



YMCA
THAMES GATEWAY GROUP

Sleep Easy

Event organisers' guide

YMCA

SLEEP
EASY

YMCA

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in taking part in YMCA Thames Gateway Group's Sleep Easy, which raises funds to help vulnerable and disadvantaged young people in Essex, Kent and London to build a future.

We know that sleeping somewhere other than your bed can be a challenge but imagine if you didn't have a bed. Or you had to sleep somewhere different every night.

Our Sleep Easy challenges you to push yourself out of your comfort zone and sleep somewhere

different for just one night – and the funds you raise will really make a difference to young people in your area.

This pack attempts to make the organisation of your event a little easier. There is no single model for a successful Sleep Easy - your event will be unique to you and your group.

In addition to this pack, we have set up a webpage that has a number of other useful documents and templates available for you to download. If there's anything missing, let us know!



£3.50

will provide a young person a hot breakfast or lunch

Documents & templates downloadable here:

www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy

We hope you enjoy taking part and that this event may become a regular date in your organisation's calendar.

If you have any questions or need further help in organising your Sleep Easy event, please get in touch with Will or Lisa at:

sleepeasy@ymcatg.org 01708 766211 ext. 3310

Go to

www.ymcatg.org

where you can

Make a donation

View our next events



What is Sleep Easy?

Sleep Easy is a fundraising challenge initiated by YMCA England and Wales, but rolled out by YMCAs everywhere - which is why, even though the purpose is the same, your event can be unique to you!

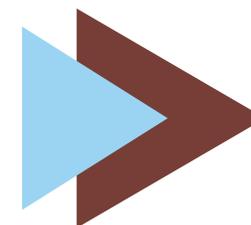
As a mass sponsored sleep out, this is a personal challenge that will enable participants to discover the facts behind youth homelessness while spending a night sleeping in a cardboard box or simply an evening away from the comforts of a warm home.

In the UK, it's estimated that almost 136,000 young people aged 16 - 24 were homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2022/23. Sleep Easy helps to create awareness about youth homelessness, which often goes unseen, and also raise vital funds to support the work of YMCA, who are helping to combat it.

The great thing about this, is that you can run your event at a time that best suits you and your organisation. All we ask is that it takes place sometime between 1 May and 31 October 2026.

Once you have confirmed your date, please do let us know so we can keep in touch and offer our support to help ensure it's a success.

By organising a YMCA Sleep Easy event, you will be raising awareness of youth homelessness and raising vital funds for YMCA Thames Gateway Group.



Four simple steps to Sleep Easy success

1

Choose your venue and plan your activity

Decide what your event will look like, where it will be held and what activities you will run throughout the evening

2

Set up your fundraising platform

Choose your fundraising platform – we use People’s Fundraising – or method for taking sponsorship donations

3

Promote your event

Shout loudly about your event, and in as many places as you can, to maximise your fundraising success

4

Celebrate your success

Share your achievement and recognise the individual sacrifices that have made your event a success. Give out certificates and if you can, enjoy breakfast together



Are you ready to Sleep Easy and make a real difference to the lives of young people in your area? Let’s go!

£10

YMCA SLEEP EASY

will provide a young person with access to mental health and wellbeing activities

How to get fundraising?



The YMCA Sleep Easy is delivered all across England and Wales, with every YMCA doing it their way – which is why, even though the purpose is the same, your event can be unique to you!

We hope your Sleep Easy is a memorable event for everyone taking part and thank you in advance for all the effort put into fundraising on our behalf.

Every pound raised through your Sleep Easy will make a vital difference to the lives of local vulnerable young people.

Setting up your fundraising page is super easy

- 1** Visit www.ymcatg.org and click on the donate button on the top right hand side of the page
- 2** This takes you to our fundraising page. Click on “**start fundraising**” then either “**Create a fundraising page**” or “**Create a group fundraising page**” from the menu
- 3** **The rest is up to you!**

If you need any assistance with setting up your fundraising page, please contact Will or Lisa at sleepeasy@ymcatg.org or call them on **01708 766211** ext. 3310.

Or, if you would like us to set up a basic page on your behalf, Will and Lisa can help with that too.

However, we do have a dedicated guide to help you do this, which can be found on our website along with lots of other useful information.

[www.ymcatg.org/
sleepeasy](http://www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy)

Set your fundraising target at £180!

2024 marked 180 years since George Williams, alongside 11 of his friends, held his first group for likeminded young men, called the Young Men's Christian Association, in the shadow of St Paul's Cathedral. Now, 180 years on, YMCA reaches many millions of people across 120 countries!

We're challenging all those taking part in Sleep Easy 2026 to raise a minimum of £180 within their group!

£180

could pay for one young person to have

- ▶ a safe and warm place to sleep for 4 nights
- ▶ kitchen & bedding essentials and a month's supply of personal hygiene products
- ▶ a hot, nutritionally balanced evening meal, every day for 5 weeks

Shout it from the rooftops!

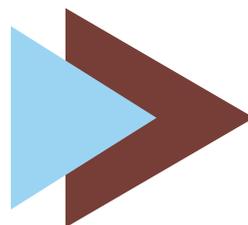
You can share your dedicated fundraising page with your friends, family and networks who may want to show their support by donating or sponsoring your participation in Sleep Easy 2026.

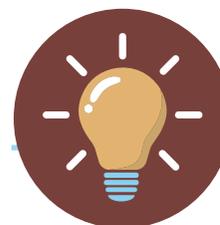
The rising cost of living will mean that some people might not feel able to donate or fundraise at the moment, but every penny and pound donated will help make a great difference. There are also other ways people can support YMCA throughout the

year without donating, including through volunteering!

If you prefer a more traditional approach, we have added both a sponsorship form and a Gift Aid form to our Sleep Easy landing page:

www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy





Top tips for fundraising

- Share your fundraising page on social media (Facebook and LinkedIn usually work well!) and let people know why you're participating in YMCA Sleep Easy
- Make a donation to kick-start your fundraising
- Add a line about taking part in Sleep Easy, along with the link to your fundraising page, on your email signature or out-of-office message if you have one
- Have some fun! Ask people to sponsor you for every hour you stay awake through the night, or to make it through the evening without any sweet treats or hot drinks!
- Don't forget to thank people for donating and supporting YMCA and let them know of your experience once Sleep Easy is over.



Maximise your fundraising

- Try selling “Sleep Easy excuses” to those too scared or unable to take part! These could range from a cast iron excuse for £5 to a feeble excuse for £50, with other possibilities in between
- You could print “I’ve been excused” Sleep Easy stickers that sponsors could wear to show they have contributed
- If you decide to do this, record “sales” on a form in a similar way to sponsorship and remember to get purchasers to sign up to Gift Aid too. This can be done digitally if sponsoring via your online fundraising page by a simple tick of a box, or by completing a paper Gift Aid form and handing this in with your funds raised
- Encourage participants to use their social networking sites to ask their contacts to sponsor them. Other simple initiatives include giving a sponsorship form to five friends or family and asking them to each raise £20 for you. A sponsorship form is available on our Sleep Easy landing page, www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy
- Encourage friends and family to get involved on the night and to share with their friends and family
- Invite your local council or public figures to attend your event and the local press to run a story on your event
- Keep us updated with your plans, provide us with pictures, tell us your organisations motivation to getting involved and we will promote your event and share on all of our socials.

Support from local companies & businesses



Local companies can be a great source for sponsorship to cover the cost of running your event, providing anything from cardboard boxes to toast & cereals for breakfast. Some may even make a financial donation to the event, sponsor or match fund participants known to them.

You may already have connections with local companies and regular suppliers you could contact for support.

If so, make a direct approach, either by phoning or writing to them.

Keep a record of who you speak to and don't be afraid to follow up if you haven't heard anything back from them within a couple of weeks.

If you are contacting a company from scratch, the best person to try is someone who looks after the company's charitable giving. This could be someone

in the Community Affairs or Marketing Department, although in a small company it is likely to be the Managing Director. Many will be pleased to help in return for a mention in local publicity material.

A letter/email template is available on our Sleep Easy landing page to help with this.

www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy

Organising your event

First of all, choose your venue.

You could:

- use your own grounds
- ask to use a local church, sports ground or a member's garden

Or, if you can't access an outdoor space, your event can be held indoors with just a sleeping bag and a cardboard box as a mattress – whichever suits you and your group.

If you want to get involved but can't operate through the entire night, you could run an activity just for the evening. Ideas include:

- spending an evening outdoors with limited resources and comforts
- dedicating your usual session to raising awareness of youth homelessness
- running a sponsored activity within your usual setting
- setting up a collection to raise money for our cause
- running an alternative fundraising event, such as a raffle, quiz night, dance-a-thon, cake sale... whatever sparks the interest of your group

Core things to remember

- Access to toilets is essential!
- At least some partial shelter
- A closed/gated and secure environment
- Facilities to provide hot drinks throughout the night
- A full risk assessment for the event to be carried out
- Activities planned

Activity ideas

It can be a long night, so organise activities aimed at keeping people warm and occupied before setting a curfew time when everyone should retire for the night.

- False perceptions of homelessness – identify some typical perceptions versus the reality of those who find themselves homeless
- What is a home? Draw it, write it, talk about it
- Colouring in competition
- Prepare an evening meal for £1
- Build a cardboard shelter – maybe a prize for the best designed and decorated cardboard abode
- Keeping warm – talk about what might you do to stay warm during a winter night on the streets
- Need or Want – What do you ‘need’ to survive? What do you ‘want’?
- Set your event off with a smile and make it fancy dress!
- A day in the life... How might it feel to not have a home? What would you miss most?



An evening without technology, engaging in activities that require no equipment other than what may be found on the street:

- Tin can bowling
- Cup pong
- Pebble pick up 5
- Pebble marbles
- Pitching pennies
- Shove ha’penny
- Hop scotch

Things to think about on the night

All that preparation should hopefully pay off and your event will run like clockwork. On the day, have one last run through your checklist – we want you to enjoy the night as well as everyone else! Spending a night under the stars in a cardboard box can be surreal and strangely humbling!

Hot drinks and a bite to eat go down well, so talk to a local pizza place or fast food store to see if they would be prepared to donate

some food, or get those not taking part to cook something up for you. Plan an early breakfast, and factor time in to tidy up and clear the site of any rubbish. Involve sleepers in the clear up process; it will help them to warm up.

On the night you will benefit from having lots of volunteer support to manage registration/ check in, record information, help with activities, serve drinks and prepare food.



£100

will provide a young person with funding for training programmes and courses

When everyone arrives

Registration & handling cash

Sleepers should check in on the night and be reminded of the terms and conditions of them taking part.

Where cash is being handled, ensure that guidelines recommended by the Institute of Fundraising are followed. These can be found on our Sleep Easy landing page, www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy to help with this.

Where possible, sponsorship and other funds raised should be recorded on the night, so by

morning you have an indication of the total amount expected to be raised. The press is generally keen to report on this too!

Food

The promise of a cooked breakfast can be an incentive to make it through the night! Depending on your choice of location you may have a number of options available, from an early morning barbeque cooked on site, to breakfast muffins supplied by your local branch of McDonald's. Contact your local suppliers or supermarkets to see if they can



support your event by providing any food or items free of charge.

If you do serve food at your event you must ensure that you comply with all food safety and food hygiene regulations. If you are not already aware of these, further guidance can be provided by your Local Authority's environmental health department. Please also consider the variety of dietary requirements that the participants may or may not have informed you about.

Record your event

Keep a photo or video diary of your event

We would love to see any photos or videos, and hear of any stories or thoughts that your event inspired within your group. If possible, we would also really like to share and celebrate your fundraising success on our website and social media.

Please ensure that all your Sleep Easy participants (or parents/guardians of participants) give permission to take and share their photo and/or name prior to

sending us any material from the event. A parent/carer consent form is available on our Sleep Easy landing page, www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy. Should any participant not wish to have this information shared we request that they be removed from any pictures / case studies prior to sending them to us.

Participant feedback

At an appropriate point during the night or over breakfast, provide participants with feedback forms and pens and invite their

comments and suggestions for future Sleep Easy events.

Feedback about the event is vital in helping to develop the Sleep Easy event for YMCA in the future. Feedback forms will help identify what went well and possibly not so well so make sure these are collected in.

A “Sleep Easy Diary Box” is a fun way of capturing video feedback from the night - just be sure to have permission beforehand.

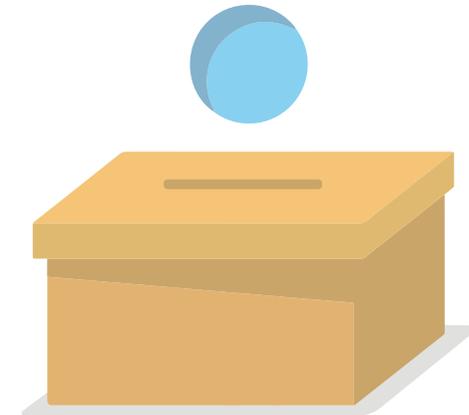
And when you're done ...celebrate!

Towards the end of the event is a great opportunity to thank everyone for taking part, and you may want to present a certificate to everyone involved or to the person who raised the most money. A couple of certificate templates can be found on our website should you wish to customise for your event.

[www.ymcatg.org/
sleepeasy](http://www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy)

The important thing is for all participants to go away feeling valued, having had an experience they have enjoyed and will remember, which, we hope, will encourage them to support YMCA in the future.

Share and celebrate how much the event has raised and how the money will make a huge difference to the work of YMCA and our support for young people locally.



After your event, please collect all sponsor money as soon as possible. If you want to physically drop off any donations, please visit the Sleep Easy landing page at www.ymcatg.org/sleepeasy to identify your closest branch. These are in Brentwood, Dartford, Romford, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Woolwich.

How can we help prevent youth homelessness?

Check out the YMCA England and Wales General Election Manifesto at www.ymca.org.uk/generalelection

Thank you for choosing to show local young people you support them

T 01708 766211

E enquiries@ymcatg.org

W www.ymcatg.org



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