



Christmas Report 2018

Together with the help of the whole community the VSL Christmas Project supported 2470 people at Christmas who were facing isolation and hardship. We are grateful to have the help of longstanding supporters and we also made connections with new organisations and projects without whom this project could not happen. Before anyone else the Christmas volunteers seasoned or new were integral to the success of the project, they gave their time in so many different ways ranging from sorting toys, delivering out hampers to helping at the Christmas day lunch.

We are very grateful to local schools, nurseries, Lewisham churches and individuals who donated food, toys, books, supermarket vouchers, gift vouchers and money not to forget their time. Goddard & Co. were again very helpful by donating boxes that were turned into hampers.

We would like to thank Holy Trinity, Sydenham very much for embracing our project for so many years and letting us use their space and say a big thank you to The Salvation Army Lewisham who tirelessly provided us with contacts and toys.

Funding and in kind donations

Our community fundraising included 2 cake sales at Laurence House where the generosity of council staff and the sales skills of young people from Sedgemoor 6th form and The Challenge (a charity working with young people on citizenship) together with colleagues from the Community Connections team contributed over £ 600 pounds to the project.

Supermarkets and shops played an important part in being able to collect food: Budgens Crofton Park and the Co-op Crofton Park hosted our donation bins, Tesco Catford hosted a toy collection over 3 days and both Argos/ Sainsburys Lee and Lewisham hosted a space for us to collect toys. Sainsburys Lewisham also donated toys.

We were one of three charities chosen for Waitrose, Beckenham's Community Affairs programme in November.

A number of Charitable Trusts and children's book publishers listed at the end of the report supported us and we were very pleased to have local support from the Sydenham Assembly this year.

Volunteering

50 volunteers helped on a rota basis with packing and sorting, this included corporate volunteers from Regular Cleaning, Thomson Reuters and Tesco's. We were very pleased that a member of the Sydenham assembly came to help and see the project in action.

57 primary school children and teachers from Stillness Primary, St Dunstan's and Fairlawn and their teachers visited the project to find out what happens with their donations and to help pack hampers.

8 young people from Drumbeat School, a specialist school for children with autism came with donations and helped us pack.

Hampers, toys, vouchers in numbers

85 food hampers for families with 5 or more family members were packed by Kings Church and distributed through VSL. (425 people)

346 hampers were delivered to elderly and vulnerable/isolated service users. (450 people)

251 families received supermarket gift vouchers (1071 people).

699 children, teenagers and vulnerable young adults received a gift/voucher.

70 residents of a local hostel supporting people with mental health difficulties received gifts and toiletries.

40 residents who live in temporary accommodation in Forest Hill received boxes of biscuits and Christmas puddings for their annual Christmas party.

5 crates of food for homeless unit (40 people).

New Developments

We have started working with a number of new referrers to ensure we are continuing to reach the people most in need. These include Citizen's Advice, Lewisham Refugee Network and Contact a Family.

A new system to enter referrals allows us to monitor numbers of requests more easily as we go along. Also, please take a look at our video that we use to promote the project.

<https://vslonline.org.uk/volunteer-opportunities/#undefined>

Christmas Day Lunch and Christmas Disco

The Christmas Day Lunch was a big success thanks to the amazing organisational work of Churches Together Sydenham and Forest Hill. This year it was held at Forest Hill Methodist Church

The Christmas Day Lunch catered for 60 people; 30 diners were transported to and from the event by volunteer drivers. Each guest received a gift from VSL and enjoyed a delicious meal and entertainment. 12 volunteers helped with serving and other supporting tasks on the day, 6 volunteers supported with driving.

16 service users attended the Grove Centre Social Club Christmas disco (for people with mental health issues) and they enjoyed a Christmas party with pizzas.

Thank you to:

The Haberdashers' Company
The Lee Charity of William Hatcliffe
Marsh Christian Trust
Souter Charitable Trust
Sydenham Assembly
Lewisham Parochial Charities
Toy's Trust

Ravensbourne Rotary Club
Hachette Books
Walker Books

C H Goddard & Co Ltd

Waitrose, Beckenham

...and the individual sponsors for their generous contributions.

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