



Children of Fire

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Newsletter: July 2005

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A Child of Fire in Focus

Sicelo Maduna is a six-year old boy from Volksrust in KwaZulu Natal. He was brought to the attention of Children of Fire by a local police officer at the age of 5. He had suffered severe burns to his face including a bony deficit in his forehead, contracted eyelids and contracted lips and to the right side of his body which resulted in the loss of his right arm. His burns were the result of a candle falling onto his bed at the age of one month.

Children of Fire subsequently arranged for Sicelo to undergo a series of operations at Johannesburg General Hospital to release his eyelid contractures on both the top and bottom of his right eye and surgery to repair the bony deficit in his forehead. Sicelo has an unusual hairline due to his burns but this will be fixable once the bony deficit on his forehead is fully dealt with.

He stayed with Children of Fire for two months at the end of 2004 where he received further surgery at Johannesburg General Hospital to rebuild the lower eyelid. While in Johannesburg Sicelo attended the Johannesburg School for Blind, Low Vision and Multiple Disability Children so that his education was not disrupted by his medical treatment. The school, founded by Children of Fire, provides a highly specialised education to children with a wide range of disabilities.



Sicelo with his mother after returning from surgery in Johannesburg

Sicelo returned home to his family in December 2005 in time for Christmas. He was excited to see his family again but said he would miss the friends he had made in Johannesburg and the regular trips that Children of Fire had arranged to the zoo and theatre among others.

Children of Fire accompanies all of the children when they are travelling to and from Johannesburg to ensure they have a safe journey and keep the children company during long rides as well as to compile a social report on the home situation.

Sicelo returned to Johannesburg once again in July 2005 to have a check-up on his eye and for the doctors at Johannesburg General Hospital to assess the artificial material that has previously been placed in his forehead to repair the bony deficit. It is hoped that Sicelo will undergo a further operation to his forehead to improve this deficit before he can have a tissue expander placed under his scalp to restore his hairline.

Children of Fire would also like surgeons to attempt a corneal graft to remove the cataract on his right eye because we believe there is a chance to retain the eye (which doctors talked about removing) and improve its appearance and function.

Sicelo is a fun-loving child and he certainly makes it a brighter environment at Children of Fire with his company. His mischievous jokes and cheeky charm always bring a smile to the face of anyone who meets him.

July's Children of Fire

Children of Fire caters for the medical and surgical needs of children from all over South Africa and beyond by arranging surgery and providing a range of post traumatic care. Therefore, the charity regularly brings children to the Children of Fire premises in Johannesburg. In July the following children came to Johannesburg for treatment:

Londeka Ngidi (13)

Londeka returned home after a six-month stay in Johannesburg. She was seen through the insertion and removal of a tissue expander to restore her hairline. This was done by placing a large balloon of saline solution under her scalp to stretch the skin. The balloon was then removed and the skin stretched across her head and surgically 'stapled' into place. The effect was to stretch her small healthy crop of hair across the whole head. Londeka, who has worn hats since she was burned, is now free and confident enough to show her whole face and head in public.

Zenette van Wyk (7)

Zenette underwent a minor operation at Johannesburg General Hospital to remove the skin contractures on her fingers. This operation will now allow her to move her fingers freely enabling her to carry out everyday tasks such as clothing or washing herself, cooking and writing with much more ease.

Mittah (15)

After suffering severe burns to her arms, neck and chest doctors assessed Mittah for best course of action regarding future surgery. For now Mittah wishes to carry on with her studies as it is an important year academically but she is likely to undergo surgery in early 2006 to release the contractures on her neck. When Mittah is fully grown (approximately aged 18) surgeons will reconstruct her breasts, and in particular the nipples, for both aesthetics and functionality.

Bongani Madlala (12)

Bongani returned to Johannesburg in July for corrective surgery to his ear. He had previously undergone an operation to put on a prosthetic ear which meant implanting two metal pins inside the ear to support the prosthesis. Sadly however the ear was knocked off and the pins damaged when Bongani's father assaulted him. Doctors at Johannesburg General Hospital believed they would have to remove the pins, and then allow the wound to heal before they could re-implant the pins later in the year. Only then would Bongani be able to have two matching ears once more.

However once the doctors had cleaned the ear, which had become infected as a result of the assault, they found that the pins only needed to be tightened to prevent further infection and the ear could be attached without delay. Bongani is now back at his school near Howick in KwaZulu Natal where he enjoys teasing his friends that he has three ears – the third being his interchangeable spare to maintain hygiene.

Nsizwa Vilakazi (12)

Nsizwa returned to the Carstenhof Clinic to undergo further surgery to improve upon the severe burn injuries he suffered as a baby. Last year Nsizwa had an operation removing cartilage from his rib which then helped to form the basis of a new ear. This time surgeons attempted to improve the appearance of the ear by remodelling it to look more like his other. Nsizwa will hopefully return to Johannesburg in September when he will be assessed for the insertion of a tissue expander.

Oscar Hadebe (11)

In July, Oscar returned for his annual check-up with Children of Fire. Doctors at Johannesburg General Hospital have now planned an ambitious operation in which they will insert three separate tissue expanders across Oscar's chest and then use the excess skin to repair the extensive burned tissue on his face.

Andani Mphaphuli (14)

Andani returned to Johannesburg for a check-up on his neck. Before surgery Andani's neck had been so severely contracted that his chin directly joined his chest. However, after surgery at Johannesburg General Hospital the contractures were released and Andani has now much better mobility in his neck. The doctors were pleased with Andani's progress after the operation largely due to his discipline in wearing the pressure garment. The doctors are also planning to release the contractures under his arms in the future but will only consider further operations after Andani has undergone psychiatric counselling to better deal with the trauma of his burn injuries.

Children's March for Justice

On 8th September 2004 officers from the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department illegally tore down around ten shacks in Joe Slovo squatter camp in Coronationville. The owners of the shacks had certified documents stating that they were the legal owners, or at least tenants, of the property. Despite showing the police officers the legal documentation the shacks still were demolished leaving many people, and children, homeless.

As part of the charity's wider aim to support the communities in which it works Children of Fire is now organising a Children's March for Justice to raise awareness of children's rights to accommodation as laid out in the South African Constitution. Therefore on Thursday 8th September 2005, the anniversary of the illegal shack demolition, Children of Fire volunteers will lead a march of around 100 children to the Johannesburg Metro Police Department Headquarters.

The children, from Joe Slovo squatter camp and other local schools and communities, will then present a petition to Chris Ncgobo, the Head of the JMPD, demanding the police apologise for their actions. Children of Fire have in the past organised a similar march with the Emang Slovo Residents Association to rally present a memorandum of dissatisfaction to the Ward Councillor.

Communities such as Joe Slovo are often neglected by local government and authorities and as such cannot develop into a more formerly legislated community with greater protection of their rights and protection in their living environment. In order to bring about an environment which is safe to the dangers of fire the community as a whole must develop and the recognition of the occupants rights is one crucial step to this becoming a reality.

Sunday Library

Each Sunday Children of Fire run a library scheme for the children in Joe Slovo squatter camp. We hope to not only develop the children's literacy and numeracy skills but also to monitor health and social problems of the children and their community.



Volunteers work with children of Joe Slovo squatter camp on literacy and numeracy skills.

Each week the library is attended by volunteers from a range of backgrounds, many of whom are eager to be involved with community projects but don't know how to do so on their own. The Library therefore acts as a means to increase youth participation in their community.

Volunteers often conduct themed lessons on issues such as fire safety, hygiene, recycling or litter dropping to name but a few. The children also have chance to take part in yoga classes, play educational board games or a range of other activities.

Children of Fire also collect donations of clothes, food, toys or ideally educational items such as books and stationery to hand out to the children at the end of each week.

Joe Slovo Empowerment Project

Joe Slovo squatter camp in Coronationville is home to over 8000 people living in poverty without electricity and proper sanitation. The main problem is unemployment – not because the people lack skills but rather they lack opportunity.

We hope to get the brightest and most enthusiastic individuals of the community sponsored to undertake an entrepreneurship course. This will help generate commerce and ultimately raise living standards in Joe Slovo.

The Business Place is offering positions on its Micro MBA course which provides comprehensive training in business start-up and management, life skills components and a mentorship programme.

We need your help to enable both the individual, and their community, to fulfill their potential.



Edith Maleka

Edith was born in Soweto on the 15th October 1977. Now 27, she dreams of setting up a computer training company to enable her to better support her one year old baby but also allow individuals in her community to gain the computer skills needed to enter the business world.

Edith achieved Grade 11 at Highveld Technical College where she passed Afrikaans, Computer N3, Public Administration N3 and Sepedi. She also gained the qualification to become a Security Officer at Mabothane Security Training College where she passed Grades E, D and C. Further to this she has gained experience working as a florist designing flower arrangements at Paradise Florists.

Edith is a friendly and confident woman who presents herself extremely well. Her personal skills make her more than capable of achieving her dream and running a small business. She is highly ambitious and even has plans to film a television documentary about the rural communities of Limpopo. Given the right training and support Edith will surely be able to turn her business plans into reality.

Edith is just one of the many individuals who live in Joe Slovo who have the potential to run a successful business.

Please sponsor Edith or any of the other individuals undertaking the course enabling them to enhance their potential through developing business expertise.

All they need is R250 to cover the course fees and materials, transport and food costs.

Generating commerce in squatter camps is a proven means to improving the living standards of the community so it is therefore imperative we develop the potential of the brightest minds.

To sponsor an individual please phone us on 011 726 6529 or email to firechildren@icon.co.za

Looking to the Future



We want a time when all homes have access to safe mains or solar electricity; where paraffin and kerosene are fuels of the past; where dangerous cooking, heating or lighting equipment is banned and the bans are enforceable; where young children are not left alone in shacks; where no child need die from burns nor ever be denied medical treatment. Where occupational therapy and counselling is freely available to all children in need and transport costs to and from hospital are met by government. Where social attitudes turn from revulsion at disfigurement to acceptance of individuals with a different appearance, as equal members of society.

Kilimanjaro Expedition

Children of Fire aim for a party of ten representatives to climb Kilimanjaro in August 2006. The party will comprise seven teenage burns survivors from South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya, a leading South African plastic and reconstructive surgeon and a further two adult volunteers from Children of Fire.

The climb will act as a means to raise awareness about the dangers of fire for children across Africa and will also be a way of fundraising for the charity which is entirely reliant on public donations. Equally the expedition will benefit the children involved showing that even though they have suffered greatly from burn injuries they are able to overcome the highest obstacles.

The party will climb the Machame Route which is the most challenging but also the most rewarding and scenic. The entire climb will take seven days and the party will be staying in tents throughout.

The party will carry with them a flaming torch to symbolise hope in the futures of young burns survivors across Africa and they will also erect an information board on top of the mountain highlighting the causes and consequences of fire and sharing some of the moving stories of the burns survivors.

Fire Safety Outreach Project

Sadly over 15 000 children are severely burned each year in South Africa alone. Children of Fire, the best informed organisation in Africa on the causes and consequences of burns injuries, tackles the presiding source of these injuries – the lack of education about fire safety.

Therefore Children of Fire's UMashesha volunteers will be traveling to the Eastern Cape for one week in late August to run a fire safety outreach project in the rural communities. This will involve a team of around six volunteers running plays and demonstrations highlighting the dangers of fire in upwards of 20 schools in the province. Education about the causes and consequences of fire is the primary means to reduce the enormity of child burns injuries in Africa and to maximise the effect of the plays they will be conducted in a range of languages to deliver the message more clearly.

Johannesburg Transport Network Analysis

Having seen first-hand that disabled people are being severely disadvantaged by the current transport system, Children of Fire is undertaking a project to map the entire transport network of Greater Johannesburg and produce an easy guide for users.

The aim of the project is primarily to enable disabled people to use public transport more easily but the project will have far reaching implications for the inhabitants of Greater Johannesburg. The project will include detailed guidelines on all public bus, minibus taxi, train and private school bus routes and could ultimately guide planners of a more integrated transport system.

Placement of fire fighting water-tanks in squatter camps

Having successfully introduced fire fighting water-tanks into several squatter camps in Johannesburg during previous years, Children of Fire is looking to vastly increase the number of tanks available to people without adequate fire protection within the squatter camps. The tanks have proven to be a highly successful way of

reducing injuries as a result of fire. In May 2004 a water tank saved the homes of hundreds when the fire brigade were unable to locate the valve needed access the water supply after it had been removed.

One area we are looking to focus on is the Setswetla region of Alexandra which has in the past seen fires spread unnecessarily because the fire brigade is unable to act quickly enough to an emergency due to the poor infrastructure. Through the introduction of these tanks and the subsequent training of local people in doing bucket runs the spread of fire can be contained.

Pioneering new technology

Children of Fire is at the forefront of pioneering technology regarding fire safety. Having successfully pioneered new designs in safety candles, innovative fuels, safer stoves and paraffin lamps we are continuing to seek simple solutions to serious problems. Further to fire safety technology Children of Fire is also looking to pioneer designs to improve the lives of disabled children such as prostheses and specialised musical instruments and learning materials etc.

Community development projects

Children of Fire is looking to expand the current Empowerment Project in Joe Slovo to incorporate various employment schemes and training workshops. Many people in the squatter camps have marketable skills but do not have the opportunity to advertise these skills to the business community. We will therefore work to address this imbalance and will actively seek to enhance skills and business acumen by increasing the accessibility to a range of training programmes similar to the entrepreneurship course currently being offering.

Volunteering Opportunities

Children of Fire have a range of volunteering opportunities for people with any amount of time or skill to invest in the charity. The volunteers will have a direct effect on the children associated with Children of Fire whether this be impacting upon their immediate well-being or their quality of life in the future. In particular we are looking for:

Working with the children

- Teachers of cooking, music, dance or drama to work at the school one day a week.
- Speech, physio and occupational therapists to work pro Deo on a regular basis in Auckland Park, Johannesburg.
- Counsellors to help children when depressed about appearance or the original cause of the injury, especially people able to speak Sesotho or Nguni group languages.

*all time invested in the children will be of benefit to them however a longer-term commitment, even if this is only one hour as week over many weeks, will be more beneficial as the children are able to form a relationship with the volunteer.

Research

- Researchers on burns statistics in Greater Johannesburg Hospitals.
- Young lawyers or law students able to help compile research for legal challenge concerning the Education Act, White Paper No. 6 and possibly the Constitution for a class action on behalf of disabled children not receiving education.

*volunteering to research can be a commitment of a few hours to a several month internship with the charity. All research is useful, no matter how little, as it all increases the charity's knowledge about the causes and consequences of burn injuries.

Professional Support

- Accountants to maintain the charities accounts – e.g. one day a month.
- Private social workers to help, free of charge, with fostering and adoption of different burned children, especially across provincial and national borders.

Odd Jobs

- Anyone willing to take the burns children on an outing on a weekend either as a once off or regularly- this can be as simple as a walk at Ementia Dam, in Auckland Park.
- Hospital visits – when we have children in hospital for surgery they sometimes stay for several weeks. They always enjoy having visitors, even from people they don't know very well.
- Children of Fire has some wonderful volunteers but one of our biggest day to day problems remains transport. We need short regular lifts for injured children mainly in the Mayfair-Auckland Park-Parktown-Crosby areas of Johannesburg.

The charity cannot offer any salary but can cover the out-of-pocket expenses of volunteers. Any time given to the charity would be appreciated as the skills the volunteers have to offer can be useful for the charity regardless of the time frame.

Children of Fire would like to thank:

Judith Herbert for the individual tuition she regularly gives to the children enabling them to catch up and advance in their education.

Eddie Thom for his continued generosity in organising and funding a range of exciting trips for the children such as the Johannesburg Zoo, the circus, the Planetarium or the Tibetan Festival amongst others.

Jeremy and Dial a Nerd for their repeated help with the office computer network. Thanks to them Children of Fire now has almost ten fully functional computers.

The Business Place for their help and guidance with the Joe Slovo Empowerment Project.

AIESEC students at the Universities of Birmingham and Sheffield in the UK for raising enough money to place ten individuals on the Micro MBA course and support other projects currently being run by the charity.

Razor Spike for installing a security car stop for the charity free of charge.

Belinda Newman for taking the children on an exciting day out to Gold Reef City.

Terjan Pillay for his continued support for the children regarding transportation and the delicious Indian meal he cooked them.

So many people support Children of Fire and it would be impossible to thank everyone. We are always grateful for any help you can offer and this organisation could not exist without your support. Thank you from all at Children of Fire.

Children of Fire 'Wish List'

The Children

Children of Fire not only ensures that burns survivors receive all necessary surgery but also seek to give them a bright and happy future.

Medical costs

Children of Fire has helped many children through a wide range of operations. The state often cannot provide the necessary surgery or the children are expected to wait or years for treatment so Children of Fire instead seek operations in the private sector. The costs for treatment are as follows:

- **R2 000** pays for adjustments to prosthetic legs as a child grows.
- **R4 000** sees a child through insertion and removal of a tissue expander over a six month period.
- **R10 000** for splinting materials for contracted arms and legs.

Kilimanjaro Expedition

Children of Fire is planning for seven burns survivors from South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya to climb Kilimanjaro in August 2006. This will be a wonderful experience for the children and show them that no obstacle is too hard to overcome. **Cost: approximately R10 000 per child.**

Burns Camp

Children of Fire run two burns camps each year (usually held in March and September. The charity requires money for transport for the children to and during the camp, food, arts, crafts and other materials for activities. **Cost: R40 000 for two camps.**

Books

"Face" by Benjamin Zephaniah, published by Bloomsbury deals with a trendy teenager who has to reassess life after serious burns to his face. It is easy for teenagers to read, even in a second language. We would like to have a supply of these book to give to teenage burns survivors that we help. **Cost: R50 per book.**

School fees

Many children will be severely disadvantaged due to their disabilities or disfigurements. We therefore look to ensure that the children are receiving a good education which may involve paying or subsidising their school fees at a private school. **Cost: approximately 1500 per term.**

Trips

Children of Fire look to provide the children with opportunities they would not ordinarily be given. A basic trip, such as the zoo, can cost R100 for many children or R1000 can give the children a truly memorable experience at the sea-side or a game reserve.

Gifts

Many of the children come from very poor backgrounds and their families cannot afford to buy them gifts. A pair of football boots is sure to bring a lengthy smile to a child's face. **Cost: R400.**

Children of Fire

Children of Fire is supported entirely by public donations. The following could enable the charity to operate more effectively and help a greater number of children.

Volunteers car

Currently all of the charity's volunteers must either walk or use the time-consuming and often dangerous public transport. There have in fact been eight muggings of volunteers over the past year. A car would enable the volunteers to carry out their work and transport the children in safety and generally support the charity and the children more effectively. **Cost: R30 000.**

Printing costs

The charity relies upon leaflets and other printed materials to advertise and create awareness of the help it can offer burned children. A batch of 100 colour leaflets would **cost approximately R500**.

Information Technology

Much of our work relies on internet and e-mail access and the charity has one computer with modem, and three more computers which could be connected to the internet easily. The computer with internet access is currently shared by up to 10 volunteers and employees. It would take:

- 2-3 single modems (either external, or as a modem card), and
- 2-4 LAN cables

to help us reach burned children in remote areas, and to network with organisations in South Africa and other countries (we've already helped children in Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, and other African countries as there is no other burns charity in Southern Africa which could support them). **Cost: estimated R2000**.

Medical Expenses

The charity takes care of children who have just undergone operations. They therefore need to have their wounds regularly cleaned and dressed. **R5 000** supplies volunteers with on-hand First Aid kits to care for the children.

Office Equipment

There is a need to copy a lot of material whether for training materials, teaching resources or office administration. A Kyoceramita (or similar) photocopier, maintenance, toner and paper **costs approximately R16 500**.

T-shirts

T-shirts for each volunteer would help to promote the charity and create awareness of burn injuries. **Cost: R3000 for all volunteers**.

Fire Prevention

Children of Fire works in the most at-risk communities – the squatter camps – to reduce the number of children severely burned by fire. Sadly 15 000 children are severely burned each year in South Africa alone.

UMashesha wages

The UMashesha volunteers carry out fire safety plays in schools, escort children to hospital sitting with them through their operations, and undertake active disaster management and prevention. However Children of Fire needs to provide the UMashesha with a basic wage to enable them to make a more long-term commitment. **Cost: R250 per month per UMashesha**.

Training

Fire fighting and fire prevention training for volunteers at R600 per person for a course with additional food and transport costs would total **R7 000 per course of 10 people**.

Outreach projects

Children of Fire runs safety plays at local schools, and we've also organised fire awareness campaigns during which we've visited up to 20 schools in rural areas within a period of 5-7 days. We have been invited to do campaigns in Bloemfontein and the Eastern Cape, for which we need:

- Sleeping bags for the volunteers (as we usually sleep in community halls, schools, etc.)
- Blankets (see above)
- A small PA system (as we are often asked to perform in front of the whole school rather than 2-3 classes, and outside the school building)

Also the transport costs of these projects are approximately R3000 for a team of 6 volunteers. **Total cost: approximately R5000 per project**.

Alexandra office costs

Alexandra is a township home to between 1 – 2 million people living in basic and often hazardous living conditions. The risk of fire in the community is high. An office would enable a team to effectively carry out disaster prevention work averting burn injuries. The rent for an office **costs R600 per month.**

Community Work

As part of its wider aim Children of Fire undertakes a range of projects to benefit the communities in which it works.

Disaster Recovery Bags

When a Fire destroys larger areas, such as informal settlements or parts of a township, we are often the first (and in many cases, the only) organisation with experience in disaster management to arrive at the disaster scene. We have pioneered the design of Disaster Recovery Bags, which include basic equipment for the first days after a fire for those who have lost everything. The bags are handed out to the most needy people. To fill the bags, we need

- Tinned and/or dried food (e.g. tinned vegetables, ProNutro for children, etc.)
- Blankets (as in most cases, the survivors will spend at least one night outside)
- Pots, pans, cutlery, and other basic kitchen equipment
- Soap, washing powder, and towels

The total cost for one Disaster Recovery Bag is R500.

Joe Slovo Empowerment Project

Joe Slovo is an impoverished squatter camp community which suffers massively as a result of unemployment. Children of Fire is looking to place bright individuals on a business and life skills course to enable them to gain employment or set up their own business in the community. The total cost for the course is **R250 per individual.**

Sunday Library re-fit

Children of Fire operate a Sunday morning library scheme for children in Joe Slovo squatter camp. The 'library' area is however extremely unsafe and difficult for the children to learn in. It is the only space available in the camp. We would like to hire a builder to ensure the surroundings are safe and install fixed durable seating for the children. **Cost: approximately R2000.**

Johannesburg School for Blind, Low Vision and Multiple Disability Children
Children of Fire's sister charity is the only primary school in Greater Johannesburg for blind children or those with low vision, with or without other disabilities.

School fees

Often the children come from poor backgrounds and cannot afford to pay school fees. To teach, feed and look after a child **costs approximately R500 per month.**

Teachers wages

Teaching disabled children requires a far higher teacher-pupil ration than a normal school. The wages for one teacher **cost R2600 per month.**

Therapy

Provision of speech, occupational and physiotherapy at R210 per session, 20 sessions a child, totals **R4200 per child.**

Books

Books are an essential part to learning. To equip a child with exercise books would **cost R50 per term.** A new set of text books for each subject from Grade R to 7 would **cost R1500.** Large print books **cost approximately R200 each.**

Flash cards

Flash cards are a highly effective teaching tool. A pack of flashcards **cost R100.**

Computer Software

Jaws and Magic from Sensory Solutions SA would enhance the children's life and vocational skills. The programme **costs R500**.

Computers

There is currently has one fully-functional computer used for administrative purposes. The school would benefit from more computers not only to be used by staff but also to enable the children to learn essential computer skills. **Cost: R8000**.

Stationary

The school needs a constant supply of stationary such as pencils, colouring crayons, rulers, pencil sharpeners etc. The cost to the school is **approximately R100 per month**.

Braille Machines

Braille enables blind children to read and write. A Braille machine **costs R8000**.

Furniture

As the school is constantly expanding we need more lightweight desks and chairs. Donations of old furniture would be very welcome.

Library

The school has recently converted the buildings' garage into a makeshift library. To make this into a fully functional and comfortable working environment we would need to install a proper roof, a window and equip the room with furniture. **Cost: approximately R15 000**.

If you are able to help with the sponsorship in any of these areas or know anyone who may be able to help please contact us at any time. Thank you for any support you are able to provide.

Contact Us

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If you are able to contribute donations may be made to:

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Sort code: 25-65-05
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Sort code: 20-17-92
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