



support the **CLOWN DOCTORS**

The clown doctors have become shooting stars in my life. I can count on them when I need some cheering up. Thank you for your smiles, your jokes, your fun. No words could ever describe what you have done for me! – Brooke

Humour relaxes people, reduces pain and stress, makes people laugh and feel good and generally promotes a positive outlook. All in all it's a good medicine. And it doesn't have the side effects of some more potent drugs. 🏠 This is where clown doctors come in. Imagine being in hospital, away from the comfort of your home, and feeling sad, anxious, frightened, lonely or in pain. Clown doctors treat children in hospital with a dose of fun and laughter. 🏠 The clown doctors programme was developed by the Humour Foundation in Australia, where 40 clown doctors entertain around 60,000 patients a year. A similar scheme is run by the Theodora Trust all over Europe. In the UK, the Theodora Children's Trust recruits and trains special clowns to work in selected hospitals in England and Wales.

Theodora Children's Trust: theodora.org.uk
Humour Foundation, Australia www.humourfoundation.com.au



Clown doctors receive considerable training in the very special skills needed to divert children's attention during painful procedures, help calm them in emergency, or just brighten up their day. They learn how to develop their mastery of magic, acting, story-telling, mime, balloon sculpture, and juggling, and adapt these skills to each child's needs in widely differing situations. When working on the wards, they have to behave with sensitivity, only approaching children when it is clear that they

will be welcome, judging how best to involve the children and their carers, and bring them some relief from the distress and pain they may be feeling.

It was an extremely stressful time, but as if by magic the clown doctors would always arrive on the ward at the right time and brighten everyone's day. The children would perk up, parents would have their minds taken off the awful and often harrowing situations they were finding themselves in, and even the staff would smile! – a grateful parent

...bring happiness to a hospital

- 🏠 It may be that think you have what it takes to become a Clown Doctor. If so, make enquiries with the Theodora Children's Trust.
- 🏠 Clown Doctors schemes require funding. Contact the Theodora Children's Trust at theodora.org.uk and make a donation, if you feel able.
- 🏠 If you know a child who is ill and could do with some cheering up, download the *Clown Doctors Activity Book* – 16 pages of colouring-in and other activities for kids – from www.humourfoundation.com.au

STREET CHILDREN *Speak out*



Children are living on the streets for many reasons. They have run away from physical or sexual abuse at home. Their families are too poor to feed an extra mouth. They are physically disabled and unwanted. They are attracted by the idea of 'the bright lights'. 🗣️ In the developing world, they are 'street children'. In the rich world, they are 'runaways'. The causes may be slightly different, but the result is the same: vulnerable children living on the street, having to fend for themselves just to survive.

Once on the streets, they need to earn money just to eat. Some beg. Some sell – anything from sweets to magazines. Some do shoe-shining. Many are ragpickers – recycling cloth, plastic, glass, metals, often in dangerous conditions. And some work is traditionally done by gangs of street children, such as erecting wedding tents in India. 🗣️ It is hard to comprehend what life for children on the streets must be like. When we encounter street children, we see them as a nuisance. But they are human beings who are being denied access to some fundamental human rights we take for granted.

Consortium for Street Children: www.streetchildren.org.uk

Change the world Street children have their own ideas about the world and its problems:

With unity amongst ourselves, we can do anything! – Mannar

We should work to protect all children and uphold their rights. We should see that the police who make the lives of street children so miserable are punished. – Suresh

Education is the most important thing to bring about change. With education comes respect. And with respect we can build our lives. – Papu

Employment is the big issue. Every young adult should have the opportunity to earn a living. – Anuj

After a brainstorm on how to change the world, a group of children in Delhi aged from 9 to 17 came up with the idea of organising a National Street Children's Day, when they would do things for other people for free, which would challenge the stereotype that streetchildren are parasites who are up to no good.



...listen to what they say

- 🗣️ **Remember:** George Bernard Shaw's wise words: "The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them; that is the essence of inhumanity."
- 🗣️ **Understand:** Read *Trash* by Gita Wolf, a storybook which shows the life of a group of ragpickers in South India, compiled from a workshop when the children told the stories of their lives.
- 🗣️ **See:** Contact the Consortium for Street Children to find out about street children's organisations in countries you plan to visit. When you get there, visit a night shelter and meet some of the children. Take some of your old toys (such as Lego) or school materials to leave with them.
- 🗣️ **Do:** Next time you are accosted by a street child, buy them an ice cream!