Global fashion chain donates laptops to support homeless and refugees

Thursday 16 December, 2021

British global fashion chain New Look has donated more than 1,000 laptops and computers, as part of a scheme to help some of the most vulnerable in society.

The laptops, computers and other tech items, such as smartphones, have been delivered to several UK charities before Christmas, including The Passage, C4WS and Migrant Help.

The donations are part of a wider project run by social enterprise SocialBox.Biz, founded by former child refugee Peter Paduh, to help tackle digital exclusion among the homeless, refugees and the elderly.

The scheme distributes old unused technology to support refugees and the homeless get back on their feet through things like education, and eventually move into permanent accommodation and employment. It also played a crucial role during the pandemic, working with charities such as Age UK to support the elderly stay connected with loved ones, and order shopping and medication online.

Peter Paduh, 43, chairman and founder of SocialBox.Biz, said: “It is great to see large companies like New Look leading by example to help bridge the digital divide in the UK.

“At more than 1,000 items, this is the largest donation we have ever received. I can’t underestimate what a difference donations like this will make to the millions of people who don’t have access to technology and the internet.”

Sue Fairley, head of sustainability at New Look, said: “Donating our old laptops to SocialBox.Biz made complete sense for New Look. It allowed us to reuse our unused laptops in a secure way, whilst supporting a social cause and our commitment to circularity.”

Mohammed, a client of charity The Passage* who received one of the laptops, said that the donation would allow him to look for online courses and find voluntary work to help rebuild his confidence.

Mohammed commented: "I am currently seeking asylum in the UK after experiencing extremely traumatic events in my home country, which have led to me suffering with PTSD. I am waiting for my UK status from the Home Office and can now start planning my future here, using the laptop you have given to me. I am so thankful for this, and all of the support I am receiving from The Passage. I feel hopeful for the future again.”

As more companies move to a hybrid model of working, the social enterprise hopes to see more organisations move to a ‘upcycling’ business model, where technology can be reused rather than the old practice of selling it for scrap metal. SocialBox.Biz has been campaigning for businesses to end this practice, which it claims adds to our carbon footprint when the scrap is shipped around the world, rather than redistributed in the UK.

The social enterprise recently launched its ‘business heroes’ scheme, which aims to recruit 100 business partners to help tackle digital inequality over the next couple of years. Previous donors include Legal & General, Aviva, the CBI and the Mayor of London.

Peter added: “The pandemic highlighted the importance of ensuring that the most vulnerable in society can access technology to get by. We are looking to recruit 100 business heroes over the next couple of years to address this and we urge others to follow New Look’s lead.”

SocialBox.Biz is currently looking for new organisations to partner with. More information can be found at https://www.socialbox.biz/.

ENDS

* name changed for the safety and confidentiality of this person.

Notes to editor

Media:



Related Sectors:

Business & Finance :: Charities & non-profits :: Christmas :: Computing & Telecoms :: Consumer Technology :: Coronavirus (COVID-19) :: Education & Human Resources :: Retail & Fashion ::

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Tech :: Social Impact :: Esg :: Cio :: Csr :: Community :: UK ::

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Images

Photography from the New Look deliveries can be downloaded here

Example case studies

Below are some other examples of the impact that previous donations have made.

Migrant Help

“One of our clients is about to start her National 4 Care Course as well as English college classes, but she needed a laptop in order to undertake get started. Thanks to SocialBox.Biz, who sent her a laptop last week, she will start studying next week! Once she is granted asylum, she hopes to go on to become a nurse, so she will have lots more studying to undertake, all of which will be made possible thanks to her laptop. She also plans to use the laptop for contacting the services and accessing the resources she needs for her two year old daughter.”

“Our client shared with us that that he is eager to learn English so he can attend college and that he would like to start some self-study around woodwork, tiling and painting in order to increase his employability. I felt a laptop would be very beneficial to him and was so pleased when SocialBox.Biz provided him one. We are now looking to fund his Wi-Fi for a year and enrol him in college so he can start on this new journey.”

C4WS

“One C4WS client, George, is a refugee from Africa who acquired an MA in Supply Chain Management in the UK while applying for refugee status. C4WS helped him with this process helped him from starting at an entry level and unstable to job, to get into a permanent role that match his qualities. COVID-19 made things difficult for George, particularly in terms of finding a job as the supply chain has been so fractured by the pandemic. He was able to use his laptop to submit applications, however, and a few months later, he got his dream job. “All the job searches, applications, appointments with our charity, interviews….he wouldn’t have been able to do it without the IT donations we gave him through SocialBox.Biz,” said C4WS.”

SocialBox.Biz is a community interest company (CIC) improving the local community by providing innovative tech solutions.

SocialBox.Biz launched in 2014 to take unused and outdated yet still useful laptops from businesses, organisations, and other agencies and wipe them clean before donating them to those in need with open-source software. Today, the company is working towards larger donation milestones. In order to ensure all reused laptops are used to their fullest, SocialBox.Biz works with accommodation services and charities that monitor usage of the electronic. Charity partners include Centrepoint, C4WS Homeless project, the British Red Cross, Routes, Centre 404, The Passage and Housing Justice.

About New Look

Founded in 1969, New Look is a leading omnichannel fashion retailer operating in the value segment of the clothing and footwear market in the UK and Republic of Ireland, catering to a broad customer audience. Our ranges comprise of women’s apparel, footwear and accessories, as well as menswear and teenwear. We offer products and a shopping experience based on excitement, accessibility and inclusivity. The New Look brand is renowned and trusted in the UK, currently ranked as No. 1 for overall Womenswear market share in the 18 to 44 age range.

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