



This press pack has been created to introduce you to the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) in England and Wales. Whether you're covering a local initiative, preparing a feature, or exploring stories of community impact, this document offers key information to support accurate and engaging reporting.

Inside, you'll find:

- An overview of who we are
- A summary of the work we do in communities across England and Wales
- Answers to commonly asked questions about our organisation and impact

The SVP is a grassroots-led charity tackling poverty, loneliness and hardship in practical, compassionate ways. We hope this pack helps you understand the heart of our work and the voices behind it. If you'd like further information, interviews, or local stories, our team is always happy to help. Please email [info@svp.org.uk](mailto:info@svp.org.uk), or write to:

St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales), Allenby House, Rees Way, Bradford, BD3 0DZ

## Who are the SVP?

- We are a nationwide front-line charity, dedicated to tackling poverty and supporting individuals and families facing loneliness, hardship, and the many challenges that life can bring.
- Our approach is practical and non-judgemental, supporting those in need, whether they require a second chance or just a friendly helping hand.
- The backbone of the organisation is our 8,900 volunteer members (encompassing all faiths or none), operating in 800 communities across England and Wales.
- We also have approximately 8,500 volunteers aged from as young as 7 up to 35, actively participating in our Young Vincentians programmes. They come from schools, youth hubs, universities and communities across England and Wales. They bring a special energy to our volunteering activities, making an impact with dedication and enthusiasm. [Mini Vinnies (7-11), Youth SVP (11-18) Young Adults -SVP 1833 (18-35)].
- We have approximately 300 dedicated members of staff.
- Our range of work is wide and varied and open to all.
- We are part of a larger international Catholic network that strives to find and help those in need, regardless of belief or background.



## **Members' Work**

- Each year we reach over 80,000 people in communities across England and Wales. This support includes material and practical assistance, as well as visiting and befriending.
- SVP volunteer members are also involved with the running of local soup runs and food banks, supporting asylum seekers and refugees, visiting older or isolated people and other community outreach.

## **Community Support Projects**

- We have 11 regional centres – known as Community Support Projects – placed in communities where need is greatest, working to break the barriers to inequality and diversity in a non-judgmental environment. (Cardiff, West Yorkshire (Bradford and Leeds), Sheffield, Newcastle, Wirral, Brighton, London (Brixton) and Southend-On-Sea).
- These are thriving community hubs that offer support and services such as debt advice, warm spaces, free hot meals, food parcels, ESOL classes and counselling.
- People do not require referrals, or appointments – our doors are open to anyone who needs help.

## **St Vincent's Shops**

- We also have St Vincent's community shops, furniture stores, and supported accommodation and we support several projects specifically working for people with disabilities.

## **Camps**

- Our children's camps are run by staff and volunteers in the summer, providing a holiday for children who might not otherwise get one. We also run holiday and play schemes in our local centres for families and children.

## **Advocacy Work**

- Our geographic spread and reach enable us to gain insight into the issues creating poverty and hardship. We use this to campaign into Government at all levels to change policy, providing a strong informed voice for those we help.



## How did the SVP start?

While studying at university, Frédéric Ozanam (now Blessed Frédéric Ozanam) was asked, “What is the Church doing to help people in need in our community?” This challenge stayed with him. Soon after, he noticed a poor family struggling to stay warm. He quietly left firewood on their doorstep, and later returned to visit and befriend them.

This small act of kindness sparked a bigger vision. In 1833, Frédéric and a group of friends founded the Society of St Vincent de Paul to offer practical support and friendship to people facing poverty and hardship.

Their belief—that even small actions can create lasting change—continues to guide the SVP’s work today.

- The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) was founded in 1833 in Paris by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, a young university student inspired to help people in need.
- The SVP takes its name from St Vincent de Paul (1581–1660), a Catholic priest known for his lifelong work caring for the poor and founding charitable organisations.
- St Louise de Marillac (1591–1660), a close collaborator of St Vincent de Paul, co-founded the Daughters of Charity, pioneering new ways to serve the vulnerable.
- Rosalie Rendu (1786–1856), a Daughter of Charity, played a vital role in inspiring and supporting early SVP members through her work in the poorest areas of Paris.
- These founders and saints shaped the SVP’s practical, compassionate, and non-judgemental approach to helping those facing poverty, loneliness, and hardship.
- Today, the SVP continues their legacy through thousands of volunteers across England and Wales, working in local communities to offer friendship, support, and hope.



## What do SVP's central staff teams/functions do?

The different staff teams and functions are here to support all the amazing work that happens in communities across England and Wales. Think of them like the people behind the scenes—helping everything run smoothly so that SVP members and volunteers can focus on helping others.

- The **Membership** team provides resource to guide and grow members' engagement and ensures their voices shape the SVP's direction and responds to their needs.
- The **Young Vincentian** programme empowers the future generations of SVP members with opportunities and support.
- The **Social Justice** team works on campaigns to tackle the big issues that cause poverty. They speak up for people in need and try to change unfair systems, so everyone has a better chance in life.
- **Fundraising** teams secure the financial means to keep the work of the SVP going, including the Community Support Projects which were set up in response to the needs of communities.
- Our **Retail** shops generate income to sustain members' work.
- The **Communications** function helps share the amazing work that members and volunteers do. They tell stories and run campaigns to help more people learn about the SVP, get involved, and support our work.
- **Governance** provides oversight and accountability, ensuring the SVP's activities align with its mission and legal and safeguarding responsibilities.

By listening to and being led by our members, these teams make sure volunteers have what they need—like tools, funding, publicity, support, and spaces to work from—to help people in their communities.



## What is the difference between a Member and a Volunteer?

- A **Member** is someone who joins a local SVP group (called a "Conference"). They work with others to spot local needs, plan and lead projects, and give direct support to people who need help.
  - Anyone can become a member – you don't need to be Catholic, but you do need to be accept our Christian values. We help all people irrespective of their background or religion.
- A **Volunteer** helps out by giving their time and skills in all sorts of ways – like working in our shops, supporting local centres, helping at children's camps, or lending a hand in an office.
  - Volunteers can be involved for a short time or longer, but unlike members, they don't usually take part in planning or leading local projects.

## How do you raise funds?

- We raise funds in a variety of ways – including through direct donations, grants, legacies, our Summer Raffles, seasonal appeals, and from matched funding from donors.

## Are funds raised by the Christmas /Lent Appeal directed to frontline services?

- The money raised during our Christmas and Lent Appeals can be used wherever it's most needed to help the SVP's work. This could mean helping people directly (frontline support) or strengthening the charity in other ways, like training volunteers or keeping our centres running. This kind of funding is called "unrestricted" because it gives us the flexibility to respond to the most urgent needs.
- We always share real stories from our work to show how these donations make a difference. Everything we do follows fundraising rules that make sure we're open and honest with the public.
- Sometimes we run special appeals for things like natural disasters or specific emergencies. These funds are "restricted", which means they're only used for the exact cause we asked for help with – and we make that really clear in our materials.



## **Why are you called the St Vincent De Paul society?**

The Society of St Vincent de Paul is named after St Vincent de Paul, a Catholic priest who lived in the 1600s. He is famous for his dedication to helping poor and vulnerable people. Inspired by his example of kindness, charity, and practical help, our society was founded to continue that mission. We follow his spirit by supporting people in need, no matter who they are or where they come from.

## **Other common questions may be about your personal experience of the SVP like, how did you get involved? How are you involved? What sort of work do you do with the SVP? Why do you think it's important?**

When you're asked questions about your personal experience with the SVP—like how you got involved, what you do, or why you think the work is important—try to be honest and speak from the heart. Share your own story and what volunteering means to you. For example, explain what first inspired you to join, what activities you take part in, and how it has affected you or the people you help. Remember, your personal experience makes the SVP's work real and relatable for others. Keep your answers clear, positive, and focused on the impact the SVP has on communities and individuals. If you don't know the answer to something, it's okay to say you'll find out and follow up later.



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# LOGOS AND SOCIAL MEDIA



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SVP   
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## Social Media for SVP England and Wales

[www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/SVPenglandandwales/>

<https://www.instagram.com/svpenglandwales/>

<https://twitter.com/SVPEnglandWales>

## Social Media for Young Vincentians

<https://svp.org.uk/involve-young-people>

<https://svp.org.uk/mini-vinnies>

<https://svp.org.uk/youth-svp>

<https://svp.org.uk/microsite/svp1833>

[facebook.com/youngvincentiansSVP](https://facebook.com/youngvincentiansSVP)

instagram: @svpyoungvincentians