandatory requirement on the sites in London and Birmingham to bring a valid form of photo ID, as these Trees are located at Network Rail Train Stations and there are some additional security measures in place.

Guidelines

Do...

- ✓ As a volunteer you are an ambassador for Social Bite's Festival of Kindness and should treat everyone with respect and courtesy.
- ✓ Follow the directions of the members of staff at the Trees. If you have any issues during your shift, please let them know as soon as you can.
- ✓ Ask people to choose a gift from our Wishlist (this is displayed on site signage).
- ✓ Encourage people to donate their gift in a gift bag (bags should not be sealed and contents should be visible so we can easily distribute this to the correct person as well as for security reasons).
- ✓ Encourage people to include a hand-written message of kindness for the recipient if they would like to.
- ✓ Please add a note to the gift detailing the type of gift and the intended recipient (adult/child/male/female/any).

Do Not...

- ✗ We would kindly ask that you do not bring anyone under the age of 18 to volunteer with you during your shift. (Although you are more than welcome to bring them to the Tree another day when you aren't volunteering!).
- ✗ Accept wrapped gifts: for safety and security reasons, all gifts must be unwrapped and clearly visible.
- ✗ Accept second-hand donations.
- ✗ Accept alcohol or other substances such as tobacco, vapes, etc.
- ✗ Accept food items (with the exception of selection boxes).
- ✗ Use alcohol or non-prescription substances before or while volunteering with Social Bite.

Tree Locations & Opening Hours

LONDON

Location:

- Charing Cross Station, WC2N 5HX
- W3W: ///amber.grid.wink

Operational Dates:

- Friday 14 November – Monday 22 December 2025 (inclusive).

Opening Times:

- Monday – Wednesday: 12:00-16:00
- Thursday – Sunday: 12:00-20:00

BIRMINGHAM

Location:

- (Outside All Bar One – Unit 28b), 1000 Trades Square, New Street Station, Smallbrook Queensway, Birmingham, B2 4NU.
- W3W: ///value.judge.talked

Operational Dates:

- Thursday 20 November – Monday 22 December 2025 (inclusive).

Opening Times:

- Monday – Wednesday: 12:00-16:00
- Thursday – Sunday: 12:00-20:00

ABERDEEN

Location:

- Bon Accord Entrance, 1 School Hill, AB10 1BA.
- W3W: ///shrimp.garage.arena

Operational Dates:

- Friday 21 November – Sunday 21 December 2025 (inclusive).

Opening Times:

- Monday – Wednesday: 10:00-14:00
- Thursday – Sunday: 10:00-18:00

EDINBURGH

Location:

- St Andrew Square, Edinburgh, EH2 2AD.
- W3W: ///paying.couple.souk

Operational Dates:

- Saturday 22 November – Monday 22 December 2025 (inclusive).

Opening Times:

- Monday – Wednesday: 12:00-16:00
- Thursday – Sunday: 11:00-19:00

GLASGOW

Location:

- Vinicombe Street, G12 8SJ
- W3W: ///first.gained.combining

Operational Dates:

- Sunday 23 November – Monday 22 December 2025 (inclusive).

Opening Times:

- Monday – Wednesday: 12:00-16:00
- Thursday – Sunday: 11:00-19:00

People Looking for Support

When volunteering at our Tree of Kindness, it is possible that members of the public who may be homeless, vulnerable, or looking for support may present at the Tree.

All of our Trees will have signposting documents available, including information on how to access free food locally, as well as additional support information for accommodation, emergency support, and other services in each city. The member of staff on site will show you where this document is when you arrive for your shift.

We know this may be a difficult situation, but we ask that you treat each person who presents at the Tree with respect, dignity, and kindness whether they are looking to support the campaign or looking for support. If unsure, ask the member of staff on shift for support passing on the signposting information to the member of the public.

Accessibility

As our tree sites differ between cities, we have location-specific accessibility information available - please get in touch with the Volunteer Coordinator if you have any accessibility queries or needs (contact details listed below). We encourage you to disclose any information that will allow us to support you appropriately and make any necessary adjustments. Any personal information that you disclose will be treated confidentially.

Key Contacts

- Charlotte Laursen - Volunteer Coordinator
 - e. volunteering@social-bite.co.uk
 - m. +44 (0) 7944 913318

If you are not signed up already and would like to volunteer, please visit our website where you can sign up for shifts. If you wish to volunteer together as a workplace team or a community group, or have any other queries, please reach out to our team at volunteering@social-bite.co.uk.



Thank you for being part of the Festival of Kindness 2025!