

## Project

# Key to Life?

## Location

We're a national charity, so across the UK

## What is it?

Key to Life? is an initiative of Counties, a charity that has been sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with communities across the country. Key to Life? tells the gospel through interactive sessions, games and small group discussions, using floor-to-ceiling touchscreens in a lorry.



**Schools are queuing up for quality resources. Teaching RE is difficult, and many are struggling to meet Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) guidelines. Many are open to Christian visitors who can enliven RE lessons.**

That's what we're about at Counties and have been for more than 100 years. We want to equip people where they really need it, which led to us setting up Key to Life?. We understand the importance of meeting the curriculum – after all, it's what schools need – but we wanted to do this in a way that schools couldn't do themselves. We also think it's really important to teach children the message of Christianity, but we want to do it in a way that encourages them to engage in their own critical thinking.

We were already running a similar interactive mobile resource called GSUS Live, which is for secondary schools. This just exceeded half a million visitors. Our GSUS Live sessions are run from two 14-metre-long trailers where young people can learn about the Christian message. We love it when people open their eyes to the message of Jesus. And it's not just the children and young people that are impacted, but also the teachers. One supply teacher, who had never known a Christian before, was blown away by GSUS live. She thought Christianity was just for a handful of old people! She was struck by the fact that

Christians had answers to her questions, and went away desperate to find out more.

With such successes in secondary schools, we really wanted to do more for primary schools. That's when the idea of Key to Life? was born. We realised that a primary school resource needed to be physically smaller and easily run by a handful of people.

We knew that whatever it looked like wouldn't be cheap. Budgets are always a headache for a charity with a big vision! We never want cost to be a barrier for schools, so we offer our resources for free (churches can make donations). We have brilliant donors who support our work, but because we are constantly trying to stretch budgets to cover wear and tear of our equipment we didn't have the money to create a whole new thing for primary schools.

It was just when we were scratching our heads about how we could reach primary schools that God provided. An initial legacy donation covered all the production of the mobile classroom (we still have the maintenance costs to contend with, but that is partly covered by a Christian grant-making trust and partly subsidised by Counties).

We always work with local churches who help run Key to Life?. That is really important to us. It gives us the support we need to run it, and gives the church a great foot in the door. For some chil-

## How to approach a school with a Christian resource:

- If you haven't connected with the school before, start with the head teacher. Send a letter or email, then follow up with a call.
- Make your approach well in advance, and avoid the busy times of the school year.
- Show how the resource relates to the curriculum. It's even better if you can demonstrate that it will do something for the school they can't do for themselves.
- Encourage the head teacher to contact other schools you have worked with to get a review of the resource, and you!
- Agree dates and times in writing, and follow all safeguarding requirements. Always show patience. One wrong word can close a school to Christians for a long time.

dren, the first place they find out about Christianity is in school. It's vital in our culture that school children meet Christians if we want them to grow up able to decide for themselves whether Christianity is worth exploring. That's why we do what we can to equip churches to go where children and young people are. First impressions are important, and having Key to Life? visit a primary school usually leads to brilliant new links between churches and schools.

Key to Life? has only been up and running since 2016, but we're already seeing the difference it makes. It's had more than 9,000 visitors now. In 2017, Key to Life? visited two primary schools in Cardiff. The schools loved all the technology. One already had good links with local churches, but the second didn't. Following the Key to Life? visit, they asked for a regular programme of visits with an assembly every three weeks. One of the teachers said: "It really brought Jesus to life." This is what we live for!

We're so pleased that bookings are coming in thick and fast, and are so excited to see what God will do through our little purpose-built lorry!

## JENNY ROSSITER

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