

This resource has been produced by the St Vincent de Paul Society. The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) is a Catholic international volunteer organisation whose members work with anyone in need in their local community – the homeless, the elderly, prisoners, struggling families, people who are sick and lonely.

Leaders Guide

What do the stats say?

God did not create one kind of person, one type of work, or one way of being. He created a human family where each of us is called to reflect His love and become a light for others.
Many Stories, One Light celebrates the diversity of people, experiences, gifts, and vocations that make up our communities, united by a shared commitment to putting faith into action. We can reflect His light through the way we treat others and the words we share.

You will need

- Infographic poster (click here)
- Mission cards printed, cut and placed into 3 piles
- Pens and paper

Part 1: Everyone has a story

In Matthew 25:35–36, Jesus describes people experiencing different situations of need. He reminds us that when we respond to others with love, we are responding to him.
Divide into six groups and give each group one of the following phrases:

- I was hungry.
- I was thirsty.
- I was a stranger.
- I needed clothes.
- I was sick.
- I was in prison.

Your challenge: Imagine the story.

Think about what this situation might look like in the world today.

1. Who might this person be?
2. What might have happened in their life?
3. What might they be feeling or experiencing?
4. What might other people not realise about their situation?

Create a short, modern-day scenario that brings this person's story to life. Give them a name and think about what their day might look like.
Share your scenario with the rest of the group.

Part 2: Behind the numbers

The situations described in Matthew's Gospel are not just stories from the past. People experience poverty, loneliness, homelessness and exclusion today.
Look at the statistics on the infographic poster.
The need around us:

- 1 in 4 children in the UK live in a low-income family.
- 7% of adults in England often or always feel lonely.
- 4,840 people slept rough in England and Wales on a single night in Autumn 2024.

These figures give us an idea of the scale of the challenges people face. But behind every number is a real person, with their own story, experiences and hopes.

The difference people are making:
Across England and Wales, SVP members are responding to some of these needs through practical support, visits and friendship.
During 2025–26:

- 38,761 people were supported by the SVP.
- 301,254 visits and calls were made.
- 80,462 acts of practical help were provided.
- On average, an SVP member visited or contacted someone in need every two minutes.



These figures are just one example of what can happen when people come together to put care into action. They also remind us how much more there is still to do.

Think together:

- What do these figures tell us about the experiences of people in our communities?
- What difference can a visit, a conversation or a practical act of kindness make?
- What do you notice when you compare the scale of the need with the number of people being supported?
- What could happen if more people decided to do something?

Remember: Statistics help us understand the scale of an issue, but they cannot tell us everything about a person's life. Every person has their own story, and every action matters.

Part 3: Bring light into the story

In your groups, take one card from each of the three piles.

PILE 1: WHO?
Who might need someone to bring a little light into their story?

PILE 2: WHAT?
What is the need? Many of these needs are taken from Matthew's gospel?

PILE 3: CHALLENGE
What might make your action more difficult or require you to think creatively?

Your challenge: Turn your cards into action.
Work together to come up with a practical idea that brings light into the person's story.
Think about:

- What exactly would you do? Could you choose one of the seven actions from the poster, or come up with your own?
  - Include someone who is left out.
  - Identify a community need and plan a response.
  - Donate food or toys.
  - Write a card to a lonely person.
  - Pray for people in need.
  - Organise a fundraiser.
  - Stand up against injustice.
- Who would you involve?
- How would you make it happen?
- How might it make a difference?

Be ready to share your idea with everyone.
There is no single right answer. Be creative, think practically and remember that every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, who helped found the Society of St Vincent de Paul when he was just 20 years old, believed that we should never give up trying to make the world a better place.
He said:
"Let us not be discouraged, let us be better."
We might not be able to change everything, but we can each do something. When lots of people take small actions together, those actions can make a real difference.

An older person living alone

A refugee family

A young family with children

A teenager

A care leaver

A retired person

Someone who has moved to a new area

A new parent

A person with a disability

An university student

A young carer

Someone living in temporary accommodation

A person who has recently arrived in the UK

Someone who lives alone

Someone who has recently been released from Prison

A family

- Loneliness
- Hunger
- Lack of confidence
- Poor mental wellbeing
- Feeling unwelcome
- Lack of basic furniture
- Not having access to essential appliances
- Not having anyone to talk to
- Difficulty accessing support
- Struggling with debt
- Has losf their job/income
- Is homeless
- Digital exclusion (lack of internet or devices)
- Difficulty making friends
- Bereavement
- Family breakdown



You have £10 or less.



You cannot spend any money.



Everyone in your group must be involved.



Your idea must be fun.



You have one week to make it happen.



You must work with another organisation.



The person must help shape the solution.



Your idea must build community.



You can only use resources you already have.



It must help more than one person.



It cannot involve fundraising.



It must be sustainable.



It must include young people.



Your idea must involve something you can find in this room.



You can only use three materials.



Your idea must work without social media.