

Whitehall Park Living Advent Calendar – Info Pack

What is it?

Living Advent calendars are a kind of community art project, originating in Sweden, that happen at Christmas time. We have been holding a Living Advent Calendar in Whitehall Park since 2015.

We get volunteers from 24 houses and hubs in the Whitehall Park community to illuminate their windows with festive decorations in December. One window is 'opened' each day from the 1st to the 24th December and all the windows remain illuminated until twelfth night. The purpose of the project is to have fun and create a nice way of bringing the community together.

How does it work?

We create a map of which houses will reveal their windows on which days, and share the map within the local community so that everyone can enjoy taking a tour of the decorated houses.



We also invite you to display a poster in your window so people know when to look out for your window display; and give you some maps to share with your friends, family and neighbours.

What's involved if I volunteer?

Volunteers decorate their windows and then reveal them on their scheduled day in Advent – and then keep their window displays up for the rest of the Christmas season. We recommend using a timer for your lights, so that you don't have to keep remembering to turn them on or off.

On your chosen day you could just do a simple switch-on of your lights, reveal your window and enjoy it with whoever happens to be passing by. You might want to invite some friends, family and neighbours for the occasion; or think even bigger - it's entirely up to you. People often do mince pies and mull (or similar) on the doorstep, but there is no pressure to do this and it's completely fine to keep it low key. As standard we ask that you do your switch-on at 6:30pm so it's easy for everyone to remember, but otherwise you can organise your own event as you like.



What kind of decoration do I need to do?

Let your creative juices run free! It's not a competition, and you can do any kind of festive decoration. The only rule is that it needs to be centred around a window that can be revealed or switched on.

There are lots of other Living Advent Calendars around the world that you could look to for inspiration - we particularly love the one in [Saltaire](#) in Bradford. You can see lots of images from previous windows on our [facebook group](#).

Will I end up with hordes of people at my house?

It varies on different days, but from past experience you might expect between half-a-dozen and twenty or so people coming to a switch-on.

The idea is that each volunteer takes the lead on inviting their friends, family and whoever else they would like to come to their own 'switch on' event. We'll do some promotion of the Advent Calendar overall (see below), but for your individual event you can get the word out to as many or as few people as you choose. If you volunteer, we hope you'd also welcome neighbours and local residents who would like to enjoy your decorations and get into the festive spirit together.

How will it be promoted?

We're aiming to bring together the Whitehall Park community, so we target the promotion at the local area. We work in partnership with [St Andrews Church](#), [Whitehall Park Residents Association](#) and [Whitehall Park School](#) to spread the word about the project.

We use leaflets and posters to share the map of the Living Advent Calendar in the local area, and we also have a [facebook group](#) so we can share photos, updates and help people connect with each other. The map will also be available on Whitehall Park Residents Association website.

A quick word on risks and mitigation

Hopefully inviting the neighbourhood to enjoy your Christmas lights doesn't count as particularly daredevil act, but just to say we are hoping that volunteers will take responsibility for taking any sensible precautions for safety and security.



We'd suggest, for example, that if you want to provide hospitality, you do it on the doorstep (rather than inside your house) so that in the worst case scenario you simply end up running out of mince pies and have a few people spilling onto the pavement. Obviously we'd hope that you have the usual insurance in place to cover your home.

How do I take part?

If you'd like to volunteer to decorate a window, or if you're interested in collaborating on the project, please send a message to Amy.

Who's involved?

This project is co-ordinated by Amy Pollard. Amy lives on Cressida Road with her husband and two daughters.

Sponsorship is kindly provided by [Whitehall's Estate Agents](#). The project couldn't happen without the support of St Andrews Church and the Whitehall Park Residents Association.

The pictures on this leaflet are from the Saltaire Living Advent Calendar, who have some [fabulous photos](#) from previous events in their community.



Tips from previous participants

“Do it! It was so much fun and really worthwhile.

We enjoyed making the window together and assembling it, and we got to meet lots of neighbours we never knew we had.”

“It was easy-peasy and great fun! We loved it!

For some reason we didn’t really believe people would turn up – but they did! We ran out of mince pies, but nobody minded.”

“I’d recommend getting a timer for your lights.

We got one for a couple of quid, and it was a lot easier than remembering to turn them on every night. It also worked a good security feature when we went away to visit family.”

“It’s hard to guess how many people will come, so move your car so that you have extra space in front of your house. That way, if there’s no room on the pavement people will have somewhere to stand.”

“Take a tour of the lights as a Christmas/New Year walk.”

“It will be quite dark on the street, so nobody will notice if you serve shop-bought sausage rolls, or shop-bought mince pies 😊”

“Don’t feel under pressure to make a massive effort. Our 12 year old designed and made our window on her own – it was lovely and she was really proud. It didn’t matter that it wasn’t “perfect-perfect”. “

“Talcum powder makes lovely fake snow!”

“Watch out for radiator heat – it played havoc with our window design.”

“Do a count-down to the switch-on! It added a bit of drama and made a good focal point.”

“When we did mulled wine from one big pot with a ladle, people were too shy to help themselves. Next time we will serve mulled wine in individual cups that people can take from a tray.”

“Think about how your window display will affect **the light in your front room**. We were accidentally made our front room really dark. It looked great as a window but it wasn’t so nice to sit in during the day.”

“Go along to events that are not your own – you’ll have more chance to talk to people properly, and see how varied the windows are.”

“If you have **big bushes** that you don’t want to trim back, do an upstairs window instead.”

No 1 Tip:

“It’s not Christmassy to be stressed about Christmas decorations, so don’t feel like you have to go the nth degree.

Just do whatever you would enjoy doing, relax and have fun.”