

### **Difficult to talk about**

In our Society it is often difficult to talk about dying and about homelessness and yet both are with us every day.

Currently, at the time of writing this paper, there is a Private Members' Bill<sup>1</sup> being put forward to offer MPs the opportunity to debate assisted dying. I am sure there is the full spectrum of views on this topic but it will get many people talking about death, the practicalities and its meaning.

This year two of the charities we are supporting offer vital support to the terminally ill and their families. For over twenty five years, Willow Wood Hospice has provided care for all ages in Tameside and Glossop. Their website<sup>2</sup> offers patient stories of how valuable their services are, both to those who are terminally ill and to their families.

The Marie Curie Charity is named after the first woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize. Among her many achievements she developed mobile radiography X-ray units during WW1. Today the charity states clearly that 'everyone deserves the right to support at the end of life.' This charity offers a range of services, from living with a terminal illness through to when a loved one dies. One significant challenge is for the homeless, who can often die alone in cold and frightening situations. This charity provides palliative care for the homeless by creating person-centred care and building strong community links.

In the UK a homeless person will typically die in their mid-40s<sup>3</sup>. Often the cause of death is drug poisoning or suicide. Homelessness happens for many reasons. It always makes people vulnerable and in need of help.

This year we are supporting Alternative Angels in Swindon. Their mission is clear: to offer a warm, welcoming space, nourishing food and a sense of community. They also provide vital guidance and connections to essential services. Sadly, there are homeless in all our communities. Walking through Leeds recently, I saw folks buzzing with the excitement of Christmas. I also saw the homeless with their dejected looks.

As we approach Christmas let us all remember those who have lost loved ones and those who face a bleak Christmas with no roof to call their own.

Let us welcome the birth of Jesus and celebrate with joy. Wishing you each a very happy Christmas. Sr Mary Holmes

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<sup>1</sup> Choice at End of Life for Terminally Ill Adults. Debate to take place on 29/11/2024.

<sup>2</sup> [Willow Wood Hospice – Together we care](http://www.willowwoodhospice.org.uk)

<sup>3</sup> From the Office of National Statistics. [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)