

Meet our board



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST

Andy Couldrick - Chair and Non-Executive Director

Andy is a qualified social worker and has worked as a practitioner and manager in a number of authorities around the Thames Valley. Andy has a record of leading service improvement and of developing practice models that are family-focused and asset-based. He was appointed as Director of Children's Services in Wokingham in 2009 when the service was subject to Intervention. The 'turnaround' he led was rapid and sustained. In 2011 he was asked to take on the role of Chief Executive of the Council. Andy has led the Children's Trust, as Chief Executive, since its establishment in 2018. He retired in December 2023 to take up the role of Chair of the Trust Board. Andy is married with three adult children. He is looking forward to exploring retirement!

Ama Agbeze MBE - Non-Executive Director

The bulk of Ama's career has been spent as a professional athlete culminating in captaining Team England to netball gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Alongside sport, Ama has worked as a solicitor in a variety of disciplines including family, commercial, charity and banking. As an ambassador and trustee for a number of charities Ama has a focus on the benefits of physical activity on health outcomes, using sport to help realise potential in children and young people. Ama regularly speaks and advocates for diversity and inclusion, improving life opportunities in areas of deprivation, cultural development and organisational change, leadership and mental health. Recently an independent Board Member of the Organising Committee for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, Ama splits her time between Birmingham and Broad Oak.

Helen Ellis - Non-Executive Director (Council appointed)

Helen Ellis is an experienced Children's Services Strategic Leader and has worked within the sector for over 20 years. Born and raised locally, Helen has a passion and dedication to the children, young people and families of Birmingham. Helen has an impressive track record of delivering successful, large scale modernisation programmes across Local Authority Children's Services teams which have been proven to produce sustainable and effective results. Helen's leadership experience spans all levels of management, including operational, middle and senior strategic leadership within both the public and private sector. During her time at Dudley Council, Helen was the driving force behind the Dudley Early Help offer and strategy and oversaw the implementation and delivery of the Early Help offer across the borough. Helen went on to oversee an intensive improvement programme for SEND and launched a new SEND strategy for the council in early 2022. Among other areas of success, Helen was instrumental in bringing schools together to ensure Dudley had a co-ordinated, whole system approach to improving outcomes for children, young people, and their families. Throughout her long service to the public sector Helen has worked tirelessly to promote and champion the work of the voluntary sector, establishing and nurturing relationships with local organisations, such as health, the Parent Carer Forum and numerous voluntary organisations. Helen joined Birmingham City Council in November 2022 as Director for SEND and Inclusion. Helen is at the forefront of driving forward the SEND Improvement agenda and is making a valuable contribution to the local area partnership. In her time with Birmingham Helen has already made substantial improvements in this area against a backdrop of challenging circumstances. Helen remains committed and passionate about delivering the best possible services for children and families in Birmingham.

Lisa Field - Non-Executive Director

Lisa has worked in Higher Education management for most of her career, in roles spanning welfare, advocacy, compliance, governance, and programme management. She currently works in the Social Inclusion Team at the University of Warwick, where she centres anti-discriminatory approaches in relation to staff diversity, inclusion, and belonging. Lisa is committed, both personally and professionally, to advocating for equitable policies and practices across sectors. She has served as a mentor on the Sprint women's development program, a facilitator on the Tackling Racial Inequality at Warwick Staff Development Program and is a Rainbow Ally. Lisa also established Warwick's Part-Time Staff Network and the Parent's SEND Community Network at her children's primary school. With a law background, Lisa previously worked in the charity sector in advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers before transitioning to higher education. She was born in Stourbridge, has lived in Birmingham for nearly 20 years, and has two school-aged children.

Professor Jon Glasby - Non-Executive Director

Jon is Professor of Health and Social Care in the University of Birmingham's Department of Social Work and Social Care and UK Director of IMPACT (the UK centre for implementing evidence in adult social care). A qualified social worker by background, he is involved in regular research, teaching, consultancy and policy advice around implementing evidence-based practice, health and social care partnerships, community care and personalisation. He is a former Non-Executive Director of Birmingham Children's Hospital, and a current Non-Executive Director of University Hospitals Birmingham. He has provided policy advice to the Department of Health, the Cabinet Office and Downing Street on the future of health and social services, and from 2003 to 2009 was a Trustee of the Social Care Institute for Excellence (the national body responsible for identifying and disseminating what works in social care). He is currently a Senior Fellow of the UK School for Social Care Research and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. From 2008 to 2015, he was Director of the University of Birmingham's Health Services Management Centre (HSMC) and from 2015 to 2020 he was Head of the School of Social Policy. In 2022, he was a special adviser to the House of Lords Adult Social Care Committee.

Ruth Harker - Non-Executive Director

Ruth taught in Birmingham for just over forty years, twenty of these as Principal/Executive Headteacher, before retiring in August 2016. Working in a diverse range of schools, she saw the challenges faced by many children and was involved in innovative partnerships to help tackle these issues. After opening the new Shenley Academy, the consistent award of 'Outstanding' by OFSTED for safeguarding was an endorsement of the emphasis given to safeguarding and children's welfare. Having successfully led two of Birmingham's largest schools during periods of challenge, Ruth oversaw several other schools in difficulties. As Chair of the local network Behaviour Group, she led the project group to set up a new Alternative Provision Free School. Ruth is currently the Chair of Governors at this Alternative Provision School in Birmingham and the Chair of Governors for Birmingham Virtual School. She also chairs the Trust Board's Workforce Committee. For five years Ruth was a Governor at the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust. She is married with one daughter, who is a teacher.

Colin Horwath - Non-Executive Director

Colin is a qualified accountant, who has spent his career working with the public sector. He was a partner with KPMG, based in Birmingham for 20 years, leading audit and advisory assignments. His internal responsibilities included heading the national public sector practice. He is a non-executive director at Worcestershire NHS Trust. He was also Governor at an Academy for 8 years. He is married with grown up children. His interests are classic cars and music, as well as learning to speak German badly. Colin currently chairs the Trust Board's Finance & Resources Committee and the Nominations & Remuneration Committee.

Elizabeth Stafford - Non-Executive Director

Liz has many years of experience as a Chief Executive of Probation organisations, including Warwickshire Probation Trust and the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company. Before becoming Chief Officer for Warwickshire Probation Area in 2001, she was a senior manager for West Midlands Probation. She is pleased to be able to bring her skills and experience to support Birmingham Children's Trust having lived in Birmingham since 1982 and having worked for Birmingham City Council Social Services Department and Education Departments from 1982 to 1990. Liz currently chairs the Trust Board's Performance and Quality Assurance Committee.

Amrick Singh Ubhi DL (Deputy Lieutenant) - Non-Executive Director

Amrick Singh was Centre Director of the Nishkam Centre for 13 years and now heads up Civic Engagement & Partnerships on behalf of the Nishkam Group. The Nishkam Centre is a faith inspired, voluntary sector civic organisation that merges spirituality and secularity creating a seamless fusion of values, ethics, and justice for the common good of all humanity. He brings extensive Non-Executive Director and Advisory Board experience to Birmingham Children's Trust, including Acorns Children's Hospice, Soho Road BID, and other voluntary, public sector and health organisations. These roles are particularly in the areas of addressing inequalities, social justice, interfaith facilitation, stakeholder engagement, and promoting collaboration to bring about positive outcomes. He is passionate about working with people to enable them to excel and to make change for the betterment of society. Driven by the value and impact of social change, he has experience in organisational development, business transformation, quality improvement and organisational capacity building with integrity, attention to detail and tangible results. His previous roles have included high profile, prestigious organisations like Shell (UK and Holland), British Gas, Bosal Interna-

Executive Directors

James Thomas - Chief Executive

James Thomas was the Corporate Director for Children and Culture at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets between 2020 and 2023, where he was also appointed to be Deputy Chief Executive. Prior to that the substantive leadership roles that James held were as Interim Chief Executive of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust; Director of Children's Services for the London Borough of Richmond; Director of Children's Services for the Greater Manchester Borough of Tameside; Director of Children's Services for the London Borough of Newham; and Director of Family Services for Westminster City Council. James has for some years provided leadership for ADCS on multi-agency safeguarding. He is a Non-Executive Director of the Innovation Unit. James has maintained his status as a registered Social Worker. James's core values are rooted in a commitment to public service, conviction of the need for social justice and to combat inequality and discrimination, and integrity in all he does. He is a Londoner with family roots that encompass Wales, India, Cheshire, Ireland and Russia.

Lisa Harris – Director of Help and Protection

Lisa joined Birmingham Children's Trust in December 2021 as the Assistant Director responsible for Safeguarding. Her social work career spans 29 years, having initially qualified with a Masters in Social Work at Warwick University in 1995. Lisa has worked in several local authorities within the Midlands occupying a range of leadership positions in front-line roles and the position of Principal Social Worker in both Solihull and Walsall. Lisa would describe herself as a restorative practitioner who adopts a strengths-based and solution-focused approach to achieving positive change for children and families.

Lisa Jamieson – Director of Corporate Parenting

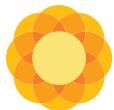
Lisa began working at the Trust in 2018 taking up a permanent position as Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting and Commissioning in 2019, following 25 years working in the North West of England. A graduate of Liverpool University, Lisa is committed to supporting the workforce across the Trust and has a keen interest in equality and diversity. Lisa spent many years as a member of the Coram BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) equalities diversity policy development group. Lisa has mentored a number of managers into leadership roles. Lisa has a proven track record of transforming services particularly in fostering, adoption and the multi-agency safeguarding hub, leading the Trust fostering and adoption services to be judged 'Good' with 'Outstanding' features.

David Stringfellow - Director of Commisioning & Specialist Services

David started his career in Birmingham as a social work assistant and then as a qualified social worker in the East of the city. He has extensive experience of children's social care having worked across a range of departments at all levels. Notably he led the implementation of the first Multiagency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in the country. David has specialised in supporting the transformation of failing authorities and has a proven track record of improving Ofsted ratings. Prior to joining the Trust in April 2019 David was a Director of Children's Social Care in the North of the country.

Marshelene Williams - Director of Quality Assurance

Marshelene graduated from Plymouth University and has over 25 years of social work experience. She has been part of the Birmingham team for many years, starting as a team manager in the south of the city in 2001. Marshelene has been part of the creation of services and implementation of new ways of working , leading her team or service through change and improvements. Marshelene has extensive experience in frontline social work, leadership, change management, quality assurance, system reviews, policy, and practice, supporting services to improve and ensuring better outcomes for children and families through partnerships and collaboration. Marshelene has worked across a range of services at differing levels, always championing improvements and successes. Throughout her career, Marshelene has been committed to the development of her teams and undertakes mentoring within and outside of the Trust. A passionate social worker, Marshelene is committed to advocacy for our children and families, rooted in social justice and the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.



Executive Directors

Lee Yale-Helms - Director of Finance and Resources

Lee joined the Trust in September 2018. He is a qualified public service accountant whose career spans 14 years in local government, including work in education and supporting children with special needs. His career spans a further 18 years in public services financial advisory roles, including Director of Finance at Doncaster Children's Services Trust. Lee provides financial expertise and input to the Trust's strategic and business planning processes and leads the delivery of a range of corporate and support services. He is an associate member of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADSC) and was President of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) in the Midlands 2021-2023, representing Birmingham at a national level with both CIPFA and ADSC and promoting better funding for children's social care.

Our senior leadership team welcome you

Birmingham Children's Trust Board

Executive Management Team



James Thomas
Chief Executive



Lisa Harris
Director of Help and Protection



Lisa Jamieson
Director of Corporate Parenting



David Stringfellow
Director of Commissioning and Specialist Services



Marshelene Williams
Director of Quality Assurance



Lee Yale-Helms
Director of Finance and Resources

Chair and Non-Executive Directors



Andy Couldrick
Chair



Ama Agbeze MBE
Non-Executive Director



Helen Ellis
Non-Executive Director (Council appointed)



Lisa Field
Non-Executive Director



Prof Jon Glasby
Non-Executive Director



Ruth Harker
Non-Executive Director



Colin Horwath
Non-Executive Director



Liz Stafford
Non-Executive Director



Amrik Singh Ubhi DL
Non-Executive Director



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

This information is available on our website

https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/info/1/about_the_trust/116/birmingham_childrens_trusts_board

