

NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN/WINTER 2024



WOOD ST MISSION



**HELPING
CHILDREN
& FAMILIES**

living on a low income in
Manchester & Salford.

A word from our CEO

Welcome to our 2024 Newsletter. We've had a busy year, and I hope you enjoy reading more about our work and importantly, the impact it has on the families we support.

Firstly, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all our wonderful supporters. As always you have fundraised tirelessly and responded with gusto to our appeals. Without your help we could not possibly deliver the wide range of projects that improve the life chances of thousands of local children every year.

With reports that the cost-of-living crisis is devastating families' mental health, with over half of individuals throughout England and Wales citing increased anxiety as a direct result of the crisis, our work is needed as much now as it always has been.

In a 2023 survey conducted by the Child Poverty Action Group, nearly two-thirds of children and parents reported experiencing significant financial stress at home, leading to a constant sense of worry.

Our collaborative working with local agencies, great relationships with local referrers and schools as well as our Outreach work in the community, our projects can and do make a difference.

Each of our projects continually adapts to the needs of our community. Our Family Basics project, in particular, illustrates how our Outreach efforts benefit families not only in tangible ways but also in terms of their mental health. By not having to travel into the city centre we are alleviating both anxiety and cost and all remain free for families to access.

As we strive to enhance Smart Start's impact on young people in need, we are actively exploring new ways to better assist families. In response to over 200 families affected by disabilities who sought our help in 2023, we are looking to offer more inclusive uniform kit options.

Our Books Forever project is thriving, enabling us to build stronger connections with local schools. As these relationships grow, schools often refer families to us for support. From a child coming home from school with a bag of books, to their family visiting Wood Street for help multiple times throughout the year, the impact of this project is significant.

As you read this, our Christmas Appeal will have launched, and we will be preparing to turn Wood Street into what can only be described as Santa's Grotto! Once again, we expect to distribute thousands of toys and gifts to local families and as always, we will be very grateful for your support both in terms of toys and financial donations. Monetary donations help us to fill the gaps when we are short of particular items.

No child deserves to live in poverty, and we are incredibly passionate about ensuring we reach as many families as possible in Manchester and Salford. Your support throughout the year enables us to improve the lives of our future generation.

I hope you enjoy this Newsletter and thank you.



Des Lynch
CEO AT WOOD STREET MISSION
des@woodstreetmission.org.uk

Our impact in 2023

Wood Street Mission provides practical help to families who live in Manchester and Salford by helping to alleviate the impact of poverty and improving the life chance of local children.

Despite being 155 years old, our mission remains the same. This year, 7 million low-income households in the UK reported that they were forced to go without essentials like adequate clothing and basic toiletries. In Manchester and Salford recent data shows that over 89,000 children are living in poverty. This is 10% more than the figure we reported this time last year. Families who have been struggling over the last few years are finding themselves with even more worries with no respite on the horizon.

Thanks to the support of our donors, we have been able to meet the needs of the families we support, and our projects continually evolve in line with current challenges.

WE AIM TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON CHILDREN BY;

- Providing free children's personal, educational and household items to the carers and parents of children living in poverty
- Broadening their childhood experiences
- Working in partnership with donors, workers, volunteers and referrers

In 2023...



'Give Today' and create a better tomorrow

We are delighted to be able to tell you about a new platform that makes it super easy to donate to Wood Street.

Give Today shows a variety of items suited to all our projects (except over the festive period when the focus is on our Christmas project) that you can choose to buy/donate. The items listed are quite generic, for instance it may show a pair of purple joggers online but once you have bought them, Give Today will contact us, and ask us what size and colour we need. This flexibility is so important for us as our needs change on a daily basis and it enables us to stock items that are most in need. They are also delivered directly to us, so you don't have to worry about that side of it at all. It's free to us and you can make a voluntary donation towards the process if you wish.

We can update our wish lists much more easily than on other platforms and the whole experience is much quicker and easier to use for the donor.

Give Today has an ethical network of suppliers, including leading high-street brands and online retailers. Good ethics are especially important to both them and us.

If you'd like to explore what they offer, please visit www.woodstreetmission.org.uk/give-today/. We appreciate every donation, no matter how small.

Thank you, everyone! We look forward to hearing your feedback.

The logo for 'GIVE TODAY' features the word 'GIVE' in a teal, rounded font, enclosed within a red rectangular border. To its right, the word 'TODAY' is written in a matching teal, rounded font.

Family Basics

Our Family Basics project is more often than not the first time we will meet families registered with us. It is important that they feel welcome, comfortable, and importantly 'heard'. Not only does this project give families access to their day-to-day essentials, but it also opens up conversation and allows us to signpost families to other essential services.

All our projects are free for families to access, but they do need to be referred. Details on our referral process can be found on our website.

For the families we support, the basic essentials are not always affordable. When they visit Family Basics, as it's set up like a shop, they can choose the items that are most suitable for their needs. There is always a vast range of items available including children's clothing, toys, books, baby equipment, toiletries, towels and bedding.

We were overwhelmed by the generosity of Comfy Group who recently donated enough bedding to last us approximately a year. This included over 600 pillows, duvets, and bedding sets. We can't express how important this is to our work and the difference it will make.

Our Family Basics Outreach service continues to be popular in both Little Hulton and Wythenshawe with families having access to everything they would have at Wood Street but in a more convenient/accessible venue for them. This saves them the cost of travelling into the city centre and the worry about getting everything home.

Our Outreach service is by appointment only and we are delighted that a range of referral workers and other local service providers have been joining us at our Outreach sessions.

If you'd like to support our Family Basics project, please head to our website where you'll find a list of everything we need.



Smart Start



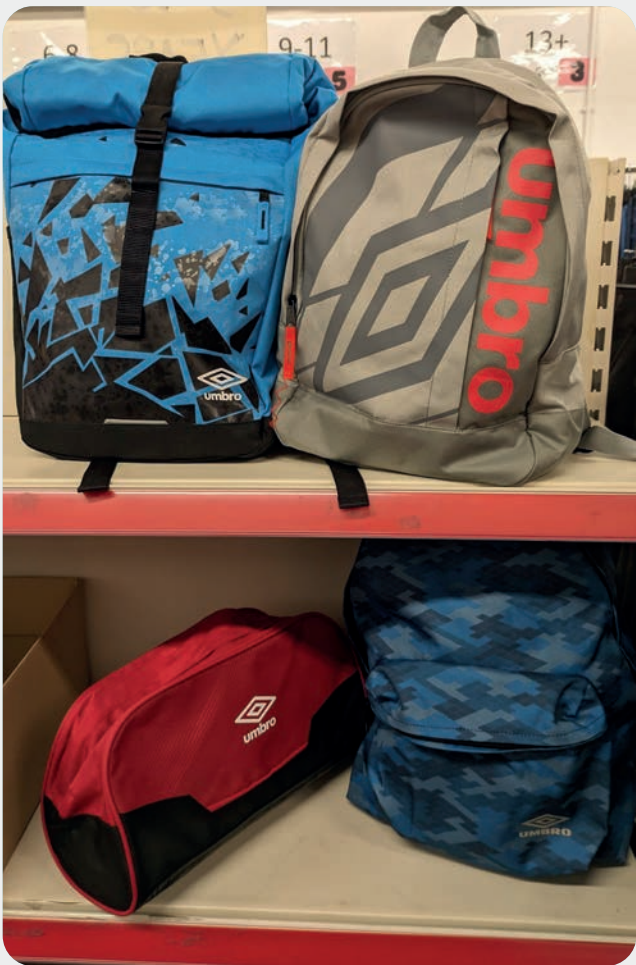
Child Poverty Action Group reported in 2023 that school uniform and shoes cost each family £336.21 for each primary school child and £461.93 per secondary school child every single year. For many of the families we support, this cost represents nearly a third of the household's monthly income. Despite these huge costs, there is still no national support for school uniform in England.

Between January and mid-August, we have already helped over 750 families, including 1,739 children who now attend lessons with greater comfort, confidence, and readiness to learn. We expect that we will reach many more families with assistance before the close of 2024, as our project now operates year-round. Each uniform kit that we deliver includes four polo shirts or four blouses, a skirt or a pair of trousers, and a jumper — every item is brand new, perfectly sized, and in the correct school colours. Families also have the option to select coats, rucksacks, stationery, and P.E. kit through our Family Basics service.

This year, we have also expanded our project's offering by adding an extra polo shirt or blouse to each kit. This addition came in response to feedback from parents and carers who highlighted the burden of frequently washing uniforms to maintain hygiene, which not only consumes time but also increases household expenses. By providing this extra garment, we have worked to alleviate the strain, offering a practical solution to a common challenge faced by many low-income families. It's important to us that we constantly communicate with families, so we understand their needs.

FAMILIES RECEIVE:

- Winter coats, school bags, lunch bags and drinks bottles
- Non-branded jumpers, sweatshirts, cardigans, skirts, trousers, polo shirts and blouses all in standard school colours
- Sport kit such as shorts, t-shirts, joggers, trainers and pumps
- Stationery including pencil cases, pens, folders, maths sets, calculators and dictionaries



We are also proud to announce the introduction of a crucial new item to our classroom essentials: laptops. We offer laptops on a case-by-case basis to help close the digital divide for families struggling with poverty. This initiative is especially critical in light of recent reports which identified access to a laptop as a basic necessity for children to successfully participate in education and society. One mother who engaged with Smart Start shared how this addition, along with the uniform kit, has transformed her children's ability to fully engage with their studies, stating hers and her family's immense relief that their "struggle to [afford these items] ... has become a thing of the past."

Our ongoing partnership with local uniform manufacturer David Luke continues to be a cornerstone of our success. They consistently go above and beyond, offering free, discreet, and direct delivery to families' doorsteps, further enabling children and their primary carers to feel supported. During the 5 years we have worked together, they have supplied 14,254 children with new school uniforms.

We feel incredibly passionate about children having good quality school uniform. Clothing that won't irritate, is robust and good enough to last numerous terms, not to mention being passed on to siblings. That's why we partner with David Luke. We are also very proud to work alongside an organisation who care so much about the ethical production of clothing.

"THE STRUGGLE TO AFFORD THESE ITEMS HAS BECOME A THING OF THE PAST."



Making Christmas Magical!



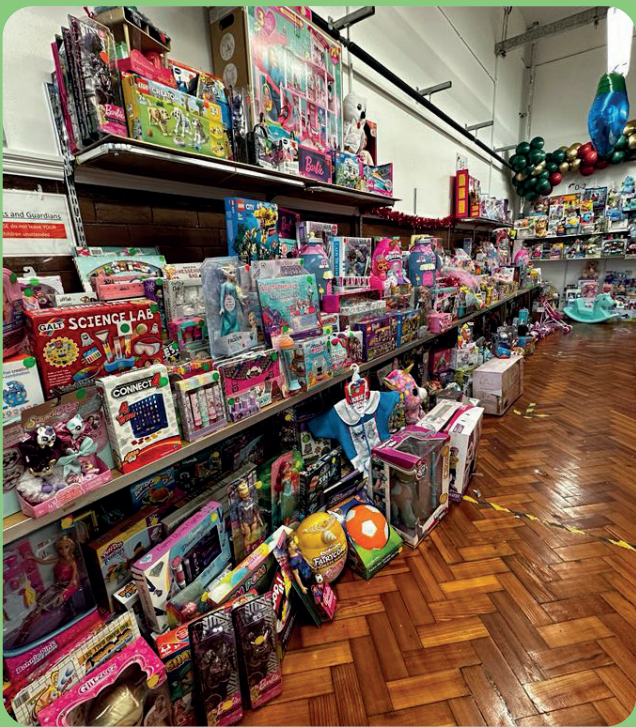
Thousands of children across the country will go without toys and gifts this Christmas. Our community is no exception with the levels of poverty here in our region meaning families will be making difficult choices in the run up to the festive season.

Our Christmas project makes a tangible difference to families and brings the magic back.

From 2nd December, families will visit Wood Street (by appointment) and they will get to choose from a wide selection of toys and gifts. They will take home a variety of goodies ensuring their children will have something special to open on Christmas Day. Your support means that we provide toys to children aged 0-14 years as well as chocolate treats and wrapping paper.

Every year we are staggered by the level of support from individuals, community groups and our corporate supporters. The level of generosity is always breathtaking and the joy is shared across all our team and volunteers. It's a real highlight of our year and that image of smiling families walking up Wood Street laden with gifts stays with us for a long time.

If you'd like to support our Christmas Appeal please check out the information on the back page.



our 2024 Christmas Appeal is now underway

The deadline for donations is **Monday 9th December**. This date may appear early, but families start to visit our Christmas project on Monday 2nd December and it's important they have plenty of choice. This gives them time to get ready for the big day.



IN 2023 WE DISTRIBUTED OVER

13,000 TOYS!

AND HAD

240 VOLUNTEERS



Childhood Experiences create smiles and memories



Poverty has a massive impact on children's ability to enjoy their childhoods and achieve their aspirations.

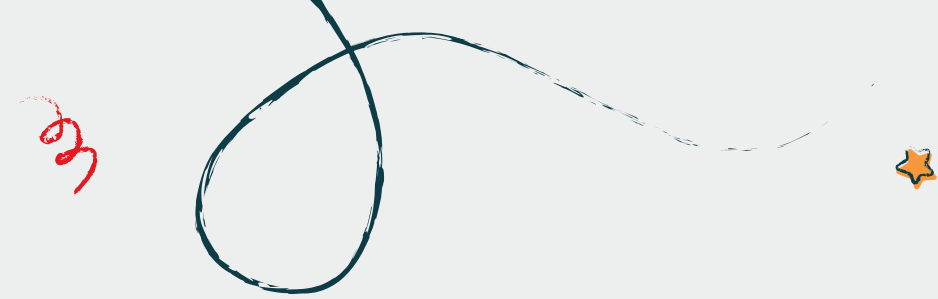
Children from low-income families often miss out on opportunities and events that many of us would take for granted. They miss school trips, can't invite friends round for tea, and can't afford holidays away from home. This can lead to a real sense of social isolation, as it's experiences like those that often create the most important childhood memories.

Our Childhood Experiences project aims to make sure no child misses out, and they can have the same chances as their peers, even when families are facing financial difficulty.

In 2023, 260 children and young people aged from 2 to 16 years from Manchester and Salford enjoyed fantastic Childhood Experience outings with Wood Street Mission. We work closely with local youth groups as partners for these experiences. This means we take groups who are familiar with each other and the workers join our team members for the experience.



“AMAZING PHOTOS, HE IS STILL BUZZING ABOUT TODAY. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING HIM”



“I LIKED THE OWL THAT SCREAMED AT SOMEONE”

It's been a busy year of 'Experiences' and highlights include

Thanks to the generosity of PZ Cussons, we took a group of children to the Children's Adventure Farm Trust for a day of reconnecting with nature. The children took on obstacle courses, made sandcastles, built incredible dens, took part in outdoor cooking sessions and toasted marshmallows on an open fire. As if this wasn't enough, they also got to meet all of the animals including donkeys, sheep, pigs, alpacas, goats, ducks, guinea pigs and birds. The children were so excited to be able to run freely and enjoy the outdoor activities whilst learning so much about nature and animals.

One Education generously funded a trip for a group of young carers to Graystones Action Sports Academy, where they could have fun on the trampolines, skateboards and scooters.

We've had a 3 visits to a firm favourite of ours, Bewilderwood Cheshire. Thanks to their generosity and that of our friends over at Glenbrook.

On a rare sunny day, we took a group of young people to Club de Padel in the city centre. Padel is sometimes known as Padel Tennis and combines elements of both tennis and squash. The important bit is it's great fun and the group absolutely loved it. Thanks to the team at Club de Padel and Food Sorcery who kept hungry tummies full up.

You only have to see the smiles and hear the laughter to appreciate the joy these days bring. Memories made.



Thank you to everyone who has supported our Books Forever Appeal this year. We received thousands of wonderful new books that go out as quick as they come in.

The children we support have an insatiable appetite for books and thanks to you, we always have plenty on offer at our Book Roadshows and in Family Basics.

We work with local schools that are based in deprived areas of Manchester and Salford, and the majority of schools have more than half of their pupils eligible for free school meals. Teachers at one school told us that approximately 80% of their pupils did not have access to books at home prior to our Book Roadshow.

We set up the school hall like a book fair, and each year group takes it in turns to visit. The children can choose up to five books to take home and keep. There are often audible gasps at this point when the team explain this – “FIVE!!!” – it’s fantastic to see the children’s enthusiasm when they choose the titles they want to read.

Each child is given a red book bag that says “Bag a Book” on the front. Inside the bag we include a leaflet aimed at the parents/guardians about our services, so if that family does need help they know how they can get it. By working with local schools in this way, we aim to promote our services with local families and also with the school staff, so the staff know how to refer a family to Wood Street Mission so they can benefit from our other projects.

Books are also available to families attending our Family Basics project, which they can access up to four times a year. We also supply books for younger pre-school readers through installing community bookshelves in the local area, such as Sure Start centres. We currently have six community bookshelves that we stock regularly.

“FINALLY, I’VE GOT SOME BOOKS TO READ AT HOME”



A big thank you to all of our wonderful local bookshops who regularly support our appeals and to the many supporters for their collections of books and fundraising towards the project. Special mention to: AHR, AXA Manchester, Bibby Financial Services, Evolution Money, Barclays, Cargill, Cushman & Wakefield, Footprint Social Enterprise, Keenan’s, Kings Chambers, Natwest, One Education, Piccadilly Place, PZ Cussons and The Phoenix for their incredibly generous support.



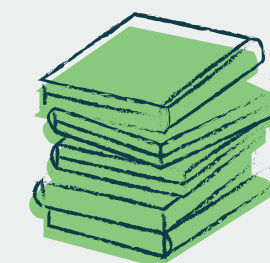
NELL JONES READING AWARD

In June, we had a wonderful afternoon at the Manchester Marriott Victoria & Albert Hotel. We were joined by Jayne and Caroline from The Remembering Nell Foundation as well as 10 deserving winners!

Each year we ask local schools to nominate their most improved Year 6 reader for The Nell Jones Reading Award. A fitting tribute to a very special young lady who lost her life in the Manchester Arena bombing. Nell loved to read and the Awards have been set up in her memory and generously supported by The Remembering Nell Foundation.

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

OVER 6,000 NEW BOOKS WERE DONATED THIS YEAR!



Our fundraising highlights

We can't possibly thank everyone who has worked so hard for us throughout the year, but we wanted to share some of the highlights.



« IGNITING A LOVE FOR VOLUNTEERING

They unloaded, they worked, they made a big difference!!! This fabulous team from British Gas joined us recently and not only did they work hard, they also brought so many wonderful lunch boxes and water bottles for our Smart Start project. Absolutely cracking team, thanks so much guys.

» AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

The lovely people over at Powell Creative Products donated a mammoth supply of pencil cases this year. They go down a treat with our families and are a lovely colourful addition to their 'back to school' essentials. A big thank you to the team at Powell.



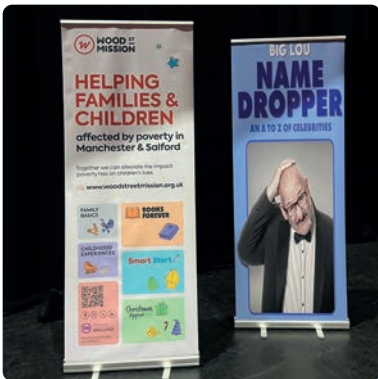
« POUNDING THE STREETS FOR POVERTY

The atmosphere, the amount of people, the levels of fundraising. It's always a very emotional day at the Great Manchester Run. We had a brilliant day with our team of nearly 100 runners. Together they raised over £18,000! What a phenomenal result.

» BIG LOU = BIG SMILES

We had a fantastic night at Big Lou - Comedian's show Name Dropper at The Lowry Theatre. Both Big Lou and Sam Harland were very funny!

Thank you so much to Big Lou and to everyone who attended for supporting Wood Street Mission, donating through ticket sales and on the night. We also need to thank our wonderful volunteers from DF Capital and Evolution Money who helped us on the doors - you are absolute stars!



« MUDDY FEET FOR WOOD STREET

Big thanks and congratulations to the teams from Rumpus PR and Warden Construction who took on the Tough Mudder challenge earlier this year! It's definitely not for the faint hearted and their efforts were very much appreciated.

W IS FOR.. Wonderful Community

Thank you to everyone who dropped by to see us at the fabulous Didsbury Festival this year.

We had such a great day and met some lovely people. We had lots of fun activities going on too which caused much hilarity at times. We followed our theme of 'W is for Wood Street' and everyone enjoyed the challenges. Thank you to IKEA, La Chouquette - Artisan Bakery, Merlin Entertainments, Carex UK and Chorlton Bookshop for generously supporting our prizes. We also had Iris and Louisa from Didsbury Theatre School join us on the day who volunteered and worked so hard.





◀◀ A SLICE OF ADVENTURE

Katie from Nell's Pizza took on the national 3 peaks to raise funds for Wood Street and absolutely smashed the challenge.

For reference Katie ... climbed 3 mountains in 24 hours, drove 462 miles and walked 37km. What an amazing feat. Thank you so much Katie, your hard work has benefited so many local children who are living in poverty.

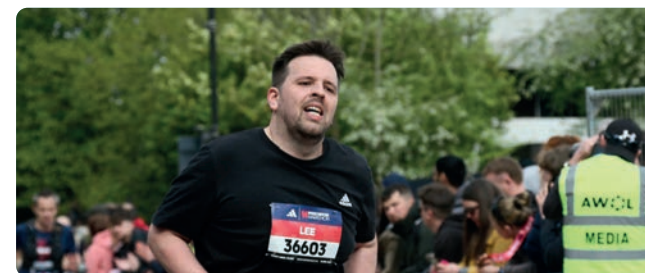
◀◀ OAR-SOME EFFORT

A huge thank you to all of our rowers who put their heart and soul into the Salford Dragon Boat Challenge in the summer. It was such a hot day too. Everyone from David Luke Ltd, DF Capital, PZ Cussons and our own team of rowers put everything into their competitions and as a result raised thousands for our cause.



◀◀ WHEN DISTANCE IS NO BARRIER TO KINDNESS

We really do have the kindest supporters including Salma and Layla, who put so much time and effort into checking out what we need and then paying us a visit from London. Such generosity, thank you so much ladies.



⬆ A MARATHON CHALLENGE

Why run one marathon when you can run two? Lee Sentino completed both the Manchester and Blackpool Marathons for Wood Street and said that although he was pleased to have completed both marathons in seven days, it was equally ambitious and foolish! He also managed to achieve a PB in Blackpool. Thank you Lee for taking on such an amazing challenge for Wood Street.

A little note from a neighbour

Wood Street Mission and the John Rylands Library have been close neighbours and friends for 125 years; in fact, the Rylands celebrated the 125th anniversary of its inauguration on 6 October 2024.

I recently retired from the Rylands after 35 years' service, and throughout that time the Wood Street Mission has been a constant presence. In the early 1990s, I remember the excitement when taxis took disadvantaged children on daytrips to Blackpool. I also recall the almost musical sound made by the metal rollers of the chute down which donations of clothes and shoes were delivered to the basement sorting room; it became the backdrop to our working lives. For many years, we have held regular collections of children's toys, books and other items, to which library staff have generously contributed.

Above all, my association with Wood Street Mission is through its archives, which are held at the Rylands. I made several visits to discuss the charity's records and arrange transfers across the road to the Library. The first was in the late 1990s, when Shirley Rheubottom was director.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH OUR FUNDRAISING?

Your support, no matter how small, makes a difference to local children and their families.

If you've got an idea or want to get involved in an existing event then we'd love to hear from you. Please contact fundraise@woodstreetmission.org.uk to find out more.



I fondly recall the warmth of her welcome, and her keen interest in the Mission's history.

So, I thought it would be entirely fitting to suggest a collection on behalf of Wood Street Mission, in lieu of a leaving present. My wonderful colleagues raised a staggering £800, plus nearly £100 in Gift Aid, far exceeding my wildest hopes. I am hugely grateful to them.

I sincerely hope that the Wood Street Mission and the John Rylands Library will remain good friends and neighbours for the next 125 years, each doing amazing work for our local communities.

Dr John Hodgson,
Honorary Research Fellow, John Rylands
Research Institute, The University of
Manchester



Support local children with a regular donation



With over 89,000 children living in poverty today in Manchester and Salford, it is vital that we are able to continue supporting struggling families.

Regular donations help us develop our projects and support families in more ways.

You can enable us to future-proof our projects, so the charity can withstand changing times and react to families' needs.

With a regular donation, you are ensuring help is available when families need it most.

TO SET UP YOUR REGULAR DONATION:

Complete the enclosed form or visit woodstreetmission.org.uk/support-us/donate-money/ to set up a direct debit online.

How your donation can help over a year...

£3 a month
can provide a child with a complete set of bedding and new pyjamas



£5 a month
can provide a school uniform pack, bag, drinks bottle and stationery set



£10 a month
can provide a new pram for a young family in crisis



Every child deserves a magical Christmas!



We really need your help to give local children from struggling families a happy and memorable Christmas.

Families across Manchester and Salford will come to Wood Street Mission to choose gifts for their children from the selection we are donated by our supporters.

We will be accepting Christmas donations until **Monday 9th December 2024**. Please try to get yours to us as early as you can, to enable us to help as many families as possible.

You can visit our website for gift ideas and links to our Wish Lists.

To help you can...

- Donate new toys, gifts or books, unwrapped and suitable for children aged 0-14 years old. Chocolates, selection boxes and wrapping paper are also much appreciated!
- Make a financial donation
- Fundraise with your friends, family, community or workplace

Donate now!

You can drop gifts off with us Monday to Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm at **26 Wood Street, Manchester, M3 3EF**.

Or to arrange a collection please call **0161 834 3140** or email collections@woodstreetmission.org.uk



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**



Get in touch or visit us at

 www.woodstreetmission.org.uk

 fundraise@woodstreetmission.org.uk

 26 Wood Street, Manchester, M3 3EF



Scan the QR code using your camera phone for a quick link to our website!

Registered Charity No 1078337