

# The season of goodwill

If you're looking to give back this Christmas there's many ways to do it, from supporting charities and donating to food banks to giving blood and even giving your time. Words: Zesha Saleem



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With the holiday season right around the corner, most of us will be busy buying presents to place under the tree, food to serve at lunch and mulled wine to sip by the fire. However, at a time associated with so much merriment, we should remember those who may well find the holidays less merry. Here are five ways to brighten their holiday season:

## 1. Donate to your local hospital

Nobody wants to spend Christmas stuck in a hospital, but it's inevitable for many people. Most hospitals run toy appeals for younger patients, and many charities will run a campaign to make Christmas a little brighter for those less fortunate. For example, The Sick Children Trust has several Christmas appeals, including its 'Gift an Hour' scheme, where employees can gift an hour of their pay to a family with a seriously ill child in hospital. Great Ormond Street Hospital, meanwhile, has a Christmas Stocking Appeal, where your donations can help bring Christmas to the hospital and help fund improving treatment and support for children.

## 2. Support your local food bank

With rising living costs, energy prices at an all-time high and cuts to Universal Credit, for many, the holiday season will be a time to decide whether to pay the bills or have dinner. It's the perfect time to support your local food bank, which provides meals for people in need. You can do this in a variety of ways, from volunteering to donating food. The Trussell Trust has a number of appeals over the festive season, so go online or get in touch with your local food bank to see what you can do.

## 3. Give the gift of blood

Many people would not be alive today if it wasn't for others donating blood. It's always in high demand, with the NHS needing nearly 400 new donors a day to meet demand and 30,000 new donors with priority blood types each year. In the light of Covid-19, there's also been a fresh call for plasma donations from those who've recovered from the virus. If you're eligible to donate either blood or plasma, go to [blood.co.uk](http://blood.co.uk), register online and arrange an appointment.

## 4. Look out for elderly or vulnerable neighbours

The festive period can be a lonely time for some people. Looking out for neighbours is something many faiths encourage during their respective festive periods. This could mean making them food, inviting them over for an evening or even doing some shopping for them.

## 5. Donate a gift in someone's name

Donating in someone's name is one of the most versatile and perhaps useful ways to give a gift — not just during Christmas but all year around. There are a huge variety of projects to donate to, run by reputable charities that work all year to help those in need. For example, Oxfam runs support projects such as Oxfam Unwrapped, where you can donate to many causes, from supporting women entrepreneurs to giving a goat to a family. Refuge, another charity, has two types of Christmas gifts: a 'gift list', where donations are used to buy presents for women and children, plus refuge, food and support parcels to support women and children escaping domestic violence.

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