

Little Village press release

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Biggest baby bank exposes ‘hidden crisis of childhood poverty’

London-based charity [Little Village](#), which is London’s largest baby bank, said today that demand for its service has never been greater, amidst what it describes as ‘a hidden crisis of childhood poverty.’

Little Village, which was set up in 2016, is like a food bank, but for clothes, toys and equipment for babies and children up to the age of five. It operates in the London boroughs of Wandsworth and Camden, and is soon to open in Southwark.

Little Village is set to feature in [Dispatches](#) programme, Born on the Breadline, which airs at 8pm tonight.

Dispatches carried out the first ever UK-wide survey of baby banks, which shows that Little Village is one of over 100 such services across the country – a number that has significantly increased since austerity was introduced. Around 35,000 families have been referred to UK baby banks this year and referrals have increased by over 500 per cent in the last five years.

Little Village has also released its own exclusive figures today, showing that:

- Since being set up in April 2016 it has supported almost 2000 families in London
- It has given out items worth over £1 million, including 753 cots; 604 buggies and 30,000 nappies
- One in two of the families it supports are homeless or in temporary accommodation
- 1 in 3 have no recourse to public funds – they are living on £35 a week
- Almost half of children living in inner city London are living in poverty, which is 20 per cent higher than the rest of the country

Chief Executive of Little Village, Sophia Parker, said:

“I continue to be astounded by the level of need we deal with on a daily basis. It is a hidden crisis of childhood poverty, and it’s right here on our doorsteps.

“People don’t believe me when I tell them we see babies sleeping on sofa cushions on the floor because the parents can’t afford a cot. It’s heartbreaking to hear from mums who are rationing nappies or living in overcrowded, rat-infested homes.

“When you’re forced to choose between heating and eating, it’s no wonder that kids’ clothing or toys are not a priority.

“Little Village provides families with the basics like clothing, buggies and nappies, but the difficulties leading to people being in such dire circumstances are complicated and wide-reaching. Issues with over-priced housing, problems with benefits like Universal Credit and public services being cut, to name but a few.”

Keith is 48 year old a dad of three from Norbury who receives support from Little Village and also volunteers for the charity. He will feature in tonight’s Dispatches, he said:

“I had a steady job as a decorator but a car accident put me out of work for months. I suddenly found myself with no money and a new child on the way. We were referred to Little Village and they astounded us by giving us absolutely everything we needed and they’re still here for us now.

“I’m back in work but the hours are limited, the salary is low and it’s a struggle to make ends meet. I’m a proud person and I’ve always supported charities in the past, so it’s hard to swallow my pride and accept that we’re the ones that now need help.”

The majority of items Little Village passes on are donated by local families, who are referred to the service via a network of children’s centres, health visitors, midwives and other charities. An emphasis is placed on high quality donations, as items are given to families as gifts, not handouts.

If you would like to learn more about how you can support Little Village, you can do so at www.littlevillagehq.org

Ends

Notes to editors

You can find [Little Village](#) on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

Please go to www.littlevillagehq.org for information on how to receive support from Little Village or to find out how you can donate money or items to the organisation. There is also information on how to sign up to volunteer.