

# **Connecting with your Community Toolkit – Crisis Community Advocate**

## Welcome

**Thank you for joining us in changing the narrative around homelessness. The more people we can connect with and influence, the more we can change public perception around homelessness and encourage the belief that if we all work together homelessness can be ended. We can't do this alone, and so you will be playing a key part in enabling change.**

This toolkit is designed to support you in your volunteer role with Crisis. We want to equip and empower you to be able to connect with your community in ways that work for you to help change the narrative around homelessness.

**This toolkit is for you to use in a way that works for you – you may only need certain sections, or you may have plenty of experience and not feel the need to use much of the toolkit. The contents are hyperlinked so that you can easily get to the section you need.**

It sits alongside the range of resources designed to support you in talking to audiences about homelessness, including:

- 10 key messages about Crisis
- A template presentation
- FAQ's

## Message from Matt Downie, Chief Executive of Crisis UK



Thank you for choosing to volunteer at Crisis. As Chief Executive, I am proud to lead an organisation that has a rich heritage of volunteering. In 1971, the first Crisis 'Open Christmas' was created by 20 volunteers in a derelict church in London. We have come a long way since then. You are joining a charity which is determined to adopt the very best practices in working alongside our volunteers to end homelessness.

Your commitment and effort as a Crisis Community Advocate is part of the solution in ending homelessness and I hope you will have a great experience volunteering with us.

Together, we will end homelessness.

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## About Crisis

To quickly recap, we are the national charity for people experiencing homelessness. All of us need a decent home, to be healthy and to thrive. Currently, though this basic human need isn't being met for so many people across the UK – **this is unacceptable**.

At Crisis we work side by side with thousands of people each year as they find ways out of homelessness. We provide practical support to help people access benefits, healthcare services, employment opportunities and more. **Our main aim is to relieve the huge pressure of homelessness, by helping people find safe and affordable homes as quickly as possible.**

We prioritise supporting people who face the most complex barriers to ending their homelessness and often have nowhere else to turn. As well as helping to end homelessness for individuals, we work to address the root causes that push people into homelessness in the first place.

We campaign on the political changes needed to end homelessness for good and conduct research to understand and highlight the scale, causes and consequences of homelessness.

Our **values** are at the heart of everything we do as we continue in our mission to end homelessness:



**Bold**



**Impactful**



**Collaborative**

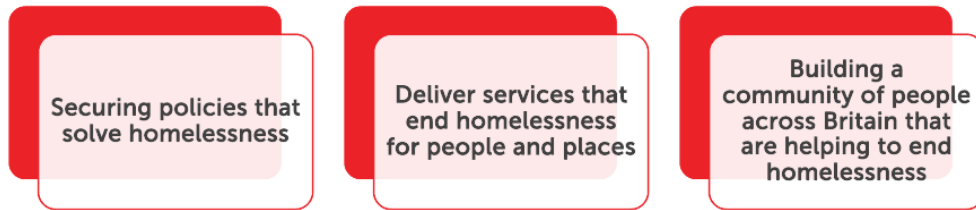


**Equitable**

Our **vision**:

In ten years, the number of people who are homeless will be going down. This doesn't mean no-one will ever lose their home again. But there will be better ways to prevent it – and quick housing-led solutions when it happens.

Our **strategic goals** are:



## How can you make the greatest difference?

Believe in the cause and share the vision with others – your enthusiasm will be contagious.

Plan activities that interest you, you're more likely to be successful if you enjoy what you are doing.

This will allow us to engage in areas where we have previously had a limited reach.

## Crisis and Volunteers working in partnership – what should I expect?

Your role is part of Crisis, so it is important that we are all clear on our commitments and how we support and respect each other. These are outlined in the table below. If there is anything you're not sure about, please do email [community.advocate@crisis.org.uk](mailto:community.advocate@crisis.org.uk).



### Keep in touch

**Crisis will:** link you with a named contact and let you know who else you can reach out to.

**Crisis asks you to:** keep in touch with us, complete the evaluation form when you have spoken to an audience, attending drop-ins, and let us know if you no longer want to continue in the role.



### Crisis 'brand' and identity

**Crisis will:** help you to use the name and logo to make your role as effective as possible. We will give you access to correctly branded materials.

**Crisis asks you to:** follow guidelines on the use of the charity name and logo to protect the reputation of the charity. Use any templates and resources provided to you.



### Respect and appreciation

Remember and respect that, whether we are staff, or volunteers, we all have other things outside Crisis, and it is important to achieve a good balance.



### Looking after our supporters

**Crisis will:** keep our records up to date when you advise us of changes to personal details.

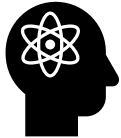
**Crisis asks you to:** Thank those you connect with and talk to promptly for their time. Complete the evaluation for after you have spoken to an audience.



## Health and safety

**Crisis will:** provide you with information on staying safe in your role.

**Crisis asks you to:** always consider your own and others safety.



## Knowledge, experience, and training

**Crisis will:** provide you with the training and resources you need for the role, support you to keep up to date on relevant information, and provide you with opportunities to connect with and share experiences with other volunteers.

**Crisis asks you to:** be guided by what you learn from Crisis and the resources provided. Be willing to share your experiences, ideas, and tips with other volunteers.



## Policies, handbooks, and guides

**Crisis will:** keep you informed of relevant policies and procedures.

**Crisis asks you to:** comply with our policies and standards.



## Managing donations

**Crisis will:** provide you with information on how individuals can donate. **We do not expect you to take donations.**

**Crisis asks you to:** provide people with details on how they can donate and not accept donations personally.



## How Crisis will support you

In this handbook you will find our top tips and advice you can use whilst carrying out your role, including how to engage with your community, from local businesses to children and young people. You can refer to this handbook at any point in your time volunteering with us.

**Role training-** You will have received training on your role, talking about homelessness and the processes you should follow in your role.

**Keeping up to date -** To carry out this role effectively it is important that you keep up to date with Crisis news, updates about homelessness both nationally and in your local area. You can do this by checking Crisis' [website](#) and social media channels regularly. We will also ensure we communicate any updates to materials and resources to you.

You can also find useful videos about our work and sharing member stories on our Crisis UK [YouTube](#) page.

**Support and connecting with other volunteers-** This handbook is designed for you to access information as and when you need it in your volunteering role. We will also provide you with presentation templates, information, and the resources you need to deliver talks and engage your local community. We know everyone has different requirements, so if there is anything you need, please do talk to us.

We will also offer a quarterly drop in where you can come and chat to us directly, as well as meet other advocates and share experiences and tips. This will be virtual, so it is accessible, no matter where you are in the UK.

**Letter of authority-** If a person/group/business requires further confirmation of your volunteering for Crisis, we can provide you with a letter of authority which confirms what you do, what Crisis do and encourages them to support your work. This letter will typically refer to the current activity you are discussing with these persons/group, so can only be used for the specific purpose it has been requested for and typically has an expiry date. You can ask for another letter in future should it be needed.

### Social Media

Social media platforms are important when networking in your local community. It helps you connect with local community groups and businesses who may be able to help and support you.

Once set up you can share any content that appears on the Crisis profile. This is a good way to populate your social media feed and helps raise awareness of the impact of support. We will also provide you with a digital badge which you can use to promote you are a Crisis Community Advocate.

***Please remember any communications you send as a Crisis volunteer, even in a digital space, are a reflection of Crisis.***

# Organising engagement opportunities

## Sourcing your own opportunities

We want you to use your local knowledge and networks to proactively promote the opportunity to speak about Crisis and help us to change the narrative on homelessness. We want people to believe we can end homelessness and join us in taking the actions needed to do so.

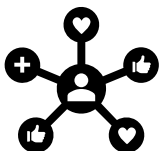
Often the best way to get started is by asking friends and family if they have any contacts suitable for you to reach out to. You may only want to reach out to people or groups you know, which is great. However, if you want to go further and reach out to others in your community this toolkit will help you do that.

You may also want to promote your activity in local press, noticeboards, or social media community groups. This will help you and Crisis become visible to local networks you may not be aware of.

## Making local connections



**Identify who to talk to** - A good tip is to contact your local Councilor or MP whose office will have a list of groups and activities in your area which might be suitable for you to connect with. Alternatively try your local Volunteer Centre.



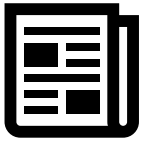
**Tell all your networks** - Talk to your friends, family, colleagues, social groups about your role and the action you are taking to end homelessness.



**Reach out to the local community** - Send a letter/email using our template to offer your services as a speaker. Explain the aim of your talks and the need to raise awareness of the causes of homelessness and how it can be ended.



**Promote your skills** – you can use posters offering your services as a speaker and put them in prominent places such as Doctors surgeries, libraries, community centres, coffee shops etc.



**Use local publications** - if you are lucky enough to still receive a local newspaper, they are typically full of community happenings. Parish magazines, local glossy magazines, neighbourhood guides or anything that pops through your door can also be a good source to find out about different community groups in your area.

**Audiences to avoid** - we recommend you do not speak to groups of very young children, such as nurseries as it can be difficult to explain the concept of homelessness. We also recommend avoiding any political or extremist groups.

## Using social media

Social media networks can be great tools for engaging the wider local community.

If you use social media, it's a good idea to like Crisis' profiles, so that you can see our messages and share them with your own networks.

Feel free to share images and messages within your own networks that refer to your volunteer role with Crisis. We do however kindly ask that you don't use the Crisis logo as your profile picture, to help avoid any confusion with our own social media accounts, and we also ask that you don't change or customise our logo in any way if it appears in any of your images, but you are very welcome to use our supporting logo and all of our digital resources. As a Crisis Community Advocate, we hope to provide you with a digital badge that you can use on your social media in the near future.

Some general social media tips:

- Follow local organisations, clubs, and associations so that you can see what they're up to, learn about what they do and where possible engage in conversation with them – this could lead to interesting opportunities to work together. Think of **local businesses or sports or social clubs** for example.
- It's also a great idea to **engage via social media with local newspapers** as they may choose to feature your activity if they're inspired by your support for Crisis. Similarly, local councils may mention your engagement events on social media if you engage with them too.
- Keep your pages updated regularly with **interesting messages and images** about what you are doing. This will keep people in your **networks engaged and build a long-term connection** with them. There's no right frequency to post – post as often as you have updates that you think will be interesting to your local connections.
- **Post messages about the talk you have given** to give people a glimpse into the great work you're doing. People will love being part of your journey!
- If you're comfortable doing so, **let people know why you support Crisis** and what motivates you to volunteer.

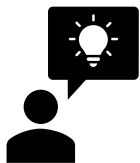
- **Share or re-tweet messages about Crisis' work** (you can re-post our messages) to help keep Crisis in the front of their minds and let them know about our research.

## Delivering presentations

You can prepare your presentation or talk using the templates provided as part of your training. You can choose how much of the presentation you use, based on how long you have with your audience, and we have included recommendations on which are the key slides you should use.

You should check with the person you are organising the talk with what equipment is available to you on the day, which will also help you prepare visual aids. Some speakers like to show pictures/photos during a presentation whilst others prefer to use props. It is important you choose a style and format you are comfortable with and let your personality shine through.

### Top presenting tips:



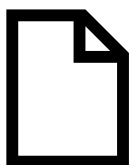
**Be yourself** – everyone has their own style of presenting, and we want you to enjoy the role and be comfortable, so we encourage you to be yourself.



**Language and imagery** – use language and imagery suitable for your audience. Crisis presentations have been developed in line with our brand and images that represent our messaging.



**Timings** – should be suitable for the event and audience. The slides are designed to be used flexibly if you choose to use them, and we have included recommendations of which are the key slides to use.



**Resources** – we don't expect you to take any handouts, but you may want to refresh on your materials before you go. If you do want to take a handout we recommend the 10 key messages, or you may choose to email the document after.



**Call to action** – deliver a clear call to action – let people know 1 or 2 ways they can help, tailor this to your audience and what asks might resonate with them. We have made suggestions later in this document, but if you are familiar with your audience, you may think other asks are more suited.



**Passion** – let your passion for ending homelessness shine through and engage and motivate your audience.

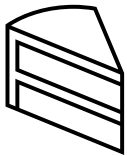


**It's okay to say 'I don't know'** – allow time for questions at the end. You have access to a FAQ document to help with some of the most common questions. It is okay to say, 'I don't know' and go away and find out. Contact your Crisis contact or attend one of our quarterly Community Advocate drop-in sessions.

## Call to action

Dependent upon your audience and environment you may ask people to take action. Informal engagement opportunities chatting briefly with people passing by, works best with a call to action such as signing up to be a Crisis campaigner and campaign for change. Whereas asking people to sign up to local fundraising activity such as Crisis Icebreaker is good at the end of a talk or presentation. Donations to Crisis at Christmas are always a great call to action too.

Below is information to help you to know where to signpost people if they do want to fundraise/donate/support Crisis proactively.



**Doing their own fundraising** - a person or group can organise their own fundraising activity for Crisis, ranging from a coffee morning, sponsored football match, to a charity ball. You can direct them to the [Do Your Own Thing](#) section of our website.



**Making a donation** - there are a number of ways that someone could make a one-off or regular donation to Crisis. Please explain you cannot take donations and instead direct them to donating on [the website](#). The benefit of this is that they will receive a formal acknowledgement from Crisis for their donation, and we will be able to claim Gift Aid on their donation if they are eligible. Donating online will also give them the option to donate regularly if they wish to.



**Gift Aid** - this is a government scheme that allows charities to reclaim the tax that has already been paid on donations from UK taxpayers. If someone is thinking of making a donation, let them know that if they are a current UK taxpayer to say yes to Gift Aid, which allows Crisis to receive an extra 25p for every £1 they donate. If they have already donated or have done so in the past 4 years (and been a UK taxpayer for this time), they can claim Gift Aid retrospectively and we have [forms online](#) they can fill in to do this.



**Legacy Giving** - this means somebody leaving a gift in their will to Crisis, helping make sure future generations do not have to face homelessness. Gifts can be left in a number of ways (e.g. a specific amount of money, or a proportion of a person's estate) and Crisis works in partnership with Farewill to offer a service for persons to write their will online for free. If someone is considering leaving a gift in their will to Crisis, you can direct them to the [legacies page](#) of our website.



**Volunteering** - volunteering with Crisis can make a real difference to people experiencing homelessness. Someone could choose to give their time in a range of ways including in our shops, fundraising or in our Skylight centres. You can direct anyone interested in volunteering to the [Volunteering page](#) of our website, which lists all current opportunities.

## What to do afterwards

Thank your host – follow up with a thank you email and if appropriate provide them with a link to our [website](#) where people are able to sign up to the [Crisis newsletter](#) or to [campaign for Crisis](#). (The sign-up forms can be found at the bottom of the webpage links.)

### Tell us about the great work you are doing.

Please complete the [Community Advocate evaluation form](#) – this lets us know about the great work you are doing to spread the word on homelessness, and how things have gone. It also means we can measure the impact of this role.

## Planning ahead

When getting started in your new role you might want to consider planning ahead so that you can fit your advocate role in with your other commitments. This should also help spread out your engagement so that you aren't busy for a few months and then left struggling with where to look next.

Awareness days are a good time to promote your activity and the cause. There are key dates such as **World Homeless Day on 10 October**.

## Crisis Events

You can find out more about what fundraising events Crisis has coming up and where on our [website](#). Crisis has a range of events including Skydive for Crisis, places in marathons and half marathons and other challenge activities that individuals can get involved in. We'd suggest taking a look at what is available as part of your preparation for your conversation.

## Keeping up to date

In this role it is important to keep up to date with the picture of homelessness in the UK and the work that Crisis is doing. You can keep up to date with Crisis' work by following our social media accounts. We are on **Twitter, Facebook, [Linked In](#)** and **Instagram**.

The Crisis website is also a great source of information, with pages about [how to talk about homelessness](#) and our [Crisis Blog](#) which breaks down Crisis' stance on various issues relating to homelessness.

There are lots of other useful pages so please ensure you take time to look around and learn more in advance of working with your community. We will also keep you up to date with breaking news and new initiatives that Crisis are supporting, which you can share with your community via email and the quarterly drop-ins.

## Crisis campaigns

It may help you in this role to stay up to date with our [campaigns pages](#) on the Crisis website. You can find information here about the latest campaigns that Crisis are focusing on, for example a current campaign focused on scrapping the Vagrancy Act. You can use information about these campaigns in any talks or engagements you have in your community.

In November and December Crisis has a large Christmas campaign, in any engagements around this time you can talk a lot about Crisis at Christmas. We will post about this a lot in the run up to Christmas so you can cater what you talk about in the winter months to reflect on our current work.



## Researching homelessness in your area

It may be useful to prepare for talks by understanding your local homeless services. Below are some helpful places you could look for this information:

- Your local authority website – you can find more details from the [gov.uk site](#)
- Volunteer Centres
- Homeless Link website – [find a service](#)
- [Crisis website](#)
- Social media
- Website searches for ‘homelessness services in...’ or “foodbanks in...”
- Trussell Trust – [find a foodbank tool](#)
- [Shelter Scotland](#)
- [Welsh government website](#)

## Connecting with Community and Faith Groups

The purpose of this list is to introduce you to groups you may not be aware of. It is in no way exhaustive, and we welcome your suggestions of groups to add to this list.

### Getting started

A good tip is to contact your local Councilor or MP whose office will have a list of groups and activities in your area or your local Volunteer Centre.

#### You can search for your local:

- Community centres which host community and social groups
- Student Unions
- Volunteer Centres

Even if groups you contact do not have speaking opportunities many are happy to network. Ask to pick their brains to find out about their communities and other opportunities in the local area.

### Top tips

- **Research** the type of group you are speaking to and what they engage in.
- **Be relevant**- make your talk relevant to them – be clear about the message you are trying to get across i.e. preventing and ending homelessness. Think about the target of their work e.g. Women's Institute focus is educating women so they may be more receptive if they can learn more about women's homelessness.
- **Know your area** - have information on local homelessness needs – the group is more likely to engage if they can see an impact locally.
- **Positive action** - ensure the group can see how they can transfer their knowledge into positive action.
- **Be considerate** – be considerate and sensitive when talking to faith groups of their faith and traditions.

## How to find details for Community Groups

Below is a useful list where you can find out details of your local community group:

Group	Details	Website	Type of ask that may resonate most
<b>Rotary Great Britain &amp; Ireland</b>	Rotary is one of the world's largest and most successful global membership and humanitarian service organisations, with 1.2 million members in over 200 countries. Also in the Rotary family - RotaKids, Interact and Rotaract clubs that cover ages 7 to 30.	<a href="https://www.rotarygbi.org/">https://www.rotarygbi.org/</a>	Campaigning
<b>The Association of Inner Wheel clubs in Great Britain &amp; Ireland</b>	Inner Wheel is an all-female organisation originally formed to complement Rotary when it was an all-male organisation.	<a href="https://www.innerwheel.co.uk/">https://www.innerwheel.co.uk/</a>	Donating/ Volunteering
<b>Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association (AMYA) UK</b>	UK's largest and oldest Muslim youth organisation AMYA, which has a membership exceeding 8,000.	<a href="https://www.muslimsforhumanity.org.uk/">https://www.muslimsforhumanity.org.uk/</a>	Campaigning / Volunteering
<b>Round Table</b>	Round Table Family which is made up of Ladies Circle (aged 18-45), Tangent, Round Table (men aged 18-45) and Ex Tablers (41 Club, men over 45) in the British Isles	<a href="https://roundtable.co.uk/">https://roundtable.co.uk/</a>	Donating
<b>Scouts</b>	Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers, and Scout network- covering ages 4-25. 400,000 young people step up,	<a href="https://www.scouts.org.uk/">https://www.scouts.org.uk/</a>	Fundraising

	<p>speak up and gain the skills they need to succeed in life.</p>		
<b>Girlguiding</b>	<p>Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers covering ages 5-18  Lesser known <b>Inspire</b> (18 -30yrs) and <b>Trefoil Guild</b> which are Guiding for adults.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/">https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/</a>  <a href="https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/inspire/">https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/inspire/</a>  <a href="https://www.trefoilguiding.co.uk/HOME">https://www.trefoilguiding.co.uk/HOME</a></p>	Fundraising
<b>Lions Club International British Isles</b>	<p>Every Lions Club supports a range of good causes and projects in its local community.</p>	<p><a href="https://lionsclubs.co/Public/">https://lionsclubs.co/Public/</a></p>	Fundraising/ Donating
<b>National Federation of Women's Institute</b>	<p>The largest women's organisation in the UK known for its campaigning and activism.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.thewi.org.uk/">https://www.thewi.org.uk/</a></p>	Campaigning/ activism
<b>United Grand Lodge of England (Masons)</b>	<p>The oldest fraternal organisation in the world, that originated in the medieval stonemason guilds. Known for their charitable giving and volunteer efforts.</p> <p>The New and Young Masons Clubs group was created to bring together the 'light blue' and young Mason clubs from around the UK.</p> <p>There are two female-only Grand Lodges: The Order of Women Freemasons and HFAF – Freemasonry for Women</p>	<p><a href="https://www.ugle.org.uk/become-freemason/find-your-nearest-masonic-centre/lookup-area">https://www.ugle.org.uk/become-freemason/find-your-nearest-masonic-centre/lookup-area</a></p> <p><a href="http://nymc.org.uk/">http://nymc.org.uk/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.owf.org.uk">https://www.owf.org.uk</a>  <a href="https://hfaf.org">https://hfaf.org</a></p>	Fundraising/ Volunteering

<b>Probus Clubs</b>	A social group for retired or semi-retired business and professional people.	<a href="#">Register of Probus Clubs</a>	Campaigning/ Volunteering
<b>Boys Brigade</b>	One of the biggest Christian youth organisations in the UK and ROI. Provides opportunities for children and young people to learn, grow and discover. Ages 5-18 years.	<a href="https://boys-brigade.org.uk/who-we-are/">https://boys-brigade.org.uk/who-we-are/</a>	Fundraising
<b>Girls Brigade</b>	One of the biggest Christian youth organisations in the UK and ROI. Provides opportunities for children and young people to learn, grow and discover. Ages 5-18 years.	<a href="https://www.girlsbrigadeministries.org.uk/about-girls-brigade-ministries/">https://www.girlsbrigadeministries.org.uk/about-girls-brigade-ministries/</a>	Fundraising

**NB at present people must be over 18 to volunteer for Crisis.**

## Connecting with children and young people

When working with children and young people focus on talking about what home means to them and the positivity of a safe and secure home. If you are looking to run an activity with a group of children, you might like to check out some of [our resources](#).

We ask that you ensure you are not alone with young people as you are not DBS checked – please ensure there is a supervisor/group lead present.

## Speaking to a young audience

When speaking to younger children they are more likely to engage with the topic if they can learn through doing. If you can avoid giving a presentation and can run a fun activity instead, do that! However, reflection is important. Once you've had a fun time and learnt some cool stuff, don't be afraid to sit down and ask questions.

If you do choose to give a presentation, just be conscious of the language you use. For example, at Crisis we often talk about homelessness in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain, this is very formal and mature language so not appropriate to use with young children.

## Top tips



**Do** – Talk about the importance of a safe and secure home, what home means to them.



**Do** - Use the activities we have developed to help you to talk about homelessness to younger audiences.



**Do** - Talk about homelessness broadly, there are lots of different ways people can become homeless.



**Do** - Use people first language, talk about people experiencing homelessness. NOT 'the homeless.' Anyone can experience homelessness.



**Do** – Be conscious that there may be young people in the group who are currently experiencing homelessness and be sensitive to this.



**Don't** - Tell strongly emotive member stories, there are better ways to make children think about why homelessness should be ended.



**Don't** - Reinforce stereotypes, instead talk about the different pressures of life that can become too much and cause someone to become homeless rather than reinforcing stereotypes that homeless people have addiction and mental health issues.

## Dealing with difficult questions

Children ask all sorts of difficult questions all the time and while we don't want to upset them it's important to answer their questions directly while still using age-appropriate language. If you are not sure how best to respond to a question do call on the teacher/supervisor/ group lead for help in doing this. Children often ask very big/broad questions based on people or things they have seen; sometimes it helps to break down a big question to figure out where the question has come from. However, we don't know everyone's story so it's best to talk in broad terms.

**Here are some examples:**

### ***'Why do homeless people take drugs?'***

First it's important to tell them that not all homeless people take drugs or drink a lot of alcohol. We did some research that said only 1 in 4 homeless people use drugs a lot. (source: [Crisis Skylight Final Report of the University of York evaluation](#))

But being homeless is really, really, hard so some people do to help them cope. This is why we want to get people into homes as quick as possible.

### ***'Why do homeless people have dogs if they can't afford a home?'***

You can talk about how dogs offer company and friendship. Dogs love being outside, going on walks. Maybe ask if they have a dog, the best bits about having a dog and when the dog is most happy (with their family and when they get to go outside and on walks). Mention that there are other charities that help homeless people's dogs with food, grooming etc such as All4Paws in Edinburgh.

### ***'Why can't the government just give everyone a home?'***

This is a really big question, it's important not to get too political when answering it. Simply put the government could give everyone a home but it's really complicated because anyone can become homeless and so it's hard to keep track of everyone that is entering homelessness. However, we are trying to help the government make it less complicated and put the systems in place so that everyone is looked after, and no one gets missed out.

## Connecting with Students

When engaging with students (particularly University students) it is important to think about the ways in which you deliver your session – are there ways you can make it different to a lecture and studying?

### Ways to contact students:

Many Students Unions have manifestos each year, so see if you can find information on their website and if there are any actions for the third sector/community engagement/homelessness.

Student Unions also have different sub-groups – there is usually one for fundraising and they like to choose a Charity of the Year so selling Crisis as a potential COTY may engage them for longer. You can usually find information on Student Unions in your area by going to the website of the Universities in your area.

Some Universities have a registered charity on site for example Swansea Uni – these can be good to connect with and offer talks.

Connect with University Employability/Careers Hubs.

### Top tips

- **Be memorable and engaging** - make your presentation memorable and engaging, but not in a cringey way. If you have teens/students of your own, ask them what might work for them. Icebreaker style activities tend to switch students off.
- **Don't be text heavy** - students do like to have something to look at, but not something text heavy.
- **What can I do?** Have a next step/action they can take – QR codes are popular or give them website info.
- **What impact will I have?** Be clear about the ways they can make an impact – social responsibility and giving back is important to them and they want to know what they will get out of it.
- **Leave them with information.** If in Wales, try and make it bilingual.
- **Take sweets if you can.** Students love freebies – sweets, food etc!
- **What help is there in my area?** Make sure you have signposting info about local services – there may be students who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and this can be helpful.
- **Be prepared** that some students may not want to listen.



## Connecting with businesses

As a Crisis Community Advocate you may wish to connect with businesses in your area to explain the benefits of supporting Crisis and how we can end homelessness. This can take many forms, including fundraising and donating their time/expertise to support Crisis' initiatives, either nationally or at a local level or joining our Homelessness Alliance.

When contacting a business, it is best to identify persons who can lead activity in support of Crisis. Below we have outlined ways to do this.

### Who to approach

When you are looking at contacting a local business, it's a good idea to consider any contacts you have who work for the business or may know/be related to a staff member. This can quickly help you learn who is the right person within the company to speak to.

If you don't have any personal links to a business, you should be able to find more information about the company online, including contact details. You can look on their website, online business communities such as LinkedIn, or even on Companies House to find out basic information.

It's always worth checking if a business has a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) representative or a Charity Champion – this person or persons will be most appropriate to contact in the first instance. In businesses that don't have these roles, speaking to a key decision maker (e.g. a director) can help you get quicker buy-in and make them more likely to take action to support Crisis.

### How businesses can support Crisis

**Organise a fundraising event in the workplace:** this can range from something as easy as a sweepstake, having a collection tin on the premises, holding a company BBQ, or arranging a golf day. You can ask the company what types of events interest their staff and consider how they can make it easy for the staff to get involved. Christmas is a popular time for staff to fundraise, however other times throughout the year such as summer sporting tournaments (Wimbledon) and TV series (such as Great British Bake Off) are also popular.

**Supporting a Crisis campaign/event:** asking the company to take part in a Crisis event (such as Icebreaker) can be an easy way for the business to get on board where planning/organisation is minimal. Some of our events and campaigning activity could take place in an office space, or employees could take part in as a team.

**Taking part in a third-party event:** Many national and local events such as runs, challenge events, abseiling are organised events with many charities taking part (e.g London Marathon). Take part individually or as a team has benefits to the business as well as raising funds and awareness for Crisis. Popular events include Three Peaks Challenge, Skydiving, half, and full marathons.

**Choosing Crisis as their Charity of the Year:** many businesses choose to support one or several charities over a fixed period and arrange a variety of activities in this time – consider asking if the business has a Charity of the Year, learn more about the application process and encourage them to consider Crisis at the next opportunity.

**Donating to Crisis:** If company/employee fundraising is not feasible, the business could consider making a one-off or regular donation to Crisis. Some businesses hold a pot of money to donate to charities each year, it's well worth explaining the work and impact of Crisis locally to encourage them to support us.

**A formal partnership:** Some businesses may wish to support Crisis in a more formal way, for example donating a percentage of proceeds from a certain product/service that they offer. This would require a formal agreement with Crisis so direct them to our Corporate Partnerships Team – [CorporatePartnerships@crisis.org.uk](mailto:CorporatePartnerships@crisis.org.uk).

**Volunteering/donating their time:** It's not all about fundraising! Businesses can also support Crisis by giving their time and sharing their knowledge and expertise. Businesses do need to be one of our formal corporate partners to access volunteering opportunities.

**Joining the Crisis Homelessness Alliance:** The Homelessness Alliance is a set of pledges employers take to support people experiencing homelessness in the workplace. It has been developed by Crisis in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. More information on the alliance can be found [here](#) – this is a great way for organisations to take action.

## **Why should businesses support Crisis?**

There are many reasons why a company might want to support Crisis, below we have outlined some common ways.

**To give back or meet their CSR goals/targets:** many businesses will have their own corporate social policy, where they aim to have a positive impact within their local community through their work. This could be through fundraising/donating money or supporting local initiatives. You may be able to see these goals on a company's website. Consider how you can link supporting Crisis' work with achieving these goals when speaking to a company.

**Positive press:** some companies are interested in supporting or working with charities for the positive publicity this could lead to.

**Addressing a specific interest/challenge in their area:** some businesses may have strong interest in ending homelessness, or the topic of homelessness may align well with their purpose/industry. Homelessness may also be something especially prevalent in their local area. The company's mission and values may align closely with Crisis' ambition to end homelessness for good, highlighting these similarities can help convince them to support Crisis.

**Supporting their staff:** the Homelessness Alliance means they are better equipped to support any staff experiencing homelessness.

## Keeping you and our supporters safe

It is important we do all we can to keep you and all our volunteers and supporters safe. We know accidents can happen, even in a low-risk situation. Therefore, we need to ensure appropriate risk assessments and insurance are in place, in case the unexpected happens.

### Assessing Risk

If you are speaking to a group in the community in person, it is important you complete a dynamic risk assessment to ensure you take care of yourself. Please consider the following:

- Location – if you are going to a group you don't know, where are you going, where can you park, how many people. You can see appendix – for some tips on keeping safe while driving.
- Ensure someone knows where you are and when you will be back; let them know if your plans change.
- Timing – will the talk be finishing late at night – if so, can you park nearby?
- Ensure you have your mobile phone with you, it is fully charged and if it is pay as you go that you have enough credit. Make sure it is always switched on and if you are driving you can use it hands free. Always keep it within easy reach.
- You should not be responsible for the health and safety at the venue, the lead for the community group should be responsible for this, but ensure you know where the exits etc are.

### Problems During Meetings / Activity

It is unlikely this will occur, but if you encounter aggression or violence - this includes inappropriate physical contact, which may or may not result in pain and/or injury or offence, and other non-physical abuse including verbal, racial or sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, gesturing, swearing, shouting, insults, innuendo, intimidating behaviour causing fear or emotional upset then you must:

- Call 999 if there is an immediate danger or threat to your physical safety.
- Leave the meeting and get to a place of safety as quickly as possible.
- Protect yourself before protecting Crisis or your own property.
- Contact your contact at Crisis as soon as possible.

If you find yourself in danger and are unable to speak freely, you should emphasise to the antagonist that you are expected to call in at a pre-determined time, and that if you don't, the alarm will be raised.

Please do report any incidents to Crisis so that we can learn from and ensure you are supported appropriately.

## Insurance for your volunteer activities

As a volunteer, speaking to local community groups on behalf of Crisis is included in our insurance policy.

## Safeguarding

Crisis is committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of young people and adults at risk, by ensuring that we have appropriate arrangements in place to provide a safe and secure environment and to deal effectively with any safeguarding issues that arise.

As a Crisis Community Advocate Volunteer, it is important you are aware of the signs and indicators and know what to do if you have any concerns. Concerns may arise as a result of a single incident, allegation or disclosure; or an accumulation of indicators and/or signs. You can read Crisis safeguarding policies [here](#) – these include further information not just on our processes but on the signs and indicators of abuse.

It is the responsibility of all staff/volunteers working within Crisis to be aware of any potential safeguarding issues and to report concerns where they believe a young person or adult has been or is at risk of abuse or significant harm. Any concerns should be reported as soon as possible to your Crisis contact.

In case of emergency or danger to yourself or other volunteers, you should always call the relevant emergency services immediately.

## Data Protection

It is really important that you consider data protection when reaching out to your community. Crisis is required to adhere to the principles of GDPR, and as a volunteer representing Crisis you are also required to.

As a Crisis Community Advocate you may have access to:

- Someone's name
- Their contact number
- Their email
- Information on their personal experience of homelessness if they share it

Please ensure you treat this information with the sensitivity and dignity you would expect yours to be treated with and keep it secure.

## Communicating with Supporters

When reaching out to your community contacts, you can use either your corporate email address or your personal email address (your organisations' security restrictions may mean you need to use a personal email address). Please consider the tone of your communications whilst you are representing Crisis.

If you are given contact details that are a group email eg [joe.bloggs@scouts.org.uk](mailto:joe.bloggs@scouts.org.uk) this is public information. However, if you are communicating with someone using their personal email address, please keep this information secure and confidential.

## **Our registrations, name & logos**

Crisis will provide you with a template presentation, 10 key messages and a template you can use to email and reach out to groups in your area - these have been produced in the approved format.

Please see below our registered charity details in case you are asked for them:

**Registered charity numbers: England & Wales 1082947, Scotland SC040094.  
Company No: 4024938.**

**Registered address: Crisis, 66 Commercial Street, London, E1 6LT**

## Lone Working Guidance

Volunteering in your local community means there will be times you are undertaking activity alone. It is important you think about the situations where you might be alone and evaluate the risk, taking steps to either undertake an activity with other people or continue as safely as possible.

It is incredibly rare that incidents happen. However, in the case of an incident you are our sole priority, and it is important you put your safety first. Any materials or money can be replaced so please do not put yourself at risk trying to safeguard these.

Below are some general tips for staying safe:

### Driving

#### Preparation

- Plan your route and take sat nav or appropriate maps.
- Ensure the vehicle is in good order and you have enough fuel.
- Take warm clothes in case of breakdown or bad weather.
- Keep valuables out of sight.
- Park in well-lit areas, if possible with the car facing in the direction of exit.
- When returning to the vehicle, check the back seat.
- Carry a mobile phone for emergency use.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers or offer lifts.
- Carry a torch at night.

#### Incidents

- If you see an incident, do not stop unless it is safe to do so; it may be safer to drive on and summon help.
- If you are forced to stop, keep your engine running and lock the windows and doors; leave enough space in front of the vehicle to be able to pull out and drive away; drive off if you feel threatened.
- If you experience someone with Road Rage:
  - do not stop to confront the other driver.
  - If a car pulls in front of you and you are approached, stay in your vehicle with the doors locked and windows closed; keep the engine running and drive away as soon as possible.
  - If you think you are being followed or feel threatened, raise the alarm by using hazard lights and horn; if possible, drive on until you reach a busy area such as a garage or service station.
  - If you cannot get away make as much noise and fuss as you can; sound the horn, flash your lights etc. To gain others' attention.

- If you are stationary and have a mobile phone, ring the emergency services.

### **Breakdowns**

- If you're on a motorway or dual carriageway park as near as possible to an emergency phone.
- Leave your car by the passenger door, wear high visibility clothing if possible.
- When making an emergency call, face oncoming traffic, so you can see if another vehicle is approaching.
- Tell the operator if you are a lone female.
- Never cross the carriageway.
- Wait behind the barrier, beside your vehicle if this is safe.
- Ask for ID from uniformed persons to ensure they are bona fide.

### **Travelling by public transport**

- Plan your route (outward and return) in advance.
- Try to avoid travelling alone late at night.
- Wait in busy, well-lit areas if possible; be aware of the location of exits.
- Have your fare/ticket ready and separate from other valuables.
- Try to keep one hand free.
- Sit downstairs on double-decker buses.
- Try to avoid falling asleep.

### **Travelling on foot**

- Think ahead, be alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Keep one hand free if possible.
- Avoid short-cuts, underpasses or poorly lit areas.
- Walk facing on-coming traffic.
- Do not hitchhike or accept lifts from strangers.
- Keep valuables out of site and avoid areas where antisocial groups may gather.
- Avoid wearing earphones which obstruct your hearing.
- If you carry a personal alarm, ensure it works and is easily accessible.



## Appendix

### 1. Email template for reaching out to groups to offer to talk to them

Hello.....,

I'm reaching out to you to introduce myself as a Crisis Community Advocate Volunteer and to offer to come and talk to your group about homelessness.

Crisis is the national charity for people experiencing homelessness. All of us need a decent home, to be healthy and to thrive. Currently, though, this basic human need isn't being met for so many people across the UK – **this is unacceptable.**

At Crisis we work side by side with thousands of people each year as they find ways out of homelessness. Crisis provides practical support to help people access benefits, healthcare services, employment opportunities and more. **Their main aim is to relieve the huge pressure of homelessness, by helping people find safe and affordable homes as quickly as possible.**

Crisis prioritises supporting people who face the most complex barriers to ending their homelessness and often have nowhere else to turn. As well as helping to end homelessness for individuals, Crisis works to address the root causes that push people into homelessness in the first place. You can read some of the stories of people Crisis has helped out of homelessness [here](#).

Crisis campaigns on the political changes needed to end homelessness for good and conduct research to understand and highlight the scale, causes and consequences of homelessness.

As a Community Advocate Volunteer, I'm passionate about ensuring our communities understand homelessness, the causes and how it can be ended. I'd like to offer to come and talk to your group, to raise awareness of homelessness and how we can all be part of the solution in ending it.

It's only by coming together, as a community, that we can end homelessness.

I look forward to hopefully hearing back from you.  
Best wishes

## **2. Template social media content that can be used to share your role**

Could you be part of the solution for ending homelessness? I am.

As a Crisis Community Advocate Volunteer, I'm happy to talk to you or your group about homelessness, its causes and the solutions that can end it. Ending homelessness needs everyone to work together, and the national homelessness charity Crisis is driving forward the need for change in government policies and practices, whilst enabling communities to be part of the solution.

Message me if you would like to know more.

To learn more about the work of Crisis visit <https://www.crisis.org.uk/>.