

Wood Street Mission Referrers' Guidelines

How can families access our service?

Wood Street Mission is a registered children's charity based in the centre of Manchester. We support families living on a low income in Manchester and Salford, with projects offering practical support based in our central Manchester office and outreach locations. Families do need to be referred initially by a professional who knows their circumstances.

In order for a family to access our service:

- **The family must have children or be expecting children**
We help low income families with children up to the age of 18. We can also provide help to pregnant women.
- **Families must live in the Manchester or Salford Area**
We do not help families living in another area of Greater Manchester (i.e. Trafford, Tameside). We can help if a family has been **temporarily** housed in another area but previously lived in Manchester or Salford.
- **Families must be referred for help by a professional aware of their circumstances.**
Workers making the referral should have a good knowledge of the family's circumstances. Referrers **must** get the consent of the family and tell them that they are making the referral. We take referrals from both statutory and voluntary agencies.
- **Families must be on a low income and in need**
We do not means test clients – although many of the families using our service will be on means tested benefits such as income support or income based JSA. Others will struggle on low wages and irregular work hours or not be able to access the benefit system. We would consider a family in need if they cannot provide essential items for children. This could be due to benefits sanctions or changes, domestic violence or relationship breakdown, unsustainable debt, additional costs due to disability or ill-health or other crisis. It could also be because a family on low income is unable to afford the expense of Christmas, the new school year, or moving accommodation. This is not an exhaustive list.

What Help will families receive?

Once a family has been referred they will be able to access our service for a 12 Month period. After this point their referral will need to be renewed. From February 2017 all families attending our community shop will receive a Family card informing them when their referral will need renewing.

Families will only need one referral for this period – they **will not need separate referrals for each project** e.g. Easter, Smart start, Christmas, holiday book clubs.

Projects we offer

Community Shop

Our Community shop is open most of the year providing help with clothing, bedding, toiletries and toys. All families referred will be given credit for our community shop, which allows them to 'purchase' goods. The credit limit will be based on family size and will renew automatically each quarter. In addition families will be able to access a signposting service for help with problems they might face. Our shop is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10am-1pm.

Baby Equipment

We can provide equipment for families with young children. This includes Buggies, High Chairs, Cots, and Safety Gates. Moses Baskets and baths. As we rely on donations, availability is limited and families may be placed on a waiting list. Families can request equipment at the shop or by phone. A referrer can request baby equipment on our general referral form. We can deliver to a family's home if they are unable to collect.

Smart Start

Smart Start provides families with school clothes and kit so their children can fit in and achieve at school which is key to breaking the cycle of poverty. During the summer holidays we provide school uniforms to children whose parents/carers are struggling with back-to-school costs. School uniform is also stocked in our community shop throughout the year and we may be able to help with one-off school costs e.g. shoes, dressing up costumes for non-uniform days

Christmas

In the run up to Christmas we run a community shop where parents/carers can shop for presents or gifts for their children and food to help with the expense of the holidays. We also hold toy fairs in outreach locations and events for families to allow them join in the festivities. At Easter we provide chocolate eggs and food to families through our shop.

Book Clubs

We host book clubs during holidays and half term breaks in outreach locations. Children and parents attending the events can choose from a large selection of donated books to take home and participate in literacy-based activities including story-time, art competition, dressing up corner. Families attending the events also get lunch.

Can Referrers Access our projects on the family's behalf?

We are working to make our projects more accessible to families throughout Manchester and Salford and would encourage families to access our projects themselves. If they cannot get into our community shop during opening times, we may be able to make an alternative arrangement for them to access the shop. Referral workers can also come in and pick up the items they require. We can also deliver larger items of baby equipment such as buggies and cots to families' homes or alternative address such as a friend or their support worker. A referral form for baby equipment can be found on our website at - <http://www.woodstreetmission.org.uk/Need-help/For-referrers.aspx>

For our Easter, Smart Start and Christmas projects we will issue guidance in the months before the projects start to all referrers on our email list. To be added to our referrer email list please send an email to referrals@woodstreetmission.org.uk

What will happen once I make a referral?

We will acknowledge your referral by email and write, phone or email to the family to invite them to attend Wood Street Mission. We aim to do so within 5 working days of receipt of a referral. If a family is in immediate need please highlight this when making a referral as we will try to help as soon as possible in an emergency situation.

Where is Wood Street Mission?

Our address is 26 Wood Street, Manchester M3 3EF. Wood Street is a narrow side street just off Deansgate, right beside the John Rylands library.

Please note if you are planning on visiting Wood Street Mission in a car we do not have parking outside our building and there are double yellow lines which run on both sides of Wood Street. We strongly advise you do not park outside the building as the area is regularly patrolled by parking attendants.