Bulgaria: Leeds based Solicitors to deliver aid to the poorest children in the EU

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The campaign faces most difficult year to date

For children in a country where 1.6 million people earn less than £100 per month, life is a constant battle. But next month, 2 ladies from Simpson Millar LLP Solicitors will join an annual convoy that brings aid and hope to children who are deprived of the most basic items. But the prospect of setting off with a jam-packed delivery of essential goods is starting to look bleak.

Bulgaria is in a precarious position. Behind the political headlines and the shocking statistics are the real victims of Bulgaria's troubles; the children. Almost **60% of Bulgaria's children** are deprived of what UNICEF considers elementary for a healthy childhood.

Back in the UK and a coalition of companies, led by the **Communication Workers' Union Humanitarian Aid organisation (CWUHA)**, is preparing to deliver desperately needed aid to those children most in need.

The aid delivery takes the form of a ten-lorry strong convoy manned by volunteers from Royal Mail, BT, Simpson Millar LLP and other supporters. The precious cargo of sorely needed humanitarian aid will be delivered directly to schools, single-parent hostels, hospitals, orphanages and families in desperate need. As such, donors and supporters have a rare guarantee that their contribution will not fall into the hands of self-interested 3rd-parties.

Allison Chatto is a senior professional at Simpson Millar LLP and a Labour councillor for Gateshead. This year marks the second time the Dunston resident has volunteered for the convoy.

She explained: "The lorry and all the aid carried inside it is funded by Simpson Millar LLP and private donations. By personally delivering it all we can guarantee that those in most desperate need benefit from the kindness of businesses and individuals alike. I even take pictures en-route to show what a real difference a teddy bear or new pair of shoes can make."

"This has been the most difficult year for us so far in terms of drumming up support for the convoy. With just one month to go, our lorry is only half full and we have to pull out all the stops to make sure not even a single sq ft sits bare by the time we leave."

Talking about the challenges presented by the arduous 4000 mile round trip, Ms Chatto added, "There can be long days; sometimes you can be driving from 7am until 7pm. However, you are instantly reminded of the reason you are doing it when you reach the final destination and come face to face with some of Europe's poorest children. It can be quite harrowing and disturbing; these children really do not have much. The biggest and strongest men are sniffling wrecks by the time the mission is over. Of course it gets to me and I really miss my children when I'm away. They themselves are keen to get involved and would probably stowaway in the back if they could!"

Allison is the proud mum of 2 boys and soon-to-be Grandma. About her motivation to volunteer for this year's convoy, she said: "The poverty in Eastern Europe is really quite severe and those poor children so desperately need toys, medical supplies and other things that we simply take for granted."

For over 15 years, Simpson Millar LLP Solicitors, support staff and even the firm's managing partner, Peter Watson have featured among the annual crop of courageous convoy volunteers. Amanda Davis, who is based in the firm's Wimbledon office, will be joining Allison behind the wheel this year.

Peter commented: "Having made the journey as part of the convoy myself, I have seen first-hand how the faces of children light up when they catch a first glimpse of the convoy. The aid that the CWUHA delivers is absolutely invaluable and as a firm we will continue to throw our support behind the campaign. It is a charity that we are firmly committed to and I wish Allison and Amanda all the best of luck on this year's journey," Peter added.

The convoy is due to depart from Dover on 6 September, so there is still plenty of time to help the cause. For more information, and to make a donation to the convoy, visit Amanda and Allison's JustGiving webpage.

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