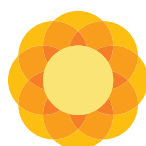
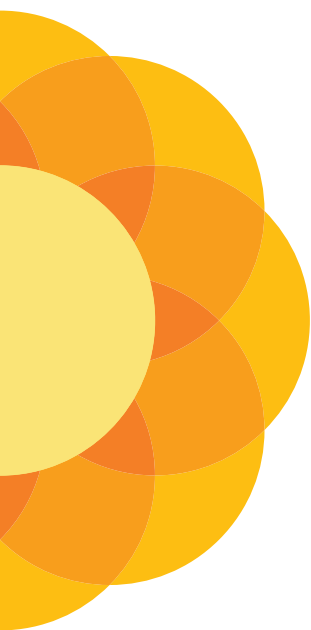




Strategic Business Plan

2018-2023

2021/22 (Year 4) Update



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**



**Birmingham Children's Trust Business Plan
2018-2023
2021/22 (Year 4) Update**

C O N T E N T S		
	Foreword from the Birmingham Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum	Page 2
1	Introduction	4
2	Birmingham Children's Trust 2021: Our Vision and Values	8
3	Strong Families	10
4	Strategic Context for the Children's Trust	14
5	Progress and Our New Priorities and Initiatives	16
6	Performance	27
7	Governance Arrangements	30
8	Trust Services	33
9	Our People	35
10	Trust Financial Position and Budget	39
11	The Children's Trust and the Council	44
12	Working with Partners	46
13	Managing Risk	48
	APPENDIX Pen portrait of our children and our service	50



Foreword from the Birmingham Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum

The five participation groups of Birmingham Children's Trust welcome you to the Trust's Year 4 Business Plan. It has been a strange year as relationships and participation have moved into the virtual world. But despite these challenges we have continued to work in partnership with the Trust and more widely to make sure our voices are heard. This has helped us hear from more children and young people who are living away from Birmingham or previously may not have been able to attend and get involved.

Just some of our work in the past 12 months:

- Co-producing surveys to gather the lived experiences of our children in care and care leavers
- Developing stronger links and voice within the Corporate Parenting Board
- Co-designed the Virtual School's ePEP website
- Co-produced the new Corporate Parenting Pledges
- Our e-learning package is now a core training offer on the dos and don'ts of awkward personal conversations
- Delivered training at regional and national forums, including the launch of our new hybrid (video and 'live') training at a Research in Practice Conference
- Increase in young people's involvement in staff recruitment, both in the Trust and externally

The year ahead:

- Working on campaigns that are focused on housing for care leavers and children's voices within placement choices
- Being active in the redesign of the Disabled Children's Service
- Continuing to Influence national policy though the:
 - Advocacy review
 - Independent Care Review and our links with the All-Party Parliamentary Group
 - The Children's Commissioner's 'Childhood Commission' and the 'Big Ask', which will be the largest ever consultation with children in this country
- We are looking forward to interviewing the Trust's new intake of social workers in June
- We will be working with the Trust's Social Work Academy on developing training about our lived experiences as children in care and care leavers
- In May we have a first "takeover Board" for the Corporate Parenting Board
- We will also be linked to new programmes including preparations for the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 where we will have a mini games and opportunities for mentoring, work experience, volunteering and apprenticeships

Our voice is being heard and the Trust is looking at ways that this is made stronger. The Trust is developing some specific apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers this year and there is a lot happening so watch this space....!!!

Thoughts and Reflections

This year one of our Care Leavers Forum members has provided some words and reflections for the Business Plan. Thank you on behalf of all the participation forums. We are keen to continue to get our voices heard in Birmingham and beyond!!!

***“Co-production is about sharing power and utilising power dynamics to make all partners equal. These are prime example of giving power to youth voice, not to mention giving the microphone to care leavers. As an underrepresented group of individuals, our involvement in co-production is beneficial for both the Trust and us. We feel like we are giving back to the same community that nourished the best in us, and the Trust benefits from our valuable experiences.*”**

The Trust has worked hard to understand and address the impact of Covid 19 and lockdowns on children in care and care leavers. Young people within the Trust have overcome significant levels of adversity and struggle. However, something that has come to light is the sheer resilience and courage we possess to build a life worth living despite these pervasive difficulties. For a lot of us, we have had to hustle and work hard to maintain stability, whether this be in home life, work or education. That is why as an empowered group of care leavers, we worked towards creating a Covid Pledge, on how we want the Trust to be accountable for our care and how we can also be accountable for our own welfare. We spoke about, heating, eating, internet and mental health... all incredibly prevalent topics which we hope will be addressed.”

Zaynab 19, Care Leavers Forum

On behalf of the Children in Care Council (CICC) (12-18), the Junior CICC (8-12), Special Education Needs CICC (12+), Care Leavers Forum (18-25) & the Young Parents Project.



Section 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

Welcome to this, the third update to the Children's Trust Business Plan.

When we wrote our second year's plan update, we had no idea of the year that was to come. Delivering our services during a pandemic has been difficult. It has tested our personal and collective resilience. It has brought sadness through the loss of Trust team-mates to the virus. It has brought anxiety and concern for personal wellbeing while we have continued to prioritise the wellbeing of the children and families we support.

But we have come through it, so far. We have tested what we now know are deep wells of strength, commitment and resilience in the Trust. We have continued to develop, evolve and innovate as an organisation and as a service provider, and we have built greater strength into the partnerships we have with the City Council, with Health and the Police, with schools and with the voluntary and community sector. At the time of writing, our front-line staff and our foster carers and residential staff are getting vaccinated. This brings real hope for the end of the pandemic. The pandemic has had an impact on the demand for Trust services, for example, those related to domestic abuse. It has disrupted the education of vulnerable children and young people and it has exacerbated the challenge of securing employment opportunities for our young people. These and many other issues are considered more fully in the self-assessment for 2020/21 prepared by the Trust.

We have worked hard to ensure our services deliver value for money for the Council. We undertook a CIPFA Financial Management review which highlighted real strength in our financial arrangements as well as pointing us to further improvement. And we worked with CIPFA C.Co to explore how we can strengthen our financial base, improve demand forecasting and management, and get even better value in our commissioning. Our unit costs are competitive, our forecasting model sophisticated.

We have worked hard to keep our services open and operating throughout the last year. Our social workers have been visiting families in their homes every day since March 2020. We have had to change how we do some things, and we learned a lot, very quickly, about our ability to switch overnight to a home-based working model. But we know that our work is all about relationships and personal contact. It's how we support families; it's how we support each other. So we have been tested, and look forward to a more flexible, agile operating model in the future, one where we never again occupy as many desks in offices, but where we can come together easily and safely as teams, for supervision and support, to meet with families and children and to work increasingly collaboratively with our partners.

In 2020/21 our Youth Offending Service was inspected and judged to be 'Requires Improvement to be Good'. The inspection identified a number of strengths and a number of areas where important and rapid improvement was needed. These improvements are now being taken forward. Our Fostering service was examined by Ofsted in an Assurance visit in December 2020, and considerable improvements since the last inspection were identified. Our residential units providing short breaks are improving, reflected in their Ofsted visits, and overall we can point to continuous improvement. This will ultimately be tested when Ofsted undertake a full inspection.

Throughout the year we maintained good performance across the suite of national performance indicators for social care, including in relation to the key performance indicators that form part of the contract between the Trust and the Council. We reported on our services and our progress twice to Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Our cycle of monthly commissioning meetings with the Council has been maintained.

We continue to face some real challenges. Recruitment and retention is a challenge, so we are doing some detailed focused work this year to sharpen our branding and recruitment processes, improve our offer, and enable us to market the Trust better for what we believe we will become: the best place to learn, to lead and to practice.

The Trust has started to confront some difficult and deep-rooted challenges in relation to equality and diversity. The death of George Floyd, in the US last summer, sparked a response in our workforce and a response for us. There is much we need to do.

Our partnership with the City Council has remained strong. We have worked hard to gain and to maintain the confidence of elected members and senior officers in the Council and believe the relationship is fundamental to how we improve, together, the lives of the city's most vulnerable children. We would point to three things that exemplify the strength of our collaboration:

- We recognise that even in a difficult financial climate, the Council has recognised and acknowledged the evidence the Trust has brought forward, along with the plan for supporting families going forward, and has seen fit to invest additionally in the Trust in 2021/22 to help us meet the demand that exists. And the Trust has worked hard to close a deficit in the 2020/21 budget and to 'balance its books'.
- The Council invested to enable the Trust to recruit early help workers who are now working with families and children, with schools and community organisations, to tackle needs earlier and to reduce the need for children's circumstances to escalate.
- With the recent departure of the Council's Director of Children's Services (DCS) the Council approached the Trust to ask the Chief Executive to fulfil the DCS role and to provide leadership and management for the senior leaders in the Council's Education and Skills Directorate, on an interim basis. This reflects a high level of trust and confidence between our organisations and offers opportunities for closer collaboration and integrated work going forward.

This business plan update will demonstrate some of the progress made in the year 2020/21, set out our financial position and the work we are doing to meet need earlier and reduce demand for higher-cost, 'higher tariff' interventions, supporting families in new and different ways, as well as summarising our financial and service performance during the year.

We have tried to show, in the plan, the extent to which our journey in the Trust is rooted in partnership with, and learning from, a wide range of partners and stakeholders. In the last 12 months our work as Corporate Parents has improved, and the Corporate Parenting Board has sharpened its focus on our work and that of partners in being the best we can for the children and young people we care for and who leave our care. The work of the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum is invaluable and described well in this year's Foreword.

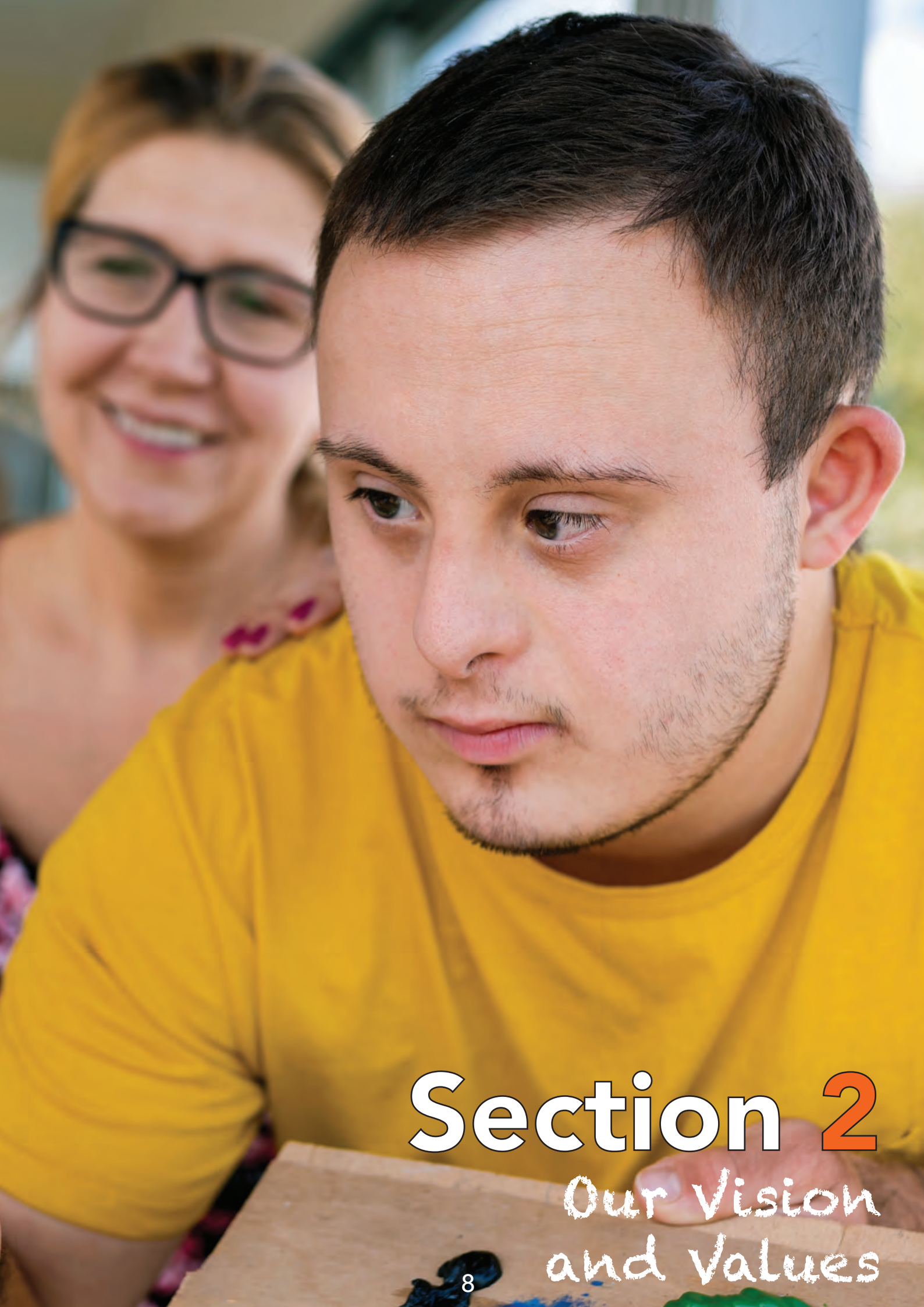
We have built the strength of our wider partnerships too. Our emerging work in Early Help is central to developments with our partners – with other statutory services, with voluntary and community groups and with schools. We are learning to be good partners, building co-production and genuine engagement to shape and to resource services. The feedback we receive indicates we are having some success.

In the early weeks of 2021 new discussions have developed with the City Council, initially about the role the Trust Chief Executive could play to cover the gap between the departure of the Council's Director of Children's Services and recruitment of the next one, and subsequently about the future role of the Trust in supporting delivery of additional Council services. This is a measure of the trust and confidence we have built, and the strength and integrity of the critical relationship between the Trust and the Council.

It's been a tough year for everyone, including the Children's Trust. The difficult times are not yet behind us. And we know that the legacy of the pandemic, particularly for children, young people and families in the city, will be significant. But there are also grounds for optimism. We know our communities are strong and resilient. The city's public services are more collaborative now than they have been in many years. And with the Commonwealth Games on the horizon we have much to plan for, in order to celebrate and support the youth and diversity of our city. Birmingham Children's Trust looks forward to playing its part.

Andrew Christie
Chair

Andy Couldrick
Chief Executive



Section 2

Our Vision
and Values

2. Birmingham Children's Trust 2021: Our Vision and Values

Our vision is to build a Trust that provides excellent social work and family support for and with the city's most vulnerable children, young people and families.

We will do this:

- with compassion and with care.
- through positive relationships, building on strengths.
- in collaboration with children, young people, families and partners.
- by listening, involving and including.
- in ways that are efficient and deliver value for money.

Success will mean significant progress towards these outcomes:

- healthy, happy, resilient children living in families.
- families able to make positive changes.
- children able to attend, learn and achieve at school.
- young people ready for and contributing to adult life.
- children and young people safe from harm.

BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S
ONE **T**TEAM
ACCOUNTABLE AND **R**RESPONSIBLE
QUALITY
RELATION**S**HIPS
HIGH SUPPORT**T** HIGH CHALLENGE

These values are reflected in the model that underpins our practice right across the Trust:

- **Relational:** practice invested in relationships with child and family; understanding of relationships and attachments and their importance in assessments and plans. Built on the idea of 'High Support, High Challenge'.
- **Contextual:** understanding the context in which people with whom we are working are: family; economic; social; school; employment. Understanding context is pivotal to learning how we can help.
- **Trauma-informed:** practice based on an understanding of the impact of past adverse events and experiences, that is sensitive to trauma and focused on the means of moving beyond trauma, for children and young people and for families, building resilience and confidence.



Section 3

Strong Families

3. Strong Families

The Children’s Trust has pulled together an ambitious and innovative programme of services and activities all designed to support families, and to keep children and young people safely in their families and communities. Demand for care is rising nationally, at a rate of over 5% (in Birmingham that would equate to an additional 90-100 children in care each year). The rate of children in care in Birmingham is below that of statistical neighbours, and we believe that this programme will enable this position to be maintained.

Strong Families: Key Elements

Set out below is the range of improvement and innovation initiatives the Trust has taken since establishment, all built on three critical value propositions:

- children do best when growing up safely in their birth families.
- when parents are unable to care safely for their children, the search for alternative care starts with the child’s family and friends and, if none available, seeks alternative family-based care.
- all of our work with families is relationship-based and restorative (based on the simple premise that we ‘do with’ children and families, rather than ‘do to’ or ‘do for’).

The initiatives and programmes we have introduced can be separated to reflect our approach to **Demand**: meeting need in the lowest-tariff way, at the earliest point, preventing escalation into higher-tariff, higher-cost care, and **Supply**: ensuring that the services and care we provide to meet need represent the best quality at the best value for money.

Managing Demand Programme

Project/Activity	Description/Intended Impact
Early Help	Multi-agency work with families to prevent escalation of problem and referral on to social care.
Pathfinder	School-based and joint-funded Early Help programme: 45 schools plus City of Birmingham School (PRU). Reduction in referrals to social care beginning to result.
Preparation for Adulthood & Transitions	Joint programme with Adult Services: transitions and support for young people reaching adulthood and needing ongoing support to live independently.
Family Group Conferences	Formal process for families to take responsibility, make decisions and find solutions for their children, supported by the state but led by the families: more children stay within their families/return to their families from care - from 50 FGCs a year 12 months ago, we now have capacity for 350.
Social Work Practice Model	Relationship-based and restorative practice model, recognising importance of families, relationships and wider systems in which children live. Consistency of practice underpinned by shared values and acknowledgement of trauma. Helping our understand and intervention methods. The introduction of family support, domestic abuse workers and adult mental health workers to the ASTI (social work assessment teams) in February 2021.

Multi-systemic Therapy	Intervention with high-risk young people and their families, focused on reducing risk behaviours and avoiding family breakdown.
Contextual Safeguarding Hub 'EmpowerU'	Multi-agency hub centring our work with young people at risk of being missing, exploitation, gangs, guns etc. Joined-up targeted approach to managing risk and addressing environmental factors. Working with families as a protective factor for young people. Reducing consequence of exploitation on family breakdown.
Family Drug and Alcohol Court	Special court dealing with substance-misusing parents/families where domestic abuse is an issue, to keep children safely in their care where we would otherwise be seeking removal.
Reuniting Families	Programme aimed at returning children from care safely back into their families.
Safer Families	Partnership with a voluntary organisation providing intensive, volunteer-based support to families at risk of breakdown. Reducing risk of need for alternative care.
Strengthening Families Project	Targeted programme in Northfield: social workers and health visitors working together with expectant mothers where risks of intervention are high, to support more to safely care for their babies in the community.
Breaking the Cycle	Programme owned by the Trust working with parents who have lost previous children to the care system to enable them to make different choices about their futures and/or to care more safely for further children.

Improving Supply Programme

Project/Activity	Description/Intended Impact
Family & Friends Care	Care provided by a relative when a child cannot live with parents. Since 2018 the Trust has doubled the rate of children in family and friends care to 10.4%: still below the national average use of this care type.
Foster Carer Recruitment	Improved recruitment: media, social media etc. Trust now showing net increase in carers after 3 years+ of net loss each year.
Regional Adoption Agency/Strategic Partnership	Innovative partnership with a Voluntary Adoption Agency will improve supply of local adopters and reduce cost of inter-agency fees paid currently.
Improved Residential Commissioning	Reversing out of high-cost, poor performing block contract; reducing urgent spot-purchasing; improving cost and contract management; building new provider alliances to improve value for money and quality.
Recommissioning Supported Accommodation	Moving to a new commissioning partnership, working with a local voluntary organisation and Adult Services to provide stronger placements at better value.
Tripartite Funding Agreement	For children in care with complex needs, funding contributions from NHS and the Council (education) (DSG) are lower than in other

	systems. So disproportionate costs fall to the Trust. Leveraging a more equitable funding model will reduce the burden that falls to the Trust.
Lifelong Links	Project that reconnects older young people in care to family networks/important adults in their lives. Leads to lasting support networks and, for some, a swifter exit from care.

All of these programmes have been initiated since the Trust was established. Some have attracted external funding (DfE, OPCC), the rest achieved by moving resource within the Trust. Each project is in its relative infancy and as they gain traction and increase impact, so the Trust will be able to track and report on savings achieved/costs avoided.

Intended Cumulative Impact of Strong Families Programme

First and foremost, the goal of the programme is to produce better outcomes for the city's most vulnerable children, young people and families. Keeping families together and supporting families' strengths and their reach, to safeguard children, will produce better outcomes. For children in care, getting them cared for close to home, in stable family-based placements will similarly produce better outcomes. High quality residential care for those unable to live in their families, or in other families, will support their life chances and enable them to grow to become independent, economically active, social connected adults.

Clearly the Trust wants to continue to deliver its services at the best possible value for money for the Council, as our owner and commissioner. We believe that the cumulative impact of the Strong Families programme will be on both 'demand' and 'supply'. Neither will change overnight, but over a three year medium-term financial plan (MTFP) period the Trust is setting some stringent targets that will mitigate the cost of increasing demand for services and increase cost avoidance. Key amongst these are:

- 25% of children in care living with family and friends rather than in 'stranger' foster or residential care.
- increase of 20% in the number of children placed with Trust foster carers.
- increase of 50% in the number of children placed with Trust adopters.
- decrease of 10% in the unit cost of care.
- management of the care population to stay at least 5 points below our statistical neighbour average (this would represent 8-10% below core cities average).

We can anticipate, as the new city-wide early help service rolls out, a reduction in referrals to the Trust. However, there are many examples nationally of new early help unearthing and identifying previously hidden need and risk, so it is sensible not to set short-term targets around the impact until we have implemented the initial wave in five localities and extracted the learning from this. We know, in the short term, there is 'pent up' demand in the system around vulnerability, domestic abuse etc, exacerbated by Covid. The Council's Early Help business case already sets out the ambition in terms of the impact of orchestrated, integrated, targeted early help on future demand for Trust services.



Section 4

Strategic Context

4. Strategic Context for the Children's Trust

Three years on from our creation, the Children's Trust is now an established partner amongst service providers for children and families across the city. Collaboration with Police, Health, Education and the third sector are all stronger, and the Trust's leaders are now respected contributors to system leadership across the city.

The context for children's services remains challenging. Poverty, social exclusion, domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse all drive demand for Trust services. Our new, integrated partnership work on contextual safeguarding is already beginning to identify hidden need around young people's exploitation in the city. We are seeking, as set out in Section 6 below, to take a more creative approach to tackling these issues with our partners, building capacity and resilience through earlier intervention, and equipping social workers with greater skills and resources on which to draw with and for their families.

The financial environment remains a challenging one, but strong and effective partnership working between the Trust and the Council means that sensible short and longer term plans are in development to recognise the pressures under which the Trust is operating.

Increasingly Birmingham is seen as the exemplar set of arrangements in terms of Trust delivery and partnership with the Council, as the Trust's owner and commissioner.



Section 5

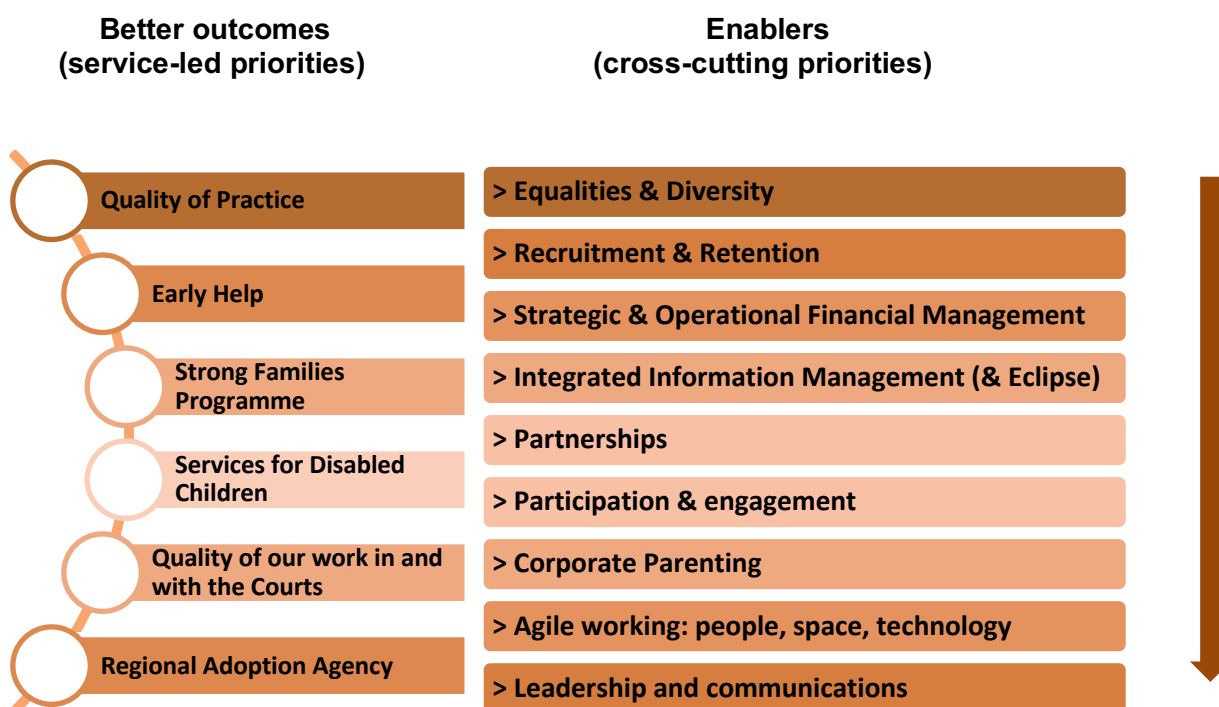
Progress and Our New
Priorities and Initiatives

5. Progress and Our New Priorities and Initiatives

We routinely refresh our Trust Development Plan and we regularly share it with our regulators. It is an honest and detailed account of our progress and our areas for continued improvement and development.

The Development Plan informs our priority-setting, alongside the review and audit work we undertake (for example our self-evaluation, the CIPFA financial management review) and what we learn from those who use our services and from our staff.

Our priorities are set out in the diagram below. That is supported by a table which reports in more detail what we said we would do in 2020/21 and what we have achieved. Some elements have been affected by the pandemic, but overall significant progress has been made.



As well as continuing to lead, drive and support better practice across the Trust, and in support of improving practice and outcomes for children, young people and families, our key strategic priorities for 2020/21 are set out below:

Birmingham Children’s Trust Strategic Priorities 2020/21: What we said; what we did

Strategic Priority: We said...	Impact/Benefits	Impact: We did...
<p>Review our service structure to develop a new operating model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social work structure • Emergency Duty Team • Disabled Children’s Social Work Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer social worker changes for children • More integrated day/out of hours service offering better responses and improved safety planning; longer, ‘flexible day’ in operation • Resources, focus and practice are better integrated with wider service to support Trust priorities and best practice: child-centred, family-focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Covid pandemic created new challenges to practice both in terms of emerging needs and service demand. As a result, a decision was made to respond to some critical issues such as points of transfer. However, the move to locality working and the re-defining of social work teams was paused. We will return to this work once the recovery phase following the pandemic is completed. • Transfer points examined to improve consistency of work • EDT review completed. Increased out of hours ‘Edge of Care’ support in place and improved day-EDT transitions • Children First improvement programme for Disabled Children’s Services will be complete by March 2021, including closer working with SEND

<p>Lead/support the development of a new, city-wide Early Help service</p>	<p>If Trust is the chosen deliverer of new service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New locality-based multi-disciplinary service 'up and running' swiftly • Increased active early help to children, young people and families • Potential reduction of contacts/referrals to Trust <p>Potential reduction in demand across Trust: Child in Need; Child Protection; Child in Care</p> <p>If Trust is not the deliverer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation supported to ensure focus on the right children and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust has delivered initial cohort of new early help workers, supporting four localities across city, with a fifth supported through the Trust SEMH Pathfinder project • Strong initial locality early help model established as response to Covid. 7000 families supported • Stronger partnership arrangements between Trust and schools established • Impact on demand not clear: skewed by pandemic effect and newness of service offer
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Strategic Priority: We said...	Impact/Benefits	Impact: We did...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome measures/success criteria agreed and in place • Reduced demand on Trust services 	
Redesign our Family Support service	(Linked to implementation of Early Help service) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less capacity used in Early Help • More focused support to children and families at greater risk of breakdown • Stronger links with Edge of Care Service • Fewer care admissions, particularly of older young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have completed a review of the family offer – we have implemented Families Together Plus and we will operationalise Families Together (the replacement for Family Support) when the Early Help offer is fully in place. • Family Support playing critical link in the interface between Early Help and statutory services, as well as supporting social workers in their role
Establish our RAA partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress towards position of 100% of Birmingham children placed with Birmingham adopters • Maintained highly regarded adoption support services • Compliance with Government requirement • Stronger partnership service model with Voluntary Adoption Agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business case approved by the Council • Procurement process for a Voluntary Adoption Agency partner is live • Adoption performance has remained strong

Strategic Priority: We said...	Impact/Benefits	Impact: We did...
Review and recommission our residential care and short breaks offer to children with disabilities and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved service effectiveness and efficiency Improved occupancy levels Greater tailoring of support to need Enhanced service offer through new commissioning approach (including potential strategic partnership for delivery) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review is part of the wider Children First review of services for disabled children, reporting in March 2021
Develop new commissioning models : care and support; new, Trust-owned supported accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move away from inherited block contracted model New care models commissioned, better integrating residential and family-based care New cross-sector delivery partnerships established Jointly commissioned Emotional/Mental Health Tier 3.5 provision Replace independent/private sector supported accommodation with Trust-run services: better quality, lower cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning Improvement Programme in train, working with the Institute for Public Care (Oxford Brookes University) New commissioning partnerships being established and improved provider/market engagement Joint commissioning programme underway with NHS and Children's Partnership around residential care for children with complex needs Developing plans for integrated commissioning function linked to the NHS Integrated Care System changes
Improve financial management via Trust-wide CIPFA financial management review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger financial management across the Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review reported Action plan being implemented Financial management continuing to strengthen in the Trust
Complete Business Support review post-Eclipse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficient business support supporting social work teams to maximise time spent with children and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 of review ready to begin Challenge from trade unions over a Council process out of the Trust's control risks delaying progress

<p>Commission (with Birmingham City Council) independent reviews: looking at demand; unit costs; practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To feed into 2021/22 budget-setting, an objective and independent position, agreed with the Council, reflecting future demand and growth in the Trust and consequent funding requirements • A shared Council/Trust position around prevention, early help and targeted support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective joint work with the Council, including Member-led star chambers, informed 2021/22 budget proposals • CIPFA C.Co review to be shared with the Council and joint action plan to be agreed • Agreed position reached on Early Help and adoption of Trust Strong Families programme
<p>Recruitment and retention pipeline: pay and rewards to keep the Trust competitive as the social work employer of choice in the region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective recruitment • Retention mechanisms, through progression and reward, that keep experienced social workers in the Trust • Further conversions of agency social workers into Trust employees • New social work apprenticeship scheme operating: first cohort of 'home grown' social workers commencing training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust Recruitment & Retention Commission established, led by the Trust's Non-Executive Directors • Specialist capacity brought in to improve the Trust's branding, marketing, external image and recruitment pathways in an overarching staff attraction, recruitment and retention strategy. • Investment in the recruitment team, additional marketing and advertising resources and methods. • Development of enhanced pay and non-benefits for hard to fill posts and all staff where applicable. Benefits statements published for social workers along with the Trust value proposition. A Trust car lease scheme is being introduced plus a new benefits portal for all employees.

Priorities for 2021/22

The Trust Board has agreed the following service-specific and cross-cutting priorities for the coming year.

Service-Specific Priorities

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits	Risks (<i>Mitigation</i>)
Quality of Practice	<p>(Continuous improvement will always be a priority)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted readiness • Ongoing focused work on assessment, planning, inter-agency partnership working to deliver better outcomes, and the function of social work teams/case progression linked to practice improvement • Improvements in Youth Offending Service (YOS) practice through implementation of Action Plan: higher quality assessments of need and risk for young people in the youth justice system • Stronger integrated service delivery across YOS and other Trust services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce fragility and turnover (<i>Recruitment and Retention Commission and improved marketing etc</i>) • Impact of Covid on capacity and management to drive improvement (<i>Trust wellbeing offer; practice supervisor training and support</i>)
Early Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services reach and wrap around children as additional needs start to emerge • Schools, Health and other partners supported to deliver a bespoke early help response • Additional capacity through new early help workforce supporting children, families, schools and communities • Maintained active partnership work focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of Covid on partner priorities and capacity (<i>Birmingham Children's Partnership signed up to the shared agenda and priorities</i>) • Greater need found and identified, but not responded to ie. early identification without early help (<i>Partners working together; outcome and progress data regularly reviewed; Trust early help workers supporting partner interventions</i>)

	on vulnerable children not attending school	
Strong Families Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand: implementation of the programme produces positive impact on demand for higher-tariff Trust services • Supply: sufficiency, market engagement, joint commissioning all improve leading to local solutions for children and improving efficiency and value for money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to implement programme (<i>Trust leadership and performance management systems</i>)
Services for Disabled Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement findings of review to modernise, personalise and improve services for disabled children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Doing nothing will mean that the offer to disabled children does not meet the standards of practice replicated across the wider social work operating model Trust wide. There have been a number of significant changes to national policy, we must be compliant.</i>
Quality of our work in and with the Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing work to reduce length and number of hearings, improve timeliness and quality of Trust submissions, reduce court reliance on 'independent' assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes fail to impact on the wider court system – shared responsibility (<i>active work through Local Family Justice Board; positive working relationship with senior judiciary; ongoing training and development for social workers</i>)
Complete establishment of Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) partner found; partnership established; improved pipeline for children in need of alternative permanent care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VAA partner not found (<i>Market engagement undertaken; positive interest from the sector</i>)

Cross-cutting Priorities

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits	Risks (<i>Mitigation</i>)
Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services delivered in ways, and by a workforce, at all tiers, that reflect the needs and experiences of the population we serve, equitably and fairly • Anti-racist practice embedded in our work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress not made, leading to inequitable service offer and increasingly disenfranchised staff (<i>Staff forum given voice to call leaders to account for progress; top-down focus on beliefs, attitudes and behaviours across the Trust;</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff feel equitably valued by the organisation in which they work; staff have the same opportunities for development and progression; HR activity reflects the workforce • Targeted work is undertaken to encourage support and progression for staff from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities • Bias and discrimination is unacceptable and is routinely addressed 	<i>additional capacity from dedicated role to lead and coordinate the programme of work)</i>
Recruitment and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust reputation and profile further enhanced and widely promoted (local, regional, national) • Improved pipeline of social workers joining the Trust • Improved retention and progression of social workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to improve recruitment and retention (<i>Recruitment & Retention Commission; dedicated focus; progress monitored</i>) • Failure to put together a sufficiently competitive recruitment and retention offer due to the Council's Equal Pay constraints or anxieties (<i>ongoing work with the Council</i>)
Strategic and Operational Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement actions emerging from the CIPFA and C.Co reviews, jointly with the Council's Finance partners • Enhance financial management at all levels of the trust • Improve efficiency and value for money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to implement actions (<i>action plan, governance and performance management</i>) • Post-Covid demand greater than planned for leading to financial/service pressures (<i>joint working with the Council; role of the Children's Partnership to support</i>)
Integrated Information Management (and Eclipse)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement further aspects of Business Support Redesign, including all elements of the Trust's IT strategy: Eclipse; Power BI; upgrades; hardware; HIE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial risks (<i>clear costed strategy</i>) • Capacity: small team (<i>keep under review; ensure prioritisation</i>)
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance Trust presence and contribution to all key partnerships across the city • Advocacy for the most vulnerable in these 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The city's history is not of a strong system so building and maintaining requires constant partner attention (<i>the Children's Partnership, the Safeguarding Children partnership and the Community Safety Partnership, plus the City</i>)

	<p>partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive closer, more effective operational partnership working in all contexts: information-sharing; collaboration; trust and confidence 	<p><i>Board, can all act as catalysts to drive and cement collaboration)</i></p>
Participation and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the reach and scope of our engagement with children in care and care leavers • Establish routine engagement with other service user groups: children in the child protection system and their families; children in need etc • Build greater co-production in our service development • Continue to focus on building engagement and connection with our staff through the Employee Forum, Wellbeing Forum, Equalities Forum and our communications models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service user voices do not shape services effectively (<i>engagement processes improving; co-production; surveys etc</i>) • Staff feel disconnected and disengaged from the Trust (<i>regular and effective communication; engagement and representative platforms; senior manager availability and visibility to front-line staff; staff surveys etc</i>)

In achieving our ambition in the coming year we recognise we have some key dependencies: changes and ongoing improvements not directly in the gift of the Trust but critical to our ongoing improvement. These include:

- ongoing SEND improvement.
- school places, attendance and exclusion as they impact on vulnerable children with whom we are working.
- deeper, stronger integration: early help; contextual safeguarding; Preparation for Adulthood etc.
- implementation of an effective integrated commissioning model: Trust, Council, NHS.
- the continuous need to build stronger collaborative working: West Midlands Police, NHS, Council, Birmingham Voluntary Service Council.

We want to work with our partners, and across organisational boundaries, to drive improvement in these areas to further enhance the positive impact we can collectively make for the city's most vulnerable children and families.



Section 6

Performance

6. Performance

As the pandemic took hold in March 2020, we expected that we would see some changes in need and demand for statutory services and as such, we anticipated that some of our key performance indicators would change dramatically. This has not been the case as we quickly altered our practice response to ensure that children and families received the timely response that they are entitled to.

We anticipated that referrals to social work services would increase significantly. This has not been the case as an effective Covid early help offer was quickly developed. This initiative reduced the need for children and families to be open to a social worker as risk and harm were prevented. This meant that social workers could respond to children in a timely manner. This standard has been maintained throughout the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic we worked hard to reduce the numbers of referrals to the Trust. We strengthened closing and step down arrangements, we worked hard with families and with partners to discuss next steps and this resulted in only eighteen percent of families being referred to the Trust for a subsequent time. We tested referrals and found that in the vast majority of cases the presenting reason was different to the last assessment and intervention. We anticipated that re-referrals would increase during the pandemic and this has happened. However, the rate of increase is much less than we expected or planned for at 25%. We continue to test the reasons for repeat referrals to assure ourselves of the quality of step down and closure.

For the third successive year, performance against the contract performance indicators has been strong all year. At no point since the Trust went live has the Council had to enact the rectification processes designed, in the contract, to deal with underperformance by the Trust.

One of the biggest challenges during the pandemic has been the progression of public care proceedings. This has not been unique to Birmingham and it has meant we were at risk of missing the KPI 12 adoption target for reasons beyond our control. Initially, the courts stepped down the granting of final adoption orders where children were already placed with their adopters. However, after a slow start and challenge to the LFJB, we were able to achieve seventy orders. We anticipate a higher number of adoptions for 2021/22 as a number of children are waiting (and so we have proposed an increase in the target for 2021/22). We are clear that the impact on these children is minimal as they live with their adoptive families. The pressure remains on the child's social worker as cases that would usually be closed are still subject to statutory functions.

In addition to the contract performance indicators, the Trust has shared its wider suite of performance measures (captured in the ChAT report), demonstrating strong and/or improving performance across the full suite of children's social care indicators. This full picture of Trust performance has been examined at both the Operational Commissioning Group and the Children's Trust Partnership Governance Group.

The Trust real-time performance reporting tool, Power BI, has enabled every manager, from Team Manager to Chief Executive, to view key data regarding need, demand and performance, down to individual level.

PI	Measure	Number of months where target met or within tolerances last 12 months	% where target met or within tolerances last 12 months
1	% of all referrals with a decision within 24 hours	11/12	92%
2	% of re-referrals to children's social care within 12 months	10/12	83%
3	% assessments completed within 45 working days	12/12	100%
4	% Initial CP conferences held within 15 working days	12/12	100%
5	% of children who became the subject of a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within the last 2 years	12/12	100%
6	% of children (under 16 years) who have been looked after for 2.5 years or more, and in the same placement (or placed for adoption) continuously for 2 years or more	12/12	100%
7	% children experiencing 3 or more moves in a year	12/12	100%
8	% of children in care reviews held on time	12/12	100%
9	% of care leavers who are in education, employment, and training (EET)	12/12	100%
10	% of care leavers who are living in suitable accommodation (19-21)	12/12	100%
11	Average time between a child coming into care and being placed with an adoptive family (A1)	12/12	100%
12	Number of children who have been adopted in year or who leave care	12/12	100%
13	% of agency social workers (including team managers)	11/12	92%
14	Average caseload of qualified social workers	12/12	100%
15	% of social workers who have had supervision (in month)	12/12	100%

As well as the performance measures, the Trust now has a well-embedded Quality Assurance framework, overseen by the Practice Hub. There is a wider range of performance audit undertaken, and the learning from audit feeds back into practice to drive improvement. Reports on our quality assurance work are shared at the Operational Commissioning Group.

The feedback we get from children, young people and family members about the work we do is a key strand of how we 'measure' how we are doing. Our Rights and Participation service plays an important role not only in advocating for our young people, but in ensuring their voices are heard clearly and continue to shape the services we offer.



Section 7

Governance

30 Arrangements

7. Governance Arrangements

The Trust is owned by the Council. But its day to day operational delivery is controlled by the Trust Executive Team which is accountable to the Trust Board in order to ensure operational independence. The role of the Board is to set the strategic aims of the Trust, oversee the management of the business and hold the Executive Team to account. It is the responsible body for the performance of the Trust in terms of delivering its legal and contractual obligations and achieving outcomes for children in Birmingham.

For the period during which children's social care and family support services remain subject to Government intervention, the Chair of the Board is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education. The Council retains "reserved powers" for certain significant matters including, for example, approval of this Business Plan.

The governance arrangements for the Trust are set out in the Articles of Association and its scheme of delegation. The Service Delivery Contract details how the Trust will work with the Council to ensure the priorities and objectives specified within the contract are delivered, how decisions are made and how the Trust is held to account.

A Governance Side Agreement is in place between the DfE and the Council, describing those areas of the Trust's governance over which the DfE retains some control, or influence, whilst the Council is subject to intervention.

The Trust Board of Directors has a wide portfolio of expertise and knowledge in children's services, commercial, financial and other disciplines. The Board provides support and challenge on the direction and strategy of the Trust. The volume of work generated for Trust non-executive directors (NEDs), and a wish to improve the diversity of the Board, have led to initial discussions about increasing by one the number of NEDs supporting the Children's Trust, in agreement with the City Council and DfE.

The Board consists of a chair and 7 non-executive directors. Details of current Board members are available on the Trust Website at: https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/who_we_are.

The Trust Board has established the following committees:

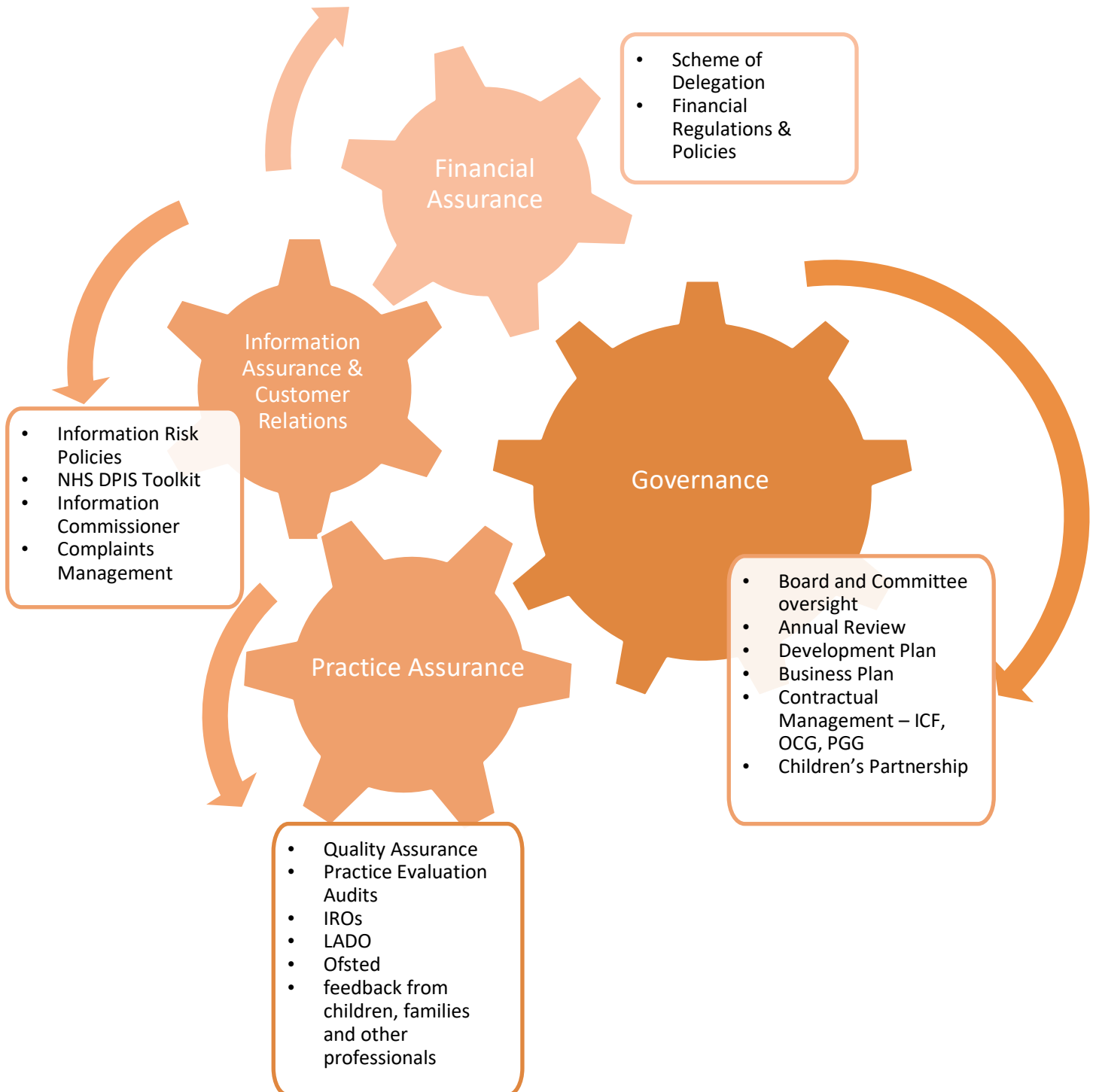
- Finance and Resources.
- Performance and Quality Assurance.
- Workforce.
- Nominations and Remuneration.

The governance arrangements, between the Council, Trust and DfE, have worked effectively during the Trust's first three years. The framework of Operational Commissioning Group, Trust Partnership Governance Group and routine engagement at Overview and Scrutiny, alongside regular meetings between the Trust Chief Executive and the Council Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and Lead Member, have together proved successful in ensuring that the Council is well informed, and the Trust held accountable for delivering the right results and the necessary improvements.

The Trust's Executive Directors consist of the Chief Executive, the Director of Practice, the Director of Commissioning & Corporate Parenting and the Director of Finance & Resources. The Executive provides management oversight of operational activities of the Trust under a scheme of delegation approved by the Trust Board.

Quality Assurance Framework

The framework below sets out how the Trust assures itself about performance, governance and other key matters.





Section 8

Trust Services

8. Trust Services

The Trust is commissioned by the Council to provide the following services:

- Family Support
- CASS and MASH
- Social Work Teams
- Contextual Safeguarding Hub EmpowerU
- Services for Disabled Children: social work; short breaks
- Fostering and Adoption
- Residential Care
- Unidentified Asylum Seeking Children, No Recourse to Public Funds, Homelessness service, Edge of Care, Family Group Conference service
- Care Leavers' Service
- Youth Offending Service
- Independent Review and Child Protection Chairs
- Support Services (including Finance, Legal Services, Commissioning, ICT, HR and Business Services & Support)
- Business support to the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership

A pen portrait of our children and our service is appended.



Section 9

Our People

9. Our People

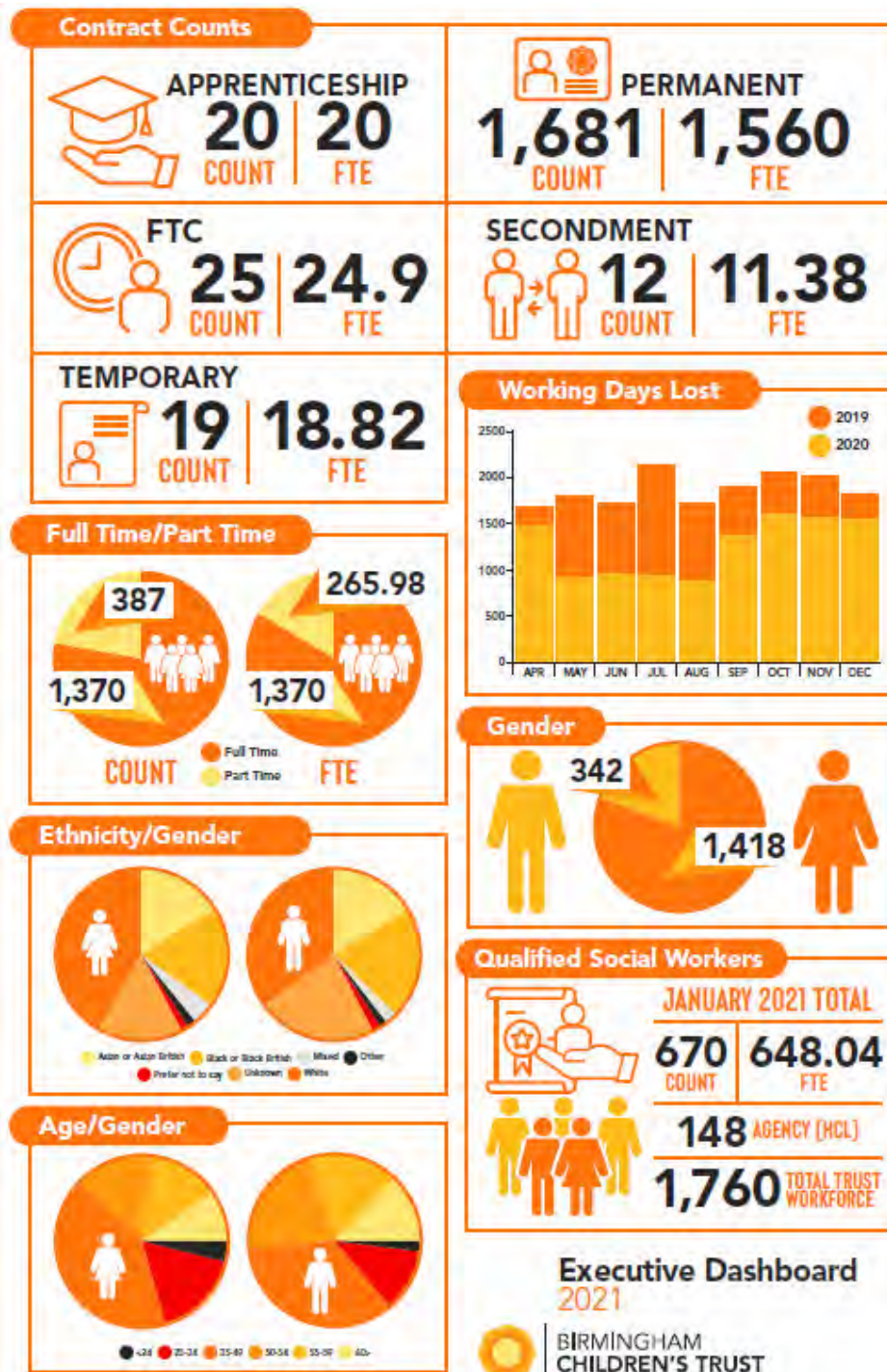
The Trust is committed to the development of our staff both in terms of how we invest in their learning and continuous professional development and in how we recognise and reward our workforce so that we are attractive as a potential employer and our retention levels are high. This is all encapsulated in our Trust workforce development plan.

A key element of the Trust workforce development plan is to promote the Trust as “an employer of choice”. Some of the key initiatives include:

- a development of our brand and “value proposition” to attract and retain staff through an improved digital marketing and social media presence and increasing the Trust’s visibility in the job marketplace.
- implementation of regular consistent digital recruitment campaigns across various platforms to target, in particular, regional experienced social workers to increase application rates and interest in our permanent vacancies.
- strategies and processes to streamline our supply of temporary and agency staff that minimises our unfilled vacancies and increases the size of our talent pool.
- introduction of a social worker apprenticeship scheme to “grow our own” and development of a Trust Academy to support the nurturing of those in the early stages of their social work career.
- investment and support in the career development of unqualified roles, eg. Family Support Worker/Social Work Assistant, within our social work team.
- a new training offer aligned to “Knowledge and Skills” for all the workforce.
- Trust-wide access to the benefits of the apprenticeship levy for existing and new staff for a range of professions.
- an established health and wellbeing initiative with a range of diverse support measures.
- improvements to our workforce succession planning, development and progression opportunities across all roles.
- improve employee engagement at all levels, through the creation of workforce specific task groups to include employees in the Trust’s decision-making and improvements to enhance their loyalty, inclusion and sense of belonging to the Trust and becoming a regional lead employer.
- a high importance placed on equality and diversity matters for all employees. This is supported by an Equalities Forum and the new role of an Equalities and Diversity Manager to support the development in this work.
- a strategic review of our pay and rewards to ensure they remain competitive and attractive including shortly a new range of staff discounts and salary sacrifice benefits.
- constant review of Trust HR policies to ensure the organisation’s people processes can be managed in the most effective and positive way.

The infographic below sets out the Trust's key human resources, outlining:

- different contract types under 'Contract Counts'. FTC means full-time contract. FTE means full-time equivalent.
- a comparison of full and part-time in terms of total head count and total FTE.
- a comparison of the 2019/2020 total working days lost.
- qualified social workers shown against the total Trust workforce.
- ethnicity and gender breakdown.
- age and gender breakdown.



An important piece of work with which we are well underway is around our approach to agile working for our staff and team-mates. We recognise we will never return to permanent full-time office-based working. But we recognise the need to get teams back together when it is safe to do so: we work through human relationships and those with our colleagues and our managers are a key element of our emerging success. We are exploring the accommodation we need, the buildings we use, and opportunities through technology to reduce our overall 'footprint', work in smarter ways that support work-life balance, and potentially share buildings and co-locate with other partners across the city, reflecting how we want to work.

We have a group taking this work forward, underpinned by an Agile Working Strategy in development.



Section 10

Financial Position
and Budget

10. Trust Financial Position and Budget

Introduction

The Trust's financial position has improved during 2020/21 with additional funding of £6.1m to meet the continued rise in the care population and increases in placement costs, offset by the delivery of a number of supply side savings, including ending some of its block contract arrangements, and securing other efficiencies across the Trust's activities.

The Trust delivered a balanced outturn in 2020/21 which is a significant achievement in its third operational year. It is recognised that the care population continues to increase but the rate of increase has slowed to 2.3% compared with 5.7% in previous years.

The Trust's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the next three financial years made a case for a further net increase in funding in 2021/22 of £5.3m to meet this continued increase in demand. A summary of the financial proposals for 2021/22 which were approved by the Council at its meeting of 23 February 2021 is provided in the table below.

Budget		2021/22 (£m)
Placements (demand growth 56 children p.a.)		5.3
Family & Friends (+89, less -78 fostering, -11 Residential)		(1.2)
SGO & Viability Team		0.6
Sufficiency (+39 Foster carers, -39 external fostering, +7 Adopters)		(0.3)
Staffing capacity	- Practice (including investment)	0.6
	- IROs	0.2
	- Legal	0.4
Better commissioning	- Efficiencies	(0.5)
	- Investment	0.2
Total		5.3

The Trust is not proposing any further increase across the remaining period of the MTFP and aims to remain within its funding envelope for 2022/23 and 2023/24. The key assumptions behind this are that:

- the Trust can deliver £2m savings in 2021/22 from its Strong Families Programme by increasing the number of children placed with family and friends, and continues to grow the number of its own carers, including foster carers and adopters; and
- the Council will make the proposed investment in Early Help of £5m per annum which will enable the Trust to expand its offer across the city and, in partnership with the other voluntary community groups, start to reduce the pressure on social workers.

A summary of the MTFP proposals is provided below.

	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m
Children in care	5.3	3.9	2.9
Demand management	(1.2)	(2.4)	(2.4)
Supply side (incl' commissioning)	(0.8)	(1.4)	(1.2)
Sub-total	3.3	0.1	(0.7)
Staffing capacity	0.9	0.7	0.4
Innovation & invest to save	1.1	-	1.8
Property rationalisation	-	(0.5)	(1.0)
Other efficiencies	-	(0.3)	(0.5)
Total	5.3	-	-

Contract Sum 2021/22

As part of the Annual Review (Schedule 3 to the Contract) and the Annual Budget Setting Process, the Trust is required, by 30 October in each Contract Year, to submit the Contract Sum Proposal to the Council for consideration as part of the Council's general budget-setting process. In response the Trust submitted its financial proposals based on the following scenario:

- a reduction of £1.8m in the grant for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- a net increase of £5.3m per the demand forecast¹ in the MTFP.
- an increase of 2.5% against pay budgets and retention of a pensions cash provision to enable the Trust to fund increments in 2021/22.
- an indexation increase of 2% for non-pay inflation.

At the Partnership Governance Group meeting between the Council and Trust on 26 January 2021 the proposed increase of £7.9m in the contract sum for 2021/22 was agreed as follows:

Contract Sum 2021/22		2021/22 (£000)
Contract Sum b/f		204,193
Adjustments	- UASC (full year effect)	-1,774
Sub-total		202,419
Demand pressure (net) per MTFP		5,340
Pay provision (2.5%)	- increments	2,060
Indexation (2.0%)	- Non pay inflation	2,238
Total Contract Sum 21/22		212,057

¹ The Council and the Trust have reached an in-principle agreement that the financial payment mechanism in the contract will be amended such that if actual demand exceeds the forecast then this will be dealt with via a contract variation agreed via the Operational Commissioning Group.

How we spend our money and how we are funded

A breakdown of how the Trust spends its money and how we are funded is given below for 2021/22.

Spending and funding analysis		2021/22 (£m)
Employees		93.1
Premises		3.3
Transport		1.6
Supplies and services		5.9
Payments to third party providers		107.4
Transfer payments to other public bodies		4.8
Total planned spending		216.2
Funded by:		
	Core contract sum from Birmingham City Council	202.1
	Government grants paid via Birmingham City Council	9.9
	Total contract sum	212.0
	Other grants and contributions received direct by the Trust	4.2
Total funding		216.2

Capital proposals

The Trust has made significant progress with its estate, with the Covid-19 response providing a platform to move forward some changes at pace and as part of the business continuity response. The Trust has successfully split contact and conference sites providing dedicated space for these distinct and separate functions and released accommodation such as the South Access Contact Centre as not fit for purpose. Additional investment in Business Services and Support has created a permanent Property Programme Manger role to take forward the Trust longer term accommodation agenda.

A wider review of the relationship with the Council as Landlord has resulted in the Trust taking forward a renegotiation of the Support Service Agreement to further strengthen and clarify responsibilities and enabling the Trust to act as the Landlord's agent. By seeking to establish a dedicated, Trust-focused facilities management role and to enable the Trust to look at the wider market for support with maintenance, these changes, once fully ratified, will strengthen not only quality and value for money but also compliance ensuring accommodation is fit for purpose for our children, young people and families and staff.

The Trust made a capital bid of £2m to the Council in relation to improvements and planned maintenance of Trust properties. This funding was approved by the Council as landlord on 9 November 2020, on behalf of the Trust. The table below provides a summary of the property programme:

Property programme		2021/22 (£m)
Improvements	– programmed works on operational properties	0.5
	- contact centres and child protection conferencing	1.2
Planned maintenance		0.3
Total planned capital spending		2.0

The replacement of the South Access Contact Centre was achieved in 2020/21 with the opening of the new Keystones contact centre and a new conferencing facility is still planned in the south of the city. St Andrews was repurposed as a contact centre only and the Willows converted into conference only facility. Proposals for a third contact centre in 2020/21 were affected by Covid-19 but it is still envisaged this will be achieved in early 2021/22.



Section 11

The Trust and
The Council

11. The Children's Trust and the Council

The Council retains statutory accountability for children's services, and continues to provide and commission all those services for children that are not within the Trust: education support, school safeguarding, special educational needs and disabilities, school admissions and place planning, virtual school for children in care, and early years services.

Improved outcomes for children, young people and families depend upon the Council and the Trust establishing and maintaining strong and effective partnership and joint working arrangements.

These 'dependencies' have been set out in the Service Specification of the Trust Service Delivery Contract. These reflect arrangements and services for children that the Council must put in place to enable the Trust to achieve its priorities and performance targets, and include:

- ensuring all children have a school place.
- ensuring where children are not in school, support is provided to help them return to school.
- ensuring all children have 25 hours education a week.
- where children are excluded, removed from roll or otherwise prevented from attending education full-time, the Council will speedily make alternative arrangements.
- that vulnerable children between the ages of two and four have access to free day nursery provision.
- adequate housing for families in need.
- an improved early support and local offer for children with special educational needs and disabilities: this area needs to improve following the June 2018 Ofsted inspection of SEND.
- provision of the Virtual School for our children in care, ensuring children in care, adopted and 'former looked after' children make the best possible progress and receive appropriate support to enhance their potential in school. This area needs to improve following the December 2018 Ofsted inspection.
- youth services that can be mobilised to support the city's most vulnerable young people in the community.
- further education, training and access to employment support.



Section 12

Working with
Partners

12. Working with Partners

Throughout the last year, and the pandemic, the Children's Trust has played a key role in building stronger strategic and operational partnership work across the city. The Trust continues to play a prominent role in the Birmingham Children's Partnership and led the establishment of the Partnership Operations Group and Joint Response Group, both multi-agency planning vehicles to ensure a joint response is in place to the risks generated by the virus, school closures and the impact on families and children.

We have been key partners in driving the locality-based Covid Early Help response, and have built much stronger links to schools across the city: every school now has a team manager link to offer advice, information and support. The emerging 'Team Around the School' model will further build support. The Trust has undoubtedly galvanised partnership working across the city since its creation, and supports many partnership bodies that are increasingly effective, across safeguarding, community safety and early help. We have strong links with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and increasingly also with the West Midlands Combined Authority (the Chief Executive is leading work across the WMCA on homeless families, for example).

We have built stronger links with BVSC and the voluntary sector, and we strive to recognise, respect and value the unique and vital role they play, not only in delivering services but also in shaping how we work, and how we work together.

We are formal members of the emerging NHS governance that will oversee the development of an Integrated Care System for the city, alongside Chairs and Chief Executives of Birmingham's health organisations, the Council and other partners involved across the Birmingham-Solihull NHS footprint.

The Trust hosts and co-manages the Preparation for Adulthood service, with the Council's Adult Services. This brand new service is meeting the needs of vulnerable young people as they transition toward adulthood and independence, and is an exemplar in service design and delivery for a group let down too often for too long.

The Children's Trust will remain an active partner in the coming years, supporting and challenging to ensure effective, integrated, strategic and operational alliances to deliver better and seamless services to children and families across the city. We hope that while the Trust Chief Executive is holding the DCS role in addition, this will give rise to new opportunities for closer working between the Trust and the Council. The Trust also wants to actively support the reshaping of the Council currently proposed.



Section 13

Managing Risk

13. Managing Risk

Key members of the Trust Board supported by the Executive have recently completed a review of the Trust's strategic risks in liaison with its external auditors, Crowe LLP. This has identified seven strategic risks as follows:

- Council - change in executive leadership and policy uncertainty
- Human Resources – recruitment, retention and welfare of staff
- Covid-19 – legacy demand impact
- Significant incident for child in Trust's care
- Regulatory failure – Ofsted inspection or other non-compliance
- Data intelligence and use of data
- Development of the Trust – delivery against the Trust Development Plan and work with partners

These events in isolation are considered significant but if they were to impact in parallel, the combination of these would pose a serious threat to the Trust.

These strategic risks will now form part of the updated Strategic Risk Register which will continue to be regularly reported to the Finance and Resources Committee and the Trust Board.

The Trust Executive will monitor and manage these strategic risks as well as those key operational risks across the various Trust's activities.



Pen Portrait of our children and our service

(31 March 2021)

Our vision is to build a Trust that provides excellent social work and family support for, and with, the city's most vulnerable children, young people and families. We give our best so young people can achieve their best.

Gross budget

£207.5m



Number of employees

1,829



Child breakdown by age

Under 1 - 510 children
0-4 - 1,451 children
5-9 - 1,778 children
10-15 - 2,590 children
16-25 - 1,885 children/young people

915
care
leavers

8.214
open
children

68 unaccompanied asylum seekers

494 Trust foster carers - **643** placements

13% of children left care through adoption

69 children adopted

4 disabled children's homes

33.9% youth reoffending rate (38.5% Eng & Wales)

Number of children with a child protection plan



1,273

Number of children in care



1,912

682

Number of disabled children



1,620
Children in need with plan

5,546

Number of families supported by Family Support and/or Think Family during the year

