

Our history

The Society was founded in France in 1833 by a 20-year-old law student, Frederic Ozanam, as a practical response to the extreme poverty experienced by those living in and around Paris at that time. Frederic and some of his fellow students started to befriend those in need and provide them with practical help. The group of students took St Vincent de Paul as their patron, and the St Vincent de Paul Society was born. Later, the work spread across France as the members left university and returned to their hometowns. The organisation continued to grow, spreading across countries and continents. Today the Society exists in more than 145 countries and has more than 700,000 members worldwide.

The formation of the Society was a Catholic response to the poverty which was endemic at the time. Today, the Society remains Catholic in ethos and takes the Gospel message of St Mark: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you came to see me" as the foundation of its work.

*"I would like to embrace the whole world
in a network of charity."*

Frederic Ozanam, Founder
St Vincent de Paul Society
1813 - 1853

For further information and how to contact us

To contact your local SVP:

Conference
Name _____

Contact
Name _____

Contact
Number _____

If you would like to know more about us,
visit our web site: www.svp.org.uk

If you have comments about our work,
good or otherwise, we would like to know,
so please email, write or telephone us as
follows:

SVP National Office
5th Floor
291-299 Borough High St
London SE1 1JG
info@svp.org.uk
0207 407 4644

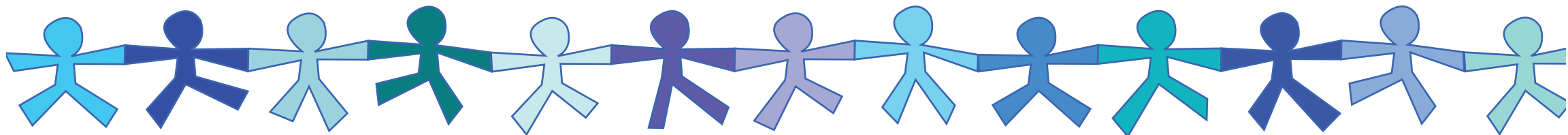
How you can help us

SVP members are all volunteers. They are not paid and undertake SVP work in their own time. Please treat them courteously and help them to help you.



SVP Client Information

St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales)
Reg Charity 1053992 Co.3174679
A member of the International Confederation of the
Society of St Vincent de Paul



Who we are and what we do

The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) is an international Christian voluntary organisation, providing direct practical assistance to anyone in need. Our main purpose is to offer people the hand of friendship through befriending visits. While our motivation stems from our religious belief, we are not here to 'convert' people, or to impose our faith.

The Society has more than 10,000 members in England and Wales who carry out befriending visits and 125 staff engaged in a wide variety of projects, providing practical support in the heart of local communities.

What you can expect from an SVP member

- Kindness and courtesy
- Compassion and understanding
- Respect for and acceptance of you as a person
- A non-judgemental attitude
- Practical help and advice
- Confidentiality (as long as you are not at risk)

What you can expect when we visit you

All initial visits are carried out in pairs and all our members have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). This is to protect you and ourselves. Subsequent visits are usually carried out in pairs or, in some circumstances, by individuals, but this will be agreed with you in advance. We never share any information about you (beyond the people in the SVP) without your permission unless we think you are at risk.

First meeting or visit

- We arrange to meet with you to get to know you and how we might help. During the visit, we seek to understand your situation in more detail.
- We arrange a suitable time to visit again if required. It may not be the same two people but, if possible, one will be the same.
- We then meet with our SVP team members locally, to tell them about your specific circumstances (in confidence).
- We agree what immediate help we can offer to you.

Later visits

- Further visits will be arranged with you either at the time of the visit or at your request.

How we can help you

Our core work is giving friendship and support

- We will lend an ear to those who need someone to listen to them during the difficult times.
- We can make regular visits to people who need company. These might be people living in their own homes, in residential care homes or in hospital and, in some instances, we can offer prison visiting.

In addition (depending on local resources), we can help to make ends meet in an emergency

- We can call on our Parish or local SVP Community Support Projects to provide specific items of clothing, furniture, or anything else that helps individuals and families get by.
- We are sometimes able to provide financial support on a short-term basis.
- Depending on local expertise, we may be able to give advice in problem areas such as benefits or financial issues.
- We can organise and (sometimes) pay for short breaks for families in difficulty, for carers, or others who may be in need of a holiday.
- When these difficulties are beyond our skills and experience, we can signpost to others with more specialised skills.

