



NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2021

Dear Friends

We trust that you, your family and friends continue to stay well. As we find ourselves in lockdown again, we continue to give practical support to local people who, for many reasons, find themselves needing help.

However, it has been necessary to furlough some staff and so currently the office is only manned weekdays 9.30am to 2.30pm.

NEW VEHICLE

Last autumn we made the decision to replace our 12-year-old lorry. The lorry has served us well but was costing a lot in maintenance and repairs and due to its size there were restrictions on who could drive. So, we planned to lease a new vehicle which although smaller, enables us to carry just as much and eliminates the need to have an operator's licence, thus removing the restrictions on who can drive it. The new vehicle (pictured below) arrived mid-January.



In addition, we had a 3.5 tonne van which was used for shop deliveries and collections and to assist with the work of the Dorcas Project as we were getting busier and covering a wider area.

During the night of our first day back after the Christmas break that vehicle was stolen and despite the best efforts of the police, has not been found. Although in monetary terms it wasn't very valuable, it was vital to us in terms of the work it enabled us to do. Thankfully we have received a reasonable pay out from our insurance company and with a very generous donation recently received and some funding promised from a local company we should be in a position to purchase a second-hand van.

But what we would really like to do is lease a second new van which will serve us well into the future and remove concerns about any repairs / unreliability that might occur with a second-hand vehicle. Can you help us to achieve this? Money we have / will receive will be used to cover the large deposit needed and the first year's lease costs.

If you feel you would like to help us achieve our goal, you can donate by sending us a cheque, phoning the office to make a card payment or via Virgin Money Giving <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/finalCharityHomepage.action?uniqueVmgCharityUrl=SouthamptonCityAndRegionActionToCombatHardship> In all instances, please specify that the money is towards our vehicle fund.

DORCAS PROJECT

Our furniture re-distribution project has continued throughout and is just as busy. We have been very fortunate in obtaining funding to buy new beds which has meant we have had to carry out fewer collections. However, we are still in need of the following items: -

- ◆ Sofas – small with fire safety labels
- ◆ Chests of drawers
- ◆ Wardrobes (small)
- ◆ Dining Tables (drop leaf or gateleg)

Collections can only be made from a garage, from outside or from one downstairs room. Thank you to everyone for your understanding in this matter. If you have anything that you no longer need that is still in excellent condition please contact the office on 023 8077 3132 or e-mail reception@scratchcharity.co.uk

If collecting furniture, we are very happy to also accept donations of bedding, curtains, crockery, cutlery, pots and pans and other smaller items. However, we don't have capacity to come just for these items.

During the current lockdown we are asking that people don't visit our premises to drop off donations. This is to ensure the safety of our staff and volunteers.

To limit people on site, the number of volunteers has been reduced to an absolute minimum. We are thankful to Mike, Steve and Rob (driver's mates and warehouse support) and Sarah (in the office) for their ongoing hard work in helping to ensure services can continue.

WELFARE LINE

Our welfare line, manned by Emma and Lucy, continues to be busy responding to phone calls from people who are struggling, many of whom have lost work during the COVID pandemic.

In addition, we are currently operating Southampton City Council's Covid Winter Grant Scheme which enables vulnerable residents who have been affected by Covid access to help with warmth, food, clothing and some household items via a voucher scheme.

SHOPS

Our shop in East Street, Southampton closed back in the summer as the lease came to an end and we couldn't agree a new lease on acceptable terms. The shop at New Milton is currently closed during the lockdown restrictions. In the couple of months leading up to Christmas, it was very busy and we were grateful for the income that it brought. All the time it is shut, there is a financial loss to SCRATCH.

Some of this can be offset by furloughing staff, but we still face a shortfall each month.

[CHRISTMAS COMPLETE 2020](#)

Another successful project was completed on Christmas Eve with a parcel of 7 or 8 presents being delivered / collected for 2393 children and young people from over 1030 families (an increase of over 15% from last year). This was despite COVID 19 restrictions, meaning fewer people volunteering each day and new ways of working for the deliveries and collections. Thankfully the project was completed with everyone involved staying safe and well. Having said that, we probably wouldn't want to have to operate in quite the same way again! We are so grateful to the wonderful volunteers who helped with the sorting, picking and packing and the deliveries. More than ever you were stars, especially the intensive care nurse who came to help on her day off.

As it was difficult for churches, schools and businesses to organise collections of toys and gifts for us, we were able to make good use of Amazon wish lists and we saw a large increase in financial donations enabling us to purchase items we needed. So, a big thank you to everyone who was involved in supporting the project in this way.

It is always lovely to get feedback from those who benefitted: just a few of the comments are shown below: -

- ◆ "Hello, I've just received a Christmas present package from SCRATCH and I thought I'd just message to say THANK YOU so much for everything you all do. It is massively appreciated by myself and I'm sure everyone else that you all help. Your generosity is immeasurable and it means a lot".
- ◆ "We would like to say a very big thank you to everyone for all the hard work and time you have given to making a difference to families again this year. The saying "it takes a community" is certainly true. We are a small charity and could not have provided the wonderful children's presents for parents to give to their children without you and your supporters. You have made such a difference to those in need and we really appreciate your magnificent support".
- ◆ "Hi, I just wanted to personally thank everyone for the box of gifts I received for my children this week. It has been an extremely hard year for our family



with the sudden loss of my Mum along with the huge financial struggle of Covid. I was so worried I wouldn't be able to give them the Christmas they are used to or deserve. Thanks to your kindness the things I received really made all the difference."



- ◆ "I would like to say Thank you very much for all involved in the behind the scenes of delivering the Christmas Complete initiative!. My children will be so grateful and will love everything provided. I've had a sneaky look and it's like you know my children personally. Everything is so well thought through and perfectly picked to make a child feel loved at Christmas. I would love to one day be in the position to be able to help and return the favour and one day I will be. Thanks again and wishing you all a Merry Christmas".

There were a few toys and gifts left over which have been sorted and securely stored. During the last couple of years, we have had requests to provide toys in situations such as Domestic Abuse (DA), house fires and even when a bus went into a property rendering it unsafe. It is great to be able to help in these instances and we believe that there will be even more instances of DA this year where we might be asked to step in and help. Whilst we have items suitable for younger children, we will struggle to provide gifts for children 9 years or over. Would you like to help by donating to allow us to purchase items as needed? Any money not used throughout the year, will be allocated to Christmas Complete 2021. You can make donations in the same way as for our van fund, just mark it toys. Thank you.

All other projects – Community RePaint, workshop and textiles are currently closed and will only be able to reopen once we feel it is safe to have more people on site.

This continues to be a challenging time for SCRATCH and it is proving to be difficult to plan too far ahead or even forecast finances accurately as we are conscious that any further spikes in COVID 19 or local lockdowns can instantly change plans. We, therefore, need your support even more than ever.

Mike Smith & Annette Davis – Senior Management Team

On behalf of the SCRATCH staff team, Board of Directors and volunteers

Stay safe and well

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