



PRESS RELEASE

Christmas Boxes bring joy in Bulgaria

Children laughed and shrieked with joy, old people cried and communities literally sang with happiness - and all because they had been given Christmas Boxes packed by people in Wiltshire.

The Trussell Trust have just returned from their annual Christmas Box trip, giving 3,750 shoeboxes filled with gifts to people living in poverty in Bulgaria. Watching people jostle over their position in a queue to get a box filled with things as simple as a toothbrush is a truly humbling experience. It is so moving to see an orphaned child open their Christmas Box and take genuine delight in everything inside - not sure which toy to play with first, or which sweet to try (and ending up trying to fit two lollies in at once!).

The Trust travelled to orphanages, schools, Roma communities, refuges and houses of people living in poverty to give out the gifts packed by Wiltshire people. Everywhere they went those receiving boxes were so grateful. Old, lonely people were moved to tears because someone had thought of them. A pastor of a Roma community said that the shoeboxes were an answer to prayer, as parents in his community could not afford Christmas presents for their families this year.

Richard Parsons, Bulgaria Operations Manager, said 'It is hard to describe the impact that a Christmas Box can have. It's not just the treasured gifts inside that make these boxes so special, it's the acceptance and love that come with them. The knowledge that someone, somewhere is thinking about them. We are so grateful to the people of Salisbury and Wiltshire who made this possible.'

Giving Christmas Boxes also allows The Trussell Trust to build relationships with poor communities and offer more long-term, sustainable projects to help break the cycle of poverty in the future.

Notes to the editor:

- 3,450 shoeboxes were given by people in the Salisbury and Wiltshire area, a record-breaking number despite the current economic climate. Blythwood Care, a partner charity, then gave the Trust a further 300 boxes to distribute.
- The Trussell Trust team, Richard Parsons, Molly Hodson and David Ward (a volunteer), distributed the boxes between 1st-12th December 2008.
- The boxes were distributed mainly in the Botevgrad region and also in Sofia.
- Young people from The Trussell Trust's residential training centre for state care leavers (The House of Joshua) enjoyed helping to distribute the boxes.
- The Trussell Trust was founded 11 years ago to work with marginalised people in the UK and in Bulgaria. In the UK we run the Salisbury **foodbank**, supplying food boxes to those in crisis locally. Our **foodbank** network provides training and resources to those wishing to start their own **foodbank** nationwide; over 30 Trussell Trust **foodbanks** are now launched across the UK. Our social enterprise project focuses on developing cohesion, creativity and inclusion in the local community whilst also generating funds. In Bulgaria we run residential training centres for state care leavers and we introduce sustainable projects to marginalised Roma gypsy communities. We also support Lipnitza School, running respite camps, improving infrastructure and giving Christmas boxes.

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