

Children should help choose the charities their schools and families support

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Children as young as four should be given more autonomy to help choose the charities their schools and families support, according to new research from the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University.

Researchers set out to find out how much [children](#) aged between four and eight understand about charitable giving. In total, 150 four-to-eight year-olds were asked by a team of 60 student researcher associates about their understanding of [charity](#) and their experiences of fundraising events.

The initial findings showed pupils were chiefly only aware of charities and events they had been taken part in at [school](#) such as Comic Relief, Children in Need or harvest festivals. Furthermore, they were often not aware of the reason for the event beyond it being something out of the ordinary.

The researchers then worked with the children to explain more about the range of charities and causes that can be donated too. This included helping them research areas they might want to give money to based on their own interests.

After this the children showed a greater understanding that they had the autonomy to select charities that they supported. They also became more engaged in developing their own ideas around charitable giving, rather than just following orders from teachers or parents.

As such, when offered the chance to theoretically give £100 to a type of charity there was an array of choices. Overall charities that relieve human suffering, such as homelessness or poverty, were the most popular, with 28% selecting money for charities in this area. Wildlife charities (26%) and charities supporting children and [young people](#) (27%) were also popular areas of giving.

Medical research charities (12%) and international relief charities (7%) were not as popular, though, which the researchers said were because children lacked as much direct experience or understanding of these issues so they did not resonate as much as the more popular areas.

Researcher Dr. Alison Body from the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research (SSPSSR) at Kent said: 'It's great that children are so heavily involved in charitable events but the research shows more needs to be done to help them play an active role in the sorts of causes and charities they help support, whether at school or at home. This early active engagement can have a life-long impact on how they understand and engage with charities and philanthropy more generally.'

The researchers suggest both parents and schools should do more to engage children with charity, to try and understand what causes they are most interested in and want to support, rather than defaulting to the most popular causes.

Provided by University of Kent

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