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Barnardos, Christchurch Square, Dublin 8.



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Mrs Mary Sample,
1 Sample Street,
Sample Town,
Co. Sample.

A special place we call **Home Corner** was the key that unlocked Ciara's heart.

Mrs Mary Sample,
1 Sample Street,
Sample Town,
Co. Sample.

The Best Start for
a vulnerable child
this Christmas...
is your gift of €XX

November 2008

Dear Mary,

How do you coax a little girl back into the real world, when all she wants to do is crawl under a table with her favourite teddy bear, and hide away?

That's the problem one of our Best Start case workers was facing three Christmases ago, when a traumatized little girl called Kirsty first came to the Barnardos project where she worked.

I'd like to share Kirsty's story with you today, but first I want to thank you for all your help over the last year.

You may not realise it... but your [€lastXmasgift> donation last Christmas has] [donations of €last 1 2mthgifts> over the last year have] helped secure a better future for some of the most vulnerable and neglected children in our society. I really appreciate your help, as does everyone here at Barnardos.

Before Kirsty came to Barnardos, her world was one of fear, hurt, and betrayal by those closest to her

Kirsty's story is a real life example of how your money can turn the suffering of an innocent child into a truly positive future. This is how Maria, Kirsty's Best Start case worker, remembers her...

"Kirsty was 3 years old when she came to Best Start - a Barnardos programme that nurtures vulnerable and neglected children under 5 and prepares them for school.

It was the run up to Christmas, and only two weeks earlier, she'd been removed from her parents care for her own safety, and placed with a foster family.

You could tell straightaway from the fearful look in her eyes, that this little girl had endured things a child her age shouldn't even know about."

You've probably already guessed that something terrible had happened to Kirsty. And sadly, you'd be right. The tragic truth is that she'd been the victim of physical and sexual abuse in her own home.

Children like Kirsty are depending on your kindness this Christmas. Please give €55 today

As a result of the hurt and neglect she'd experienced, Kirsty saw adults as people who were not to be trusted. And at first, this included Maria as well...

"On her first day, she crawled under a table in the corner with a battered old teddy bear, and stayed there for the whole day. It was a pattern I got used to. Day after day, Kirsty hid away from the world under that table.

She wouldn't speak to me, or to anyone else. I'd offer her a toy or some food, or try to play a game with her, but she'd just lower her eyes and hug her teddy. It was like he was the only one in the world she could trust.

As you can probably imagine, it broke my heart."

After two weeks of this, Maria grew really worried. She knew she had to think of something to get through to Kirsty. It was nearly Christmas, so Maria set herself the personal target of trying to break through to Kirsty before the Barnardos Christmas Party.

"This was a major concern - it's impossible to connect with a child that won't talk to you... who won't even come out from under the table. And without that first connection... none of the vital work we needed to do could happen.

Then one day the solution came to me. I picked up my favourite storybook, lay down on the floor beside Kirsty's table, and began to read. I read to her every day, lying on the floor with her. And it worked!

As the days went by, she got more and more involved. I'd read a little, then stop. If she wanted me to carry on, she had to come just a little way out from under the table. Before long, we were sitting together in an armchair."

That storybook was the first step towards a new life for Kirsty. Hand in hand, she and Maria took that step, and the ones that followed, together. It was hard work, demanding much of both of them, but they got there.

Kirsty began talking to Maria, then to the other staff at her Barnardos project. She began to trust people again. And then the real journey began, the one where we gave Kirsty the best start possible.

Best Start means a better future too - and that's what your Christmas gift of €55 means to a child like Kirsty

The really good news is that Kirsty is now a confident girl of 6, who's recently started school, and is on the brink of a brighter, happier future.

That's what Best Start is all about - giving pre-school children who have suffered neglect, harm or disadvantage, the best possible start for their new life ahead.

The people who make this happen are our incredibly talented case workers like Maria. But the people who really make it all possible in the first place, are wonderful people like you.

I've worked for Barnardos for XX years now, and I've watched stories like Kirsty's unfold time and time again in our projects up and down the country.

And every time I see this amazing work being done, I offer a silent thank you to the special band of generous donors who make it all possible. Good people like you...

Why we need your Christmas gift of €55 so badly...

The simple truth is, that with Christmas on the way, we need your help more than ever. Here's why...

- Because Christmas puts added pressure on parents in consistent poverty, leaving vulnerable children to bear the brunt of their strain.
- Because children attending our projects come in hungrier, less well cared for, and even more at risk than usual over Christmas.
- Because the current climate of public spending cutbacks are threatening our services, including ones like the Best Start project that helped Kirsty.

Without your donation this Christmas, our already stretched services will be placed under even greater strain. Putting vulnerable babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers at even greater risk.

But that won't happen if our trusted core of generous supporters - of which you are one - can help them before Christmas. And that's why I really hope you can make a **Special Christmas Gift of at least €55 today.**

I can promise you that **your** Christmas gift will go to work immediately, helping children like Kirsty to have both the best Christmas and the Best Start possible.

So please make a Special Christmas Gift of €55 today, because children like Kirsty need us, and we can't help them without you...

Thank you so much,



Fergus Finlay
Chief Executive

Please try to send us your €55 Christmas donation before the 15th of December, because neglected and vulnerable children like Kirsty need our support right throughout the Christmas Season. Thank You!

Patron / Éarlámh: Mary McAleese, President of Ireland / Uachtarán na hÉireann
Chairman / Cathaoirleach: Harry Slowey
Chief Executive / Príomhfheidhmeannach: Fergus Finlay

Barnardos Republic of Ireland is a company limited by guarantee, registered at Christchurch Square, Dublin 8.

Is comhlacht teoranta ag ráthaíocht é Barnardos Phoblacht na hÉireann atá cláraithe ag Cearnóg Teampaill Chríost, Baile Átha Cliath 8.

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Barnardos

No child gets left behind

Kirsty's doing really well now,
but there are so many other
under-fives in our Best Start
projects who need your help
this Christmas

Please make a Special Christmas Gift of €55

Do you want to send the boys and girls at Barnardos your own Christmas message?

If you do, we've enclosed an exclusive Barnardos Supporter's Christmas Card for you. You can write your own personal message inside and enclose it with your donation.

We'll pass it on to one of our Barnardos projects, to brighten the days before Christmas for all the children you help us to care for.

Here is my urgent gift to help vulnerable children like Kirsty

I would like to donate:

€ my own amount

I would like to make my donation to Barnardos by:

Cheque Visa Mastercard Laser

Card No

Expiry /

Signature

Date

I do not require an acknowledgement of my donation

I would prefer not to receive mail from Barnardos in the future

Donations of €250 or over in a year are eligible for tax relief. If you are paying tax at the higher rate €250 is actually worth €423 to Barnardos.

Contact Barnardos on 01 708 0497 Merchants Hall, 25-26 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8

YOU CAN ALSO DONATE SECURELY ONLINE AT WWW.BARNARDOS.IE