

**Impact
Report
2023**



**LITTLE
VILLAGE**

executive SUMMARY

Welcome to Little Village's 2023 Impact Report. We are so excited to be able to show you what a big difference your help has made over the last year.

Little Village is operating in an environment of significant and frightening need from families with babies and young children. Poverty in our capital is both growing and deepening. Essentials are becoming unaffordable for more and more families, and many are facing complete destitution.

We supported a record number of children and families in 2023, but the demand for help still outstripped our capacity to respond week on week. This is why, alongside our daily, individual support, we need to raise our voice for change – to strive for an end to child poverty.

For now, though, one thing is very clear: the impact we have on individual families' lives is huge. We make a big difference. And crucially, that difference doesn't stop with one individual. The help we provide – sharing essential items and connecting families to a wider network of support – catalyses a chain reaction: sharing, reusing, connecting.

What does this look like?

Parents who receive essential items from us return them to our baby banks, or pass them on to other local families, when their own children have outgrown or no longer need them.

Families whom we have signposted to other places of support share that information with their friends and neighbours – and provide reassurance that it is OK to ask for help. And some mums and dads we have supported sign up to volunteer with us after their children have started school.



This all adds up to a local ecosystem of sharing, reusing, donating, and connecting; helping families, helping our volunteers and referral partners, and helping our planet. Together with all the members of our “Little Village”, we are proud to be making a big difference.

Sharing the essentials every child needs to thrive

In 2023, we directly supported 5,815 families, including **8,529 children**. Many of these families needed our help on more than one occasion.

The essential items we gifted to other families would be worth **£3.4 million**, if valued new. These items included:

- **1,916 safe places** for children and babies to sleep.
- **2,385 ways** for families to get out of the house – including 1,081 buggies, plus slings, scooters, and buggy boards for big brothers and sisters.
- **7,747 coats**, so that children can stay warm, snug, and dry.
- **15,573 pairs of shoes**, so that children can have well-fitting and weather-appropriate footwear all year round.

- **1,407 infant baths** or bath supports, so that parents can create bathtimes that are safe and fun for their children.
- **21,456 books**, to stimulate children’s learning, development, and imagination.

Some of these items are small, others larger. But they all made a big difference to the lives of the families who received them. In our annual survey, **86% of families** agreed that if they had to buy the essential items they received from Little Village they would have struggled to afford to pay for bills and food.

And the impact doesn’t stop there. Here are some of the ways in which families say that receiving essential items from our baby banks has made a difference:

1. Families have the essential items they need for their children
2. Families experience fewer difficult spending choices
3. The items we provide support children’s development and stimulation
4. Parents and carers feel supported
5. Families are better able to leave their home
6. Parents and carers feel less anxious and more confident

Volunteering

Like any community and its members, Little Village is powered by its “villagers”. For us, that is our volunteers. And in 2023, an astonishing **34,072 hours** were given by 1,024 volunteers, allowing us to support more families than ever before.

Our volunteers are growing in diversity, reflecting the communities that we work in. It is vital for us that they can thrive, and that the experience of working with us makes a difference to their lives, too.

Thanks to their feedback, we know that this is the case – our volunteers tell us that they value the feeling of “giving back”, that they are growing in confidence, and that they appreciate the knowledge and skills they are gaining from their hours with Little Village.

34,072 HOURS
 were given by
1,024
 volunteers

Connections

We build warm connections with families so that they feel part of the Little Village community, and more able to access support in their wider environment, both now and into the future.

There are two practical ways that we help build these vital connections in our day-to-day work: phone calls and messages from our Family Liaison Team – almost 6,000 of them during 2023 – and our signposting and guidance service, which helped 435 families connect with a wider network of support.

Making these connections to other sources of support is yet one more way in which we made a difference last year. Our staff and volunteers issued 223 food bank vouchers in 2023; and these, together with the help we gave with grant applications, energy bills, and debt advice, saved families over £31,000.

Environmental impact

In 2023, we gifted 142 tonnes worth of items to families, which may otherwise have ended up in landfill. Saving this level of carbon emissions is the equivalent of taking **43 cars off the road for a year**.¹

Over the last year, we have made it even easier to donate pre-loved items, hosting 179 pop-up or regular donation points across the capital.

We also passed on 3.7 tonnes of surplus stock in certain items or sizes – including enough clothes for 520 children – to other organisations supporting babies and children. In this way, we were able to extend the reuse chain beyond Little Village, save more waste from landfill, and reach even more families with the gift of essential, high-quality goods. And there is evidence from both families and referral partners to suggest that the high quality of the items shared by Little Village is helping to catalyse another chain reaction: changing people’s attitudes and behaviour around reuse and giving and receiving second-hand items.

Raising our voice for change

At the heart of all our profile-raising and media work is our commitment to centring the voices of the parents we support. In the last year, we raised awareness of our work – and why it is necessary – through a wide range of coverage on ITV, BBC Radio 4, and various print media.

In particular, a partnership with The Sun newspaper led to national coverage of 29 baby banks from across the country and endorsement from HRH The Princess of Wales and a number of celebrities. The Princess of Wales went on to bring even more attention to the need for and work of the UK’s baby banks, selecting the cause

as the focus for the Royal Foundation’s Christmas initiatives in 2023.

We also continued our work to incubate a National Baby Bank Alliance, in partnership with Save the Children UK, Purposeful Ventures, and Baby Bank Network Bristol. We are delighted to share that the Alliance has now opened up for membership, and over 140 baby banks have joined so far.

Our Net Promoter Scores

This year, we asked our families, volunteers, and referral partners whether they would recommend Little Village, on a scale of 1–10. Using the Net Promoter Score model, we worked out three scores that we can use as numerical reference points for how we’re doing, and how we compare in future surveys. Our Net Promoter Scores for 2023 are:

- Families: 86
- Referral Partners: 83
- Volunteers: 73

The creators of the NPS methodology suggest that scores can be interpreted as follows:

- above 0 is good,
- above 20 is favourable,
- above 50 is excellent, and
- above 80 is world class.

As you can see, our scores for 2023 come in as “excellent and “world class” – incredibly impressive results.

Conclusion

In 2023, Little Village reached more children than ever before, sharing pre-loved items so that they have the essentials they need to thrive. This is a testament to the dedication of our volunteers and employees, and the kindness and generosity of our donors. But it also highlights the frightening scale of demand – of people who need our help – at a time of rising and deepening poverty.

In 2024, we will continue to meet this need – building on our growing national and local profile, strengthening our internal infrastructure and partnership work, and continuing to embed the community relationships that support families with babies and young children.

And with your help, we will continue to make a difference, every day, to the families who are referred to us; families who are experiencing the stark and desperate realities of deepening poverty in our capital. We will continue to pass on high-quality, pre-loved goods to these families so that their children have the essentials they need to thrive.

So finally, we want to take a moment to say: thank you. We haven’t done anything alone; everything we achieve is only possible thanks to the love, kindness, and generosity of our supporters – our “Little Village”. All of the donations of loved items, of precious time and of money mean we can do what we do. This Impact Report is for you; to show you what a big difference your support has made in 2023.

In 2023 we reached **MORE FAMILIES** than ever



Welcome to Little Village's 2023 Impact Report. We are so excited to be able to show you what a big difference your support has made over the last year.

For three years now, our work has been guided by five ways of working:

1. **Providing families with essential items** through our baby banks, so that we can help alleviate material poverty among children in London.
2. **Helping volunteers to thrive**, with opportunities for skills development and personal growth.
3. **Building deeper connections** and extending networks of support through our signposting and partner-led activities.
4. **Looking after our planet**, by championing principles of reuse and circular living.
5. **Raising our voice for change** through our campaigning and advocacy work, so that we can tackle the issue of child poverty at a systemic level.

This Impact Report showcases the differences we have made across all five of these ways of working. First, though, we explain a bit about the need that we're meeting, and the families that we help. You will read a number of disturbing, and sometimes shocking, facts and figures about family poverty in the UK, and London in particular.

At Little Village, we see the individual faces behind these statistics; we hear their stories. This Impact Report, part of an annual series, is a platform for sharing these stories and raising the voices of the families we support.

That's why, in sharing our results within this report, we have packed in as many as possible of our families' own words. We want them to tell you about the big difference that you – and all our supporters together – have made to their lives.

INTRODUCTION

You may wish to go straight to the next section, where we start to look in depth at our impact over the last year. But a transparent methodology is an important part of results sharing; so, for those who are interested, this section explains how we identified the impacts described in this report, and a few key things to bear in mind.

How did we measure our impact?

In 2023 – like the year before – we took a mixed-method approach to measuring our impact. The data for this year’s report came from six key sources:

- Ongoing **monitoring data**, collected as part of our everyday engagement with families and volunteers.
- **An annual survey** shared with families, volunteers, and referral partners.
- Data from ongoing **signposting and guidance surveys**, completed

specifically by families who have received our signposting and guidance service.

- **In-depth interviews** with a sample of parents and carers who received items from Little Village in 2023.
- **WRAP Benefits of Reuse Tool**, a recognised model that works out the environmental benefits of passing on items for reuse.
- **Family stories**, gathered from parents and carers who were happy to tell us their stories, in their own words, to share in this report.

METHODOLOGY

Monitoring data

Using a case management IT system, we collect ongoing information about the families, volunteers, and referral partners that we work with every day. We capture details like why a family has been referred to us; the numbers and ages of the children in each family; their ethnicity and first language; and the gifted items that they choose. We also record information about our volunteers, like the hours they give to Little Village, and which site they work at; and we make a note of basic information about our referral partners, too.

Annual survey

In December 2023 and January 2024, we sent out online surveys to all the families, volunteers, and referral partners who had contact with us in 2023, and asked them to reflect on their experience.

Each survey also contained a **Net Promoter Score (NPS)** question, asking how likely the respondent would be to recommend Little Village to others. An NPS is a measure between -100 and +100 that is used to track customer experience. The creators of the NPS methodology, Bain & Company, suggest that scores can be interpreted as follows:

- above 0 is good,
- above 20 is favourable,
- above 50 is excellent, and
- above 80 is world class.

Signposting and guidance survey

After a family receives our signposting and guidance service, we ask them to complete a short, voluntary questionnaire, either online or by phone. This gives families the opportunity to tell us about their experience with the service and the impact it has had on them.

In-depth interviews with families

Between October and December 2023, we held in-depth interviews with 16 parents and carers who had received support from Little Village that year. We chose families to take part using a purposive sampling strategy so that we could reach parents with a range of views and experiences. The interviews were completely voluntary, and families were given the choice of talking to us on the phone or a video call.

WRAP Benefits of Reuse Tool

The Waste and Reuse Action Programme (WRAP) Benefits of Reuse Tool allows users to work out the carbon emissions associated with their activities, and assess the potential impact of reusing materials instead of sending them to landfill.²

Family stories

From the second half of 2023, we began inviting families to share their personal stories. We selected parents or carers at

random and asked whether they wanted to participate, on a completely voluntary basis. All the parents who took part were happy for us to share their stories in this report.

A quick note about some limitations of this approach

Surveys

Our survey response rates varied. Our annual volunteer survey received a response rate of 25%, while our ongoing survey of families who have received signposting and guidance had a response rate of 15%.

However, the response rates for the annual family and referral partner surveys were 11% and 8%, respectively. This means that, although our surveys generally provide a good indication of the views of all three groups, we need to be cautious when interpreting the results of the family and referral partner surveys in particular.

In-depth interviews

We met our sampling quota for the in-depth interviews, which means we can be confident that the study captured a good range of participants and achieved the diversity we were aiming for. However, we still need to bear in mind that the sample of parents we interviewed may not be fully representative. This is because we were only able to capture the views and experiences of the parents who volunteered to be interviewed. As these parents are likely to be more engaged and motivated compared to those who didn't want to take part, it is important to recognise that the latter group's views are missing from the results.

Family stories

As with all storytelling, it is important to be aware of potential biases. The parents and carers who chose to take part did so specifically because they have a positive view of Little Village and want to support our work.



TEESHA'S STORY

"For the first time in my life, I felt like I was letting my kids down," says Teesha. "I couldn't tell them I didn't have enough money for food and clothes."

Teesha is a hard-working nursing assistant from South London; a single mum-of-three, who came to Little Village for support when she found herself struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

Teesha was really worried about the future; it was stopping her from sleeping. *"I'm not used to asking for help. I've worked really hard since I was young and have always been really independent. I'm normally the person who likes to offer help to others, but things became so tough. I was so scared."*



After walking through the doors at Little Village's Tooting hub, Teesha had an experience that left her in tears – tears of relief and joy.

"The ladies in Tooting were angels on earth. They didn't judge me and they really listened. The patience and love was incredible. After that first visit, I went home that night and slept brilliantly for the first time in ages."

"Knowing I had really good quality things that I needed for my baby was such a blessing – and I've been able to pass them on to other friends and family, so one donation has gone such a long way and helped so many people."

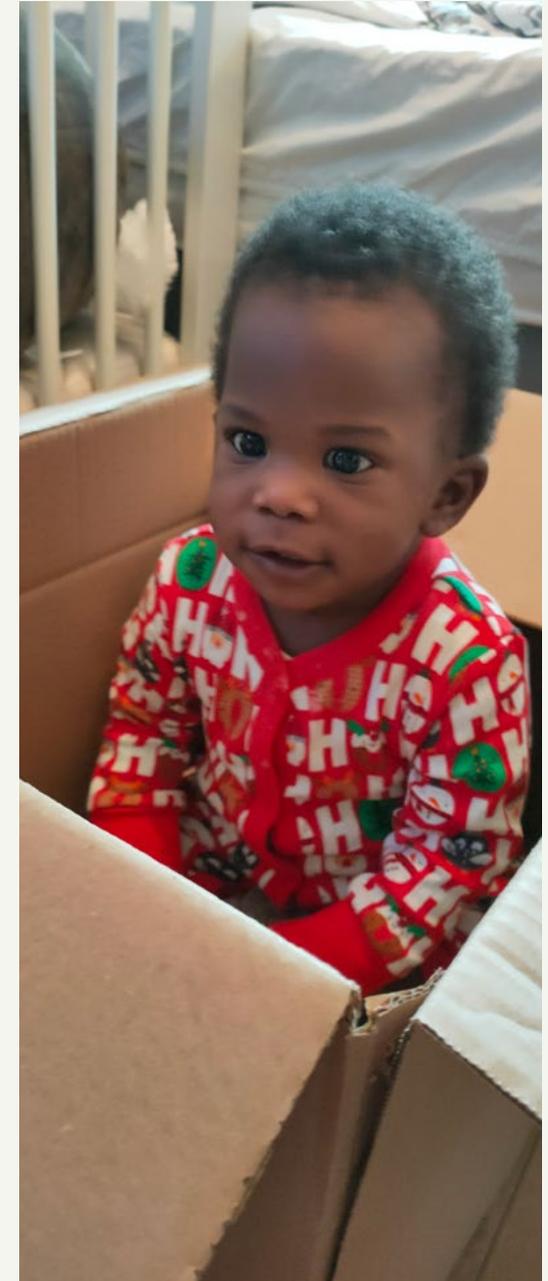


It was one gift in particular that brought Teesha to tears: a lovely side-cot for her new baby. *"I just thought I'd get what I was given, but going into Little Village was like entering a lovely baby shop. I called my Mum in tears ... I was so grateful for everything and to be able to give my newborn the best start I could. It was overwhelming."*

Teesha's baby boy, Miles, also took home a cute cuddly sheep – named "Baaaary" by his elder brother – that now doesn't leave his side.

Teesha was resistant to visiting Little Village at first – she didn't want to feel like a "charity case". But alongside the essential items she took home for her children, Teesha also came away from the experience with a new outlook: it's OK to ask for help.

If you're thinking of donating to Little Village, Teesha wants you to know what a big difference your gift could make: *"Every little donation counts, and a few simple things can touch so many lives. It gives relief to stopping worrying about whether you're going to be able to afford to feed your children that week. I can't tell you how grateful I am to everyone who donated – the help has been life-changing."*



THE NEED WE'RE MEETING



The UK, despite being one of the richest countries in the world, has growing levels of child poverty. There are now 4.2 million children living in poverty – that's one child in every three. Of these children living in poverty, half live in a family with an under five-year-old.³ This illustrates the increased pressures that families with very young children face.

Although many people don't realise this, London has the highest rate of child poverty in England. A shocking 800,000 children, representing 39% of all of London's children, are growing up in poverty in our capital city.⁴

As well as being on the increase, the nature of childhood poverty is changing. One example of this is the rising number of children growing up in poverty despite having a parent in work. In fact, 38% of Universal Credit claimants are in work.⁵ Today's reality is that millions of hard-working parents can't afford to buy essentials for their children.

It's not just rising numbers of children in poverty. The severity of individual families' situations is also getting worse. In 2022, one million children were destitute; this means they lacked access to essential basics such as food, shelter, heating, clothing, footwear or toiletries. That year, London had the highest destitution rates in the country.⁶ And across the UK, the number of destitute children has almost tripled since 2017.

The impact of these rates of childhood poverty and destitution are devastating and have long-lasting effects on individual lives. Children growing up in poverty see a significant detrimental impact on their:

The Need We're Meeting

- Achievement at school: they are less likely to be school-ready at age 5 and to achieve five good GCSEs at age 16.⁷
- Mental health: children living in poverty in their early years are four times more likely to develop a mental health problem by the time they are 11.⁸
- Overall development and behaviour: this can impact children living in poverty, because they tend to have weaker relationships with carers due to family stress.⁹

And after all that, these children face living a shorter life. Those living in the most deprived 10% of areas will die nine years younger than those in the richest 10%.¹⁰

The cost to each of these individual children is staggering – and that alone demands action. But there is also a significant cost to society overall. The Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood, together with the London School of Economics, worked out that in

England alone we are paying at least £16.1 billion per year on addressing issues that arise from poverty in childhood. These costs – from running the care system to treating short- and long-term mental and physical health challenges – might have been avoided if action had been taken earlier in those children's lives.¹¹ More importantly: the children themselves could have been saved from those challenges.

To compound this, parents are often having to navigate these challenges alone. The Royal Foundation's research found that over half of parents report feeling lonely sometimes (36%), often (13%) or always (3%). In addition, 70% of parents report feeling judged by others, and among these parents nearly half feel that this negatively affects their mental health.¹²

That is the need we are meeting. Now let's tell you a bit about the real people behind these facts and figures – the families we support.

ONE CHILD IN THREE
lives in poverty



OUR FAMILIES

The families we support come from a wide range of backgrounds and need our help for many different reasons.

But they all share the experience of bringing up young children in London while facing financial hardship.

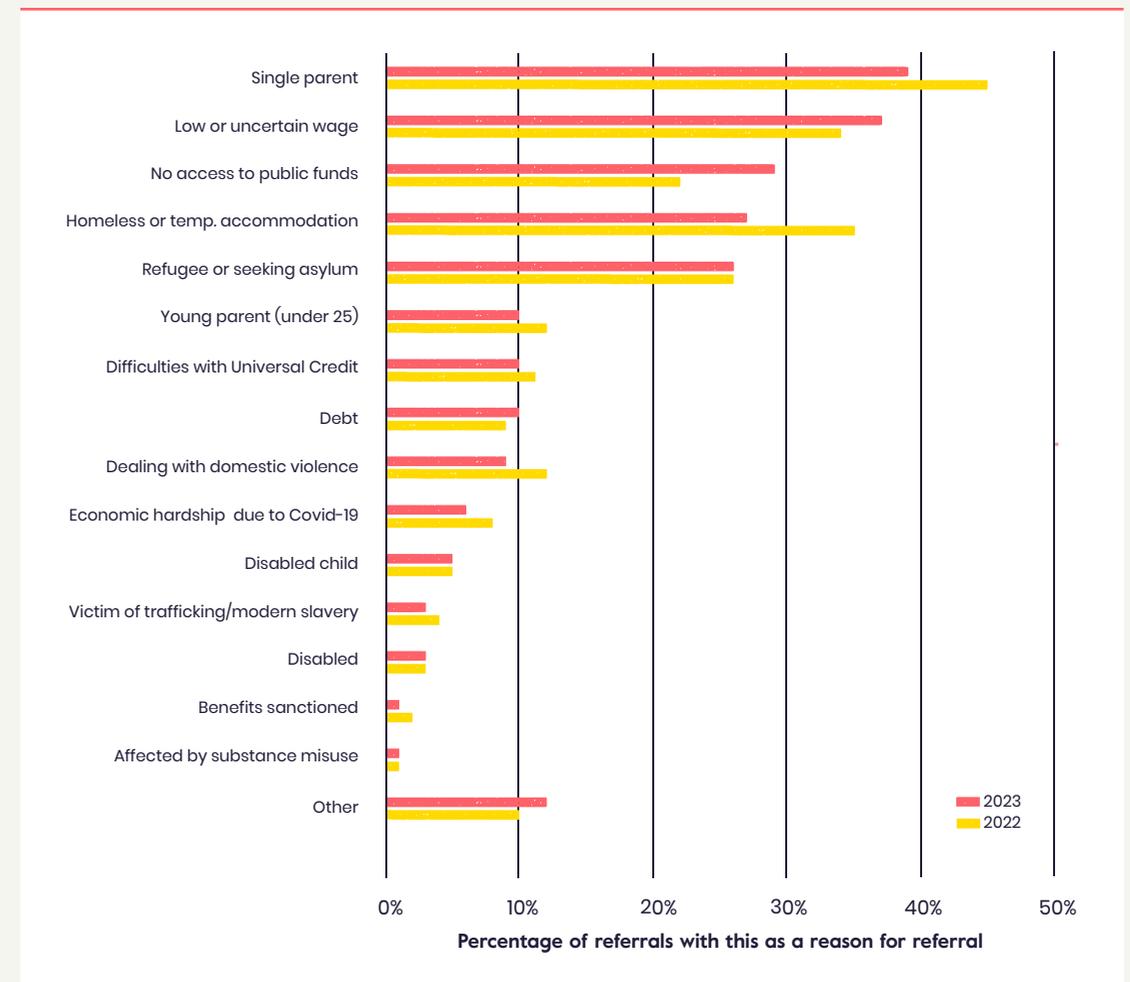


Figure 1 Why are families referred to us?



Figure 2

WHERE DO OUR FAMILIES LIVE?

When our referral partners refer a family to us, they also tell us about why that family needs our support. This helps us track and build a picture of the kind of needs we are helping to meet – as you can see in Figure 1 – but most importantly, it means we don't need to ask families too many questions when they visit or speak to us.

For some families, one-off support is all they need – one box or bundle of essential items to tide them over until their situation improves; or one conversation packed with kindness and respect as we connect them to other services and providers.

For others, more regular help is essential; this year, 37% of the families we helped had received support from Little Village before (see Figure 4).ⁱ We love watching families grow and we're happy to be a part of that journey if families need us. Often, they bring back items their children have outgrown – contributing to a chain reaction of sharing, reusing, and connecting.

Meanwhile, we know that having multiple little ones can bring added pressures. This is reflected in the numbers: 37% of the families we supported in 2023 had more than one child under the age of five (see Figure 5).ⁱⁱ

i Total percentages may differ slightly against the breakdown in Figure 4 due to decimal rounding.

ii Total percentages may differ slightly against the breakdown in Figure 5 due to decimal rounding.

Figure 3: Families' ethnicity

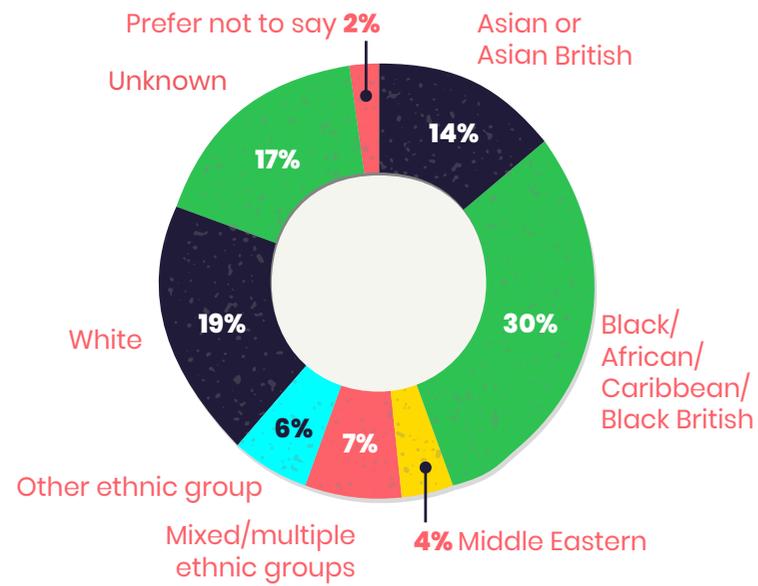


Figure 4: How many children under 5 do our families have?

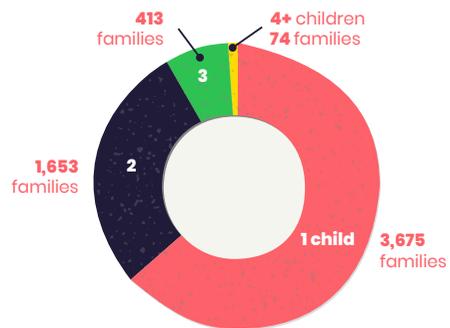
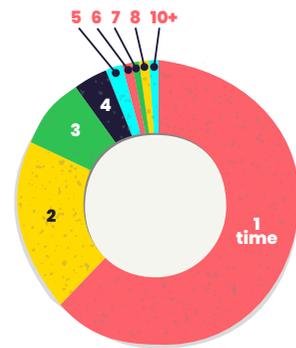


Figure 5: How many times have families visited us for support?



**THE way
we WORK**

Providing families with essential items

We know just how challenging it can be for families to provide their young children with all the essentials they need to thrive. That's why we make it possible for families to pass their pre-loved, essential items – from clothing to big pieces of equipment like prams and cots – to other families who need them. These safe, high-quality items are given as gifts, with love and respect, and make a big difference to the families who have been referred to us.

In 2023, **Little Village responded to 7,341 requests for support.** Over a thousand of these were delivered to families through partnerships, in a local community setting.

Our volunteers packed 11,747 clothing bundles and we directly supported 5,815 families and 8,529 children, many on more than one occasion. The essential items you gave us to pass on as gifts to other families would be worth £3.4 million, if valued new.

8,529
children supported

Your gifts included:

- **1,916** safe places for children and babies to sleep.
- **2,385** ways for families to get out of the house – including 1,081 buggies, plus slings, scooters, and buggy boards for big brothers and sisters.
- **7,747** coats, so that children can stay snug and dry.
- **15,573** pairs of shoes, so that children can have well-fitting and weather-appropriate footwear all year round.
- **554** highchairs, so that parents can feed their children safely.
- **1,407** infant baths or bath supports, so that parents can create bathtimes that are safe and fun for their children.
- **21,456** books, to stimulate children's learning, development, and imagination.
- **23,313** toys – because all children need toys.



What impact has this had on families?

In this section, we're going to tell you about six different impacts that receiving simple, essential items from our baby banks has had on our families, based on what they have told us themselves in our surveys and interviews.

The impacts of sharing essential items with families go beyond simple material provision. As one mum put it: *"Helping my children also helped me as a mum, and us as a family."*



Impact 1: Families have the essential items they need for their children

Children grow and develop fast – and, as all parents know, they need a lot of kit. For example, having great quality clothes that are appropriate for different weather conditions can have a huge impact on their physical and emotional wellbeing.

Half of all the parents/carers we spoke to told us that they were anxious about how they were going to provide for their child or children before being referred to Little Village.

Like this mum, who told us, *"As a single mother, I was so scared of meeting all the needs of my child – but since my baby's birth Little Village has supported me in every possible way. I was provided all the things required for my daughter and I feel so lucky to have this support when I know it is so hard for families to meet the expenses of a newborn and children."*

– Parent; family survey

Here are some more of the specific impacts that families told us about, after receiving items from Little Village:

- You helped my child or children be safe (62%)
- You helped my child or children be warm and dry (72%)

- You helped my child or children get out, e.g., to nursery/children’s centres/groups (30%)
- You helped us all get sleep and rest (35%)

Almost **90% of families told us they would not have been able to afford to buy all the items** that they received from Little Village.

The families who are referred to us face a range of challenges, often intersecting and complex. These families regularly tell us how a single item, however small, can make a big difference. For example, we interviewed one mum who was living with her children in a room in a shared accommodation. She explained how important it was to her to receive a baby bath – for her, this simple gift meant she could bathe her baby in their own space instead of the shared bathroom.

“It made a difference in my life because I got what I needed at the right time that I needed it ... I was able to bath my baby in my room. I was happy about that.”

– Parent; interview



Impact 2: Families experience fewer difficult spending choices

Parents told us how they were able to better manage their household budget after receiving essentials from Little Village. As well as relieving them of the immediate burden of having to pay for these items – or worrying about not being able to afford them – it also took the pressure off their other family spending decisions.

One parent talked about the emotional burden of having to make difficult financial choices, and the impact of receiving items from Little Village:

“The weight of not having to worry so much about her not having enough clothes or muslins or things that she needs when I’m struggling to pay other bills. It was like a weight lifted.”

– Parent; family survey

Here are some other things families told us about the big difference that receiving essential items from us made to their finances:

- We were able to spend money on other things our family needed instead (91%)

- We didn’t have to make compromises on how to spend our family money (83%)
- We were able to pay bills and buy food that we would have struggled to afford if we had needed to buy the essential items we received (86%)

Impact 3: The items we provide support children’s development and stimulation

We fundamentally believe that toys, books, and other educational materials for children are not luxuries. Access to these items is essential to the cognitive and social development of babies and young children and plays a crucial role in their overall development. Because of this, we are incredibly grateful for the thousands of high-quality, pre-loved toys and books that we receive as donations – thanks to you, in 2023, we were able to include almost **45,000 developmentally or age-appropriate toys and books** in our bundles of essentials.

Over half (52%) of parents told us that the items they received from Little Village helped stimulate, engage, and educate their child or children; meanwhile, 78% of professional referrers told us that gifts from Little Village aided the development of the children they work with.

Many proud parents gave us specific examples of the achievements and developmental progress their children had made since receiving items to support their stimulation and learning.

A mum we interviewed explained how her daughter’s delayed speech is now developing through play: *“Some of the toys help her on her speech because she has delay in her speech. She tries to speak to the toys, I observe her, she’s doing dolly playing, she’s learning from the toys or some of them sing so she’s copying the songs. She’s happy.”*

– Parent; interview

Impact 4: Parents and carers feel supported

We don’t just share essentials; we also share understanding. Our conversations are packed with kindness, respect, and trust; we give gifts with love, and in a way that offers support and connection.

We believe that this approach helps parents and carers who may feel isolated, vulnerable, unseen, and unsupported in other areas. We want these parents to experience a sense of community – to feel that they are part of our “little village”, and that they can count on us for support when they need it.

And we were so pleased to hear from our families that 97% of the parents who completed our annual survey do feel supported by Little Village. Of course, support can mean different things to different people, but 91% of our survey respondents said that the emotional support they received from our staff and volunteers was either “important” or “very important” to them. This is just one more way that we can measure the big difference we are making to people’s lives.

In fact, this impact is so wide ranging that we can break it down even further, showing the multiple ways in which parents and carers feel supported when they receive items from Little Village.

Families experience joy upon receiving items

Impossible to quantify – but crucial to capture – is the happiness we bring to families; the excitement and joy that they feel in the moment of receiving their items. Parents regularly told us about the emotional impact of the gifts they received from Little Village:

“I was extremely delighted. I remember me and my son were so excited to open the box together. It was a moment.”

– Parent; interview

Families appreciate the judgement-free way they are supported by staff and volunteers

Families feel comfortable at Little Village. They appreciate the **warm and welcoming** atmosphere we strive to create, whether in person at our high-street hubs or over the phone. They feel heard and understood, which in turn makes them feel less isolated.

It’s crucial for families to be able to ask for what they need without feeling judged – especially as we may support them over several years, in a relationship that spans their child’s early years and then continues with their younger siblings.

“You made me feel like I was visiting a second family (I have visited several times before). You guys always think of things I haven’t thought of. And there’s never any judgement to anyone’s situation.”

– Parent; family survey

The environment of support that we provide also extends to families who receive deliveries and help over the phone. One mother told us

“I fled DA [domestic abuse] and had the baby at a refuge. I was not able to think about the baby as I had two other children. The parcel for my baby was really appreciated and made me smile, which I had not been able to do for a while. I felt as though someone cared and this made me hopeful and feel empowered.”

– Parent; interview

One dad, who was seeking asylum with his family, spoke with one of our volunteers over the phone, when she called him to check what items his children needed.

He told us: *“She was so understanding. I was newly in the UK, so she was so patient to explain. She was so patient to listen.”*

– Parent; interview

In our survey, 93% of families said it was their interactions with our volunteers and staff that mattered the most to them about their experience of Little Village.

And 98% of the professional referrers we surveyed agreed that a referral to Little Village helped parents feel supported:

“The families I refer feel like they are being gifted the items, rather than accepting charity. This makes a huge difference to them.”

– Referral partner; survey

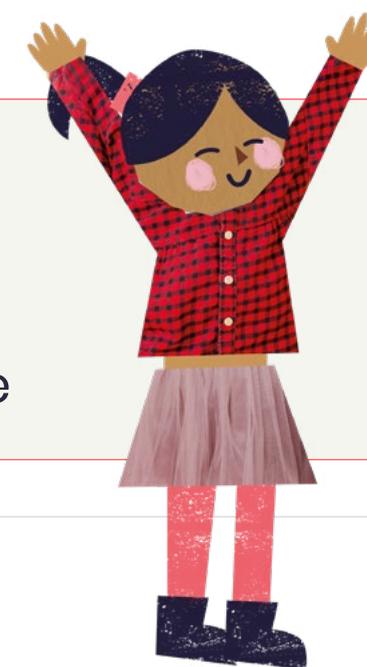
Families receive good-quality items, thoughtfully selected by volunteers and staff

We know that every family is different. That’s why we offer a personalised experience to every family, taking into consideration the different stages their children are at.

Families tell us that the staff and volunteers who help them in our hubs, or while packing their deliveries, are **thoughtful and considerate**. They often suggest items that the families need, but hadn’t actually thought of, and point out developmentally appropriate items that parents might be interested in, such as a potty or a walker.

One mum told us that her daughter has allergies and that it made a big difference to her that our volunteers remembered this on her return visit: *“I bet they see hundreds of different families all the time and we’re not there every week, months pass, and*

98%
of professional referrers
agreed parents felt
supported by Little Village





they still remember little details like that. I think that means a lot as well.

— Parent; interview

Families told us that they were very happy to receive pre-loved items; what mattered to them was the quality of what they were offered:

“The stuff they give in Little Village is second hand but my children and me were very happy ... It was second-hand but it was very good quality.”

— Parent; interview

Often, it is a lack of suitable clothing that keeps families trapped inside. One parent told us what it means to them to receive items from Little Village: *“It’s had an impact on our wellbeing, a little push. Because there was no clothes to go out with, we were just indoors. But when the items came, we had something to put on for the kids and we went out, for a stroll, to play.”*

Impact 5: Families are better able to leave their home

A buggy, sling, or even a scooter is more than a way to get out of the house. It provides parents with an opportunity to regain independence and confidence. It gives them a way of transporting children to activities, taking part in their community, and connecting with other parents.

One mum told us that she was isolated in a flat on the second floor, where she couldn’t get a buggy up or down the stairs.

We provided her with a sling: *“It made me feel more comfortable taking her out and going to baby groups and things like that. I think, our lives would be a lot different, I would have been in the house, I wouldn’t have made mum friends and got to know the area ... I probably wouldn’t have gone back to work.”*

— Parent; interview



Impact 6: Parents and carers feel less anxious and more confident

The worry of not being able to provide for their families causes a huge amount of stress and anxiety for the parents and carers we support.

Emotions prior to support from Little Village. Survey data	
I felt anxious about how I was going to support my child/children	48%
I was worried about my child/children's future	32%
I felt hopeless	19%
I was in a bad place with my mental health	21%
I was worried that social services or another agency would feel that I wasn't looking after my child/children well	9%
Respondents could choose multiple options.	

Following support we see a significant shift in positive feelings. Survey data	
My experience with Little Village...	
Reduced my worry and anxiety	62%
Gave me 'head space' to think about other things	43%
Helped me feel more confident as a parent	49%
Helped me feel more confident about asking for help	43%
Respondents could choose multiple options.	



As one mum told us: *“Becoming a twin mum with a toddler singleton was huge shock. My anxiety level rocketed. Finding out about Little Village and getting the support really saved my mental health. Knowing that there is someone to help and provide all these necessary items for free was just a present sent from heaven.”*

— Parent; family survey

Hearing this, in that mum's own words, is incredibly important as a measure of our impact on families. But this impact is also backed up by the numbers, showing that this parent's experience is not an isolated one.

Our family survey tells us that before receiving support from Little Village, parents were battling with significantly negative emotions. (See table, left.)

We aim to give temporary relief to families when the burden of providing for their children has become overwhelming. And here, again, we can look to the numbers to show that this is happening – we are making a big difference to parents' emotional wellbeing.

Almost half the families that responded to our survey told us that our support helped make them feel more confident as a parent or carer, and about asking for help:

“The support I received took a weight off my shoulders the people I spoke to were kind and helpful. Took all the worry I had

for being judged away they made me feel confident and happy to ask for help.”

— Parent; family survey

Overall, when asked whether they would recommend Little Village, on a scale of 1–10, the response from families gave us a Net Promoter Score of 86. Given that the creators of the NPS methodology categorise anything over 80 as “world class”, this is an incredible testament to the impact Little Village has had on the families we support.

What impact has this had on our referral partners?

Last year we worked with 2812 referral partners, made up of professionals who support families with babies and young children. They include midwives, health visitors, children's centre staff, social workers, and staff working in charities that support children and parents. Last year our referral partners numbered 2812.

“After the first visit, I went home that night and slept brilliantly for the first time in ages. Knowing I had really good quality things that I needed for my baby was such a blessing.”

— Parent; family story

The Way We Work

The majority (56%) of these professional referrers are from the NHS and statutory services. Many describe the service we offer as “invaluable” – in fact, 40% of referrers we surveyed told us that without us they would not have been able to support families with essential items of clothing and equipment.

“[Little Village] really are a wonderful and vital part of the maternity care that we give.”

— Referral partner; survey

Being able to refer families to a service like ours also helps strengthen our referrers’ own support relationships. For example, 86% of the referral partners we surveyed told us that referring a family to Little Village helps them to build trust with the families in their own work.

“[Little Village] not only gives family access to essential items they may not be able to afford but also enables other professionals to reach out and support their families in times of crisis.”

— Referral partner; survey

One important impact that people may not consider when they think about our work is the alleviation of financial strain for our referrers, as well as families. Of the referral partners we surveyed, **82% told us that the essential items we provided to families referred by them had directly saved public money.** Another benefit to referrers is that our model of sharing gifts through

home deliveries or in-shop appointments means our partners don’t need to collect anything for the families they refer. We work directly with the family, so that the referrer’s time is freed up to focus on providing critical health care and support services.

In 2023, we expanded our partnerships with referral organisations so that their staff could get items to families as a complement to the support they were already providing. By overlapping support in this way, we provided over 1,000 bundles of items directly to families, at groups and settings where they were already receiving support.

Families and referral partners rated us as

‘WORLD CLASS’



The Way We Work

Thanks to the success of these partnerships, we were able to:

- stock emergency newborn bundles in three of London’s maternity units;
- provide developmentally and seasonally appropriate bundles to parent support groups and children’s centres; and
- launch an outreach programme, where Little Village staff and volunteers visited groups to provide specific items for the children there.

We plan to further test these models in 2024.

One of our partners in trialling the outreach work said: *“Our collaboration with Little Village has felt like an ideal model of what a partnership can look like, and all the more interesting as it’s been driven by delivery rather than funding priorities.”*

When asked whether they would recommend Little Village, on a scale of 1–10, the response from referral partners gave us a Net Promoter Score of 83 – another “world class” result.

“Every borough needs to have a ‘Little Village’. In these times of austerity, Little Village can be viewed as an emergency service. Thank you, Little Village.”

— Referral partner; survey



Helping volunteers thrive

“The warmth and commitment are clear from the start; the feeling that as soon as you start the simplest job you are making a difference; the immediacy of knowing each little bundle of clothes or toy or piece of equipment is going to improve the life of a child and lessen some of the anxiety the parents must feel. After just a few sessions I wish I had more time to give.”

— Volunteer; survey

Like any community and its members, Little Village is powered by its “villagers”. For us, that is our volunteers. Once again in 2023, Little Village volunteers stepped forward with love, contributing their time, passion, and skills, and making a big difference.

Our **1,024 volunteers** gave over **34,000 hours** of their time so that, together, we could support families across London with the essentials they need to thrive.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ A “volunteer” is defined here as someone who did at least one two-hour shift during the year. This figure includes only one volunteer (a group leader) for each of the corporate sessions that we ran.

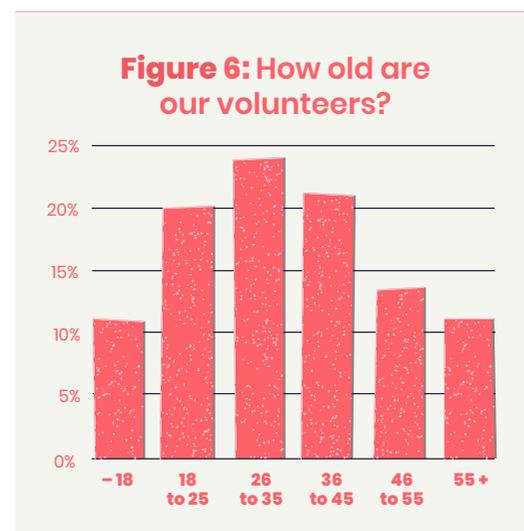
In fact, volunteers are essential for us to thrive. They are central to everything we do: welcoming families; providing advice and support; sorting, packing, and delivering bundles of essentials that bring families relief and joy; and so much more.

And, in turn, we’re proud to create a friendly, innovative, and values-led environment so that our volunteers themselves, can also thrive.

In the rest of this section, we share some highlights of the impact Little Village has had on our volunteers.

Who are our volunteers?

Little Village offers volunteering opportunities, both regular and one-off, to individuals, groups, and corporate teams.



“I needed somewhere I could volunteer in the evening, and someone put me onto Little Village. I’d read about baby banks in the news, being a dad of a baby myself, it connected with me, so here I am.”

— Volunteer; survey

As you can see in Figure 6, we’ve had a recent increase in volunteers under 25 – more than double compared to last year. Among these new younger volunteers are the **92 students** we welcomed on placements in 2023, and a number of under-25s who joined us as part of their **Duke of Edinburgh award**.

Our volunteers themselves appreciate the diversity among their colleagues, and the opportunities it provides for bringing people together. Of the volunteers who answered our survey, 62% said they valued **mixing with people from different backgrounds**.

As well as our regular volunteers, our corporate volunteering programme has continued to grow. In 2023, we hosted 85 sessions, totalling 866 individuals and over 4,000 volunteering hours.

“The sheer love of the environment that Little Village creates; passion and dedication of so many fantastic people who strive to alleviate poverty amongst the most vulnerable.”

— Volunteer; survey

Flexibility continues to be a priority as we welcome volunteers at all stages of their lives: with children under 18 (44%); without children (40%); studying or in employment (43%); and retired (18%). We offer opportunities with varying levels of involvement – including evening and weekend sessions, home-based roles, and one-off volunteering days – alongside our regular sessions.

In 2023, we held nine volunteer focus groups to gather further insights into ways we can increase accessibility for our volunteers. The topics we discussed included: introducing digital content; redefining our volunteer roles; and streamlining our onboarding process for new volunteers.

“Over my life, many people have helped me. I volunteer now because I want to pay that forwards. I also enjoy getting to know my fellow volunteers – people I probably wouldn’t have met otherwise – and working together towards a shared purpose.”

— Volunteer; survey

This year, the number of volunteers who are under 25

DOUBLED

“The fact that it is a small charity with such good ethics, the kindness it shows to families but also to the volunteers is outstanding. Little Village Cares.”

— Volunteer; survey

Promoting a more diverse volunteer base

Community is a vital part of who we are and what we stand for. As part of this ethos, we work closely with the communities, organisations, and groups that surround our physical sites.

In 2023, we hosted the following targeted programmes in our local communities:

- **An elective placement scheme with Kingston University:** We welcomed 15 nursing students, who collectively contributed over 2,000 hours during the summer.

“My involvement at Little Village provided me with valuable insights and experiences that I can apply effectively in my nursing career. The transition to my nursing practice has been seamless. I have found that lessons learned, and skills acquired have enhanced my ability to provide compassionate care to patients and their families.”

— Volunteer; survey

- **Barnet Youth Justice Services:** We held weekly sessions for young people on referral orders; helping them to build new skills and create positive opportunities as part of their community hours.
- **Restart Scheme, a government employability programme:** We hosted one-off sessions for people looking to get back into work, in partnership with the Jobcentre Plus.
- **Community Adult Services, Hounslow:** We offered supervised group volunteering sessions for 20 adults with learning disabilities.
- **Schools for those living with education needs:** We provided work experience for students from two schools, helping them to build their skills and independence.
- **London colleges:** We welcomed volunteers from five colleges, who provided over **1,919 hours** between January and June. In addition, **three London universities** contributed hand-crafted donations and a further 28 staff and students, who gave over **168 hours**.

How do our volunteers feel about their experience with Little Village?

When it comes to volunteer satisfaction, the survey results speak for themselves: 96% of our volunteers surveyed told us they were **very satisfied** (75%) or **satisfied** (21%) with their volunteering experience in 2023.

The reasons for this were varied and overlapping; for example, 87% felt that volunteering allowed them to **give back to their local community**, and 52% have **made new friends** through their involvement with Little Village.

Thanks to our volunteers’ positive experience of working with us, they are among our biggest promoters. And this has a great impact on our ability to grow our community even further. In fact, **71% of our individual volunteers have introduced friends, families, and others in their networks** to either volunteer, donate, or fundraise for Little Village.

“A friend of mine was supported by Little Village, and I was very taken with the visions and values of the charity. I wanted to be involved from that point.”

— Volunteer; survey

Diving even deeper into our volunteers’ experiences, we can identify at least two specific impacts that contribute to the positive feelings they reported on our survey:

Volunteers experience personal growth

In our volunteer survey, 52% said they felt an **increased sense of self-worth**. This was reinforced by the 22% who felt that their **mental health has improved**, and the 16% who told us that their **stress and anxiety had reduced**.

In addition, 20% of volunteers told us they had **improved their confidence levels, gained paid employment, and increased their ability to deal with life’s challenges**, as a result of their volunteering role.

“Volunteering has really opened up my eyes to the generosity of others. From volunteers who give their time, to individuals and businesses who donate. Then those who receive help from Little Village, give back and it goes full circle continuing to help even more children and families.”

— Volunteer; survey

Volunteers develop new skills and knowledge

“By volunteering, I can make a positive impact whilst gaining valuable experience and skills. It suited my skill set and, in addition, offered me work experience as I have been a full-time mum since having my son seven years ago.”

— Volunteer; survey

Of the volunteers who took part in our survey, 46% said they have gained

new knowledge and skills from their volunteering, and 17% told us it had helped them purposefully **build their local networks**. Over the course of the year, several of our volunteers told us they were moving on because they had successfully gained paid employment – and they credited their Little Village volunteering experience with helping them achieve that important milestone.

We ran 12 volunteer training sessions in 2023, including both generic and role-specific courses. And our volunteers demonstrated

their commitment to Little Village’s mission – and our ethos of self-development – by requesting optional courses to improve their skills and knowledge. For example, 44% of volunteers asked for training on **childhood poverty and equality** in 2023.

“I am learning new things that I have been able to apply in other volunteer roles I do. I am in the lucky position to speak to families the positive impact it has on their lives, and of the kindness and compassion they have received.”

– Volunteer; survey



Building deeper connections

We build warm connections with families so that they feel part of the Little Village community, and more able to access support in their wider environment, both now and into the future.

There are two practical ways that we help build these vital connections in our day-to-day work:

1. Our **Family Liaison Team** calls families when they are first referred to us, so that we can understand the essential items they need, and then after their visit or delivery, families are contacted about any other forms of support that they may need. We give families the space to tell us about these needs, packing our conversations with kindness, respect and trust, so that families feel safe and not judged. Once we understand their needs, we can signpost families to resources – from food banks, benefits, and practical help to kids’ activities, parenting support, and community networks. We will make

as many follow-up calls as it takes, to provide families with all the support they need. During 2023, the Family Liaison Team contacted families almost 6,000 times.

2. Our **Signposting and Guidance Team** offers more in-depth support to families who may struggle to access the extra help they need. Both in person and over the phone, we reach out to families who are particularly isolated or vulnerable, experiencing language barriers or health issues, or simply finding that the particular service they need is harder to access. We listen to what families need and offer frequent guidance to make sure they are well-connected with local support and expert advice. During 2023, the Signposting and Guidance Team accepted 497 cases, supporting 435 families.

Nine in ten of the families we spoke to about the signposting they received told us that it was either “helpful” or “very helpful”. And 84% said the support had a “positive” or “very positive” impact on their family situation.

In this section, we’re going to tell you about four different ways that families feel the impact when we support them to build connections.

Families feel part of a supportive community

Families tell us time and again that it's not just what we do at Little Village, but how we do it that really matters to them.

By taking the time to listen and connecting – with warmth and without judgement – we help families feel part of a caring community. We also encourage families to build the community around them, so that they can start to reduce ongoing isolation and develop vital, sustainable support networks. For example, we referred 71 families seeking asylum to Happy Baby, a community of support for pregnant women and mums with young children fleeing violence or traffickers.

In another example, one mum, who'd been forced to move after her home was flooded, told us: "I felt overwhelmed. It really helped to be asked by someone 'Are you ok?' This lifted the weight off a bit as it felt like someone really cared."

– Parent; signposting and guidance survey

More than half of families who received our signposting support in 2023 did not speak English as a first language. Our staff and volunteers worked with interpreters so that we could support these families, who may otherwise have missed out.

Families are more aware of available resources and feel confident to access them

We give families the information they need, in the most friendly and accessible way – with kindness, respect, and trust. This information can be anything, from showing families how to check online that they're getting the right benefits, to finding details of their closest children's centre, when it's open, and the best bus route to get there.

And this often starts a chain reaction: the families we help then share these connections with others who need support – and also pass on their own knowledge back to us at Little Village. In this way, we are all part of one broader community – supporting, sharing, and connecting, from one person or family to another. A true "Little Village".



In another example, one mum told us: "[The Little Village volunteer] introduced me to new services I was not aware of and provided me with links to wellbeing information. [At the workshop], I found out all about local help. That only happened because of Little Village. It's helpful as I can pass that information on to other families in need, for example at my church."

– Parent; signposting and guidance survey

Many families aren't aware of resources in their community; they don't know what they're entitled to, or they don't have the time or confidence to navigate what's

available. Around 70% of the families we surveyed had never accessed a signposting and guidance service like ours before. Likewise, almost three-quarters of the families we interviewed about the signposting they received told us the information Little Village provided was new to them.

But after receiving our signposting support, 75% of families said they felt "confident" or "very confident" about accessing support again, either now or in the future. In the long term, this will make a big difference to the ability of these families to provide for their children and to thrive in the capital.



75% of families were confident about accessing support again

One family, who was connected with a food bank and the Turn2Us benefits checker, explained that the volunteer from our Signposting and Guidance Team helped her feel *“[t]hat you’re not on your own and that it’s OK to ask for help. This made me feel more confident in being able to get help.”*

— Parent; signposting and guidance survey

Another family was given information about benefits, council tax help, rental advice, and local playgroups.

They told us: *“Sometimes it’s good that you speak with someone as it pushes you to do stuff. ... It was helpful, as I wasn’t feeling confident in myself at the time. She was positive, and this pushed me to seek help.”*

— Parent; signposting and guidance survey

Families receive practical help and can further improve their financial situation

With ever-rising prices, it can be hard for families to cover basic costs, having to balance the need to pay for food, energy, rent, and other practical essentials for daily living. As well as offering clothes and kit for their children, we work alongside families to help ease financial pressures in other ways.

When needed, we can issue emergency food bank vouchers and signpost to community food shops; help families access hardship grants and in-kind support with furniture or white goods; and

signpost or refer families to organisations who can help reduce or manage energy bills.

Our staff and volunteers issued 223 food bank vouchers in 2023; these, together with the help we gave with grant applications, energy bills, and accessing debt advice saved families over £31,000.

Families can access specialist advice and expertise

Some families experience complex and often urgent challenges, such as housing, debt, or immigration issues. They are often battling against a backdrop of wider issues

“At the time when I came to you, I was really struggling. I had applied for Universal Credit and not received it yet. I was asking friends to loan me money because I had nothing. You guys were the difference between me not having anything and actually being able to feed my family.”

— Parent; signposting and guidance survey

that makes it very difficult to resolve their situation. They may have tried to access help before, but struggled to find the right place, with the expertise to advise them effectively. We use our connections with specialist organisations to understand a family’s options and refer them for expert advice when they need it.

One family we worked with was housed in totally unsuitable and unsafe accommodation without heating for months, despite their persistently trying to resolve the situation. Our Signposting and Guidance Team referred them to Green Doctors for expert energy advice and helped them contact their local councillor. Happily, the family was moved to more appropriate accommodation – and we then linked them with local support in their new area.

We also supported a mum who was struggling to pay multiple debts, and connected her with debt advice and food support. We also encouraged her to access a Freedom Pass due to her disability. She told us: *“I needed legal advice, support and guidance ... and LV helped me with all of that. It felt good to be supported.”*

— Parent; signposting and guidance survey

And a single mum with a newborn baby asked for help with food, as she had nothing to eat at home. We were able to secure emergency food support, and we also built a positive and trusting relationship with her through the help of an interpreter. With no access to public funds, she was particularly vulnerable and her immigration status was precarious. We referred her for free immigration advice to better understand her options, and to start her on the pathway to a secure life in the UK for her and her baby.



Marisha's story

"It was like Christmas coming early. I didn't know what to expect. I'd had a simple conversation over the phone about the things I needed but had no idea what was going to arrive or if they had the things I desperately needed."

These are the words of Marisha, whom we met with her young daughter, Latahlia. When Marisha was heavily pregnant, she received her first bundle from Little Village after being referred to us by her community midwife.

"When there was a knock at the door and I saw what was waiting for me it was just unbelievable. To be honest, it was lifechanging."

Marisha received a cot and sling, along with a mix of clothes and toys for Latahlia, who was just weeks away from being born.

"After losing my job as a holiday rep because of the pandemic and also leaving my ex-husband, I lived in a women's refuge for a year. After meeting my new partner I then became pregnant, but the additional strains of the pandemic were too much for us and we separated before Latahlia was born."

Marisha told us that she'd experienced anxiety and depression since being a teenager – and now the extra physical and emotional strains were starting to take their toll: *"It was a really tough period for me being a single parent and dealing with my mental health challenges."*

"I stayed strong though and thanks to support I received from my midwife and extra care team, I started to find a better routine and hope for the future."

After Marisha was referred to Little Village, two relatively small items that she received ended up making a profound difference to both her and Latahlia.



"Little Village was a god send. A really special gift we received was a play kitchen. It's Latahlia's favourite thing on the planet. She pretends she's chopping veg next to me when I cook and just looks so happy."

"The other thing was a sling. The impact it had on me was massive. Without the sling I wouldn't have started to go to baby groups. Something as small as this gave me the confidence to get up out of the house and do things when I was really struggling. If I hadn't made those steps to leave the house, with my mental health struggles in the past, I'm not sure I'd have found the strength to go back to work. A small thing like a baby

sling really did help me start building my own little community of friends."

Inspired by her own and other people's journeys as a single parent, Marisha is now hoping to train to become a primary school teacher.

"Life is still a financial struggle. We get by but I'm not in a great position so the support from Little Village is just so incredibly helpful. I'd like to raise awareness for more families in my position. For those that are thinking of donating, a carrier bag of clothes really can make all the difference to people who need a helping hand."



Looking after our planet

Climate change, air pollution, environmental degradation, and declining biodiversity all pose severe challenges to reproductive, maternal, and child health – so protecting our planet is another essential part of our vision to help families and children thrive.

We are dedicated to making a positive impact by diverting waste from landfill, sharing surplus resources with others, and creating a local ecosystem of donation and reuse. An important part of this work is our commitment to changing attitudes and behaviours around recycling and the use of second-hand goods.

In this section, we will tell you about four specific impacts that our work has had on the wellbeing of both our local environment and our planet as a whole.

Environmental impact

In 2023, we gifted 142 tonnes worth of items to families, which may otherwise have ended up in landfill (see Figure 7).

We have used the WRAP Benefits of Reuse Tool to work out the positive environmental impacts of our local-donation ecosystem.

The tool compares the impact of passing on pre-loved items – assuming that they will be used for a further two years from the date of the gift – with the impact of the same items being sent to landfill straight away.

In this way, we calculated savings of:

- 200 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions;
- 1,557,503 MJ-equivalent of fossil fuel energy from the production of new items; and
- 1.1 Sb-equivalent of other natural resources from the production of new items.

Saving this level of carbon emissions is the equivalent of taking **43 cars off the road for a year**.¹³

Promoting reuse by making it easy to donate

In 2023, we collaborated with various organisations and supporters to establish a wide range of donation points (see Figure 8). This made it even more convenient for donors to gift items within their local community, and also helped us to reach new areas of the capital.

In 2022, Little Village gifted 142 tonnes of items to families

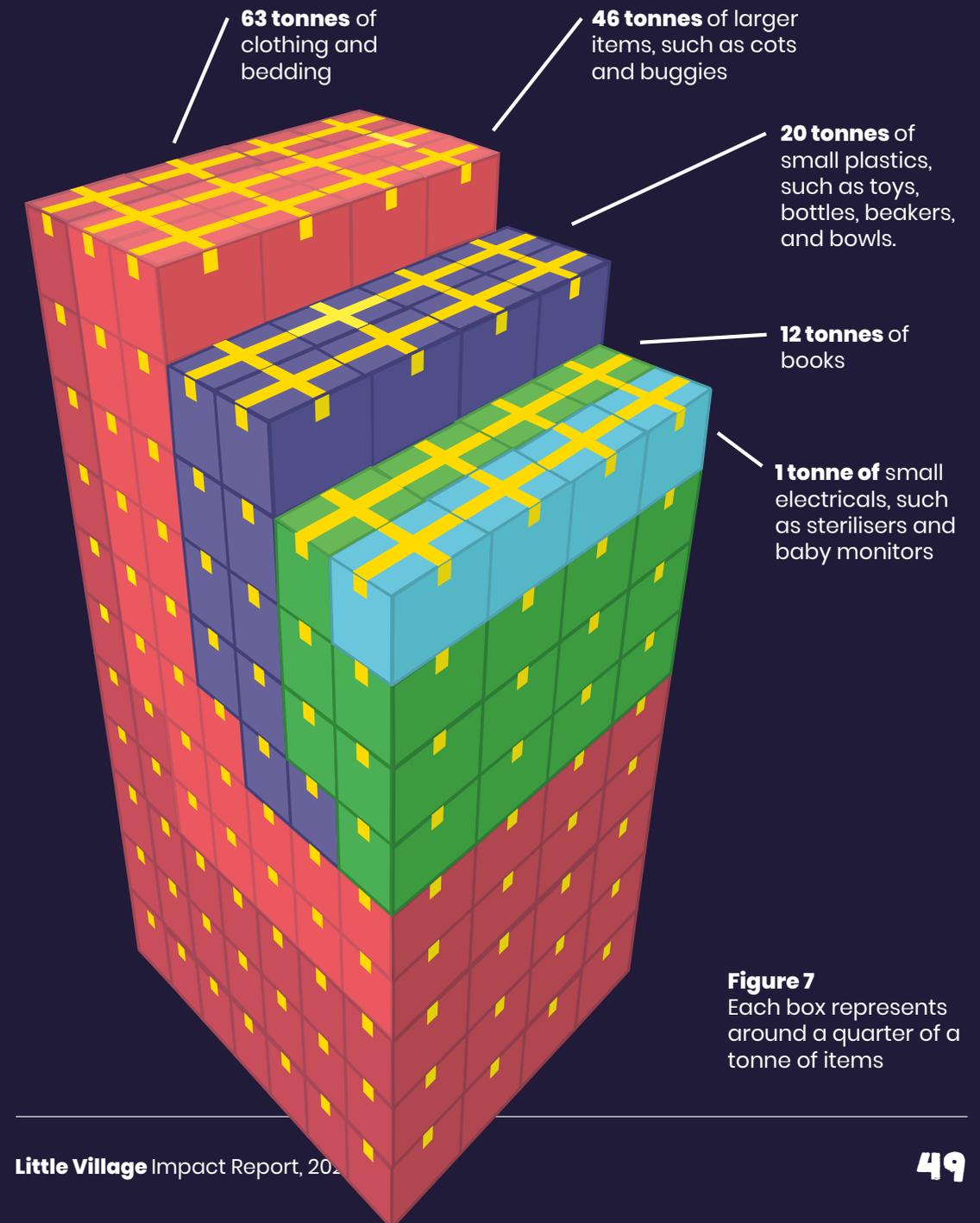
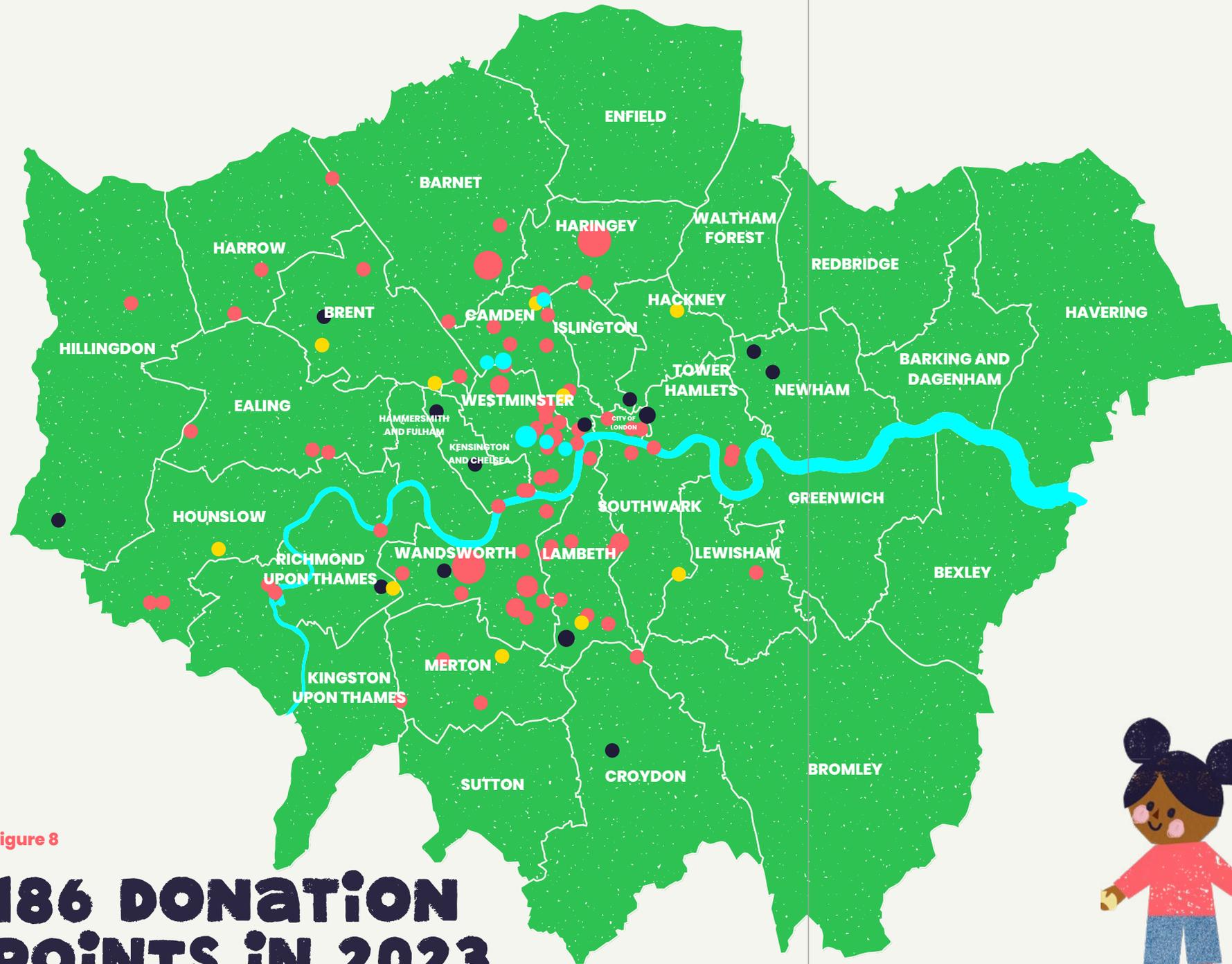


Figure 7
Each box represents around a quarter of a tonne of items



Key

Note that the size of the circle is proportionate to the activity in that location.

- **Donation drive:** A community-based donation point at venues hosted by our supporters.
- **Activity drive:** A donation drive focusing on items we specifically need, e.g., toiletries, nappies, or blankets (may include brand new or handcrafted items).
- **One-off:** Pre-loved donations from alternative, non-community-driven sources – such as leftover stock from swap events, ex-stock from clothing rental companies, surplus stock from other baby banks and charities, and so on.
- **Little Village hub or regular donation point:** Sites where donors can drop off items all year round.



Figure 8
186 DONATION POINTS IN 2023

We partnered with businesses, nurseries, schools, and food banks, among others, so that families and supporters could share their pre-loved clothes and other items at 179 events and pop-up donation points across London.

And, on 137 occasions, we accepted stock that couldn't be sold or used from businesses and other supporters, so that these items could be passed on to families instead of being disposed of and wasted. Stock left over from shop closures, end-of-line items, items with branding that was outdated or no longer relevant, and items produced as samples are just some examples of the creative ways in which we sourced essential items to be reused instead of sent to landfill.

Continuing the reuse chain beyond Little Village

Sometimes, we find we have an excess of a certain size or item of stock, due to the unpredictable nature of the donations we receive. With limitations on space, we have a strong commitment to reducing any overstock. And we do this by passing such items further on along the chain – to other organisations that support babies and young children – so that even more families can benefit from these gifts.

In 2023, we shared 3.7 tonnes of excess stock with other organisations and baby

banks – places such as the Magpie Project in Newham, which works with families in temporary accommodation; and the Happy Baby Community, which works with asylum-seeking and refugee women. Among these shared items were enough clothes for 520 children.

Changing attitudes towards giving and receiving pre-loved items

We know that people are increasingly comfortable with the idea of receiving and donating used items, with over 90% of our volunteers telling us that they already supported recycling and reuse. Among our families, however, only 43% say they already use and buy second-hand goods. This suggests that there is a need to make pre-loved goods more acceptable.

By showing that second-hand clothing and items can be of high quality and fit for purpose, we encourage families to consider seeking out pre-loved items for themselves. Some parents tell us they already pass items on.

In the words of one mum: *“It's a really good thing what you are doing, it's like recycling ... I sometimes give to some mums I know, they are in need also so I pass things to them. Mums at baby club, mums in the same situation, so I always offer.”*

— Parent; interview

In our survey of families, 41% said that having received gifts from Little Village before, they were more open to using second-hand items in the future – saving money and prolonging the life of a wide range of essential products. And even more encouraging, 80% of families said they were glad to contribute to reusing and recycling.

This impact extends out to our referral partners, too. Since referring families to Little Village and seeing our work firsthand, 40% of our referral partners said they had changed their behaviour, to find more ways to pass on or recycle items they no longer need.



Raising our voice for change

In 2023, we focused on building awareness of the desperate need faced by the families we support, and the stark realities of too many children’s lives. As well as leveraging our own communication channels and the momentum of our work and reputation across the capital, we also joined together in national partnerships, to help raise the profile of baby banks more broadly. After all, the problem of child poverty is a matter of national, as well as local, urgency.

We aim to raise our voice for change so that we can overcome child poverty across the UK. And we believe that this starts with raising awareness of the problem – and of how baby banks are working tirelessly to be part of the solution.

Raising the profile of challenges faced by low-income families

At the heart of all our profile-raising and media work is our commitment to centring the voices of the parents we support. When we say we will “raise our voice for change”, we whole-heartedly include the voices of these families; one of the most powerful things we can do is to provide them with

a platform to share their stories, in their own words.

Our media work included coverage in the *Evening Standard’s* Winter Appeal; the *Metro’s* campaign on baby formula; and an extended feature with a mum, Teesha, who told her impactful story on ITV News and on BBC Radio 4’s “You and Yours”.

We worked with Home Start London and Save the Children UK to create a panel session on the early years as part of the London Child Poverty Summit during London Child Poverty week in October. A parent we’ve supported, who now volunteers at our Brent hub, joined the panel to share her perspectives.

We also created our first ever Christmas film in support of our annual Big Give fundraising campaign. The film featured the voices and words of mums supported by Little Village, giving them the opportunity to tell their stories anonymously, but authentically.

Raising the profile of baby banks

We continued our work to incubate a National Baby Bank Alliance, in partnership with Save the Children UK, Purposeful Ventures, and Baby Bank Network Bristol.

Building on the work we started in 2022, we have increased the Alliance’s capacity and formalised its infrastructure. Save the Children and Purposeful Ventures both seconded a staff member to help with

setting up the Alliance, and two “Community Leads” – both baby bank founders – were appointed to lead on community building and information sharing.

We are delighted to share that the Alliance has now opened up for membership, and over 140 baby banks have joined so far.

Our work to create the Alliance also attracted valuable support from *The Sun*, whose weekend magazine, *Fabulous*, launched a new campaign – Baby, Bank on Us – profiling the work of 29 baby banks across the UK. Celebrities – including Leona Lewis, Dame Arlene Philips, and Christine Lampard – visited baby banks and championed our work, and businesses donated essentials like pyjamas and nappies that were shared with baby banks across the UK.

Building on the success of this campaign, *The Sun* went on to choose baby banks as the focus of its Christmas campaign, “Cosy at Christmas”, in the main paper. This included a fundraising ask, and donations received will be distributed to baby banks early in 2024.

We’ve also benefited from the continued support of HRH The Princess of Wales, who endorsed *The Sun’s* campaign, and visited Barnet-based baby bank, Sebby’s Corner, to kick off the Royal Foundation’s Christmas initiatives. This visit included an opportunity to meet with other baby bank founders at a conversation facilitated by the Baby Bank

Alliance, and was followed by baby bank founders attending the Princess’s carol service at Westminster Abbey.

Meanwhile, baby banks (Little Village, Baby Basics, AberNecessities, and the National Baby Bank Alliance) were represented at the Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood’s first national symposium in November.

And finally, we have begun tracking the impact of this work. An omnibus market research survey of a representative sample of Londoners, carried out in July 2023 and again in January 2024, showed a 3% increase in prompted awareness of baby banks. The National Baby Bank Alliance will be carrying out separate measurement work to look at overall awareness.



Christine Lampard visiting Little Village



CONCLUSION

As we draw this report to a close, we want to take a moment to say: **thank you**. We haven't done anything alone; everything we have achieved was only possible thanks to the love, kindness, and generosity of our supporters – our “Little Village”.

This Impact Report is for you; to show you what a big difference your support has made in 2023. But it also serves to highlight the need that still exists.

In 2023, Little Village reached more children than ever before, sharing pre-loved items so that they have the essentials they need to thrive. This is a testament to the dedication of our volunteers and employees, and the kindness and generosity of our donors. But it also highlights the frightening scale of demand – of people who need our help – at a time of rising and deepening poverty.

Every day, that demand exceeds our ability to respond.

The feedback from our referral partners demonstrates our increasing role in an ecosystem without a safety net; where a

philanthropically funded organisation is seen as a “fourth emergency service”.

Families should not be experiencing this level of poverty in the UK. We want to change this. In 2023, we took firm steps towards this goal, with the development of the Baby Bank Alliance. The national attention this drew to the work of baby banks across the UK – which have flown under the radar for too long – provides a vital platform for us to continue to raise our voice for change. This is well worth celebrating; but there is still a lot of work to be done.

In 2024, Little Village will continue to build on that growing national and local profile. We will also strengthen our internal infrastructure and partnership work, and continue to embed the community relationships that support families with babies and young children.

Conclusion

And we will continue to provide that support, every day, to the families who are referred to us; families who are experiencing the stark and desperate realities of deepening

poverty in our capital. We will continue to pass on high-quality, pre-loved goods to these families so that their children have the essentials they need to thrive.



Endnotes

- 1 Using EPA standard of a car producing 4.6 metric tonnes of CO₂ per vehicle per year.
- 2 This tool uses a methodology consistent with recognised standards on life cycle assessment (ISO 14040 and 14044) and guidance on Social Return on Investment to quantify greenhouse gas emissions. More information is available online at <https://wrap.org.uk/>.
- 3 https://wp.littlevillagehq.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/RLTV06-It-Takes-a-Village.pdf?_gl=1*1auwdkf*_ga*MTgwODg0MzQzOC4xNzAwNTAwNjA2*_ga_CTK716NF8Q*MTcwMDUwMDYwNi4xLjEuMTcwMDUwMDY5Mi4wLjAuMA.
- 4 www.childhoodtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/London-Child-Poverty-Report-2023-1.pdf (p. 7).
- 5 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-12-october-2023/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-12-october-2023.
- 6 JRF Destitution in the UK report (2023) www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2023.
- 7 A DSSF study (2009) showed that 62.8% of children not receiving free school meals achieved at least 5 A*-C grades at GCSE, compared to 35.5% for children who received free school meals.
- 8 Gutman, L., Joshi, H., Parsonage, M. & Schoon, I. (2015) Children of the new century: Mental health findings from the Millennium Cohort Study. London: Centre for Mental Health.
- 9 <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2002-10732-001>.
- 10 Child Poverty Action Group (2017) The Effects of Poverty. <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/effects-poverty>.
- 11 <https://centreforearlychildhood.org/research/>.
- 12 <https://centreforearlychildhood.org/research/>.
- 13 Using EPA standard of a car producing 4.6 metric tonnes of CO₂ per vehicle per year.

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— Parent we supported

