

Year 12 Sleep out: A Night in the Cold for a Warmer Cause **by Victoria Collis and Dasha Pechena**

Tomorrow night, *writes Victoria Collis*, a brave group of 20 Year 12 students will willingly abandon their warm beds, fluffy pillows, and central heating to spend a night out in the cold. Why? Not because they've suddenly developed a passion for outdoor camping in February, but to stand in solidarity with the thousands of homeless people across the UK.

Their challenge is simple but powerful: endure the harsh conditions of a winter night up north to raise money for St. Pio's Soup Kitchen, a charity providing vital support for those without homes. Last year, 15 Year 12 students took on the same challenge and raised an impressive £1,200. With five more students braving the elements this time, hopes are high that they'll surpass that total—though the real victory will be the awareness they spread along the way.

Dasha explains a little about her motivation and expectations: *"the aim is to experience, even briefly, what it might feel like to be homeless—to raise awareness and funds for those affected by homelessness and other social issues by spending a night outdoors in conditions similar to those faced by people without shelter.*

The weather forecast predicts a little rain on Saturday and temperatures dropping to around 3–4°C overnight. Our expectation? That we'll all turn into icicles. It might be slightly uncomfortable, but we are only putting ourselves in this position for one night. If we've all signed up, we're brave enough to see it through.

The Sleepout may stir emotions. Witnessing the struggles of others, hearing personal stories, and coming to terms with the reality of homelessness can evoke sadness, frustration, or even inspiration to take action.

By the end of the night, we may feel both exhausted and fulfilled, knowing that we've helped raise awareness and funds for a vital cause. But no matter how cold or uncomfortable it gets, the experience will be worth it in every way. This is an opportunity to step outside our comfort zones, build resilience, and develop character. More importantly, it offers a deeper sense of empathy for those experiencing homelessness, helping us see the issue in a more personal and urgent way."

A Cold, Wet, and Unforgiving Night

As for the conditions they'll face, the forecast predicts temperatures won't drop below 3°C—not exactly comforting when you're lying on the ground with nothing but a sleeping bag and a few thin hoodies for warmth. And just to keep things interesting, rain is set to make an appearance from 18:00 to 22:00. Some might call this unfortunate; others might see it as an immersive experience. Either way, compling in the rain will be both a test of faith and waterproof clothing.

It's easy to romanticise the idea of a one-night sleepout: a bit of discomfort, a lot of camaraderie, and the knowledge that a warm home awaits in the morning. But that's

exactly the point. For thousands of people across the country, this isn't just one night—it's every night. A wet sleeping bag doesn't lead to a hot shower in the morning. A cold night doesn't end with a return to warmth. That's where charities like St. George's Crypt step in, (another charity we will support), providing food, shelter, and comfort for those who need it most.

A Lesson in Kindness

One of the students taking part summed it up with a simple but profound lesson: "*It takes two to play chess.*" While this may sound like an oddly placed piece of wisdom (or an excuse for losing too many matches in the common room), the meaning is powerful. No one can escape hardship alone—it takes kindness, help, and community.

So, as these students zip up their sleeping bags, huddle under makeshift shelters, and wonder if they can still feel their toes, they'll be experiencing just a fraction of what thousands endure every night in the UK. And in doing so, they'll hopefully be inspired to keep making a difference.

If you'd like to support them, visit their fundraising page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/dan-davison-1?newPage=true>

Every pound donated is another step toward helping someone get back on their feet. And if nothing else, spare a thought for the students tomorrow night as they battle the elements—hopefully, next year's forecast will be a little kinder.

"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done." Proverbs 19:17