

# Birmingham New Street's Christmas Eve meal returns as take-away for 2020

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Birmingham New Street's highly successful Christmas Eve meal for the city's homeless is returning this year – but with a difference.

For the third year running Network Rail is teaming up with award-winning charity Midland Langar Seva Society (MLSS) to provide hot food and festive cheer for those who are struggling in the city centre this Christmas.

Since 2018, 550 people have enjoyed a three-course sit down meal and party on Birmingham New Street's concourse.

However, holding an indoor event is not possible this year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Network Rail and MLSS were determined for 2020 not to be missed, so have revealed the alternative plans to provide 250 take-away meals and gifts are being revealed.

Patrick Power, Birmingham New Street station manager, said: "We know holding the Christmas Eve meal

for those who need help in the city centre is a highlight for them so the station team and MLSS have pulled out the stops to make sure Covid doesn't cancel Christmas this year.

"Because of social distancing we can't hold the meal inside in the warm as we would like, so we've had to think about how to do things in a different way. We're sure we'll be back inside for Christmas 2021 even bigger and better than before."

The food and gifts will be given out on the Eastern plaza between 5pm and 7pm on Thursday December 24.

A queuing system will be set up to ensure people keep at a safe distance from one another to help stop the spread of coronavirus.

Volunteers from Network Rail, the rail industry and Midland Langar Seva Society will work throughout the evening to cater for up to 250 people.

This year's Christmas Eve meal is being sponsored by Quinn Infrastructure services.

Randhir Singh, Midland Langar Seva Society co-founder, said: "Our homeless Christmas meal has been special for our service users for over seven years, with a sit down three-course meal at the Birmingham New Street station for the last two – it has been a highlight for them. Every year they look forward to it and for many months they have been asking whether the party is still going ahead due to the pandemic.

"This year will be different due to the social distancing restrictions, however we will still make it special for them by spoiling them with presents, if they are lucky, they will get a chance to have a photo with Santa."

Neil Shearwood, managing director from Quinn Infrastructure Services, said: "We are delighted to play a part in the 'Christmas Eve Meal for the Homeless' for a second year now. This year, more importantly, as so many charities have really felt the effect of COVID-19 on contributions.

"We hope this can bring some Christmas cheer to those who need it most and support our client Network Rail in this fantastic effort."

*Photo credit: Network Rail*

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