# ?Spread Christmas cheer through the year for homeless people in South London

**Monday 19 November, 2018**

**Spread Christmas cheer through the year to empower homeless people in South London**

The 999 Club today (Monday) launched its first festive campaign by encouraging people to buy virtual Christmas stockings to transform the lives of homeless people in Lewisham and beyond.

The campaign - **Spread Christmas cheer through the year** - highlights that homelessness and the fear of becoming homeless is a devastating experience no matter the time of year. Loneliness, isolation, exhaustion, fear of being attacked and the physical and mental scars of life without a secure home happen every day, across all seasons.

At Christmas time we often receive generous donations of clothes and toiletries, but we don't have space to store all of these and they may not be exactly what people need at a given time.

This year, instead of goods we're asking the public to consider giving a **virtual stocking** which will allow us to buy essential items, specific to the needs of each person, throughout the year.

This can be done individually or collaboratively as an office, school, class or community group.

The 999 Club also welcomes **regular donations** from just £10 a month, to help keep our vital services open and free to those who need them most.

Go to https://999club.org/ christmas/ for more information and to donate.

Fashion designer Irene, who helped launch the campaign, has spent over a month in the night shelter after she was made homeless. She said:

*"It's very difficult to explain what it's like, being homeless. It's very hard knowing that each night you need to find somewhere to sleep, to have a proper good night's sleep, and have somewhere my kids can come to visit me."*

**The £15 First Night pack**

The first thing Billy* asked for when he arrived at our Deptford night shelter this summer was some new underwear and socks. The £15 First Night pack could include essential toiletries and underwear such as socks, pants, razors, shower gel, sanitary items, deodorant, a toothbrush and toothpaste. These basics help clients who arrive at our night shelter or day centre on the first step to a new life away from the streets.

**The £25 ID Pack**

When people come to the 999 Club there are many physical barriers to them accessing the services and support they need. To access housing, bank accounts and employment you have to be able to prove who you are and where you live and this can be extremely challenging for homeless people.

We help clients such as Giselle* by setting up the 999 Club as their "care of" address then ordering a replacement birth certificate and photo ID. This pack could cover the cost for getting a client a new birth certificate, photo ID and an Oyster travel card with credit.

**The £50 Job Pack**

Some of the guests at our night shelter are "working homeless". Toni* worked in central London, but couldn't save enough for a rental deposit, and so ended up sleeping rough. Others, like Graeme* have interviews lined up but need to look smart enough to seal the deal. This pack could help a homeless person clinch that new job that changes their life. It could include: new shirt/polo-shirt, new jeans/trousers, underwear, socks, shoes, Oyster card and top-up.

**The 999 Club**

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Earlier this year, the 999 Club opened a summer shelter for the first time, thanks to generous donations of more than £20,000 through its crowdfunding campaign. It has since been awarded a grant of nearly £116,000 from the government's Rough Sleepers' Initiative to open its night shelter doors seven days a week, for more people (up to 30), until at least March 2019.

Tim Fallon, 999 Club chief executive, said: *"Homelessness is a year-round problem. We need help from the public now in this winter period but resources can also get stretched thin in the summer when there are fewer shelters open for rough sleepers. All donations from our Christmas campaign will be gratefully spent empowering the most vulnerable in our community to transform their lives."*

Damien Egan, Mayor of Lewisham, has announced the 999 Club as his chosen charity for 2018-20. He said: *"People rightly think more about homelessness when it's cold and wet outside, but with homelessness on the streets of Lewisham on the rise, people need the right kind of support to get back on their feet again, whatever the time of year."*

In Lewisham, the number of people officially recorded as being homeless has risen by 270 percent between 2011/12[1] and 2016/17[2], although the actual number of people rough sleeping is estimated to be higher.

**Names changed to protect identities.*

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

*Irene and Jerry help launch the 999 Club's festive fundraising campaign at its Deptford centre.*

**About the 999 Club**

The 999 Club is based in Deptford, in the London borough of Lewisham, and has a 26-year history of working with people who have experienced homelessness. We provide a warm welcome for people who are often ignored, isolated or stigmatised. We empower them to gain the confidence, skills and support needed to transform their lives. www.999Club.org

[1] https://www.mungos.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/chain_street_to_home_annual_report_2011-12.pdf

[2] https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports

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