



# The Big Sleep Out 2011

## Resources Kit

September 2011

Off The Fence Trust, Brighton  
Registered Charity number 110777

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# What is The Big Sleep Out?

## The Big Sleep Out – This is reality!

Everyday many thousands of people have to survive life on the streets of cities and towns throughout the world.

Even though homelessness charities like **Off The Fence** exist, many of the everyday things that we take for granted - food, homes, warm and clean clothes - are hard to come by and, especially when temperatures drop below freezing, the lack of such basic necessities can be life threatening. Because of such conditions crime, disease and feelings of hopelessness and isolation are daily realities for many.

This is reality for many hundreds in our own city of Brighton & Hove

Imagine if it was your reality.

## The Big Sleep Out – The experience

**The Big Sleep Out** is a practical experience designed to help young people to get a taste of what life might be like if they were homeless or sleeping rough, to reflect on God's concern for the marginalised and to start thinking how they can respond. Together, with faith, we can repair the hurt of homelessness and rebuild lives.

**The Big Sleep Out** has been designed to run over one night. After building their own rough shelters, the young people participate in a series of challenges that simulate different aspects of being homeless. These fun challenges are guaranteed to test their endurance, creativity and ingenuity.

This **The Big Sleep Out** resources kit contains everything you need to run **The Big Sleep Out**, including real life stories, information about the homelessness charity **Off The Fence**, and practical ways to respond to the needs of the many homeless and rough sleepers to be found on our streets.

## Fundraising through The Big Sleep Out

**Off The Fence** is a Brighton-based Christian charity that works with the homeless and rough sleepers - there is a profile of the work that we do through our **Antifreeze Project** included in this resources kit (see the section entitled 'Homelessness facts'). Participants can collect sponsorship for the time they spend participating in **The Big Sleep Out**. All money raised for **Off The Fence** through **The Big Sleep Out** will be used to support the work of the charity amongst the vulnerable and marginalised of Brighton & Hove. Further information about fundraising and a sponsorship form are included in the booklet

# Setting up The Big Sleep Out

**In this section you will find:**

- What to look for in choosing a location
- Gathering materials
- Arranging for the disposal of materials
- Health & Safety issues
- Fundraising

## What to look for in choosing a location

For the overnight event you will need to choose a location that has:

- Access to one tap
- At least one toilet
- An area for private washing (using bucket baths)
- Access to a clear, open area for safe outdoor cooking (or access to a kitchen and fridge to store food)
- Space to construct a rough shelter (the shelters tend to be about 2m x 2m, and should be very close together for maximum effect)
- An open grassy area for some of the challenges

Ideally an outdoor area is recommended as it enhances the reality of the experience for the participants. When selecting a location, consider safety issues for the young people involved.

If required, seek permission for use of the site from the church, school, club, local authority, festival or campsite. You can use the sample letter provided to do this. Apply at least one month before you intend to run the event.

Public Liability Insurance may be required if you are staging the **The Big Sleep Out** as a public event. Confirm with your group, church or school that you have the required Public Liability Insurance if you intend to run **The Big Sleep Out** as an event that is open to the public.

## Gathering materials

You will need to collect a lot of different resources and materials to run **The Big Sleep Out**. Because **The Big Sleep Out** is constructed around a series of challenges (beginning with the challenge of building a rough shelter), a full checklist of materials required is provided with the description of the challenges

The major items required to build the shelters are things like:

- Large cardboard boxes - like those used to transport refrigerators, televisions etc
- Plastic sheeting - often used in the packaging of fridges & freezers, cookers
- Tarpaulins and/or groundsheets
- Old sheets/old curtains

Most of these items can be collected for free from businesses, as they are used for packaging. Visit electrical retailers or warehouses to ask for discarded cardboard boxes and plastic sheeting. Ask for donations from your church or group.

Transporting and storing **The Big Sleep Out** building materials will need to be planned ahead of time. You may need to hire or borrow a van or trailer.

### **Arranging the disposal of materials**

You will need to ensure that the materials are disposed of properly once the shelters are dismantled. If you intend to throw them away, you may need to organise for the materials to be taken to a refuse site (remember cardboard can be recycled!) If you intend to keep the materials for future or other use, they will need to be stored safely.

### **Health & Safety issues**

Each challenge has a risk assessment/safety section, outlining any risks associated with the event and providing a checklist of actions you can take to ensure health and safety of the participants.

### **Fundraising**

Information on sponsorship and fundraising is included. In addition to the sponsorship forms **Off The Fence** can provide you with collecting boxes. If you can please supply us with details of your event both before and after it has taken place as we like to feature details of groups/schools who have participated in the **Off The Fence Big Sleep Out** in our regular newsletters and website. We would also like to send your group/school a 'certificate of participation' see our website [www.offthefence.org.uk](http://www.offthefence.org.uk) for up to date contact details.

# Running The Big Sleep Out

## In this section you will find:

- Preparation and briefing
- Rules
- A list of Challenges
- Homelessness facts
- Homelessness stories
- Bible reflections
- Debriefing

## Preparation and briefing

This resource kit aims to be a comprehensive guide to running **The Big Sleep Out**, with all options included. Because of this, it is important that you read the resource kit carefully from beginning to end and think about how you intend to stage it for your group.

You will need to send a letter to parents/carers (sample letter included), choose which challenges to run, and which Bible studies and homelessness stories to use. Once you have made your choices, plan your event, schedule briefings, choose the challenges (and the resources needed to organise them), decide on Bible studies and homelessness stories in the order you want them.

**Sample Programme for Friday evening/Saturday morning** (this can be varied to suit your own group's abilities and interests)

### Friday evening/night

1. Hold a short briefing session for the group, using notes from the resources kit and also relevant photos and illustrations (available from the **Off The Fence** website [www.offthefence.org.uk](http://www.offthefence.org.uk)) to guide your group's reflections.
2. Participants build their rough shelters, and these are subjected to the "weather test".
3. Choose three or more challenges for your group to participate in.
4. The final challenge before the meal
5. Cooking demonstrated and food and drink provided
6. Time for reflection/journal writing
7. Sleep Out

### Saturday morning

8. Bible study and homelessness story
9. Food and drink challenge (breakfast)
10. Debrief and use one of the Bible reflections

## Initial Preparation

Some initial preparation of the group is desirable, particularly if they have not previously considered homelessness issues. A lot of the material from **The Big Sleep Out** resources kit and the **Off The Fence** website [www.offthefence.org.uk](http://www.offthefence.org.uk) - such as the homelessness facts, photos and homelessness stories - are useful in helping to prepare a group.

Once you know who the young people are who will be taking part in **The Big Sleepover**, it is important to have a final briefing session immediately prior to building the shelters.

## Questions for the initial briefing session (to the participants)

- What do you know about homelessness?
- What are you hoping to experience or learn by participating in **The Big Sleep Out**?
- Is there anything you are nervous or apprehensive about?
- Have you ever seen a homeless person? Where? How did you respond?
- What do you think God thinks and feels about homelessness?

Divide the group into "families" of between three to five people. Each family will be responsible for building their own shelter, cooking their own meal(s) (if you have decided not to cook for the group) and competing in the challenges. Take into account age and gender issues when dividing the group into families.

Be aware that **The Big Sleep Out** is a simplification and each challenge only partially simulates an aspect of reality for people who are homeless or sleeping rough. You may need to address misunderstandings that could arise from any individual challenge but also from the event as a whole.

## Safety Briefing

Each challenge has its own risk assessment/safety briefing section. However it is vital to emphasise a few safety aspects that must be considered across the whole **Big Sleep Out** event.

- Because the shelters are made from discarded materials participants should remove trip hazards if they see them. They should also wear footwear at all times.
- If **The Big Sleep Out** takes place outside participants, particularly in the summer months (the event will mainly take place over night - but the sun can be strong during the early evening), therefore stay 'sun safe'. Sun block should be applied every 2 - 4 hours and hats and shirts should be worn at all times.
- Because water may only be collected from one tap, there is a risk that participants will not drink as much water as they should. To avoid getting dehydrated, participants should make sure that they drink regularly.
- Because participants will be washing less thoroughly than they normally would, it is important that they wash their hands carefully before handling or consuming food and after visiting the toilet.

- If participants are doing their own cooking or heating of food and drink, ensure that you have a fire extinguisher on hand and that food is thoroughly cooked before consumption.
- Ensure that you have a well-stocked first aid kit on hand, and access to someone with current first aid training.

You will need to brief participants about the rules they will need to follow during **The Big Sleep Out**.

# Rules for The Big Sleep Out

You can modify these rules to best suit your group and the way you will run the **The Big Sleep Out**. Generally, though, you should aim to make the rules fairly challenging and strictly enforced. Most of the learning and challenge of participating in **The Big Sleep Out** comes from the participants being outside of their comfort zones.

## Rule 1

During the **Off The Fence Big Sleepover**, you can only sleep in the shelter you've built, or snooze outside.

## Rule 2

Your meals (the Friday evening dinner and the Saturday morning breakfast) will consist of rice and dhal (this replicates the food that many will eat who are homeless in the developing world). During **The Big Sleep Out** you can't eat any other food, unless you win it as a prize in challenges.

## Rule 3

During **The Big Sleepover**, all the water you need for drinking, cooking and washing can only be collected from one tap. You'll be allowed to wash in a private space, but you can't use running water from the taps! - its bucket baths for participants!

## Rule 4

If anyone visits your shelter, you must offer hospitality of food and drink. (The guest may refuse to eat, but you can't tell them that, and a drink must be provided for them anyway.)

## Rule 5

You must stay close to your shelter in order to be on time to participate in each challenge. You may not leave the location where **The Big Sleep Out** is taking place unless required to participate in a challenge, or in an emergency.

## Rule 6

You'll be limited in the items you can bring into your shelter.

Here's what you can bring (if it's not on this list, you can't bring it):

- One set of clothes:
- One set of cutlery and crockery:
  - Cup
  - Bowl OR plate
  - Fork and spoon
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Bar of soap

- Towel
- Sleeping bag
- Sun block and sunglasses (if weather is expected to be sunny)
- Feminine hygiene as required
- Prescription medication as required
- Bible
- Notepad and Pen

Here's just a sample of what you can't bring:

- No other toiletries, makeup, hairbrushes, combs or deodorant
- No pillows, pyjamas or teddy-bears
- No mobile phones, MP3 players, Discmans, laptops, TV's
- No books, newspapers, or magazines

## So what are the Challenges?

**The Big Sleep Out** is structured around a series of challenges that simulate some real aspects of homelessness. Choose a selection of challenges from those listed below to suit your group, the timeframe you are working in and the space you are using. Each challenge should have a prize, to be won by a single family group. Since **The Big Sleep Out** relies on removing aspects of "normal life", the prizes should be kept simple - food and drink or practical comfort items that are otherwise not allowed.

Examples of food and drink prizes:

- Fruit juice
- Soft drink
- Fruit
- Chocolate

Examples of comfort and utility prizes:

- Pillows
- Bed rolls or sleeping mats
- A battery powered radio
- A torch
- Additional, better quality, material for house construction

To enhance the realism, many of the challenges also have a section describing the reality being simulated. You can use this information as part of the briefing for participants.

# Challenges

## The Shelter Building Challenge

This is reality

A billion people around the world are homeless or sleeping rough. Many will only have the most basic of materials that they can find on rubbish dumps - cardboard boxes, discarded plastic sheeting, to build a rough shelter to give them a small amount of protection from the rain or sun. A typical shelter will be a single room around 2m x 2m, in which a whole family will live.

Teams of volunteers from the Brighton-based homelessness charity **Off The Fence** make regular visits to locations where rough sleepers are living. Often they are the only people that the homeless will speak to all day.

The first and most fundamental challenge of the **The Big Sleep Out**: building the rough shelter.

### Materials required

- Large cardboard boxes
- Plastic sheeting
- Ground sheets/old curtains/old sheets
- String or twine
- Pegs
- Parcel (or gaffer) tape
- 2 buckets per family (for water collection)

### Process

1. Mark out (or indicate) the area for the rough shelter 'township'. This should be large enough for the required number of shelters (which should be roughly 2m x 2m single room shelters) to fit in fairly close together.
2. Family groups must construct their houses from the available materials.

Supporting the houses against trees, the walls of a building, or even sharing common walls between several houses will improve the stability of the shelter and cut down on the amount of material required to build them. You can even require families to construct their shelters joining on to each other.

Shelters should be made completely from cardboard, plastic sheeting/ground sheets/old sheets - using string or twine, pegs and tape.

- The "Weather Test" should be used on each shelter. During the weather test, participants must sit in their completed shelters, while:

- Water from a hose or bucket is sprayed on the shelter (if the location permits) to see if it is waterproof
- The shelter is rocked gently to see if it is strong enough to withstand wind gusts.

### Risk Assessment (safety issues)

- Participants should wear footwear at all times.
- Shelters should be checked for stability (especially the roofing). Anything that could fall or collapse must be secured carefully.
- Participants should wear gloves whenever they are transporting or handling timber.
- Clean the site thoroughly after construction is completed to remove any discarded materials that may constitute a hazard.

### Food and Drink Challenge

This is reality

**Big Sleep Out** participants must prepare their own food in order to eat. Around the world 800 million people live on the edge of starvation, not knowing if they will find enough food for their own and their families' survival. Many more people live on very basic food getting just enough to get by. Many of the homeless in the UK are dependent on food supplied through homelessness charities.

The Brighton-based homelessness charity **Off The Fence** has teams of volunteers visiting the homeless on the streets of the Brighton throughout the year. This increases to six evenings a week during the winter months to provide emergency food and to those who are sleeping rough in order to provide a vital lifeline.

### Materials required

- 1 cup of red or yellow lentils per family
- 1 cup of rice per family
- 1 tablespoon of spice mix per family (premix this in bulk:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup salt,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cayenne pepper,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup turmeric powder,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cumin powder,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup coriander powder)
- 1 teaspoon of chopped garlic per family
- 1 washing up bowl per family
- Small amount of washing up liquid
- 1 camping stove or gas cooker per family
- 2 saucepans per family

## Process

- Demonstrate how to make dhal.
- Soak lentils in water for 2-3 hours.
- Drain lentils
- Bring 2 cups of water to the boil
- Add lentils, garlic and spice mix.
- Mix thoroughly.
- Simmer for 30 - 60 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Serve on rice.

Supply tea or water to drink

## Risk Assessment (safety issues)

- Ensure that **The Big Sleep Out** participants wash their hands before handling or eating food.
- Ensure that open flames are kept away from paper, cloth, dry grass (if outside) or other flammable material.
- **Big Sleep Out** participants are not to run near cooking areas
- Ensure that cooking is done in an open area and that a fire extinguisher is available
- Ensure that food is thoroughly cooked before consumption
- Ensure that utensils are washed after each meal.

## Alternatives

Provide pre-cooked dhal, so that families only have to heat the dhal and not prepare it from scratch.

OR

Cook the entire meal in bulk and provide it to all **The Big Sleepover** participants so they don't have to do any cooking

## Water Collection Challenge

This is reality

**Big Sleepover** families compete to be the first to collect sufficient water for their family's daily needs. If you are sleeping rough you won't have water piped directly to you - you will need to collect water from communal taps or pumps which may be shared by dozens of other people.

## Materials required

- 2 or more large plastic dustbins or drums
- Two buckets per team
- Whistle

## Process

1. Divide **The Big Sleep Out** participants into two, three or four equal teams. (if you have a large group, several families will be on the same team).
2. Position the large drum or bin for each team an equal distance from a single tap.
3. On the whistle, one member of each team races to the tap to collect water. The first person at the tap may collect water, while the others must queue and wait their turn.
4. Water must be carried in the bucket on their heads at all times. Any person that fails to do so is penalised by having to return to their team and start again.
5. During play, another team member may use their team's second bucket to steal water from the drum of an opposing team.
6. The first team to fill their drum wins.

## Risk Assessment (safety issues)

This challenge should be played in an open area, free of obstacles, preferably on grass or an area that won't become muddy and slippery.

- Participants should wear footwear at all times in this challenge.
- Water collected in bins should be used to water garden areas (not drunk)

## Alternative

Stage this as a simple relay race where participants must carry a bucket of water on their heads.

## Scrap Soccer Challenge

A soccer round robin played with a soccer ball made from scrap.

## Materials required

- Plastic bags
- Newspaper
- String
- Sticky tape

## Process

Families must make a soccer ball each from scrap materials. Families participate in a 'round-robin' soccer competition to determine the winner of the challenge.

## Risk Assessment (safety issues)

Participants should wear footwear during this challenge.

## Demolition Challenge

**Big Sleep Out** participants must rebuild after some or all of the shelters have been demolished.

This is reality

Many shelters that the homeless build are in public open spaces - parks, woodlands or on derelict land. This means that they may be removed or demolished by others - and those using them to shelter in will be made homeless.

The Brighton-based homelessness charity **Off The Fence** works with many of the homeless to find them temporary accommodation and permanent accommodation or to make contact with their families again.

Process

1. Give residents five minutes notice that they must clear their shelters of their contents, as their shelter has been scheduled for clearance.
2. Choose one or more of the shelters for demolition. This creates a dilemma for the community. Will they offer a place for the homeless to live, assist in rebuilding, or just leave it to the family themselves to deal with?

## Homelessness Quiz Challenge

A test of memory and observation.

Materials required

- Posters displaying "homelessness facts" listed on pages 17 and 18
- A set of questions
- Pencil and paper for each family

Process

1. Make a set of posters out of some or all of the "homelessness facts" listed on next pages. If you are going to use the homelessness quiz challenge, then you should display these posters (without otherwise drawing attention to them) throughout the duration of **The Big Sleep Out**.
2. Choose questions based on the posters and also on the challenges, briefing material and "homelessness stories" you have used with your group. The family that answers the highest number of questions wins the challenge.

## Homelessness facts

Include some of these facts on posters that you display around the rough shelter township. They can then be used as the basis of questions in the "The Big Sleep Out Challenge" - see above.

### Globally

- Most of the world's homeless and rough sleepers - 550 million people - live in slums in Asia, with nearly 200 million more living in Africa (this total excludes those who may be made homeless through war or famine)
- Over 80,000 people make their homes on "Smoky Mountain", Manila's largest rubbish dump. Smoky Mountain gets its name from the constant smoke and fumes from burning refuse. Most people work here as scavengers and scrap sorters.
- Over 99% of the city-dwellers in Ethiopia live in rough shelters (the highest concentration in the world).
- In Zimbabwe in 2005, more than 750,000 people living in the slums of Harare and Bulawayo were made homeless when the government demolished their houses and cleared the slums in what it called "Operation Drive Out Trash".
- In 2002, in one township in Nairobi, Kenya (the Mathare 4A slum) there were just two public toilets for 28,000 people.
- The United Nations has designated the first Monday in October, 'World Habitat Day'. This is a time for the world to focus on the state of human settlements and the basic right to adequate shelter for all people.

### Nationally

- In one of the richest countries in the world - the UK, over one in five of the population of England live in poverty including about one child in three. Figures are worse in Wales.
- To most people, 'the homeless' are the people seen in town centres who sleep rough. Rough sleepers suffer from the most extreme form of homelessness where people are literally roofless and live on the streets.
- Anyone is at risk of homelessness - it takes only a bit of bad luck, such as a combination of family breakdown and unemployment for an individual or family to find themselves without a home.
- The latest government figures show that in England in the year 2006-2007, a 159,330 families applied to their local council for re-housing.
- In recent years the numbers sleeping rough have begun to rise again in central London as migrant workers from Eastern Europe have little alternative if they lose their jobs, as they are not entitled to benefits unless they have contributed National Insurance payments for 12 months continuously.

- In the UK 'Homelessness Sunday' takes place on the last Sunday in January each year. It is organised by the *Homelessness Sunday Partnership*. Resources are available from [www.housingjustice.org.uk](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk).

## Brighton & Hove

- The three main causes of homelessness in the city of Brighton & Hove are loss of private rented accommodation, eviction by parents, eviction by other relatives or friends (*source: Brighton & Hove Homelessness Strategy 2008 -13*)
- Many young people travel to Brighton to escape abusive family situations only to find that the reality of sleeping rough on the streets leaves them open to danger.
- A survey carried out in 2010 amongst those who were sleeping rough in Brighton showed that 46% suffered from substance misuse issues and 55% had alcohol issues (*source: Brighton & Hove Homelessness Strategy 2008 -13*).
- Established in 1997 the Brighton-based Christian charity **Off The Fence** provides through its homelessness programme, **Project Antifreeze** emergency help (food, clothing and sleeping bags) to the homeless and rough sleepers on the streets of the city six nights a week. The Charity is totally dependent on voluntary gifts and donations to continue its work.

Off The Fence **also provides** work in these key areas:

- **Homelessness outreach service**, through our emergency teams of volunteers, helping rough sleepers on the streets of Brighton & Hove;
- the provision of freely available advice and practical help at our **Drop in Advice Centre**;
- ongoing help for the homeless once emergency needs have been met, in accessing both temporary and permanent accommodation.
- Our women's programme called **Project Gateway**, which provides support for women and girls facing times of crisis in their lives,
- **Women's advice and referral centre** incorporating skills training
- **Schools Programmes** working with secondary school students throughout the City.

## Homelessness stories

### Globally

#### Life on the Streets (Anonymous)

As told to Robyn Hemmens, Youth For Christ KwaZulu, Natal

"My home for the night has been the toilets at Durban station. The noise outside disturbs my sleep and I wake up. My back aches from the hard floor. As I step out of the cubicle door I accidentally stand on my friend who swears at me in her sleepy voice. My back is sore so I double over for a while to ease the pain. I drink some water and go outside to join two others who have already woken and are sitting around a freshly made fire. No one talks much.

Passers-by cross to the other side of the road to avoid us. Their eyes and comments show they find me disgusting. I drop my head to avoid their stares, which makes me feel worthless.

We have no food, so a friend and I go in search for some breakfast. We head to the beachfront, but we arrive just after the bins have been emptied. Some rice and bits of old bread have been left behind; nothing worth getting excited about. My friend is smaller than I am, so I lift her up and hold her as she reaches to the bottom of the rubbish bin to scrape the last bits out. It smells terrible and I have to hold my nose; otherwise I will throw up. We eat some, but decide to try a hotel down the road.

We find meat, fruit, bread and even chocolate cake in some unemptied bins, and eat like queens. Once full we stash the rest of the food in a plastic bag to be eaten later in the day, and shared with the rest of the group.

We get to the beach, the sand feels warm against my sore feet. We wash ourselves in the sea behind the far jetty on North Beach. Our stomachs are full, and the warm sun feels good against our skin. Feeling sleepy, we lean up against the wall and doze.

It must be nearing lunchtime, because the beachfront is busy; lots of people in their fast cars and smart clothing come to the restaurants to eat. We hang around and watch the young boys beg for money. I find it funny when the people say "no" to the boys, but when money is given I try to work out how much there will be to share.

When we count the money, we find there is enough to visit KFC. We walk the long way around, as there is fighting happening between two gangs. We have been told that one boy got stabbed to death last night, and that his friends are looking for someone they can kill in turn. We walk closely together, watching all around just in case we are seen.

Because I am the oldest, I go into KFC to get chicken, chips and Coke. We head off to a deserted street, and I eat so fast that I can hardly taste what I'm chewing. Contentment comes again, and I feel happy for the moment.

My friend and I leave the boys and wander around the shops, looking at all the things we will buy one day, when we have money. I would like some platform shoes and pink nail varnish. We end up back at the beach where we meet with the people we sleep with. The bag of stuff from the morning is shared with those who have not been as lucky in their search for food.

Before I go back to the toilets to claim my sleeping space for the night, I watch the children who have come with their parents to walk on the beach and eat ice cream. Some are in school uniform, and I wonder what they learnt today. I try to remember my teacher from long ago. I loved my teacher. She used to smell so nice and speak so gently to me. But one day she told me I could not return to school unless my mother paid the school fees. School fees? There were six of us children and my mother couldn't even afford bread. How could she pay school fees? I would love to be at school and play netball like the other girls I see.

I notice that one boy is fighting with his mother because she will not allow him to have the ice cream of his choice. I think that I would be so happy to have any ice cream, and a mother who would buy it for me.

I miss home and the warmth of my mother's skin, even though she often used to hit me. My mother lives with her boyfriend in a shack in Inanda. I think she is still there. It was a bigger shack than most, but when it rained the roof would leak all over the place. I would laugh at my mother as she ran around with bowls and buckets trying to catch the water. When it was hot, the shack would bake, just like the oven I saw in the house where my mother had a job for one day a week. My baby brother was small and couldn't walk like other children his age. And even though he was covered with sores he never cried much, except when my mother's boyfriend beat my mother. Then he cried.

Night time comes, and it begins to get cold. I find my blanket, unroll it, wrap it around me and curl up in a ball and fall asleep."

## **In the UK**

### **Darren's Story**

"Hi, my name is Darren and I am sixteen.

My dad left us when I was eleven and my little sister, Samantha was only nine. It was a bit of a shock, really, but we sort of stuck together and got on with things and my mum worked really hard to keep everything much as it used to be. Everything began to be OK again and for a while I thought life was sorted, you know. But you just can't plan for anything good, really. Something is always bound to happen.

So, when mum started seeing George we didn't mind too much. Mum needed to have someone who could take care of her just as she took care of us and we didn't complain. But George moved in and when he did he just took over, telling us what to do as if he was, like, our real dad. It just seemed to go from bad to worse. I couldn't do anything right. If I went out I was a 'trouble-making teenage lout', if I stayed in I was a 'layabout'. And I didn't like the way he treated mum. She deserved more respect but when I challenged him on that she either kept completely quiet

or was on his side. So, it's like we argue every day, mostly about nothing. He just gets on at me all the time.

And now he wants me to go, to leave my own home. It was my home long before he came on the scene but he is saying to mum, 'Either he goes, or I go!' and you can see the panic in her eyes. It's like I said, he has no respect for her but she is being pushed down so much by him now that she will agree to anything he says, no matter what. So, it's me that has to go. I have a mate who says he can let me sleep on a mattress in his room for a while but I can't see how that's going to work out. I have just started my GCSEs and I thought I had pretty good prospects. I actually like school and always saw myself as going to university and becoming a scientist, you know? But I might have to drop out of school and find a job so that I can pay for somewhere to stay. If I can get enough I might be able to rent somewhere big enough for my sister, too. I can't leave her there with that creep. I wish my real dad was still around. Nothing like this would have happened if he had stayed with us."

## **In Brighton & Hove**

### ***Mark's story***

Taken from "*Learning about Life*" (*The Brighton Evening Argus*)

"My parents had a messy divorce when I was 14 and life became a real hassle. Mum's new boyfriend made life difficult for me and it really did my head in. There was so much tension that something had to give. That something was me

There was a lot of fighting and I often got stuck in the middle. It got really bad after my Dad left and my Mum and I started arguing all the time: we just weren't getting along. I wanted to live with my Dad, but there wasn't enough room. They already had five people living in a two bedroom flat with my Dad and his girlfriend sleeping on the settee and her kids and my sister in the bedrooms. They just couldn't fit me in. I was terrified that I might end up sleeping rough on the streets or in a hostel.

A space however had just become available at the Safe House Project which the Off The Fence charity in Brighton runs for young people like me who are at risk of ending up sleeping on the streets and I was able to move in within a week. It was scary at first and I kept myself to myself. It was a big shock to be living on my own after coming out of my family home. I had never cooked meals or managed money and I didn't know where to start. But bit by bit I got used to everyone and began learning how to look after myself.

The support and help that I got at the Safe House really helped me and meant that I could sort out problems with my Mum and her new boyfriend which meant that it was OK for me to move back home when my year as a resident at the Safe House came to an end. The things that I have learnt have helped me to re-build the relationship with my family. Talking through all my issues and getting all this support has helped me so much. I know I am ten times more independent because of being there." Mark is just one of the many young people who have received help and support through the Brighton-based homelessness charity **Off The Fence**.

## Bible Reflections

It is recommended that you take regular time during **The Off The Fence Big Sleepover** for reflection and prayer. The following Bible studies are suggested for use in these times. You may have to modify the studies depending on the time available and the age of your group.

### The Beatitudes and the World's Myths

Throughout Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection, he dismantled myths - a task that was carried on by his disciples. Myths about what true power was, and how it should be exercised (e.g. Mark 10:41-45); the myth that women were not fit to be "scribes in the kingdom" (e.g. Luke 10:38-42); the myth that the poor and ill were excluded from God's blessing (e.g. Mark 1:40-45); the myth that the powers of law, sin, guilt and death can defeat the grace of God (e.g. Colossians 2:13-15).

Few other passages demonstrate this "myth-busting" aspect of Jesus' teaching as well as the Beatitudes (or "Blessings" - "The Message"). These statements are a powerful challenge to the way the world habitually operates. They overturn the dominant myths that we all operate under or struggle against. In our world, it is not the poor who are (or appear to be) blessed. It is certainly not those who mourn, those who maintain integrity (purity of heart), or those who seek to create peace.

*Read Matthew 5:1-16*

- Individually, write a set of "beatitudes" that reflect the world's myths - that is, the way the world actually seems to work. You can do this by writing "reverse beatitudes", for example: "Blessed are the merciless, for they will take advantage of every situation."
- Share your "beatitudes" with the others in your group.
- In what ways do Jesus' beatitudes challenge the "myths" that the world operates under?

*Read Luke 6:20-26*

- What is the effect of Jesus including both "blessings" and "woes" here? How does it make you feel?
- What is the significance of blessings being addressed to the poor in Luke, and to the poor in spirit in Matthew? To the hungry in Luke, and to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness in Matthew? Are they the same groups? Different? Related?
- Do these beatitudes relate to concrete physical, material and economic situations, or are they purely spiritual?

- In what ways do you understand God's kingdom to be present, here and now - bringing blessing to the poor, the hungry, the bereaved, the peacemaker's, the persecuted? Share any examples or stories with the group.
- How do these beatitudes relate to Jesus' command to those who heard him, to be the "light of the world" and the "salt of the earth"?

*Comment: -*

*"Only when we take the Beatitudes seriously as our corporate charter of life can we hope to be effective agents of God's kingdom in the world. That is why the list of beatitudes is followed by the famous sayings on salt and light... When we, as a Christian community, believe in and embody the Beatitudes, we will be a truth-affirming, life enhancing, thirst-creating manifestation of God's kingdom in society."*

*(Chris Marshall, "The Challenge of the Beatitudes")*

## Knowing God – Psalm 146

Think about some of the prayers of praise and thanksgiving that you may have heard. As a group, make a list of things that you most often hear people thanking and praising God for. What are the common threads in your lists? Are there any items that stand out?

*Read Psalm 146*

- What aspect of God's character and activity is the writer of the Psalms drawing attention to in verse 6?
- What about in verses 7-9?
- In what ways do you understand or experience these words to be true about God?
- What are the implications for people who worship the God who acts in this way to bring about justice and liberation for the poor, vulnerable, sick or oppressed?
- How is the character of the kingly rule of God revealed in the Psalm demonstrated in Jesus' ministry?

*Comment: -*

*"It is impossible to really know Jesus and be indifferent to the plight of the poor."*

*(Dewi Hughes, "The God of the Poor")*

- Do you agree with Hughes' statement? How does it make you feel?
- Break into pairs and read one of the following texts:- Genesis 18: 16-19; Deuteronomy 10: 17-19; Jeremiah 9: 23-24; Matthew 5: 43-48; 2 Corinthians 8: 1-9; Philippians 2: 1-11; 1 John 3: 16-18.
  - What does the passage you've selected tell us about the character of God?
  - What does it say about the way that people, as they get to know God, will live in response to this knowledge and relationship?

## Prayers

### Caring Father

Divide into two equal groups and say together:

**Group 1** Caring Father, you ask us to love our neighbours but we turn our backs on them and close our ears to their suffering.

**Group 2** Help us see the truth around us, recognise what needs to be done and have the courage to act in your name.

**All** Amen

**Group 1** Loving Jesus, you walked among us and witnessed the suffering that human beings inflict on each other. You saw all of this and then became a victim of human cruelty and hatred.

**Group 2** Help us step forward with love in our hearts, offering justice and peace to all who find themselves powerless victims in an uncaring world.

**All** Amen

**Group 1** Holy Spirit, bringer of wisdom and inspiration, you see people perform acts of oppression and hatred based on ignorance, boredom and a fear of all that is different.

**Group 2** Open our hearts and our minds to your enlightened vision. Help us rejoice in the richness of diversity, become ever eager to learn and understand and always want to stand with and support those who are abused and oppressed by others.

**All** Amen.

### Loving God

Divide into two equal groups and say together:

**Group 1** Loving God, we pray that the riches we enjoy will be fully shared with all so that there will always be:

**Group 2** Good homes for all, regardless of who they are and what they earn.

**All** For good homes, God, we pray.

**Group 1** Enough good food, so that no one goes hungry or suffers without proper nourishment.

**All** For good food, God, we pray.

**Group 2** Freedom from oppression and from acts of hatred and violence suffered each day by the weak and the vulnerable.

**All** For freedom from oppression, God, we pray.

**Group 1** Understanding, caring and love so that our society grows in justice, heals its wounds of division and brings dignity into everyone's lives.

**All** For understanding, caring and love, God, we pray.

**Group 2** Hope and a sharing of peace that gives people the strength to keep going and faith to know that all will be well.

**All** For hope and peace, God, we pray.

Alone, each voice and action is weak, but together our voices will be heard and listened to and our actions will help change the world. Loving Creator, you made all things good. Help us to see that good in everyone and everything and help the good in our hearts

lighten even the darkest corner of despair and fear in our world. Together with you, we can make a difference!

Amen!

### **Open my eyes**

O Lord, open my eyes that I may see the need of others,  
open my ears that I may hear their cries,  
open my heart so they need not be without succour;  
let me not be afraid to defend the weak  
because of the anger of the strong,  
nor afraid to defend the poor  
because of the anger of the rich.  
Use me to bring love and hope and faith where it is needed  
and so open my eyes and my ears  
that I may this coming day  
be able to do some work of peace for You.

Amen

Alan Paton

### **Our own part in Your world**

God our Father,  
in Your hands is the outcome of everything.  
what You ask of us is not that  
we should solve every problem,  
but that we should do our own part in Your world  
as faithfully as we can.  
Receive us now with our gifts;  
confirm us in the faith that Jesus is Lord,  
and grant us always the help of your Holy Spirit,  
for Jesus' sake.

Amen

Liverpool Justice and Peace Commission

### **Over our city, Lord, have mercy**

Jesus drew near to the city and wept over it  
*Over our city, Lord, have mercy*  
Light has come into the world, but we too often choose darkness  
*Over our city, Lord, have mercy*  
The light exposes our words and deeds,  
*Over our city, Lord, have mercy*  
Let us come into the light and live by truth  
*Over our city, Lord, have mercy*  
Help us to do the things that make for peace

*Over our city, Lord, have mercy*

So that all can see which God we worship

*Over our city, Lord, have mercy*

Come Lord Jesus, light of the world, and dwell in us

*Over our city, Lord, have mercy*

*Note:* You might want to replace the word 'city' with the name of your own town, village or neighbourhood.

### **Forgive us our hard hearts**

Forgive us that our hearts are so often hard, so often fearful.

Forgive us for our fear of involvement, of sharing.

Forgive us for our fear of taking risks for Your sake.

Forgive us for our fear of the otherness of people.

Forgive us when we forget the power of Your love.

**Amen**

Trampled Vineyard 1992

### **Cease to do evil, learn to do good**

Cease to do evil, learn to do good,

Search for justice, help the homeless,

The poor, the hungry, the elderly,

The lonely, the imprisoned.

May the love of God enfold us,

And the fire of the Spirit kindle us,

And may the blessing of the Lord God

Come down upon you and remain with you always.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Amen**

Trampled Vineyard 1992

## Debriefing

This is essential, and allows participants to reflect on their experiences and think about the reality behind the event. You can run a debriefing session at the conclusion of **The Big Sleep Out** or on another day soon after the event. Allow plenty of time for this, making sure that all people get a chance to be heard.

- Have an open discussion of people's experiences - what they found challenging, memorable, surprising, and how **The Big Sleep Out** affected them.
- How close to "reality" did people think the event was?
- How do they feel about the reality behind the idea of **The Big Sleep Out**?
- How will they describe the experience to people who weren't involved?
- What is the one thing that participants are going to change in their own lives right now after having participated in **The Big Sleep Out**?
- What are some of the changes they would like to make over the next few months and even years?

## Going further

Simply tick the "Please keep me up to date on your work" box on the sponsorship form that you will have completed to be mailed, free of charge, regular information on further activities of the Brighton-based charity the **Off The Fence Trust**. In addition to this the **Off the Fence Trust** regularly updates its website with news on issues concerning homelessness, how to volunteer with them, local news and their exciting programme of fundraising events that are open to all. See [www.offthefence.org.uk](http://www.offthefence.org.uk).

It is important to provide plenty of opportunities for the young participants in **The Big Sleep Out** to make a meaningful response to their experiences.

## Raising Money through The Big Sleep Out

In addition to the **The Big Sleep Out** being a valuable tool to raise awareness of issues surrounding homelessness and rough sleeping both locally and globally the event can also be used as a way of raising funds for the work of the Brighton-based homelessness charity the **Off The Fence Trust**. As your group learns about the experiences of the one billion homeless or rough sleepers in our world, they can also be actively doing something to bring about positive change 'on their doorstep'.

All money raised through the **The Big Sleep Out** will support the work of the registered charity **The Off The Fence Trust** (Charity number 1108777) who work amongst the homeless and rough sleepers in the city of Brighton & Hove. Further information about our work is available on our website: [www.offthefence.org.uk](http://www.offthefence.org.uk) or by contacting us at the **Off The Fence Trust**, 132 Portland Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 5QL.

*Important:* A copy of our official sponsorship form is appended

### Sponsorship Tips

- Encourage your group to collect the sponsorship money at the time of the pledge if possible, as this saves them time chasing up the money after the event.
- Together as a group set a realistic, but ambitious amount, to aim for in your fundraising efforts.

### Collecting the money and forms

Make sure that each person who takes a form returns the form, along with any money raised. Collect all forms issued, even from people who haven't raised any money.

### Sending funds raised to the Off The Fence Trust

When all money and forms are collected, add up the total funds raised and record on **The Big Sleep Out Sleepover** Organiser form (ENCLOSED) Send this form with a cheque (cheques should be made payable to the **Off The Fence Trust**) for the total funds raised to:

Off The Fence Trust  
132 Portland Road  
Hove, East Sussex  
BN3 5QL

The **Off The Fence Trust** will send you a receipt and a certificate to recognise your group's efforts.

## Forms and Sample Letters

**In this section you will find:**

- A sample letter requesting permission to use a site
- A copy of an Information Sheet for participants
- The Event Application form (for participants)
- The Off The Fence Sponsorship form
- The Organiser's form

## Sample letter for permission to use a site

### Your organisation's letterhead

To \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

We are seeking permission to make use of the property location at *(address)* to run an event called 'The Big Sleep Out' from *(date and time)* until *(date and time)*.

'The Big Sleep Out' is an event designed by the Brighton-based charity the Off The Fence Trust. Off The Fence, is a registered charity (1108777) founded in 1994 with a vision to help the socially excluded. The charity strives to make a real difference to the lives of the many that are 'at risk' in our community. They work in the four areas of homelessness, women at risk, accommodation for vulnerable young people at risk of becoming homeless and a series of highly regarded education programmes in secondary schools in Brighton.

'The Off The Fence Big Sleepover' aims to raise awareness about issues surrounding homelessness and to provide ways for people to contribute to practical solutions to help those that are homeless regain a place in society. Participants will build and live in their own "rough shelter" and participate in a series of challenges over the duration of "The Big Sleep Out" event. They will also raise funds to support the work of the Off The Fence Trust in Brighton & Hove.

We hope that by raising awareness of this situation among young people who participate in 'The Big Sleepover' and the wider public we can help create a world where people are set free from poverty and are able to pursue lives of dignity and hope.

All funds raised during 'The Big Sleep Out' will be donated to the Off The Fence Trust.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding permission to use *(name of address of site)*.

I can be contacted on *(your details)*.

Yours sincerely

*(Your name)*

# The Big Sleep Out

## Information Sheet for Participants

**The Big Sleep Out** is a reality game where you get to experience a bit of what life is like for the one billion people on the planet who are homeless.

### **The Big Sleep Out - This is reality!**

Everyday many thousands of people have to survive life on the streets of cities and towns throughout the world.

Even though homelessness charities like **Off The Fence** exist, many of the everyday things that we take for granted - food, homes, warm and clean clothes - are hard to come by and, especially when temperatures drop below freezing, the lack of such basic necessities can be life threatening. Because of such conditions crime, disease and feelings of hopelessness and isolation are daily realities for many.

This is reality for many hundreds in our own city of Brighton & Hove

Imagine if it was your reality.

### **What Happens during The Big Sleep Out?**

You will build and live in your own rough shelter (built out of basic discarded materials - all supplied) for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ hours.

You will eat simple food.

You will face restrictions in what personal items you can bring.

You will compete in challenges that simulate aspects of being homeless. These challenges will test your ingenuity, team skills and determination.

To participate you must:

- be willing to participate in **The Big Sleep Out** for \_\_\_\_\_ hours
- be willing to play by the rules in a cooperative way with other participants
- be willing to build your own rough shelter in a group and live in it
- have permission from your parent or carer if you are under 18

Please fill out the attached **The Big Sleep Out** permission slip and return it to your group leader.

# The Big Sleep Out

## Permission Slip

Please complete this form and return to: \_\_\_\_\_

Forms must be returned by: \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact \_\_\_\_\_

### Health

Do you have any allergies or medical conditions that may cause problems or require attention while participating in **The Big Sleep Out**.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I've read and understand the rules of **The Off The Fence Big Sleepover**. I agree to abide by the rules and follow all instructions given by leaders of **The Big Sleep Out**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/Carer's signature (if under 18) \_\_\_\_\_

# The Big Sleep Out

## Sponsorship form



**OFF THE FENCE**

I .....(name) will be taking part in the Off The Fence **Big Sleep Out**

Use **Gift Aid** and you can make your donation worth more. If you Gift Aid your donation, the Off The Fence Trust will continue to receive an additional 28p. The Off The Fence Trust can claim Gift Aid tax relief of 25p on every pound you give. HM Revenue and Customs will also be operating transitional provisions for Gift Aid donations made from 6 April 2008 until 5 April 2011, paying a government supplement of 3p on every pound you give.

**NOTE:** You must be a UK Taxpayer; paying Income tax or Capital Gains tax equal to or greater than the amount we can claim back.

**Big Sleepover** on (date) to raise funds for Off The Fence Trust (Charity No.1108777)

Name	Address (Please include Post Code)	Amount Pledged	Amount Collected	Date Collected	Gift Aid ✓	Please keep me up to date on your work
Mr A Nybody	12 Somewhere Road, Hove, BN3 5QQ	£10.00	An Example		✓	✓
<b>Total Collected</b>						

# The Big Sleep Out

## Organiser's form

Group/Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) event was held: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of money raised: \_\_\_\_\_

Make you cheque payable to:           The Off The Fence Trust

Off The Fence Trust  
132 Portland Road  
Hove, East Sussex  
BN3 5QL.

The **Off The Fence Trust** will send you a receipt and a certificate to recognise your group's efforts.

Please provide any comments or suggestions about The Big Sleep Out

### **Acknowledgements:**

Off The Fence is grateful to volunteers Susan Lodge and Lauren Spouse for their helpful suggestions on the draft of this Resources kit and for Schools and Youth Officer Rachel Munt for her input on the final draft.

*Off The Fence, September 2011*

### ***"Tackling social and spiritual poverty in the City of Brighton and Hove"***

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Registered charity number 1108777, Company number 5300691