

Welcome to Little Village

About us.....

Little Village makes a big difference to families with babies and young children living in poverty across London. Via our network of a baby banks we pass on loved goods from one family to another – clothes, toys and equipment – so that many more babies and young children have the essential things they need to thrive.

At our core, we alleviate material poverty through operating a baby bank - like a foodbank, but for clothes, toys and equipment for babies and children up to the age of 5. We collect great quality donations and gift these on to local families in financial hardship, often dealing with additional challenges such as homelessness, unemployment, domestic violence, modern slavery, and mental health issues. We currently operate hubs in: Tooting (Wandsworth), Regents Place (Camden) and Wembley Central (Brent). Families either visit one of our Little Village hubs, or items are packed with care and delivered directly to their home. But it doesn't stop there. We also connect families into a wider network of support, helping them to build and extend their own 'village'. And we raise our voices for change; sharing the stark realities of too many children's lives in London.

Thanks to the generous donations of loved items, precious time and money, since we launched in 2016, Little Village has supported more than 32,000 children.

Our values of love, solidarity, thriving and sustainability are at the heart of everything that we do

Who can refer to Little Village?

Families are referred to us via a network of over 2,000 professionals such as midwives and social workers. We accept referrals from professional and voluntary organisations working with families in an official capacity. We do not accept self-referrals, or referrals for family and friends. We are also able to accept referrals from local mutual support groups and community support groups but will ask for additional registration details from you if you do not have an organisational email address.

What if I'm not sure if the family I support qualifies?

We only accept referrals for families with children up to the age of 5 years or mums 30+ weeks in to their pregnancy who need support and live in one of the boroughs listed below:

Brent, Camden, City of London, City of Westminster, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Royal Borough of Greenwich, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Wandsworth.

Please use this link [Find your local council - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) and simply type in the family's postcode that you are supporting to find their local authority.

If you are unsure as to whether a family qualifies for support, we would always recommend reading the Referral Criteria section of our Referrals Policy. You are also very welcome to discuss any concerns with us directly. If you are still unsure, we are happy for you to use a 'reasonable doubt' assessment of need, meaning in the absence of evidence of the family's situation, the judgment of the referrer can be used to put the family forward.

What if my family lives in one of the London boroughs that you don't deliver to?

Due to the rising demand for our support, we have had to make the difficult decision to focus on families which live in inner London boroughs.

We understand that there are areas in all boroughs that suffer from high levels of deprivation, but we have taken great care to avoid eliminating boroughs with a poverty rate that is higher than the average rate in London

We are currently **unable** to support families residing in: Barnet, Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Kingston, Newham, Richmond Redbridge, Sutton & Waltham Forest

We have compiled some resource to help you and the families you work with get support from other sources. These may be particularly useful if you are working with families who live outside the boroughs we currently deliver to:

- [View a map of baby banks in the UK](#)
- [View a list of family support resources](#), including other ways to source baby equipment and clothing, as well as more general support

What can Little Village provide?

We can provide clothing and shoes (up to age 5), essential baby equipment — including a safe place to sleep for a baby/child, bedding, a sling, a buggy, feeding and bathing equipment, toys and books, nappies and wipes — for any children under 5. Our items are **second hand** except for mattresses, bottle teats, breast pumps, nappies and toiletries which are all provided brand new.

Please note we don't provide formula or baby food, car seats, maternity wear, monitors, sleeping pods such as sleepyheads and dockatots, white goods or nursery furniture, clothes for older children.

All items are delivered safely and directly to the family's home or families can choose their items from one of our high street hubs, depending on their location.

I have a family I'd like to send your way – what do I do?

Visit the referral section on our website and complete our simple online form. This form will take you through our referral process and ask you to fill in what the family need. You may find it easier to fill the form in whilst you are talking directly with the family (on the phone or in person if possible). We will only get back in contact with you if we have any further questions or can't contact the family.

Please note: we open the form each working day from 9:30 with a daily quota, once we have met our daily quota, we will close our form and reopen the following working day. As we continue to navigate the increasing demand for our services, the quota helps us to reach as many families as possible while also managing our resources. Currently there is a save option (save just before you submit) so you can log back on the next day to finish your submission, however, you can only re submit when the form is open.

How does a family get an appointment to attend one of your hubs to choose their items?

Depending on the postcode of the family, at the end of the referral form, you will be given the opportunity to book a family in to visit one of our high street hubs to choose and take away their items. You can either opt to book an appointment on behalf of the family or the family can book one themselves. If you choose the option for the family to book their own appointment, they will receive a booking link via SMS and email. If a hub visit is declined e.g. mum is heavily pregnant and unable to travel, family live too far away then a delivery can be made instead.

How do I know if I am completing the form right and what should I include?

The form is straightforward to use however these top tips below may help you complete it more accurately, **(please note if we don't receive accurate information on the form, we will be unable to process the referral):**

- Remember to double check that the family's contact details are correct, the address is very important as we may be delivering via a courier. The address needs to be in a clear format and you will be prompted with an address look up function:

House / flat number and street name

Town

Postcode (in CAPs)

- Please fill out an individual entry for **EACH** child under 5 that requires support (use the **+add additional** child button) otherwise we will only pack for one child
- Don't forget to include an estimated due date for an unborn baby so we can establish how urgent the request is
- Please consider the kit you are requesting reflects the current needs of the child e.g. a moses basket is for under 3 months
- **Due to our limited quota for daily referrals, requests for single or limited items such as nappies or wipes or just toys and books will unfortunately not be accepted**

- Please consider whether the kit you are requesting is needed over the next three months. Don't forget you can re refer a family every 3 months if there is still a need
- We have recently reduced the amount of information required to be submitted on the form to save referral partner's time. We will only be asking about clothes and large kit items such as beds and buggies on the form. Additional items such as feeding, weaning, washing and sleeping equipment will be confirmed directly with the family at either a shop appointment or on the telephone. So there is no need to include these on the form
- You will be emailed once your referral has been submitted as a record of receipt.

What happens once I refer a family?

You won't hear from us again unless we have any further questions about the referral. With a delivery, our Family Connections team will contact the family (using the details you have given us) to go through the items requested in more detail, they may also discuss situations that might impact the kit choices- such as access to the property for double buggies. Once the referral items have been confirmed, the referral will be allocated to a site to pack. The packed boxes will then be delivered by a courier company. We always sms/call the family the day before their delivery to confirm their delivery address and let them know roughly what time their items will arrive. If they have requested larger kit this may arrive in a separate delivery.

If the family have booked a hub appointment (to choose and collect their items in person) they will be sent details of where to go and what to bring. Families are given an hour slot to attend- they meet with one of our trained and friendly Baby Bank Helpers to talk through their referral and discuss what they need. There are items they can choose themselves and also pre packed bundles of age and gender appropriate clothing to collect.

In all cases, the family will also be contacted by Little Village approximately 2 weeks after they have received their items to welcome them into the Little Village community and to offer further support and signposting if needed.

How long will it take if the family have delivery ?

We aim to deliver to the family within four to six weeks of submission of referral. The items are all delivered safely and directly to the family's home. If they have requested larger kit such as beds/ buggies this may arrive in a separate delivery at a later date, if they are available.

Do you help families transport heavy items home after a shop appointment ?

Families are encouraged to only take home what they can carry. We advise that they bring a wheelie type suitcase to their appointment or friends/ family that can help them carry additional items home. If larger items such as beds and buggies have been requested at a hub visit, we can arrange these to be delivered free of charge at a later date, if they are available.

What if there are no hub appointments available to book?

New hub appointments are published on a fortnightly weekly basis so in the unlikely event that non are available , please check back the following day via the link provided.

With both delivery and high street hub visits, we suggest sending our **What to Expect** leaflet to the family you are referring to alleviate any anxiety they may have over their referral.

Can I collect on behalf of a family instead?

By prior arrangement, referral partners may collect items from our sites

Do you always have everything in stock?

We often have a good supply of clothes, toys and books. Other equipment such as cots and buggies are in high demand. We can only gift on what is donated to us and operate a first come, first due, first served basis for cots and buggies, depending on stock levels. Unfortunately, we can't operate a waiting list for the most popular items such as buggies and cots. We will do what we can to fulfil these requests; however, alternatives may be offered if the original request can't be fulfilled e.g., a single newborn buggy and sling/ or buggy board may be offered if no double buggy is available.

How often can families be referred?

You can re refer a family back to Little Village every three month or three months after a baby has been born, for clothing and equipment if the need continues.

How else can families get involved with Little Village?

We are volunteer run and would like to encourage families to volunteer with us. There are so many positive benefits to volunteering, including getting out of the house and meeting new people in a fun and friendly environment, learning new skills and gaining confidence and self-esteem. We know how busy life can be, so we have many flexible volunteering options available. We have weekend and evening volunteering sessions available too. We welcome babes in arms i.e if the baby is happy being in a sling or buggy during the 2-3 hour shift.

- Volunteering at one of our sites, sorting donations and packing up gift bundles for families
- Driving stock and delivering items to families
- Remote roles (for example, stock sorting at home, telephone liaison)

We offer volunteering opportunities at our sites in Tooting, Camden and Wembley

How else can my organisation work with Little Village?

We are always open to exploring different ways to work with our referral partners to help us support as many families as possible. For example, we work alongside a number of asylum seeker family drop in centres, running a monthly delivery drive from Little Village of clothing for babies and under 5s. Working with a regular referral partner and delivering to one location enables us to build relationships, limit our carbon footprint and reach more families.

Get in touch at referrals@littlevillagehq.org to chat further.

Keep in touch with us

Our website is regularly updated with our latest news and advocacy work www.littlevillagehq.org and on our network and local facebook groups:

<https://www.facebook.com/littlevillagehq>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/littlevillagecamden>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/littlevillagesouthwark>

www.facebook.com/groups/LittleVillageWandsworth

<https://www.facebook.com/LittleVillageBrent/>

We are always contactable on email- referrals@littlevillagehq.org. We are committed to providing the best possible service to our families, our referral partners, and our volunteers. We welcome all feedback – good and bad! Thank you for your involvement and for helping us in our mission to facilitate local families supporting one another with dignity and love.

**With best wishes,
The Little Village Team**