

Council invests in charity coats for rough sleepers

Homeless charity Streetwork receives 50 all weather coats bought by the council from a not-for-profit outdoor clothing firm

Edinburgh Council have partnered with Livingston's [The Outsider](#) to provide 50 sleeping coats for rough sleepers.

The council is the first local authority to partner The Outsider, which has now provided over 250 Sleeping Coats directly to beneficiaries, or to charities that work with people experiencing homelessness. John Keogh, the Broxburn man behind the company, presented the sleeping coats to staff at The Simon Community which runs [Streetwork](#) services for people facing homelessness in the city. It comes as the council said the city "is in the grip of a housing emergency."

The Outsider is a Community Interest Company (CIC) that reinvests the profits from its outdoor clothing sales to make and donate the coats for the benefit of rough sleepers. Each coat is individually hand-made and has been made to be multi-functional; working as a coat and a sleeping bag with room inside to change clothes and with a detachable foot section that converts into a bag to store the coat, act as a cushion or hold personal items.

The Outsider was founded by John after he came across a homeless man with a waterlogged sleeping bag, cold and soaked to the skin begging on the street. He gave the man some food and a hot drink. For wild swimmer John this encounter led him

to invent The Outsider and begin a mission to improve the lives of rough sleepers by providing waterproof, warm, hard-wearing coats to support their health, welfare and dignity whilst on the streets.

Set up as a Community Interest Company, The Outsider has the freedom to sell the products it makes and to accept donations. No one working for The Outsider is paid a salary.

John said: "Our aim is to make the highest quality clothing that is most appropriate to its intended user, all of our materials are sourced from UK suppliers and our transport costs are low".

Over the last year, the reputation of The Outsider has flourished and interest in the company has spread, also thanks to the help of a loyal band of supporters.

The Outsider has championed fundraising activities, including 'Sleep-Oots' where people sleep rough for one night, become involved in educational initiatives and support to events, particularly those involving wild or cold-water swimming.

Commenting at the presentation of the coats on The Outsider's social media pages, the council said: "Edinburgh is in the grip of a Housing Emergency. Close to 5,000 households will spend tonight in temporary accommodation. But rough sleeping is reducing.

"Helped by incredible partner agencies, charities, volunteers and local businesses who work together and reach out to those in urgent need.

"One day we hope to end rough sleeping for good. But until then, we're very grateful to The Outsider and Simon Community for helping us to distribute these warm waterproof jackets. Doubling up as sleeping bags, we hope these 50 garments will go some way towards making a difference."

by Stuart Somerville Local Democracy Reporter



Streetwork charity receives 50 all weather coats