



NEWSLETTER SPRING 2025

Over the last year our premises have seen a bit of a transformation. We have new toilets, a volunteer changing room, the main areas have been redecorated and carpeted and we are enjoying a refurbished main office. This creates a more pleasant working environment, shows that we value our volunteers and helps maintain the building for the next 9 years (when the lease will hopefully be renewed for another 10 years). We are thankful that funding has been available to make this possible.

Another change has been the use of a new system for organizing the delivery and collection schedules for the drivers which gives us real-time information and allows the driver to update an order when certain items aren't delivered for any reason or when things cannot be collected. It has been a steep learning curve for all involved, but it is already proving to be of great benefit in providing a more efficient and paper-free service.

Our projects continue to serve the most disadvantaged in our local areas by meeting very practical needs and signposting to other agencies who can provide support in other areas. You can read more about these projects below.

CHRISTMAS COMPLETE

No sooner does one year's project finish than the other seems to start. A survey amongst longstanding volunteers and a staff team meeting earlier in the year has produced some planned changes for the way the project will work this year. We will still, however, be asking for donations later in the year and seeking volunteers – watch out for details during October.

In December 2024, we were able to provide a parcel of 7 or 8 gifts to 2563 children and young people (this is a slight drop from the previous year). As always, we were grateful for the donations of toys, gifts and finance as well as the support from so many incredible volunteers. Thank you to everyone who supported the project in whatever way.

It is so rewarding to read and hear feedback from the clients we serve and the various agencies that refer. Here are just a few: -

- *My housing officer kindly contacted yourselves as despite me working my children and I are struggling financially and I was unable to get them anything for Christmas. Your charity kindly dropped off a parcel that had presents for both of my boys and I just wanted to email and say a massive thank you for their gifts. I really can't express my gratitude to you all for making Christmas a little more special.*



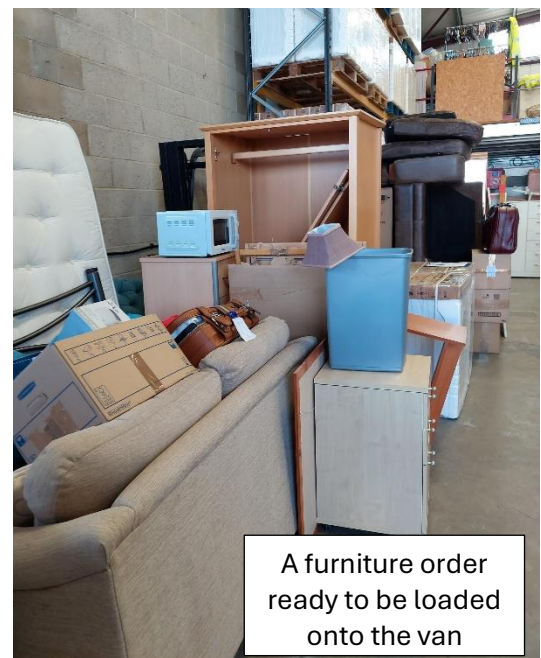
- *Many thanks for the delivery to St Mark's School for some of our families. The gifts are wonderful and will make such a difference!*
- *I would like to send my thanks to you all for all the help your charity has given me and my family. We had a Christmas delivery on Saturday this has saved Christmas for us in so many ways.*
- *Thank you so much for my gifts you have actually saved my Christmas and taken away so much stress.*
- *I would like to thank you for the Christmas gifts. It was indeed a blessing to us, especially our daughter M. Thank you for putting a smile on her face.*
- *I'm not sure who arranged the SCATCH Christmas boxes for the Ukrainians, but I just want to pass on my thanks and those from the families. The children were so happy and the presents were really outstanding. New Forest District Council.*

FURNISH TO FLOURISH

The delivery of reuse furniture to disadvantaged individuals and families continues to grow with more households helped across the wider Hampshire area (a 5% increase from the previous year). We have been thankful for specific funding that has enabled us to buy beds when we have experienced shortages, otherwise we would have seen families having to wait for the delivery of these essential items.

We do, however, still need to collect beds as well as other basic furniture items. We often have shortages of the following things: -

- Single Wardrobes
- Dining Tables (must be drop leaf or gateleg)
- Chests of Drawers
- Microwaves
- Curtains
- Sofas (must have fire safety labels attached)
- Rugs



To arrange a collection, please either phone the office on 023 8077 3132 or e-mail reception@scratchcharity.co.uk.



Other smaller essential items which are constantly required are saucepans, kitchen utensils, casserole dishes, cutlery, tin openers, pillows and towels etc. These can be dropped off at our warehouse weekdays between 9am and 4pm. We are also happy to collect, if we are also coming for larger furniture items.

A gentleman we recently collected from said *"I just wanted to let you know that the gentleman who came this morning to collect was so very polite, respectful and grateful. He is a real*

asset to your team. We will absolutely keep you guys in mind if we have anything else that we can donate.”

Below is some feedback from a couple of households recently helped: -

- *I was previously homeless so I had nothing at all for my flat. Having a comfy bed and my own plates and cups makes this feel like a home. I am now working and love coming back to my cosy home.*
- *I have 3 children in a 2 bedroom flat so getting an additional trundle bed meant they have a bed each, instead of sharing one and I can put it away during the day so they can have their toys out. The bedtime routine has improved and my daughter loves having a ‘big girl bed’.*

During the year our office staff and volunteers answered over 16,000 phone calls relating to the delivery and collection of furniture as well as queries and questions regarding Christmas Complete and other projects.

WELFARE

We were pleased to hear that the Government’s Household Support Fund has been continued for another year (up to end of March 2026) and that we can continue to work with Southampton City Council to support the most vulnerable in our community. We do this via utility top-up vouchers and / or free new white goods for households who meet specific criteria, plus additional support for particular client groups.

During the course of the year we issued just over 3,600 utility top-up vouchers and provided 762 households with a new white good.



A stock of cookers and washing machines awaiting delivery

A recent recipient of a white good, commented: *I have 3 children and I am on a very low income. When my fridge freezer broke down I knew it would take me at least a year to save for one. Being on a low income means I just couldn’t afford to buy fresh food every day. Having a freezer means I can budget better.*

Part of our welfare provision is a Welfare telephone line for Southampton residents (we answered over 2,000 calls during the

year). As part of this service, we often need to make referrals to local food banks (Basics Bank, operated by Southampton City Mission), with 753 such referrals last year. Other callers are signposted to more specialized advice / debt agencies.

STAFF

After 25 years service, Mike (Senior Manager – Operations) who started at SCRATCH as a driver, will be retiring at the end of the year. He will be missed in many ways by so many people.

This has resulted in the Board of Trustees carrying out a staffing review which is currently ongoing and may result in a new position(s) being available in the team later in the year. Keep an eye on our website for employment opportunities as they arise.

VOLUNTEERING

We have been delighted to welcome a steady stream of new volunteers from a variety of referral sources, resulting in a healthy waiting list of people eager to get involved. It's always inspiring to see individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to support our work. In March, we were proud to renew our Investing in Volunteers accreditation, the UK's quality standard for excellent volunteer management, which we've held since 2017. This recognition reflects how much we value our volunteers and our commitment to providing a positive volunteering experience. In May, our Volunteer Manager Lizzie joined seven volunteers at Southampton Voluntary Services' award ceremony for volunteers across the city who have given 100 hours of service — a special occasion made even more memorable with a tour of the Lord Mayor's Parlour and offices.



We hope that this newsletter gives you a brief insight into what we have been up to. Our 2024 / 25 Annual Report will be available in the summer, if you would like to receive a copy, please let us know.

Many thanks for your continued interest and support.

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