

The **WORLD** in our street

Interview with

Chris Smethurst Manager of SCOPE

Chris has worked at the shop for 2 years and has worked in charity for 7 years, prior to that she worked in catering. Margaret is her assistant manager.

SCOPE – the organisation exists to make this country a better place for disabled people and their families. They do this by running a range of services, raising awareness of the issues that disabled people face and influencing change across society.

The shop has been there for about 15 years, prior to SCOPE it was a fishmongers. There was a shop in St Werburgh Street, now there is one in Frodsham Street as well. There are 13 people who volunteer at the shop and the 2 managers. Volunteers work for a minimum of 2 hours per week; some work the maximum of 16. The shop is open 7 days; it only closes on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. It is a successful shop and Chris is pleased with the turnover. It is mostly local people who come into the shop. They completely rely on donations and it is really good that people can park outside to drop off donations. There is a Day Centre in Blacon and some of the service users there come and work as volunteers.

Chris finds it a very positive street, a little community with a festival each year.

There is a volunteer at the shop called Chris and her Uncle Tom used to own a shop that was like a grotto – full of everything. Her Nan lived in Peel Street so Brook Street was her shopping Street and back then there were no “foreign” shops. There was a fish shop and a “hole in the wall” where you could get a drink and a meal. Her Mum and Dad met at the Gaumont – Mum was an usherette and her Dad was a projectionist – this was back in the 1950’s.

How the shop gets donations.

People phone for stuff to be picked up and Chris will go out and pick it up. You can pick up a bag by the door and then fill. They advertise for donations “The great





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Donate”. They do have targets to hit. Tesco’s used to donate but the Champion has retired. They are always looking for schools and organisations to donate. For example some of the shop fittings were donated and that has made a huge difference.

There are 260 shops nationally.



The donations come upstairs and a volunteer will sort through the bags and things need to be separated into good stuff and into rags – these go into a separate bag and then sell them to the rag man and they also now sell them to garages for them to get oil off their hands, they also just sell off rags in the shop – basically just want to get all the money they can.



Items are then sorted into ladies tops, trousers, men’s etc.

They have a system of “take off” so everything has a 2 week rotation; if not sold within 2 weeks then goes to another shop. Chris and Margaret check the stock and price; they have a standard price guide from SCOPE and sometimes do special promotions. If some items such as soft toys do not have a label on then they cannot be sold because of Health and Safety. They can sell for example children’s knitted clothes as dolls clothes because they too don’t have labels on them.



They sometimes get some very high value items – once there was a Tumi suitcase worth £1065. They sold this for £100. Occasionally items will be taken to a dealer to value.



Sometimes people come in and are looking for something very specific.



Gift Aid has been important and increasing numbers of people are willing to this – they have 4 drawers of a filing cabinet full of “Gift Aiders”.





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The shop has to have a certain amount hanging on each rail so for example might need 20 jumpers. They tag, hang, steam and price then go on rails. They are all trained to work on the tills. Chris or Barbara do the cashing up. All staff have to go through induction and training and references are always taken.



Chris, as Manager has a lot of paperwork to complete including risk assessment, health and safety, insurances etc. Basically everything is the same as an ordinary business. They have targets and budgets.



Chris finds it fun. She and Helen have been able to go and see children helped by SCOPE. The organisation runs a one to one help line which is staffed 24 hours.

Chris, the volunteer has a brother who has Cerebral Palsy.

The Manager makes sure that any support needs of the volunteers are met.



The shop is short of men's clothing. They have pens ready for next season as make sure always planning ahead. They have storage upstairs and also 3 sheds and always short of space!

They have a promotional window – it is quite a large space and is changed every week or so - it is a Valentines display at the moment.

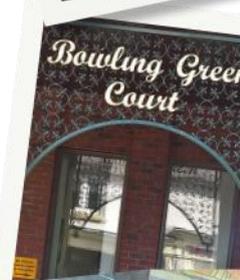


They do additional fundraising activities in the shop, for example a coffee morning, Chris' sponsored silence, cake sale.

They have Managers meetings and once a week the Area manager works at the shop and Chris has a really good relationship with her. There is the challenge of shoplifting; they have got a direct link to the police.



The best thing about working here is “see the difference you are making, long term it's rewarding, and it's not for the pay! You get lots of enjoyment from it.”





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A lot of the volunteers wouldn't get out if they didn't come to work in the shop and for some it has helped one volunteer Andy who volunteers for ½ day per week – he has now got a part time job at Chester Zoo. They have a Volunteers party every year.

Chris hopes to keep doing what they are doing and supporting the charity.

