

SAFE & SOUND

DEPAUL

Homelessness has no place

Your support in action. Together we're changing young lives.

“
**I KNOW HOW
YOU FEEL,
BECAUSE I'VE
BEEN THERE**
”

Sophie used her experience to make sure school children at risk of homelessness get the support she never had.

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HOMELESSNESS HAS NO PLACE...



Welcome

I hope that as you read this year's Safe & Sound, you will be inspired by the stories that your support makes possible.

You'll meet our cover star Sophie on page 8. She experienced homelessness at a young age and had no idea where to turn. Today, as one of our Client Reps, she's transformed that into something powerful: delivering workshops in schools, showing young people that things can get better.

That same spirit runs through the strategy our CEO Alexia Murphy sets out on page 3: stopping young people experiencing homelessness before it starts, by getting them the tailored support they need at the right moment.

We know that for people with complex needs, the support they need is often not available. On pages

4 and 5, Nicola Harwood, our Executive Director of Operations, explains why, for people who fall between the cracks of mainstream services, we are the people who say yes.

Family breakdown is the leading cause of youth homelessness. On pages 6 and 7, Reconnect worker Kerry explains how our education workshops and

family mediation service reach young people early – and shares the story of one young girl whose relationship at home was transformed, just in time for Christmas.

On page 9, meet the staff whose dedication goes far beyond their job description, doing everything they can to help young people achieve their dreams. A worker who supported a young person through every stage of their job search to secure their first job and Tony, who gives up the comfort of his bed each year for the cold ground, so no young person faces homelessness alone.

On page 10, meet Nightstop hosts Janice and John – and see how your generosity and their kindness work hand in hand – providing young people with a safe place to stay when they have nowhere else to go.

Your support is no small thing. It is a sign to every young person we work with that they are not alone, and that someone cares.

Thank you, from all of us.

Kristina Hedderly-Perez
Executive Director
of Fundraising and
Communications

Campaigning for change: Major policy wins for young people

We're delighted to report our campaigning is driving real change. Late last year, the Government announced its much-welcomed National Plan to End Homelessness, including two major policy wins for young people – wins we fought for alongside partners.

One key win is the reform of Housing Benefit rules: young people in supported accommodation who work can now keep more of their earnings, so work genuinely pays. Another is a dedicated chapter on

young people in the Homelessness Code of Guidance to ensure consistent council support.

Our Director of Development and External Affairs, Dan Dumoulin, is excited by Government plans to explore early intervention in schools – something we already deliver with great success. “We welcome this strategy as a solid step forward,” Dan says. “We stand ready to work with the Government to ensure it leads to lasting change – and we hope it is followed by stronger commitments to end homelessness for good.”



Together, we can stop homelessness before it even begins

CEO Alexia Murphy shares Depaul UK's new strategy for the next five years and explains why prevention is the only way to end homelessness for good.



Stopping homelessness before it starts is at the heart of everything we do at Depaul UK – and none of our prevention work would be possible without our supporters.

We all know the adage “a stitch in time saves nine”, well at Depaul UK we apply this preventative approach to ending youth homelessness too. Recently, when designing our new five-year strategy we asked ourselves the question: What difference does preventing a young person from becoming homeless make, compared to helping them at a point of crisis?

Could the difference include helping them to stay in work or education, enabling them to build a more resilient future? Could it help to rebuild fractured family relationships before it is too late – supporting families to stay together and support each other? Could preventing homelessness ensure that a young person's mental health doesn't suffer to a point where they are utterly overwhelmed and concentrating only on surviving? Is it possible that early intervention could ultimately help communities stop paying for the cost of homelessness and start building better futures?

Of course, the answer to all these questions is yes. Let's not wait

until a young person is sleeping on the street or riding the night bus all night. Instead let's commit to community education, family mediation, and providing emergency accommodation through Nightstop to intervene early before a young person is in crisis.

This is why prevention sits at the heart of our new strategy – and it's made possible by your support.

Caitlin, a young person whose relationship with her dad had completely broken down, was helped by our prevention services. In the past she'd often run away after arguments and was at risk of becoming homeless. Our Reconnect family mediators worked with Caitlin and her dad, helping each of them hear the other's perspective. She later told our team: “We've finally got that dad-daughter relationship I always wanted.” That's what prevention is – the difference between nights spent on the street or days spent building their future.

A wider focus

Of course, the homelessness crisis is also caused by a lack of suitable and affordable housing available for those who need it. To this end, over the next five years we will ensure Depaul UK provides more homes to those who

are often overlooked, including young people leaving care, rough sleepers and those whose lives are affected by complex needs.

Our job is to unpick that complexity to find a way of providing support that works for them, so they can move forward with their lives. For someone with complex mental health needs, for example, that might mean supported housing with specialist support.

Our story has always been about offering high-quality, individual support to those in greatest need – and that is what we continue to do today.

And sometimes it's the small things that matter most. One young woman we supported, Abi, didn't qualify as a care leaver, even though her needs were just as great. When we helped her finally get a bed and a mattress for her unfurnished flat, that was the moment she started to feel like it was her home.

One of our values is to celebrate the potential in people and we do just that. The young people we work with are phenomenal, and being part of the change in their lives is just the biggest thrill.

We help break down the barriers that are stopping young people from achieving the same as their peers – getting into work, going to college or completing an apprenticeship. Having the individual support they need and not having to worry about where they're sleeping tonight.

Together with you, our amazing supporters, we changed more than 3,900 young lives last year. Our goal is to help even more young people this year. Thank you so much for making it possible.

** Source: Shelter*



WE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO SAY YES

Nicola Harwood, Executive Director of Operations, explains why Depaul UK is there for the young people other services can't reach.



Every day, thanks to our supporters, Depaul UK is there for young people who have nowhere else to turn. A care leaver stepping into adulthood with no family behind them. A young person released from prison with nowhere safe to go. A refugee rebuilding life in a country they're still finding their way around. Someone with complex mental health needs unsupported by other services.

These 'people on the margins' are at a higher risk of homelessness than other groups. And they often fall between the cracks of mainstream services. When someone has multiple needs at once – a history of trauma, a mental health crisis, no family network, uncertain immigration status – services built around a single

need can struggle to help them. Too many of these young people end up with no door open at all.

These are the people our supporters' generosity reaches, and they are at the heart of everything we are working to do.

Our approach is rooted in our Vincentian values – no matter what someone has been through, we will support them. I'm always struck by a quote from St Vincent de Paul: "What must be done." For St Vincent, this was a simple instruction: if you can see someone who needs help and you are able to give it, then you must. When I think about the people other services have found too difficult to reach, that quote feels more relevant than ever. We are the people who say yes rather than the people who say no.

A commitment to care leavers

I am especially passionate about young people who have been in care. Figures for England show that

more than one in 10 young care leavers (aged 18–20) face or are at risk of homelessness.

For most young people, turning 18 is something to celebrate, but for many of those we support, it's a milestone that leaves them feeling scared. On reaching 18, they are expected to step into independence. The structures that have held them up are about to fall away, and it can be hard for them to imagine their future.

We work closely with their social workers and personal advisors to make their transition as smooth as possible, and to be the present, stable support that they need.

Why our support is different

We work with individuals to understand their specific needs, and with consistent, tailored support we can help them grow and thrive.

Our progression coaches work



“We are the people who say yes rather than the people who say no.”

alongside young people over time, building trust. For some young people, it's the first time an adult in their life has reliably shown up and done what they said they would do. We celebrate every step, no matter how small. Turning up to college, sitting down for a cup of tea with a support worker – these can be big achievements.

Marina is a care leaver who came to our supported accommodation with complex mental health needs. She'd had nine different foster placements by the age of 18, and the instability badly affected her mental health.

What makes the difference for someone like Marina is the tailored support for her individual needs. A familiar face who knows that packing and moving is an anxiety

trigger for her. A staff member who sits with her when she's nervous about communal spaces. Structured support sessions at times that suit her, alongside informal conversations over a cup of tea. Staff have seen her confidence gradually build. “I feel a bit more grounded,” she says.

For Marina, an environment that feels settled, staffed by people who know her history, has helped her to begin healing. “The shared space feels warm,” she says. “We even have a sensory room with bean bags and a view. It doesn't feel like formal shared accommodation, like other places I have been.”

Our buildings are designed to support people to flourish, and to feel warm and welcoming rather



than institutional. The kitchen, with a table and chairs, is at the centre of things. There are houseplants and pictures on the walls, not notices and lists of rules.

Local authority funding covers the basics of our supported accommodation. It's our supporters who fund the rest – from mental health support to the client involvement work that gives young people a voice in how our services are run to the finishing touches that make our accommodation feel like home. We couldn't do this without their generosity.

Knowing that our supporters believe in them sends a clear message to these young people: they are not forgotten, and they are not facing this alone.



It starts with listening

Homelessness often begins long before a young person leaves home. Through our prevention work, we help families rebuild relationships before they reach crisis point. Reconnect worker Kerry knows just how life-changing that support can be – because she once needed it herself.

At 16, Kerry's relationship with her mum broke down. For the next two years, she moved between friends' sofas and her grandmother's house, never feeling settled or secure.

Today, she helps other young people avoid the same experience.

"I can now see it from my mum's perspective," Kerry says. "She did try. But she didn't have enough support, and neither did I."

That understanding shapes everything she does. Having experienced

family breakdown herself, Kerry knows that homelessness rarely begins with someone leaving home. It often starts much earlier, when relationships become strained and families no longer know how to communicate.

Family breakdown is the leading cause of youth homelessness in the UK. Behind that broad term are many different pressures – financial worries, poor mental wellbeing, and social and cultural challenges that can place enormous strain

on family life. But with the right support at the right time, homelessness doesn't have to be the outcome.

That's why prevention is at the heart of our work.

Kerry first joined Depaul UK delivering our schools workshops, helping young people understand how homelessness can happen, recognise the warning signs and know where to turn if they are worried about what is happening at home.

"The workshops open up honest conversations and help young people

recognise risks in their own situation," she says. "At the same time, they're a safe space and an opportunity for them to ask for help."

Sometimes, that conversation is just the beginning.

When tensions at home continue to grow, young people can be referred to our Reconnect family mediation service, where Kerry now works. By bringing together our education workshops and Reconnect, we can offer support before a young person reaches crisis

point, helping families rebuild relationships before homelessness becomes a reality.

Every family's situation is different. Kerry begins by meeting each young person on their own, helping them find the words to express feelings that can be difficult to explain.

She introduces simple "I feel..." statements: "I feel like this when you do this, and this is what I'd like instead."

For many teenagers, it is the first time they have been given the language to talk honestly about what they are experiencing.

"We're not teaching them to avoid conflict," Kerry explains. "We're teaching them how to argue well – to disagree without it destroying everything."

One of the most powerful tools she uses is also one of the simplest: silence.

"Everyone feels like they have to fill a silence," she says. "I will just sit there."

Giving a young person time to think, process and find the right words shows them that what they have to say matters. For many, it is the first time they have truly felt listened to.

"A lot of young people don't feel heard by adults," Kerry says. "So much of the feedback I get is: 'I felt heard.' That is often all it takes to start the change."

For Kerry, every conversation is an opportunity to help a young person avoid the journey she experienced herself. And thanks to our supporters, more young people can get help before family conflict ends in homelessness.

Because when families receive support early, relationships can be rebuilt, futures can be changed, and homelessness can be prevented before it starts.



"So much of the feedback I get is: 'I felt heard.' That is often all it takes to start the change."

"The one that stays with me" – Kerry shares one girl's story

It's our supporters who help to make these stories possible. This one began with a workshop and ended with a family back together at Christmas.

I often think about a girl I first met during a school workshop. She was 14. At first, she was quiet and withdrawn but started to open up. Then one day she wasn't there. Her friends explained she'd argued with her grandmother, who was her main carer, and had gone back to her mother's house, where there was a history of violence.

We referred her to Reconnect. After spending time with the family and lots of listening, it became clear the difficulties went deeper than the conflict at home. She was struggling at

school. She had tried to say she couldn't cope and been told she was fine.

Through the local authority I got her an advocate, to help her voice be heard.

This led to better understanding from teachers, a time-out pass for lessons, and the homework load reduced to something she could manage. As the pressure at school got easier, life at home grew calmer too. She was able to settle back permanently with her grandmother.

At Christmas, with the help of a local charity that arranged gifts for children in need, I delivered presents to her. She was there in her Christmas pyjamas, saying 'thank you'. And her nana was just over the moon. It was really lovely.

Sophie used her experience to make sure school children at risk of homelessness get the support she never had.

As a Client Rep, Sophie used her experience of homelessness during a placement in our education team to help shape Depaul UK services.

Sophie experienced abuse and neglect as a child, and by her teenage years had cycled in and out of homelessness, with no idea where to turn for help. "I didn't know that we could even go to the council," she says. It would be years before she found Depaul UK, but then she realised how much she could help others.

Sophie became one of our Client Reps, young people who use their experience of homelessness to help shape our services for others. "I found I could still be vulnerable and useful," she says. "And that meant something." If she could help even one young person avoid the trauma she experienced, that would be a win worth having.

The power of prevention

That's what drew Sophie towards a placement with our education team. "My journey with Depaul UK started quite late," she says. "I'd been homeless quite a few times and never knew where to go. Had I had these workshops, I would have known what to do."

It is a regret she carries for her whole family. "There are six of us," she says. "Six lives that could have been wildly different if we'd known interventions like this existed." It's thanks to



"There are six of us. Six lives that could have been wildly different if we'd known an intervention like this existed."

our supporters that these programmes give the early support Sophie wishes she'd had.

Connecting with young people

Sophie's placement involved helping prepare materials, reaching out to schools, and standing in front of a classroom herself. Sophie had expected to find it daunting. "I used to be quite frightened of large groups of teenagers," she admits.

What she found surprised her. As a teenager herself, Sophie had felt consistently underestimated. "I was never given enough credit as a young person, and it

sent me down the wrong path. A lot of the time I felt misunderstood." Looking at the students in front of her now, she saw something different. "You can guarantee that 99% of them are willing to listen and engage."

For the students, hearing from someone who has experienced homelessness changes everything. "Being able to say 'I know how you feel because I've been there' adds a layer of validation for a child who might think no one really understands," Sophie explains. "If you can see that someone's been through it and is now stood

at the front, it says: OK, well, if you can, I can."

None of this would be possible without the supporters who fund our client involvement work, and all the work our education team does.

Sophie's own journey forward

The placement gave Sophie more than the chance to help others – it changed how she saw herself. "I learned a lot about my abilities," she says. Her confidence began to grow. "Becoming part of the team myself, I felt accepted," she says. It helped prepare her for her own next step: returning to work.

The difference it makes

Looking back, Sophie is clear about what the placement taught her, and why she wants the work to continue. "I didn't know any charity did work like this, but it's so important. School isn't just for academic education; it should be for life skills as well."

Her hope for the future is that fewer young people will ever reach the point she once did. "If we can reduce the risk and increase the number of people who know that help is available, that makes me feel really good." Thanks to Depaul UK's supporters, that work continues.

People like this change lives

Our staff go above and beyond to support young people experiencing homelessness.

Supporting a young person into their first job

Cystal is a Progression Coach who goes above and beyond to understand what a young person's individual needs are, to support them in building their confidence and learning the skills they need to move on with their life.

Recently she supported a young person through every stage of their job search – working closely with them to apply for apprenticeships and jobs, and offering practical guidance with CV writing, making applications, and preparing for interviews.

With consistent, hands-on support throughout, Crystal ensured they felt encouraged and well-prepared at every stage.

As interview dates approached, the young person had nothing suitable to wear. Crystal offered guidance to help them choose their interview outfit and helped them feel ready to start work. With Crystal's support, they secured a job and are now ready to move on to the next stage of their journey.

"Crystal is hardworking, caring and proactive," her colleagues say – and it certainly shows.



Tony sleeps out to shine a light on homelessness

Armed with little more than a sleeping bag and a big heart, Tony, Regional Engagement Officer for the South East, has for the fifth time swapped the comfort of his bed for the cold ground of Lord's Cricket Ground. Tony took part in the CEO Sleepout, an annual event to raise awareness of homelessness and vital funds.

Through this latest night under the stars, Tony raised more than £3,800, bringing his all-time fundraising total for Depaul UK to an impressive £13,500. For Tony, it is about more than the money raised: it is a reminder of Depaul UK's mission to end homelessness, and a chance to show solidarity with the young people we support, even for one night. By sleeping out year after year, Tony helps provide young people with a safe place to stay, a chance to thrive, and the opportunity of a brighter future.

SHOUT OUT

TO OUR FANTASTIC SUPPORTERS

Welcome to our community shout-out page – where we celebrate and thank all the communities, teams and individuals who are volunteering or raising funds to support young people facing homelessness. Together we're changing young lives.

Art, talks and a skipathon: three schools raise £4,000 for young people

Thank you to the pupils of St Mary's, St Saviour's, and St Margaret's Church of England Primary Schools in Walthamstow and Barking, who raised an incredible £4,000 to support young people experiencing homelessness.

Together, these three schools make up Genesis Education Trust. Through their "Seeds of Change" project, the children learned about the realities of homelessness, breaking down common misconceptions and highlighting the need for compassion. They raised funds through a sponsored skipathon, presented TED-style talks to their parents, and created beautiful artwork for a charity auction, with their efforts culminating in end-of-term Festivals of Hope.

Executive Principal Amir Lemouchi said: "We are passionate about enabling children to be active change makers. Working collaboratively with



Depaul UK has shown them that they can drive positive change. As a result, our children are full of confidence to advocate for social justice in their community and beyond."

If you or your community group would like to take on your own fundraising challenge, we would love to hear from you.

Visit depaul.org.uk/fundraising



**Scan the
QR code using
your phone**

Going the extra mile: Our marathon heroes



Total amount raised so far

£22,500

Our amazing Team Depaul runners have been raising vital funds to help young people facing homelessness.

OSB Group rallied a brilliant team of five runners across two races: Raees and Corey at the Great

Birmingham Half Marathon, and Danielle, Jamie and Roger at the London Marathon. We're so grateful to them and their fellow runners Stuart from DHL Supply Chain (Great Birmingham Half Marathon), and Charlie from Alfa Financial Systems (London Marathon).

We were delighted to have five runners in the London Landmarks Half Marathon: David, Victoria and Tomasz, from Andrews Property Group, Kevin from Gatehouse Bank and Katherine.

A huge well done to Isobel from Gleeds, and Dan, who took on the Great Manchester Run Half Marathon.

The Manchester Marathon saw an extraordinary 11 runners cross the line for Depaul UK – including Christopher, one of our own Nightstop hosts, and Terry, a member of Depaul UK staff – alongside Kaisa, Neville, Conner, Joe, James, Chris, Sam, Danny and Nadeem.

Every step they run helps ensure young people have a safe place to stay, a chance to thrive, and the opportunity of a brighter future.

“There’s always space at our table”



After years doing humanitarian work in Africa, Janice and John continue their lifelong commitment to helping others. Today, they open their home as Nightstop hosts.

After decades of humanitarian aid work across Africa, they returned to Manchester with their three children looking for a way to continue this work.

They discovered Nightstop through a food bank where John was volunteering. More than 50 young people have now stayed in

their home.

Every safe night in a Nightstop host's home is made possible by supporters like you, whose generous donations fund the costs of running the service.

“When guests arrive, most just want to go to their room. We show them where they’re staying, give some options for dinner, ask if they

want to join us, and give them the WiFi code,” Janice says.

Some arrive frightened, exhausted or traumatised. Janice and John give them space, warmth and no expectation.

Small moments can become significant ones. One of their earliest guests was a young man of 19 who didn’t know how to cook and had been living on chips and cheese. Janice asked what he’d like to eat. He said chips and cheese. So, they started there. She suggested a few other things; he pulled out a notebook and wrote down everything she said. Together they worked through a cheese toastie, rice and an omelette. Simple things that helped him build skills for independent living.

When friends ask about safety, Janice’s answer never changes. “It’s very safe, and a really easy thing to do. Nightstop are there for us 24/7. The people who stay with us don’t need looking after – they just need a warm, safe place to stay, and peace. Just like most of us.”

If you have a spare room and would like to find out more about becoming a Nightstop host, scan the QR code or visit depaul.org.uk/nightstop



 **Scan the**
QR code using
your phone

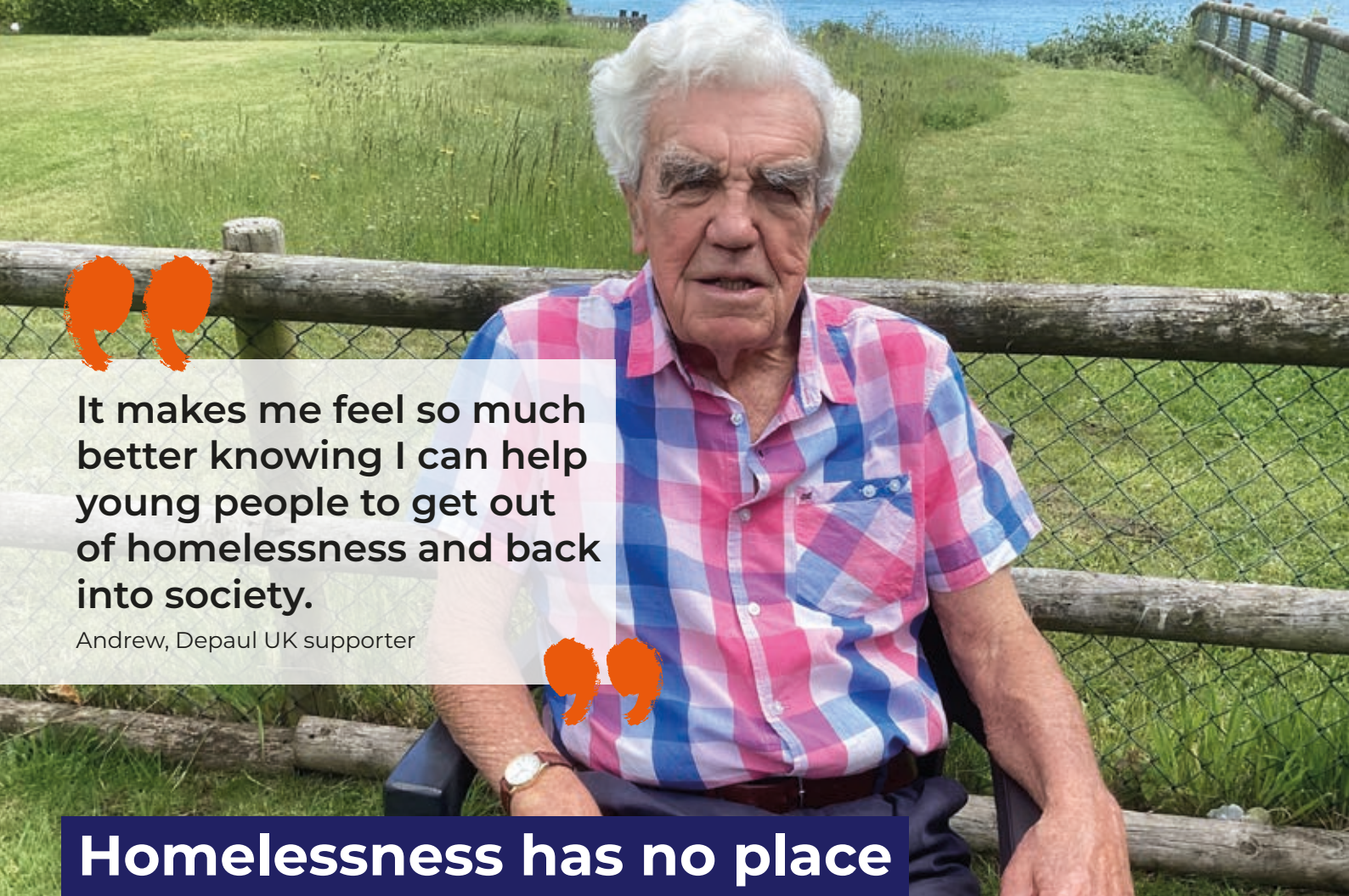


Archbishop Richard Moth becomes Patron of Depaul UK

We are delighted that Archbishop Richard Moth has become a patron of Depaul UK, following his formal installation as the Archbishop of Westminster in February. At his installation, he highlighted the importance of “the protection of the vulnerable;

the plight of the refugee and the dispossessed”.

Depaul UK was founded in 1989 by Cardinal Hume, and since then the incumbent Archbishop of Westminster has been our patron. We are honoured that Archbishop Richard Moth continues this tradition.



It makes me feel so much better knowing I can help young people to get out of homelessness and back into society.

Andrew, Depaul UK supporter

Homelessness has no place

You can help end it

For over 35 years, we have been helping young people rebuild their lives and realise their dreams. But we have not done it alone.

Kind supporters like you – people who share our belief that homelessness has no place – have helped change young people's lives.

Together, we have already achieved incredible things. Part of that is thanks to those who've remembered us in their Will.

By leaving a gift in your Will to Depaul UK, you can help change a young person's life. Your lasting legacy could provide a young person with a safe place, a chance to thrive, and the opportunity of a brighter future.

You could make a difference

If you'd like to find out more, we're here to help.
If you have any questions, please email

julia.billington@depaulcharity.org.uk

 **Scan the QR code**

using your phone to visit

depaul.org.uk/wills



Depaul UK

Sherborne House
34-36 Decima Street,
London, SE1 4QQ
e [supportercare@
depaulcharity.org.uk](mailto:supportercare@depaulcharity.org.uk)
t +44 (0)20 7939 1256



Stories used reflect real life experiences of young people in Depaul UK's support services. Names and photos have been changed to protect identities.
Your donation will support Depaul UK's services wherever it is needed most.

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