

Phone chargers for people living on the streets

People who sleep rough in Edinburgh are being given portable mobile phone battery chargers to ensure their phone is kept powered up for what might be a lifesaving call to a support service.



The phone chargers have important phone numbers on them

The Edinburgh-based homelessness charity, Streetwork, has identified a relatively high level of mobile phone ownership among rough sleepers in the city, but no easy way of being able to charge them, when their battery power begins to run down.

Streetwork has commissioned powerpacks for distribution by its street team. The packs are printed with vital contact telephone numbers, including the charity's own contact number, in case of emergency.

Powerpacks are then collected after use by street team members, in return for fully-charged ones.

Says Hugh Hill, director of Streetwork: "For most of us, our phone is a crucial connection to our family, friends and the outside world.

"If you're on the street, it's more important than that; your phone is a lifeline, security and, in some cases, it's your only means of help."

Streetwork says that the average life expectancy of a homelessness person is 47, while a rough sleeper is nine times more likely to commit suicide and 47 times more likely to be

robbed.

Many people who are rough sleepers find it difficult to charge their phone in the way most people would when out shopping or visiting cafes or restaurants.

Hill continued : “Our focus is always about getting people off the streets but, where that’s not possible, we want people to be safe – which is why we’re planning to issue portable phone chargers to people on the street.”

“Our street team are out everyday in Edinburgh and Leith connecting with people sleeping or begging on the streets.

“In one day, in June, we spoke to 89 people begging in the city. We know people are having a tough time and we’re helping people get the right support and treatment they need. Being able to keep in touch by phone is a huge benefit.

“There’s nothing good about being on the street. It’s bad for your mental and physical health, it’s unsafe and your chances of assault, theft and exploitation are huge.”



The Streetworks team will collect used chargers and hand out new ones.