

Review of the Year 2016

Who We Are

Wood Street Mission is a registered children's charity based in the heart of Manchester. Our mission is simple: to improve the lives and life chances of local children. Our work includes running a community shop where families purchase everyday necessities, and goods at expensive times of year, with credit based on family size. We distribute uniform and other school necessities to help children fit in and achieve at school and organise book clubs during school holidays to promote reading and literacy to children and their parents. One of the oldest charities in the city, we also raise awareness about child poverty through heritage activities, communications and talks at schools, churches and businesses. Both Manchester and Salford have high levels of child poverty and we help 3000 families and 7000 children every year.

Our Values

We believe in support – all of us need support, especially in times of adversity and transition, and many of the families we work with are isolated and lack a support network

We believe in being respectful to people regardless of personal characteristics, circumstance or background, and we are inclusive in our approach to working with others

We believe in sustainability – we have been here since Victorian times and we will continue to adapt our services in response to the changing needs of families

We believe in hope and, despite all of the challenges, we remain committed to improving the lives and life-chances of local children, so all can grow up to fulfil their potential

SmartStart

Our flagship project SmartStart aims to distribute one million pounds worth of uniform and other school goods – enough to give every child living below the poverty line a school uniform. In 2016 we distributed £217,952 worth of kit over the course of the year, and at back-to-school time teamed up with leading school wear supplier Trutex, to provide new pre-ordered uniform to a record 2,313 children. Hundreds more families were helped through our popular, back-to-school shop.

SmartStart survey

A good education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty but many families struggle to afford the cost of school uniform which means their children can be bullied in the playground and get into trouble for breaking school rules. A survey carried out over the course of the summer indicated that without the project, half of families would have to spend rent or food money on uniform, while a third said they would get into debt. A quarter of parents said SmartStart prevented their child being bullied at school. Over 90% of parents said they were satisfied with the project.

Helping children fit in and achieve at school



Ruby Barnhill,
star of BFG

Promoting literacy and improving life chances

Book Clubs

Our holiday book clubs promote reading and literacy to children and their parents. Over the year we held events in community venues in Cheetham Hill, Hulme, Gorton, Langworthy, Ordsall and Wythenshawe, plus a special summer event at the Children's Adventure Farm in Cheshire. As well as giving families the chance to take home high quality children's books for good, the events allow children participate in book-themed story-times, competitions and an IT corner, and enjoy a nutritious lunch. Over the summer we organised a series of Roald Dahl themed events as part of Roald Dahl 100 and we were delighted when Ruby Barnhill, star of the BFG movie, dropped into the event at the Children's Adventure Farm to read to families.

"Since your last book club I haven't had to chase my son to read. He got his favourite book and wants to read at home. He had books to read from school before, but now he's got his own. His Dad put a bookshelf in his room and when his friends come to play, they all choose a book and sit reading!"



"We were introduced when I became a single parent and had to set up home from scratch. Since then we've been to about four book clubs. My son truly loves choosing his books. As do I! I am positive it's the reason he loves reading"





Mcr Deputy Lord Mayor Eddy Newman opens our Christmas shop

Building a brighter future for local families

Community Shop

Our community shop had over 5000 family visits during its first year. The shop stocks necessities like children's clothes, bedding, baby items, and toiletries, as well as toys and books which are important for children's development. In the run up to the new school year it became a 'back-to-school' shop where parents could shop for new uniforms and other school goods for their children. And in December it became a Christmas shop allowing parents to choose toys and gifts to give to their children as presents, as well as food and treats to help with the expense of the season. In 2017 we will launch a new service combining the shop's practical support, with signposting, support and volunteering opportunities for families.



Former service user, Marian O'Brien

Joining up the past and present

Living Heritage Activities

In June we took part in Manchester Histories Festival for the first time organising a discussion event with former service users called What the Dickens? with the University of Manchester and Greater Manchester Poverty Action. We produced a booklet to accompany our Queues, Clogs & Redemption history exhibition which was displayed in our building during the festival, and organised two well attended events, a heritage walk and archive talk with tour guide Suzanne Hindle. Raising awareness about child poverty is an important part of our work as we approach our 150th anniversary. We are very pleased our history exhibition will be displayed at the Salford Museum and Art Gallery from June to November 2017.

CASE STUDIES

Poverty is fact not fiction

We helped over 3000 families and 7000 children in 2016. Our families are very diverse. Many are parents with pre-school children simply struggling without family support to manage childcare and work. Some have experienced relationship breakdown, others are in low paid jobs or are unable to work because of long-term health conditions, while some come from newer migrant communities.

"I left my husband after 12 years of abuse. I have moved past being completely supported, but the nature of being a single parent in part-time work means I do still need help. I have got food at Easter and Christmas and will receive help through SmartStart when my son starts school. The food helps with cooking on a budget. When it comes to things like treats, yes Easter Eggs might only be £1, but what would you rather spend £1 on – an Easter Egg or a packet of pasta?"

"I live with my children in a property with no central heating. Once winter comes we live and sleep in one room. I prioritise bills and food, there's no extra money to go on holiday with the kids, and I have to say no to social engagements. At school they often ask for contributions to activities. It's embarrassing to have to go to the head and explain that you can't afford things. My daughter's friends say 'Oh your mum doesn't pay' and that's hard to hear. Everything would be so much harder if Wood Street wasn't there."

Raising Awareness

Manchester United footballer Juan Mata paid us a visit at Christmas to give out presents and learn about our work. The visit, which was covered by Manchester Evening News and Manchester United TV, generated considerable interest on social media. It topped what was a great year of media coverage for us, with SmartStart featuring in BBC Radio Manchester's Drivetime and Sunday Breakfast Show, the Times Education Supplement, and Manchester Evening News. Information about the project was also included in the programme of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Seven Acts of Mercy, along with examples of six other projects working with vulnerable people. Our Christmas shop got plenty of media coverage as well, driving a huge response to our Christmas Should Be About More Than Survival appeal. Our work also featured on Irish TV, That's Manchester TV, and community radio.

Getting our message out



Footballer, Juan Mata



Making good things happen

Clockwise from top left: Flixton Junior school; Holly Bontoft, Fieldfisher; The Lowry Hotel Great Manchester Run team; Carillion volunteers

Volunteers

In 2016 over a thousand people gave up their time to help at Wood Street Mission. Volunteers sorted donations, read stories and served up hot lunches at our book clubs, and stocked shelves in our community shop. Our volunteers are recruited in different ways: they are donors and supporters who want to get more involved in the work of the charity, young professionals working in nearby businesses and professional firms, and parents who have used our services and want to give something back. Volunteers are vital to our work and we are incredibly grateful to everyone who volunteered for us over the course of the year.

Adding it all up

2016 in numbers

- 5000** visits to our community shop.
- 15000** children's books given out at book clubs.
- 895** children given new high quality warm coats.
- £217,952** worth of school uniform and kit distributed.
- 4391** children given toys and gifts for Christmas.
- 400** corporate volunteers helped in our Christmas shop.
- 2313** children kitted out in smart new uniform for school year.
- 2516** Twitter followers and **5151** Facebook likes.

One big difference to local children

THANK YOU

Wood Street Mission receives no statutory funding and relies entirely on the generosity and good will of the local community to do our work. We were amazed and often touched by the thousands of acts of generosity – big and small – which allowed us to help so many children in 2016 and would like to express our gratitude to everyone who supported our work over the course of the year, including:

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| 3M | Kuits Solicitors |
| Alchemist | Lakeland Picnic |
| Allied International Credit (UK) Ltd | Lambert Smith Hampton |
| Allied London | Littlewoods Clearance |
| Anthony Royle | LDeX |
| Art Battle Manchester | L'Oreal UK Ltd |
| Ashton Road Congregational Church | Lowry Hotel |
| B&Q Burnage | M&S Didsbury |
| BASF | Manchester Guardian Society Charitable Trust |
| Big Easy Ltd – 42nd Street | Manchester Hoteliers Association |
| BLM Law | Manchester Relief In Need |
| BNY Mellon | MEC |
| Booth Charities | Metro Mechanical Services |
| Brian Kennedy Trust | Oliver Valves |
| Cargill PLC | Peter Kershaw Trust |
| Carillion NWEF | PH Media |
| Chapman Taylor | Pinsent Masons |
| Charity of George Pilkington | PZ Cussons |
| CMFT Doctors' Mess | RBS |
| Denis Ashton, family and friends | R Noone and Son |
| Didsbury Theatre School | Robert Lindsay |
| Donation in memory of Jennifer Pitchforth | Sally Cabrini |
| Dr Barbara Lewis | Share Gift (Orr Mackintosh Foundation) |
| Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund | Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition |
| DWF Foundation | Souter Charitable Trust |
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| Fanny Rapaport Charitable Settlement | Swinton Park Golf Club |
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| George Pilkington Charity | Tom Gaskin |
| Greenery | Tough Mudder Team |
| Guardian newspaper | Tricia Drucker Memorial Fund |
| Hawksmoor | Trisha and David |
| Helen, Lucy & Fran | True North |
| Holy Angels Catholic Church | Trutex |
| HMRC | United Biscuits |
| John Rylands Library | University of Manchester |
| Key 103 Cash for Kids | White Stuff Foundation |
| Kings Chambers | Zochonis Charitable Trust |

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