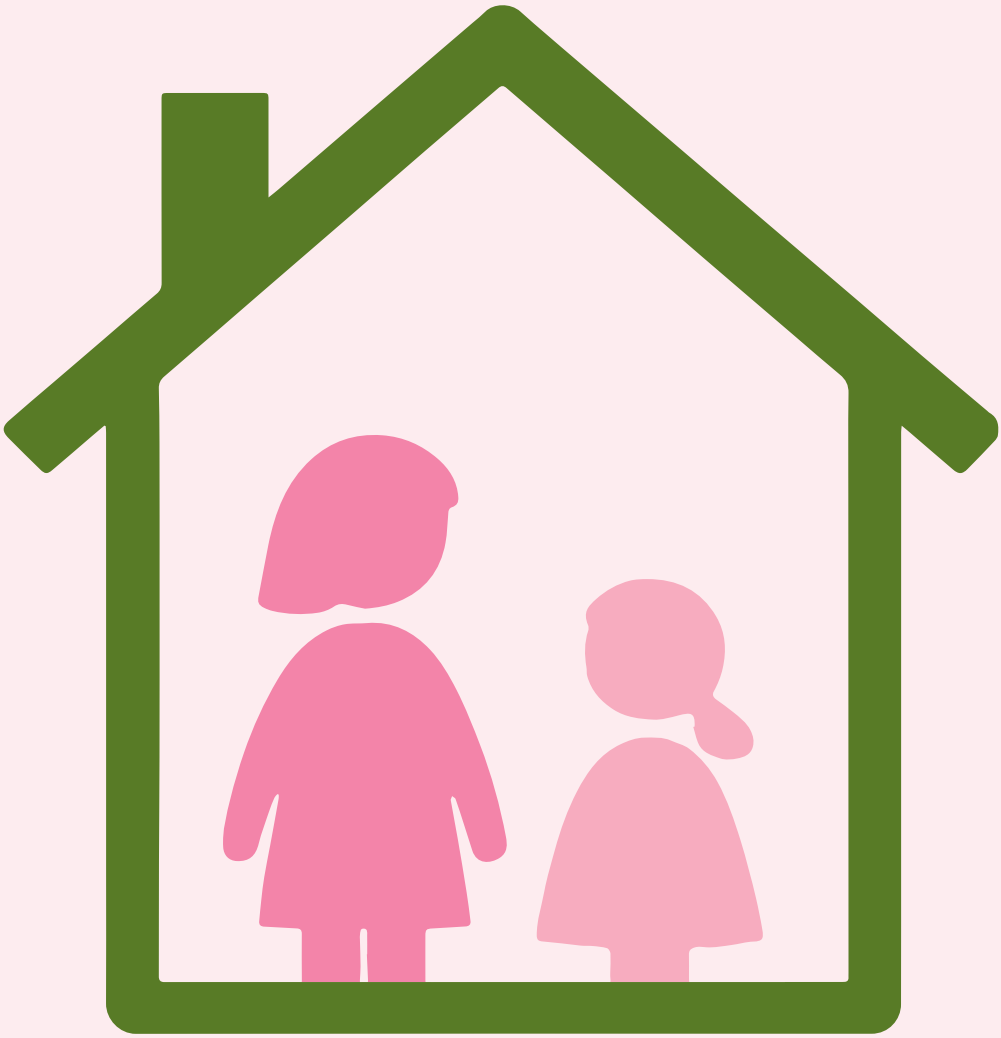
National Federation of Women's Institutes
Action Pack



No Woman Without a Home

Foreword

For more than a century, the Women's Institute has shown what happens when women come together with a shared purpose. Founded in 1915 by women inspired by the suffrage movement, the WI has never been afraid to speak out on the issues that matter. In fact, our very first national resolution, passed in 1918, called for better housing for women and families. Since then, WI members have campaigned on hundreds of causes that have shaped life in the UK.

Today, we stand together once again. Hidden homelessness among women and girls is one of the greatest social injustices of our time, but it is not inevitable. Across our towns, villages and cities, 175,000 WI members have the power to raise awareness, influence decision-makers, support local charities and ensure that women's voices are heard. Every conversation, every letter to an MP, every local partnership, every community event and every act of kindness brings us one step closer to change.

Chrissie Booth – NFWI Trustee & Public Affairs Committee Chair

The very first WI resolution was passed in 1918 at the NFWI's second Annual Meeting and called for a 'sufficient supply of convenient and sanitary houses, being of vital importance to women in the country'.

Background

Homelessness isn't always visible

When we think of homelessness, we often picture rough sleeping. But for many women, homelessness is hidden. It can mean sofa surfing, moving between temporary accommodation, living in unsafe housing, or staying in an abusive relationship because there is nowhere else to go. As a result, many women experiencing homelessness remain invisible and unsupported.

The UK Government's Social Housing Bill aims to give survivors of domestic abuse greater control over their housing options, including enabling perpetrators to be removed from joint social tenancies where appropriate. While this is an important step, the WI believes it must be backed by practical support, including sanctuary measures, specialist services, and access to safe alternative accommodation when remaining in the home is not the right choice for the survivor.

Domestic abuse is one of the leading causes of women's homelessness, alongside poverty, rising housing costs, poor mental health and insecure employment. Too often, women are forced to leave their homes while perpetrators remain. This can lead to prolonged instability for both women and their children, disrupting their safety, health and wellbeing.

THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE:

382,618
people homeless in England

175,025
children homeless

15.9%
of homelessness relief cases are due to domestic abuse.

176,130
children are living in temporary accommodation, in England and over 2,000 children in Wales.

134,210
households in England are in temporary accommodation, and more than 10,000 people in Wales.

65%
of surveyed women had slept in places excluded from official counts or stayed awake through the night

£2.84 billion
is spent by councils on temporary accommodation each year.

Traditional rough sleeping counts do not capture women's experiences. Solace Women's Aid: **www.solacewomensaid.org**, Crisis: **www.crisis.org.uk** and Single Homeless Project: **www.shp.org.uk** research found that 65% of women surveyed said they had slept in places excluded from official homelessness counts:

49%

had walked around all night to avoid sleeping visibly

27%

had stayed with strangers or new acquaintances

45%

had been in some form of homelessness accommodation immediately before sleeping rough. This shows that current services often fail to meet women's needs and aren't enough to prevent them from sleeping rough.

38%

were not receiving support from either a housing officer or homelessness organisation.

Women's homelessness is often driven by a combination of poverty, trauma, housing insecurity, and relationship breakdown. Other causes can be:

- Domestic abuse
- Family or relationship breakdown
- Unaffordable housing costs
- Loss of income or employment
- Poverty and debt
- Mental health challenges
- Substance misuse
- Leaving care or institutional settings
- Eviction or tenancy loss
- Temporary accommodation is often unsuitable
- Lack of support networks
- Gender-based violence
- Physical health issues
- Benefit delays or sanctions
- Migration or immigration status issues

PREVENTION SHOULD COME BEFORE CRISIS

Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) can be issued by a range of bodies, including the police and individual applicants. They are widely regarded as a valuable tool for protecting women and children experiencing domestic abuse. However, there have been cases where perpetrators have used coercive and controlling behaviour to pressure survivors into withdrawing or cancelling an order. This highlights the continued need for every DAPO to trigger a comprehensive safety pathway, ensuring survivors have access to financial support, safety planning, housing assistance, and specialist services alongside legal protection.

The WI supports the principle that the perpetrator, not the survivor, should be held accountable for the abuse. We are calling for every woman at risk of homelessness to receive an immediate package of support, including a housing and safety assessment, specialist advocacy, legal and tenancy advice, practical security measures or sanctuary

schemes, and access to safe alternative accommodation where needed. Survivors should be able to choose the option that is safest and best for them, whether that is remaining in their home, relocating, or accessing specialist accommodation and support.

While survivors who become homeless due to domestic abuse are entitled to housing assistance, there is currently no automatic requirement for a coordinated package of housing, safety and specialist support.

Access to refuge spaces, sanctuary schemes, advocacy, tenancy advice and longer-term housing options can depend on local provision and funding. This can leave women navigating complex systems at a time when they are most vulnerable, increasing the risk of homelessness, repeat victimisation and poor long-term outcomes.



Our 3 campaign priorities:

1. COUNT HER. PREVENT IT.

Our priorities in each nation:

England:

We want all local authorities to take part in the Women's Rough Sleeping Census: **www.solacewomensaid.org/womens-rough-sleeping-census** so that women are no longer invisible in official homelessness counts.

Wales:

The Welsh Government collects homelessness data, but hidden homelessness among women often goes unrecorded prompting the WI to call for gender-informed monitoring, improved data collection to capture hidden homelessness, and the publication of gender-specific findings, along with sustainable funding to ensure that women have access to these services. Wales aren't currently included in the Women's Rough Sleeping census.

2. HOUSING & SUPPORT

Every survivor should have a safe place to live.

Ensure the default response to domestic abuse is access to safe accommodation for every woman and family, either through a sanctuary scheme that enables them to remain safely at home or through refuge provision.

3. KEEP HER SAFE

Wraparound support.

Ensure every survivor receives holistic, survivor-centred support, with seamless access to specialist services, mental health care, education, housing, policing, financial support and NHS services.

Get involved in the campaign

Individual WI action plan:

HELP MAKE SURE EVERY WOMAN COUNTS

England:

The Women's Rough Sleeping Census identified 1,406 women sleeping rough in 2025, compared with 435 recorded in official Government counts. This means that hundreds of homeless and rough sleeping women are being missed from official homelessness figures. Participation in the Census is currently voluntary. The WI is calling on the government to make the Census mandatory for all local authorities, so women's homelessness is properly counted and addressed.

We want to demonstrate strong support for ensuring every homeless woman is counted. Write to your local councillor and ask if your local council is taking part in the census.

Visit My WI: **https://mywi.thewi.org.uk** to download a template letter.



Wales:

The Welsh Government collects homelessness data, but hidden homelessness among women often goes unrecorded. The WI is calling for gender-informed monitoring, improved data collection to capture hidden homelessness, and the publication of gender-specific findings from this monitoring. This would help ensure that women's experiences of homelessness are recognised, understood, and reflected in policy.

Ask the Welsh Government to collect and publish gender-specific rough sleeping and hidden homelessness data by writing to your MS.

Visit My WI: **https://mywi.thewi.org.uk** to download a template letter.

INFLUENCE DECISION MAKERS

England:

Aim:

Change policy and keep women's homelessness on the political agenda. Women's homelessness is too often a hidden issue.

How you can get involved:

Write to your local MP asking them to support the WI's three policy asks and to champion a survivor-centred response to domestic abuse, ensuring that every survivor has access to coordinated, wraparound support from specialist domestic abuse services, housing, mental health, education, police, financial services and the NHS to help prevent homelessness. You can download a template letter from My WI: **https://mywi.thewi.org.uk**. You can find out how to contact your local MP at: **https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP**

Lobby your local council:

Send the WI's Women's Homelessness Council Checklist (see next page or download from My WI: **https://mywi.thewi.org.uk**) to your local authority and ask councillors and officers to review their services against it. Encourage the council to identify any gaps in provision and commit to an action plan to improve outcomes for women experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



Wales:

Housing is devolved to the Welsh Government, so WIs in Wales have a unique opportunity to influence both local authorities and Members of the Senedd (MSs).

Aim:

Ensure Wales leads the UK in preventing women's homelessness through effective implementation of Welsh legislation and gender-informed services.

How you can get involved:

Write to your Members of the Senedd asking them to support the WI's three policy asks and to champion a survivor-centred response to violence against women, ensuring that every survivor has access to coordinated, wraparound support from specialist domestic abuse services, housing, mental health, education, police, financial services and the NHS to help prevent homelessness. Ask how the Welsh Government is preparing for the implementation of the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Act 2026 and how women experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, are being identified and supported in Wales. You can download a template letter from My WI: **https://mywi.thewi.org.uk** and find your MS at: **https://senedd.wales/find-a-member-of-the-senedd**

Lobby your local council:

Send the WI's Women's Homelessness Council Checklist (see next page or download from My WI: **https://mywi.thewi.org.uk**) to your local authority and ask councillors and officers to review their services against it. Ask your local authority what it is doing to prevent women's homelessness. Ask whether gender-specific homelessness / hidden homelessness data is collected and how this information is influencing local services and commissioning.

Women's Homelessness Council Checklist

Leadership & Strategy

- ☐ Our homelessness strategy explicitly recognises women's homelessness.
- ☐ We recognise and monitor hidden homelessness, including sofa surfing and unsafe housing.
- ☐ Women's homelessness is treated as distinct from rough sleeping.
- ☐ We have a lead officer and work with women's organisations and women with lived experience to shape services.
- ☐ Gender-informed objectives and Equality Impact Assessments are included in housing policy.

Data & Evidence

- ☐ We collect and publish homelessness data by sex.
- ☐ We record causes of homelessness, including domestic abuse.
- ☐ We monitor outcomes for women, including hidden homelessness, refugee and migrant women, and women leaving institutions.
- ☐ We participate in the Women's Rough Sleeping Census (or equivalent enhanced data collection).

Prevention

- ☐ Women can access support before reaching crisis point and without having slept rough.
- ☐ Survivors of domestic abuse and VAWG receive priority support.
- ☐ DAPOs automatically trigger a housing assessment.
- ☐ We work with police, health and social care partners to identify women at risk.
- ☐ We provide tenancy sustainment, debt, benefits and financial support.

Domestic Abuse

- ☐ Homelessness and domestic abuse services work closely together.
- ☐ Refuge provision meets local demand.
- ☐ Women can present as homeless without extensive evidence requirements.
- ☐ Staff are trained in trauma-informed practice and coercive control.
- ☐ Women are never expected to return to unsafe accommodation.

Health & Wellbeing

- ☐ Women can access GP, mental health, substance misuse and sexual health services.
- ☐ Support is available without requiring a fixed address.
- ☐ Staff understand the impact of trauma.

Refugees, Migrant Women & Asylum Seekers

- ☐ We work with refugee support organisations and/or the City of Sanctuary movement.
- ☐ Information, interpretation and advice are available in relevant languages.
- ☐ Staff understand the housing rights of refugees, migrant women and those with NRPF.
- ☐ Referral pathways exist for women leaving asylum accommodation.
- ☐ Refugee and migrant women are included in homelessness prevention programmes.

Accommodation

- ☐ Emergency accommodation is safe, suitable and trauma-informed.
- ☐ Women-only accommodation is available where needed.
- ☐ Women can stay with dependent children.
- ☐ Provision is accessible and suitable for women with complex needs, disabilities, different cultural backgrounds, pets, and women of different ages.

Move-On Housing

- ☐ Women have access to social housing, move-on accommodation and private rented sector schemes.
- ☐ Women are supported to secure and sustain permanent housing.
- ☐ We monitor repeat homelessness among women.

Partnerships & Training

- ☐ We have strong partnerships with domestic abuse services, Women's Aid, refugee organisations, health services, police, probation, social care and community groups.
- ☐ We have a multi-agency women and homelessness forum.
- ☐ Frontline staff are trained on women's homelessness, domestic abuse, trauma, safeguarding, exploitation and the needs of refugee women.

Good Practice Indicators

- ☐ We have a published action plan on women's homelessness.
- ☐ We fund specialist women's homelessness services.
- ☐ We routinely seek feedback from women using services.
- ☐ We have plans to reach marginalised groups, including refugee women, disabled women, women of colour, LGBTQ+ women, care-experienced women, women leaving prison and women with NRPF.

Gold Standard Test

A council should be able to answer "Yes" to all of the following:

- ☑ We know how many women are experiencing homelessness locally.
- ☑ We know why women become homeless.
- ☑ We can identify hidden homelessness.
- ☑ Women fleeing abuse can access safe housing immediately.
- ☑ Refugee and migrant women can access support safely.
- ☑ We provide women-only and trauma-informed accommodation.
- ☑ We collect and publish sex-disaggregated data.
- ☑ Women with lived experience shape our services.
- ☑ We prevent homelessness before crisis occurs.
- ☑ No woman has to sleep rough before receiving help.

Campaign challenge

5000 CONVERSATIONS

One conversation could change a life. Imagine 5,000.

As part of the No Woman Without a Home campaign, every WI is encouraged to host one community event focused on women's homelessness.

Open your doors. Invite your local community. Bring together charities, housing providers, people with lived experience, local councillors, your local MPs or MS, and anyone who wants to be part of the conversation.

These events could take many forms, a guest speaker, panel discussion, coffee morning, film screening or community conversation. The aim is simple: to raise awareness of women's hidden homelessness, challenge misconceptions and inspire local action.

Every conversation matters. Together, these individual events become a powerful national movement—raising awareness, strengthening local partnerships and bringing communities together to take action.

Aim:

Every WI is encouraged to host at least one campaign event that is open to the whole community.

By opening your doors to members and your wider community, WIs can:

- Raise awareness of hidden homelessness among women and girls.
- Bring local charities, housing providers and people with lived experience together.
- Build lasting partnerships within their community to help tackle homelessness at a local level.

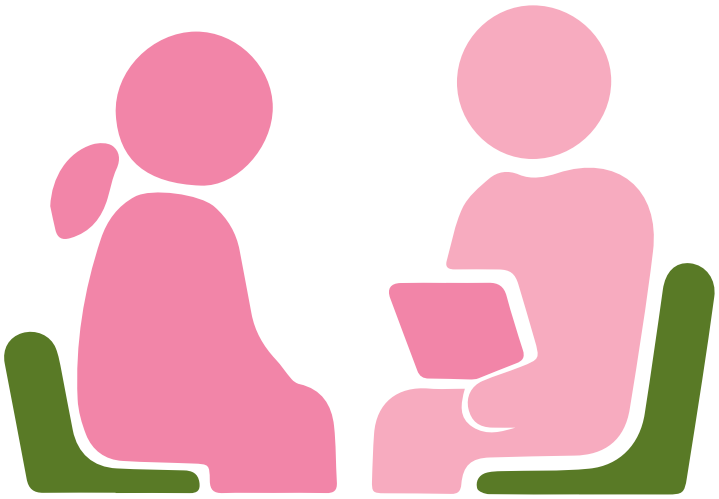
Whether it's an evening talk, panel discussion, coffee morning or film screening, every event plays a vital role in raising awareness, challenging stereotypes and encouraging local action on homelessness.

You could reach out to your local homeless charity, local council or university for talks, advice and practical help.

Please tell us about any events your WI is planning. We can help promote them, attend where possible, and support you in reaching a wider audience.

IMAGINE THE IMPACT

- **5,000** conversations taking place across England, Wales and the Islands.
- **Tens of thousands** of people learning about women's hidden homelessness.
- **Hundreds** of local charities given a platform to share their work.
- **Thousands** of new connections between WIs and their communities.



Hayley's story

After experiencing domestic abuse and significant trauma, Hayley became homeless following the breakdown of her family life.

With nowhere to go, she was told she was not a priority for housing. For more than three months, she slept in her car or stayed in churches offering emergency night shelter, using a local leisure centre simply to shower each day.

Without a support network, Hayley's mental health deteriorated and she struggled to cope with the loss of her home and separation from her children.

Everything changed when she was referred to Launchpad. She was offered safe accommodation and a dedicated support worker who helped her rebuild her life, addressing her mental health, securing benefits, finding long-term housing and regaining her confidence.

Two years later, Hayley had moved into her own permanent home, was no longer homeless and was rebuilding her relationship with her children.

"I've been through it all and I've come out the other side. I know I can move forward and Launchpad has given me back some confidence. Now I can see the light."

Launchpad
Preventing homelessness

LAUNCHPAD

Launchpad was founded as a soup kitchen by University of Reading students in 1979, Launchpad has since grown into a holistic service, providing vital support for local individuals, couples and families who are homeless or at risk of losing their home.

www.launchpadreading.org.uk

Our heartfelt thanks go to Hayley for bravely sharing her experience, and to Launchpad for the vital support they provide and for enabling us to share her story.

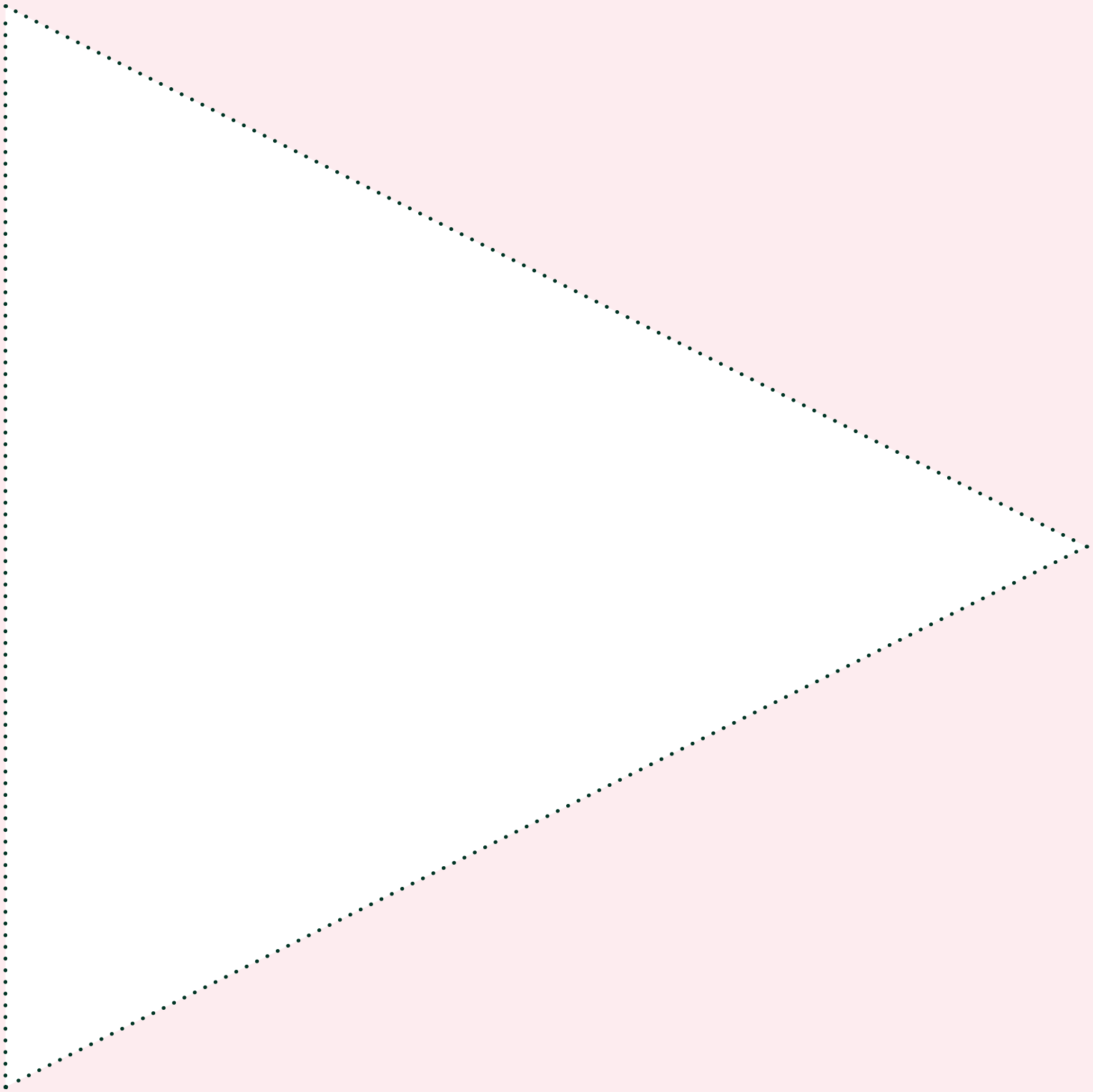
Take part in our craft challenge

Sew, stitch, paint or decorate a 200x200mm bunting triangle with a message that calls for change. Whether it's "Keep Her Home", "Count Her. Prevent It." or your own creative slogan, every contribution will become part of a national display highlighting the WI's campaign to end women's homelessness. Below is the template.

Deadline for entries is May 30, 2027.

Send your bunting to:

104 New Kings Road,
London SW6 4LY



Dates for the diary:

8th March
International Women's Day

September
Women's Rough Sleeping Census takes place each year

10th October
World Homeless Day

17th October
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

25th November
International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

25th November
Start of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

Christmas campaign
Watch this space for No Woman Without a Home at Christmas

10th December
Human Rights Day

How to provide help immediately if you see someone rough sleeping:

Online:
www.thestreetlink.org.uk

Phone:
0300 500 0914

If the person appears unwell, injured, in immediate danger, or needs urgent medical help, call 999 instead.

When reporting, try to provide:

- The exact location
- The time you saw them
- A description of the person (clothing, approximate age, etc.)
- StreetLink passes the information to local outreach teams, who will try to locate the person and offer support and accommodation services where appropriate.

References

Government guidance:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-protection-orders

Home Office overview:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-act-2021-overarching-factsheet/domestic-abuse-protection-notices-dapns-and-domestic-abuse-protection-orders-dapos-factsheet

Ministry of Housing homelessness statistics:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics

Welsh Government homelessness statistics:
www.gov.wales/homelessness

Women's Rough Sleeping Census:
www.solacewomensaid.org/womens-rough-sleeping-census/

Women's homelessness research:
www.crisis.org.uk
www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/latest-news

England: Women's Rough Sleeping Census:
www.solacewomensaid.org/womens-rough-sleeping-census/

Welsh homelessness statistics:
www.gov.wales/homelessness

Parliament MP finder:
https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP

Senedd postcode finder:
https://senedd.wales/find-a-member-of-the-senedd

Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Act 2026:
www.legislation.gov.uk

Homeless Link directory:
www.homeless.org.uk

Women's Aid:
www.womensaid.org.uk

Crisis training and resources:
www.crisis.org.uk/get-involved/campaign

Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research:
www.i-sphere.hw.ac.uk

StreetLink:
www.thestreetlink.org.uk

Launchpad:
www.launchpadreading.org.uk

Single Homeless Project:
www.shp.org.uk

Supporters & champions

Crisis

www.crisis.org.uk

Launchpad Reading

www.launchpadreading.org.uk

Women's Aid

www.womensaid.org.uk

Heriot-Watt University

www.hw.ac.uk

Single Homeless Project

www.shp.org.uk

Solace Women's Aid

www.solacewomensaid.org



The Baroness Polly Neate CBE

Teresa Parker

www.teresaparkermedia.co.uk

Thank you to all these wonderful experts and charities for their ongoing support of our campaign.

theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN

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