

## An invitation to make a real difference locally again this Christmas



First of all, a big thank you to everyone who participated last year - the feedback we had from the families and the nurses was amazing again – people loved the boxes, and were very touched by the personal thought behind them.

### So what is it all about?

As many of you know we have had rather too many hospital stays with our daughter Isabel. Being in hospital just before Christmas some years has been particularly hard, and made us feel really disconnected from the rest of the world

- where everyone else seemed to be enjoying just getting ready for Christmas. We imagine that this year will be particularly hard to be in at Christmas, with much reduced visitor numbers.

It was actually having a visit from the Exeter Chiefs 6 years ago that made us realise how much it helps when the outside world comes in, and sparked an idea – how could we help those families in hospital over Christmas itself feel that they hadn't been forgotten? And with this, Operation Bramble Christmas was born! The idea? Simply to fill a shoebox with goodies to cheer up a whole family, and on Christmas Eve we will deliver them all to Bramble childrens' ward and the neonatal unit, where any premature or poorly babies go when they are born. It is such an exciting gift – the gift of support, connection and most of all love.

Can you help us to make our 6<sup>th</sup> year the most successful ever? If you can then we are looking for you to fill an ordinary shoebox wrapped with Christmas paper, full of treats to cheer up a family.

Many organisations bring gifts for the poorly children, so our focus is on the whole family especially siblings. So, ideas might include some nice goodies, food treats, small games/things to do which are not too age specific (e.g. cards, puzzles, colouring pens), plus a card from your family. Aldi and Lidl do some lovely treats for Christmas so it doesn't need to be an expensive thing – it really is the thought that counts. Remember, it's a little bit of love and connection from you to a local family who are having a worrying and stressful time, so whatever you give with love will be well received – if you are stuck though please get in touch and we can give some ideas.

On a practical level, we would ask to wrap the shoebox and its lid separately in Christmas paper, but to leave the top of the shoebox open or covered with cling film (so the contents can be seen). Please keep any food in sealed packets with original labels in case of allergies etc. This year, could any unwrapped contents (eg books, soft toys) also be in a sealable bag for infection control purposes. We have 3 people acting as drop off points in West Hill, plus us in Aylesbeare, and we need boxes by **12<sup>th</sup> December** this year to allow time for quarantining. So, if you would like to take up our challenge please let Alison know on 07711 312888 or [alisonpearson1@yahoo.com](mailto:alisonpearson1@yahoo.com) so that we know how many to expect - we can also let you know where to drop off.

And thank you, in advance, for this little bit of the true spirit of Christmas,  
Alison, Bill, Harry and Isabel Pearson.