



Changing childhoods.  
Changing lives.

# Digital Tools & Digital Channels

Building an omni-channel approach  
that cuts through and delivers results

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# About Barnardo's

- 356,000 children, young people, parents and carers through more than 650 services and partnerships across the UK (2024-2025)
- **Changing Childhoods and Changing Lives** for more than 150 years
- Helping children and young people feel *safer, happier, healthier, and more hopeful*
- **Fundraising & Marketing mission:** Drive income growth and build an engaged community of people who give and get support.



# What is Engagement?

- Beware vanity metrics
- Donation doesn't equal engagement
- Go beyond opens, clicks and platform metrics
- Create rules to track behaviour: e.g. N emails unopened in X time period = Flag as at-risk
- Look for meaningful signals that a supporter is leaning in:
  - Opens, clicks, donations (the baseline)
  - Volunteering and challenge-event participation
  - Shares and comments on social
  - Watching a video through to the end
  - Contacting supporter care to update personal info
  - Drop-offs and underperforming journeys — what's missing is a signal too
  - Signed petition and advocacy asks



# Supporters are more discerning



Today's supporters are informed, trust-led and permanently comparing

They expect charities to feel as joined-up as the brands they use every day

**We're not just competing with other charities for attention, we're competing with every inbox, every feed, every notification**

Supporters decide in seconds whether we've understood them, and can quickly cut us off (unsubscribes, unfollows, paused giving) when we haven't

**They ask hard questions:**

- *How are you using my data?*
- *What difference does my donation make?*
- *Why am I hearing from you?*

# Five threads



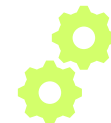
1. Omni-channel is about experience, not more channels



2. Email is still the anchor, but it's more competitive than ever



3. Audience-Led, not Product-Led



4. Data is the unlock, AI is not a strategy



5. Experimentation is how you learn what cuts through

*And underneath it all is Integration - tech, data, and ways of working.*



# Thread 1 (contd.): More Orchestration

## Channel roles

- **Email** carries the story, the ask, the detail
- **SMS & WhatsApp** nudge non-openers back
- **Direct Mail** carries emotional weight for key moments
- **Social & PR** warm the audience before email lands
- **Paid ads** retarget clickers who didn't convert
- **Website** one dedicated URL per campaign



## Channels need to work as a system



## Thread 2: Email remains the anchor, but it must earn its place

### Email provides:

- High ROI
- 1st-Party data
- Platform ownership
- Intimacy

## Are you **email marketing?** Or just sending emails?

What email marketing looks like:

- **Segment ruthlessly.**
- **Stay focused.** One email = one key message.
- **Deliverability is underrated.** ISPs reward senders people want; punish the rest.
- **Every metric is a signal.** Opens, clicks, unsubs tell you who, how often, what.
- **Audit your journeys.** Find the gaps – how we did on website signups.

# Thread 3: Audience-led, not product-led

## The shift

- Stop forcing the funnel, vary by engagement & data
- Give supporters control
- Segment with intent, pen portraits and data shape content

## What relevance looks like

- Dynamic content - demographic, psychographic, behavioural
- Actual gift - not a generic thank-you
- Localisation - their region, their services
- Send-time - not 10am because it's 10am

Header: What makes you smile?

Layout Plain Text Desktop

**Choose one below:**

- Families in poverty**  
Helping families get back on their feet with essential and support.
- Health and wellbeing**  
Making sure children have access to physical and mental health support.
- Family support**  
Helping parents feel confident and informed, so their families
- Children in care**  
Standing by children in care and care leavers as they find

# Thread 4: Data is the unlock

## Data confidence

- Teams excited about data!
- Growing data literacy across teams
- Data shapes the creative brief; it doesn't arrive after launch

## Data governance

- Quality, consent, provenance - the boring essentials
- Stop conflicting definitions
- Not a blocker, it's what makes speed safe

## Data strategy

- Segmentation that reflects behaviour, not just demographics
- Output isn't a report, it's a decision you wouldn't otherwise have made
- Data enables you to spot patterns – e.g. the data insight that allowed us to both save money and increase income in IG campaigns

# Thread 4 (cont.): AI is an enabler, not a strategy

## Embrace it

- The risk of a charity not using AI is bigger than the risk of using it
- Encourage adoption and try to carry everyone along but don't force

## Govern it

- Responsible use: where human sign-off is required, where it isn't
- Shadow AI is real, so set rules but avoid bans
- Create usable governance – not dusty pdfs

## Use it where it earns its keep

- Send Time Optimisation - right moment, per supporter
- Engagement Scoring - predicting who's likely to act
- Engagement Frequency - reducing email burnout
- Generative needs more governance

***AI makes good strategy scalable. It doesn't make bad strategy smarter. And the more we automate, the more the human touches that don't scale become our edge.***

# Thread 5: Experimentation is how you learn what cuts through

*All marketing is a hypothesis. Failure is feedback.*

- **Subject & Send:** subject lines, preheaders, From name, send-time
- **Content & Creative:** copy length, dynamic vs static, images, P.S., design
- **Asks & CTAs:** button vs link, copy, colour, placement, personalised vs generic
- **Rhythm & Channel:** frequency, journey length, resend-to-unopened, SMS + email, mail + email
- **Audiences:** try segments in different comms
- Create a rhythm – e.g. test one element per quarter on our newsletter
- One hypothesis, one variable, a sample size that actually tells us something
- Wins go into always-on journeys; losses inform the next test
- Don't test multiple things at once

# The real unlock: three layers of integration

None of the threads land without this. Integration isn't one thing — it's three, and only the last one really transforms the organisation.



## 1. Technology

Necessary. The tools have to talk to each other.  
But the easiest of the three.



## 2. Data

Harder. One view of the supporter — so we stop  
telling contradictory stories about the same  
person.



## 3. Ways of working

The only one that actually transforms the  
organisation.

# Act like one org, not separate teams sharing a logo

*Integrated ways of working - every team acts on the same plan, improves supporter experience and enables cross-selling*

- Integration requires new culture - breaking silos, and giving teams space, resource and budget to commit to long-term value beyond BAU
- Cross-Functional collaboration from planning to launch
- Supporters carried through a single experience, not handed off between silos



# Where the puck is going

Three shifts starting to reshape supporter engagement and what they ask of us.



## AI as a channel

Supporters are starting to find causes through LLMs, not just Google. Being “findable by AI” is the new SEO. And AI ads are here.



## Consent-first by default

Zero-cookie tracking is nearly here. Charities need clean first-party data and clear value exchanges.



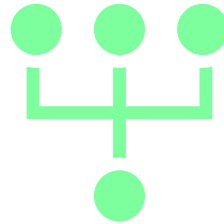
## The human layer is the premium layer

The more comms gets automated, the more the handwritten note, the phone call, the IRL events cut-through. Use automation to free up capacity for the human touches, not replace them.

# Tech will change. Fundamentals won't.



Tell better stories.



Understand your supporter.



Meet them where they are.

# The Secret Sauce is You



# Go and be:

**More  
Experimental**

**More  
Personalised**

**More  
Data-driven**

**More  
Integrated**

**More  
Ambitious**

# THANK YOU

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The logo for Barnardo's, featuring the word "BARNARDOS" in a stylized, bold, black font. The letter 'A' is replaced by a red heart, and the letter 'O' is replaced by a red smiley face. The letters are slightly irregular and have a hand-drawn feel.