

Emma Bunton goes 'Downtown' for Children in Need

Children in Need- one the major and most well known charities that give money to children that are in need on our doorstep, here in Great Britain. Every year the team at Children in Need don't fail to impress us with the live show broadcast across the UK as well as the new and innovative fundraising ideas and of course the amount of money that they raise every year. This is done through fundraising and donations, to help the troubled children of our nation. With the final total of 33.2 million for the 2004/2005 appeal, this year Children in Need hope to raise more money than ever before and this looks to be a great success. With all the hard work put in by the team at the BBC, the celebrities involved and all the individuals who raise money through unique and fun activities around the country, this will not be hard. There are many celebrities faces of this years Children in Need and with one of them being Singer/Songwriter, former Spice Girl and contestant on Strictly come Dancing, Emma Bunton, we jumped at the chance to personally interview her (through connections at the BBC) and to get involved in doing something for this amazing charity.

To start off we asked Emma about what she is doing for the appeal this year...

How did you get involved with Children in Need and are you involved in any other charities? *Have been involved with Children in Need for many years, it's always a fun night and a great way of raising money.*

You are releasing this years official Children in Need single, 'Downtown' a sixties classic originally by Petula Clark. Was this song a personal preference of yours and how do you intend to put your own stamp on it? *Yes Downtown has always been a favourite of mine and I've always had a sixties influence on my albums, I'm making it my own by having a live orchestra.*

Emma is a very talented young lady as whilst being involved in Children in Need she is also taking part- and very well- in the BBC programme 'Strictly Come Dancing' and also has many hidden talents including Karate.....

With already being in the music Industry you have danced for a lot of your videos and songs, what is it like dancing with Darren in Strictly Come Dancing and do you feel confident that you could win? *Darren my dancer is great and very patient with me. Of course I'd love to win but for now just happy to be taking part.*

We've heard that you have a blue belt in Karate. What got you started and do you think it's important for girls to learn a martial art? *Yes I'm a blue belt in karate; I started because my Mum teaches karate and has a black belt. I think it's important for girls to learn some form of self defence.*

Emma Bunton has achieved so much in her musical career already including being a member of one of the most famous girl bands of the 90's, a successful solo career and at the moment she is singing and dancing for charity, so we thought would ask her- for the benefit of any budding performers- what advice she would give...

What advice would you give to budding young performers who can see themselves following in your footsteps a a potential career? *Lots of hard work and write all your ideas down, they might come in handy for lyrics when writing a song. Good luck.*

Thanks Emma, Good Luck with your new Single and Album and of course good luck and have fun on Friday Night on the live show.

Although the celebrities and of course Pudsey Bear are the outward face of Children in Need, the fundamental part of the appeal happens backstage. We also had the chance to find out a little bit more about the charity itself with an e-mail interview with Gloria Abramoff, the Managing Editor of BBC Children in Need and so here is what she had to say.

With the chance to interview a woman so high up in the organisation of Children in Need we firstly decided to find out a little bit more about her job.

How did you get involved in this job? *I joined the BBC as a researcher in television some 25 years ago. I had a vision and naive fantasy to 'change the world'. That was certainly naive as I quickly learnt that good journalism is about balance, giving both sides of the story and being fair and impartial. Over the years, I worked in many parts of the BBC, my love and passion was to make a real difference so with over 20 years experience at the BBC, I approached the charity and asked if I could work there to really develop the programming side, with an emphasis to create and commission programmes that would highlight the social need and give a platform to discuss the social issues - the areas of deprivation, injustice and concern that we raise money for.*



Photo: BBC / Justin Canning

What does your job involve? I am responsible for a small team of 5 people who are all extremely talented and experienced programme makers. We make films that are shown to potential corporate partners; we have meetings with colleagues in the BBC about different ways of creating seven hours of live, fun, engaging television for the night of the Appeal; I also meet lots of celebrities to encourage them to get involved in the charity. I have only been with the charity for a year and in that time have visited over 25 projects that we fund. I set an objective for each member of staff to visit a project at least once a month. I think it's absolutely vital and integral to all we do that we understand the need and get first hand knowledge of the issues. I leave a project uplifted but sometimes frustrated that we can't do more. The best bit of my job though is visiting projects that we fund and meeting the kids.

I'm sure many of us wonder when we are donating or raising money, where exactly our money is going to, so we asked Gloria to answer this ever existing query...

How do you decide where the money raised should go to? I personally don't decide. We have a group of very experienced regional and national co-ordinators who organise all the applications we get in to go to a team of assessors who look at each case. Last year we raised £32million but got applications for £177 million, so unfortunately we can't possibly help everybody. We try to fund the projects that we think will make the most difference to the lives disadvantaged children in the UK, but it's an incredibly difficult decision. If you look on our website - www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey all the details are there on how we spend the money that you raise. We are a charity and that makes us accountable and we have to abide by very strict guidelines. Also, we have assessors and local grant committees that vet and assess each application for validity and authenticity.

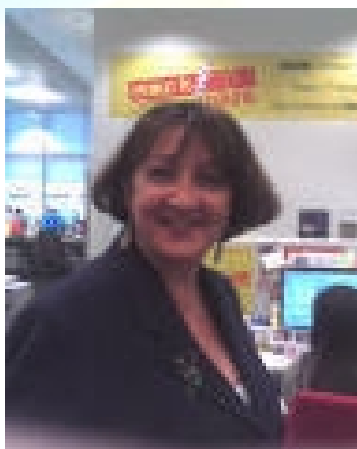


Photo: BBC / Justin Canning

Now Gloria, a few questions on the aims of Children in Need, The decision making and the charity itself...

You are one of the only charities that give their money to children in Great Britain. What made you decide to focus on children in need in the UK and not in the more obvious 'poorer' countries in the world? Although we are a rich nation, tragically, we still have thousands of children and young people living in this country below the poverty line. We might have some of the best support systems in some parts of the country, but many children are still being subjected to terrible abuse and neglect. We have a high drug problem in this country and growing concern in the area of self harm and suicides. Although we cannot compare the poverty here to that experienced by millions in many parts of the developing worlds, the need continues in this country and we - as a charity - are committed to empowering young people to live a more fulfilling life and be active and engaging citizens.

Do you think it is appropriate that in 2006 we are still reliant on charitable fundraising to support poor children in Britain? Is this not a government responsibility? Many of the projects that we fund - and we fund nearly 2000 in the UK - work alongside government initiatives to compliment existing work. And a lot of our funding goes towards projects that fall out of government responsibility e.g. we are the biggest funder of child care workers in domestic violence units in England, where there is no provision or in the area of excluded kids, again, where there is no government funding.. I also am a strong believer in people giving their time in their community. I don't think it's enough to appease your guilt by just giving money - I am far more about getting people to give their time, skills and knowledge back to the community. I don't believe that the government should always be legislating - we all should take responsibility for what's happening around us.

And as for the live entertainment show broadcast across the UK on Friday. Do you have a big part in creating ideas for the Children in Need Show? Yes. My role is really to make sure that the charity is well presented on the night; that the Appeal films you see give the audience a real understanding of why we continue to raise money and the impact that those donations can have on children and young

people. I also contribute to the entertainment ideas along with ideas that will generate money on the night.

What would you look for in fundraising ideas that could be included in the show? Things that are different; things that the audience can associate with; things that make people laugh (or cry!). Ideas that are visually exciting, that demonstrate creative thought and commitment. But we are so grateful to the public; their generosity still amazes me so whatever people do I'm grateful!

Thanks very much Gloria, I'm sure we all now know a lot more about the charity of Children in Need, Good Luck with this years appeal. Children in Need is a major event for the calendar each year and we are happy to have done something to help. Kelso High School itself is doing continuous fundraising for this years appeal. A group of senior pupils took part in the National Mock Trial Competition at Glasgow High Court last Saturday and were sponsored for taking part and per point that was awarded to the team; Pudsey biscuits have been made in the Home Economics department and are being sold to raise money; a very chatty senior pupil is undertaking a sponsored silence!!! and a group of pupils and house captains (maybe even some teachers) are doing a sponsored hopathon on space hoppers continuously all day. This was a unique and brilliant idea and will hopefully generate more money for Children in Need. Letters have also been distributed to a number of local companies with a view to securing corporate sponsorship and broadening the community involvement in fundraising for Children in Need. This is all successfully happened (or is happening) thanks to Modern Studies teacher Alison McWilliam who has an aim to get the school involved in fundraising for various charities. We are certainly proud and I hope everyone else is proud too, to be part of a school that will do so much for charities such as Children in Need and make the most of the pupils, teachers and facilities we have to raise money for those less fortunate than us. This report informs us about how this charity works and shows Emma Bunton has proven to us that the celebrities involved are as devoted to being part of the charity and helping as all the contributors to this annual appeal.