

# Candlelit Vigil 2020

A large, stylized graphic of a candle flame dominates the right side of the page. The flame is composed of horizontal lines of varying lengths, creating a sense of movement and light. The color transitions from a dark yellow at the base to a lighter, almost white yellow at the top. The background is a dark grey with subtle, larger-scale geometric shapes in shades of brown and grey, suggesting a night scene or a memorial space.

---

Join the national moment  
of reflection to remember  
those who their lives  
whilst homeless

---

## Toolkit

---

# Did you know that hundreds of people are dying whilst homeless every year?

**On a given night in 2019 over 4000 people were sleeping rough on our streets. And in 2018, 726 people died whilst homeless.**

---

At Shelter we believe that a home is a fundamental human need, the foundation on which we can all build our lives and the basis for strong communities. Following the release of the ONS homeless deaths statistics, and in memory of those who lost their lives whilst homeless, Shelter will be facilitating an online candlelit vigil. We'd love for you to join us on 14 December for a national moment of reflection.

We believe every life lost to homelessness should be honoured and we know that loss of life is a very personal issue. Throughout

this year the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has meant that not only have more people lost loved ones, but it's been harder to come together to commemorate the lives that have been lost.

We've put together this helpful toolkit to provide everything you need to know about this year's vigil and make holding your own vigil simple, special and most-importantly, meaningful to you.

---

## What's in this **toolkit**

---

About the event	4
What's happening this year and how to join the vigil	5
How you can get involved – organising your own vigil	6
Ideas for your own event	7
Join the conversation on social media	11
Frequently asked questions and resources	12

---

## About the event

---

For the last three years, Shelter has facilitated an annual candlelit vigil to coincide with the release of the ONS homelessness death statistics.

- These are figures that come out each year to show the number of people who died whilst homeless the year before.

Originally in Manchester, it has been an opportunity for communities to come together to remember those who have lost their lives whilst homeless. Last year, we held a candlelit vigil in a church in

Manchester where we were joined by community and faith leaders, as well as those with direct experience of homelessness.

The Candlelit Vigil has always been something that everyone can get involved in and in past years we've seen lots of organisations, groups and individuals take part on social media using the hashtag **#ShineALight**.

This year will be no different and we hope as many people as possible will join the national moment of reflection.





---

# What's happening this year and **how to join the vigil**

---

## **What will this year's vigil consist of?**

This year there will be:

- Speeches and readings from key community and faith leaders across Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and London.
- Powerful stories from those with direct experience of homelessness.
- A collective moment of reflection to light a candle for those who lost their lives whilst homeless.

## **Where will the ceremony be held?**

The plans for this year will be a little different. Due to the pandemic, we have moved the national ceremony online instead.

## **When will it begin?**

The vigil will be on **Monday 14 December from 7pm on our YouTube channel.**

## **How do I join?**

On the main candlelit vigil webpage you can add this event to your calendar. You might already have a calendar reminder for the event from which you can follow the link.

Alternatively, follow the link on our Candlelit Vigil 2020 webpage from 14 December.



---

# How you can get involved – organising your own vigil

---

There are lots of things you can do to take part.

Whilst we would love you to join the main ceremony, we know that many people have been affected by loss this year. It's important you're able to honour those who have lost their lives in a way that's meaningful for you.

Use the ideas section of this toolkit to start planning your own vigil.

## Candles

Candles can make vigils even more special. Find examples of where you can order candles in our [FAQs section](#).

## Regional statistics

At 9.30am on 14 December, you'll be able to find the official figures for homeless deaths for 2019 by region [here](#).

## Stay safe

If you're planning to hold an event in person, it's important that you look up the latest guidance on social distancing for your area because they may change at short notice. The ideas we've provided should only be considered if you're able to organise them in a safe, responsible way and in line with the [latest government restrictions](#).





---

## Ideas for your **own event**

This year more than ever, no activity is too small. If you use the toolkit to plan your own event, we want to hear from you.

Take a photo of how you're getting involved and post about it online, using the hashtag **#ShineALight**. The more people use this hashtag, the more content we'll have and the louder we'll be able to shout about the housing emergency. See the section below on joining the conversation on social media.

Alternatively, if you want to contact us by email about something you're planning, we'd love to hear from you. Email **campaign@shelter.org.uk** and attach any photos you're happy for us to share.

Here are some ideas you can use to hold your own vigil:





## In your community

### 1) Doorstep vigil

Make some simple flyers asking your neighbours to join a socially distanced doorstep vigil. You could offer to hand out candles and agree to meet on your doorsteps, or at the window, to light a candle and discuss the issue of homelessness in your city and if you feel comfortable, your relationship to the issue.

### 2) Arrange a ceremony at your local place of worship

If you practice religion in any form, you could ask your local leader to say a prayer followed by lighting a candle and holding a minute's silence. This photo is from the 2019 candlelit vigil, which was held in a church in Manchester, but you could hold a similar event virtually, by asking a faith leader to say a prayer and light a candle over Zoom (or a similar video calling platform).

Bear in mind that if you want to take candles inside venues, make sure to buy ones that don't drip wax on the floor! It's always best to check with the venue in advance.



### 3) Poetry reading in your local park

There are lots of poems available online that you could select to read to close friends and family, in a local park or outdoor space. If you're particularly affected to learn that hundreds of people die every year whilst homeless, you could even write your own poem to perform to loved ones.

### 4) Spoken word open mic night

Spoken word is an incredibly powerful way of bringing people together, especially to reflect and remember loss of life. You could choose a selection of spoken word performances to play before lighting a candle and holding a minute's silence.

For inspiration, listen to Kojo Apegyei's spoken word piece on [YouTube](#) where he shares what it was like the day he and his family moved into temporary accommodation.

Artist and activist Kojo Apegyei performing 'Hotel Hell Hostel'







## In your **real or virtual office**

It's now possible for large groups to meet up online by using video calling platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Facebook and WhatsApp.

If you have access to a phone or laptop you can use these platforms to meet on a video call. For most platforms you just need to create an account. They're designed to be easy-to-use and chances are, someone you know will be able to help you if you've never used them. You can then hold an online ceremony from the comfort of your own home.

### 5) **Photo vigil with colleagues**

Bring your team together one lunchtime and take a photo with each of you holding a candle. Post it on social media with the hashtag #ShineALight and a line about why your organisation is getting involved.

This picture was taken in 2019 and was posted on Twitter as part of the social media activity. Any group photos taken this year should be social distanced (or virtual!) and adhere to the Covid guidance in your area.



### 6) **Raise a toast**

Bring your colleagues together to raise a virtual toast to honour those who died whilst homeless. At last year's vigil, lots of organisations who work directly with people affected by homelessness on what we call 'the front line', took part. Finding a way to bring your team together to quietly reflect is important not only to mark the loss of life, but for creating space to process and support each other to carry on this vital work.





# Craftivism

Creative ways of using your craft skills for activism.

## 7) Make a statement with your face masks

Use your facemask to stand with those who have lost loved ones to homelessness. This is a good option for those who are isolating or are living in areas where lockdown tiering is high.

If you can arrange to do this with a group of friends, you could join a Zoom call and take a photo together, sending a clear message that no one should die homeless.

Check out this easy [DIY facemask tutorial](#).

## 8) Raise your voice with a banner drop

A banner drop is a great way to raise awareness. There are lots of ways to make a DIY banner, below are some links to websites with handy guides:

- A [printable pdf](#) on making your banner
- A [practical guide](#) to making a banner



[Click here to see an example banner drop](#)

## 9) Put up homemade bunting

If you're isolating indoors why not have a go at making your own bunting to hang in the window with a candle? You could use old fabric or even paper to spell out a message of support such as: 'No one should die homeless' or '"#ShineALight to remember those who died homeless'.

Check out these [four ways to make bunting](#).

## 10) Say it through sewing

Well, it's called embroidery, actually! This form of crafting is very easy and looks effective. All the materials needed to embroider your own message can be ordered from any online haberdashery – that's another technical term! It's just the name for shops that sell sewing and crafting materials.

You'll also be able to find these items on online shops like eBay or Amazon.

You'll need:

- an embroidery hoop
- some cross-stitch fabric (or some plain material if you prefer)
- embroidery yarn
- an embroidery needle
- a pencil for sketching your message or picture





---

## Joining the conversation on **social media**

---

Whatever you end up doing – we want to hear about it. Take a photo of how you're getting involved and post about it online, using the hashtag **#ShineALight**

We'll also be using #ShineALight throughout the day to talk about what we're doing and to share more information ahead of the main event.

Here are some example tweets you could post with a photo of a candle, or your event:

- No one should die homeless. That's why I will #ShineALight with @Shelter and others to remember the lives lost in 2019.
- Last year XX people in [your city] died whilst homeless. Let's remember them together. #ShineALight
- Tonight we're hosting a candlelit vigil to #ShineALight on how many people die homeless each year. And on 14 December we'll join @Shelter and others for a national moment of reflection.



---

# FAQs and resources

---

## **I'm planning a candlelit vigil, how can I tell you about it?**

We're keen for everyone to be able to make their own plans. If you've found the toolkit useful and have some thoughts to share, we'd love to hear from you. And if you've got some photos of your event to share, even better!

You can let us know about your plans by posting photos on Twitter using the hashtag #ShineALight

You can also get in touch with us if you've got questions about your event, by emailing [campaign@shelter.org.uk](mailto:campaign@shelter.org.uk)

## **I'm not sure what I'm allowed to do because we're in a local lockdown**

Whilst we'd love you to be able to organise an amazing community event, we all have a responsibility to keep ourselves and others safe. We're in the middle of a pandemic which may worsen over winter, so it's important that whatever you plan on doing is within the limits of government restrictions.

**You must check the latest rules and restrictions for where you live** before you plan your event, because if things change, it may mean you have to cancel. It may be better to host an online version of your candlelit vigil, and we've provided lots of ideas on how to do this in this toolkit.

**Please read the [government's latest guidance](#) before planning your event.**

## **Some of the ideas in the toolkit involve event ideas that I cannot do because of the restrictions in my area. What should I do instead? How can I make my event virtual?**

It's worth bearing in mind that there are some groups of people who are still going to work, or able to meet with other households in their support bubbles. So some of the ideas in this toolkit will be achievable for some but not for others.

**Please read the [government's latest guidance](#) before planning your event.**

However, if you're not able to host a physical event, there are lots of ways to turn the same ideas into virtual ones!

## **For my own candlelit vigil, how can I get hold of the statistics for those who died whilst homeless?**

This year the stats will be published on the 14 December at 9.30am, which is the same day as the national vigil. The statistics will refer to the period January 2019 – December 2019. This is because it's too soon to know the number of deaths for 2020.

The best place to find the figures for homeless deaths for your own activity will be on the Office for National Statistics website.

You can visit this [page](#) (when they are released on 14 December)

---

## FAQs and resources

---

### If we organise our own event, can we still join the main ceremony online that Shelter is facilitating?

Absolutely! We realise that some people may wish to organise their own vigil because they are unavailable to join the main national event, but we hope that everyone who can make it, joins the ceremony at 7pm on 14 December.

We'll be sharing our vigil online where you'll hear from community and faith leaders in cities across England.

If you're stuck and need help joining, email us at [campaign@shelter.org.uk](mailto:campaign@shelter.org.uk) and we will explain how to join.

### Where can I get candles for my own virtual or community event? Will Shelter be providing them?

We won't be posting out candles this year, but we've provided some links to where you can order your own. The great thing about candles is that they come in all shapes and sizes, from tapered candles (commonly used for candlelit vigils) to tea lights, or even electric ones – which are good if you're doing this with children.

- You may need [tapered candles](#), which you can buy for £1 each from Etsy or Wilko sells a [pack of 10 tapered candles for £2](#).
- You could use [tealights for your event](#), which are available from supermarkets as well as online. Wilko sell them in packs of 200 for £2.50.
- [Flameless candles](#) (made of card) are a great option if you've got children.
- [Drip shields](#) are a great option for avoiding getting drips on the floor when using tapered candles.

### I need help right now, what can I do?

Shelter is here 365-days-a-year to make sure no one is left to fight bad housing on their own – visit our [advice pages](#) for more information or call our free national helpline on 0808 800 4444.



**Candlelit  
Vigil 2020**

