

Little Village press release

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'Shocking' levels of poverty uncovered by London's biggest baby bank

To mark its third birthday, London's biggest baby bank, Little Village, today released new figures showing a huge increase in the number of families it sees and says it expects the trend to continue in 2019.

The number of families seen by Little Village rose from 773 in 2017 to 1524 in 2018 – a rise of 97 per cent.

Since its launch in 2016, Little Village has supported 2098 families. This includes passing on:

- 859 safe places to sleep (cots, Moses baskets) - showing that almost half of the families did not previously have a safe place for their babies to sleep
- 697 buggies
- 170,000 items including clothing, shoes, warm coats, toys and books
- 21,000 pieces of equipment including bottles, high chairs and baby carriers

The figures have been released as Little Village prepares to celebrate its third birthday with a reception at City Hall tonight (12th February) to recognise the work of its staff and volunteers.

The charity says it needs more financial support if it is to continue to support such high numbers of families.

Sophia Parker, Chief Executive of Little Village, said:

"We see mums unable to pay for nappies and food for their children; babies sleeping on towels and broken beds; families living in single rooms with nowhere to cook or play. It's hard to convey just how difficult the circumstances are that many families find themselves in.

"I'm shocked by the dramatic rise in the number of families we've seen and the sheer level of need we've uncovered. Poverty blights lives. It simply isn't right that so many children are living in such unacceptable circumstances in one of the wealthiest cities in the world.

"Thanks to issues around low wages, low paid jobs, Universal Credit and insecure housing in the capital, this year looks set to be incredibly busy for us. But we can only continue to support growing numbers of families with more financial backing. We don't receive any public funding so are reliant on people's generosity in providing financial donations. Any

money you can spare will go directly towards helping some of the most vulnerable children in London."

Carla Toomey, 41, lives in Camden and is expecting her second child. She has recently been supported by Little Village Camden. She said:

"I've worked since I was 16, I've always worked, but I've recently stopped because I'm heavily pregnant and my health isn't very good

"I was advised to come off my Working Tax Credit and go on to Universal Credit, but I've been left for four weeks now with no benefits whilst I wait for it to kick in. I've got food to buy, a teenage daughter to take care of, bills to pay, how can anyone be expected to live on nothing? It's killing me.

"When I first came to Little Village my jaw hit the ground and I just cried, I was so overwhelmed by it all, by the kindness. They've given me absolutely everything I need for my baby, who's due in March: buggy, clothes, nappies, dummies, the lot. Having this support is one less thing for me to worry about."

The charity estimates that it costs £30,000 every year to safely pass on the items that have been donated to them. That covers the essential costs of new cot mattresses, vital repairs and new parts for buggies and transport and delivery costs.

Little Village is like a foodbank, but for clothes, toys and equipment for babies and children up to the age of 5. Local families donate items, which are passed on to families who have been referred via a network of partners like health visitors, children's centres and midwives. It has supported families across 29 of London's 32 boroughs, and currently has stock rooms in Camden, Wandsworth and Southwark.

You can support Little Village via their [Just Giving page](#).

Find out how else you can support Little Village, including how to set up regular payments, at: www.littlevillageHQ.org.uk

Ends

Notes to editors

Follow Little Village - [@LittleVillageHQ](#) on Twitter; [Little Village HQ on Facebook](#) and [Little Village HQ on Instagram](#).

Little Village statistics

The families we help:

- Just under half of the families we support come from the bottom fifth of wards based on deprivation data.

- Around half of families we support (51%) are either homeless or in temporary accommodation – a figure that has increased this year from 32%.
- Around one in five of the families we support are in work but still struggling to make ends meet.
- A third (31%) of families have no recourse to public funds.
- 39% are single parent households and 23% are refugees and asylum seekers.
- Many are dealing with domestic violence and substance misuse.