

CELEBRATING 'GOOD' NEWS

Hello to Councillors and others reading this, our fifth Children's Trust newsletter.

Since our last newsletter there have been a number of major milestones collectively achieved by the Trust and the city council, namely being recognised externally by Ofsted as having 'Good' children's services in Birmingham and the Government removal and revoking of our Improvement Direction.

I am immensely proud of both achievements, on behalf of our Board, all of our fantastic staff and our partners. You can read a lot more about these achievements on **pages 3-4**.

I have recently announced my decision to step down as Trust Chief Executive, to step into the role of Trust Chair of the Board, following the news Andrew Christie will be retiring as current (and only) Chair. Read more on **pages 5-6**.

As we head into a summer free of restrictions I trust everyone will take some time to rest and recoup, following a remarkable first half of 2023. Once again, a huge thank you for the continued support you are providing.

Andy Couldrick
Chief Executive,
Birmingham Children's Trust



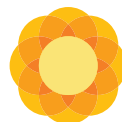
Trust staff celebrating the 'Good' news.

Current campaigns

On pages 8-10 you will find information about three current campaigns, all important, and all taking place to safeguard children in the city.

Please familiarise yourself with the campaigns, and where you can, please support.

- Never Ever Shake a Baby
- Private Fostering - Everyone's Business
- Bring FGM out of the shadows



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST

In this June 2023 issue

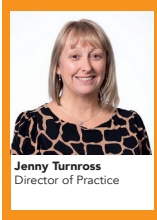
Update from Andy Couldrick	Page 1
Current campaigns	Page 1
Our senior leadership team	Page 2
Children's services get some 'Good' news	Pages 3-4
Leadership in the Children's Trust: Change and Continuity	Pages 5-6

Foster Care Fortnight 2023 recap	Page 7
Campaigns update - June 2023	Page 8
• Private Fostering poster/advert	Page 9
• FGM awareness poster/advert	Page 10

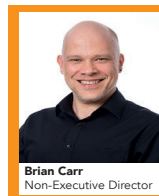
Our senior leadership team welcomes you

Children's Trust Board

Executive management team



Chair and non-executive directors



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

Contact our Executive management team

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Children's services get some 'GOOD' news

Significant progress in improving the experiences and outcomes of children has resulted in Birmingham children's services being given a 'Good' grade by Ofsted, following a 2023 inspection.

Children's services in Birmingham are managed by Birmingham Children's Trust and Birmingham City Council. Birmingham Children's Trust was set up in 2018 by Birmingham City Council to create the conditions that enabled good social work and family support to flourish.

Prior to that children's social care services in Birmingham had been graded 'Inadequate' by Ofsted since 2010 and had been failing for longer. Government intervention, along with the appointment of a series of commissioners, reflected the national concern for these services.

The City Council took the decision to deliver its social care services through a Trust in January 2017. The appointments of Andrew Christie as Chair and Andy Couldrick as Chief Executive followed. A new board of executive directors and independent non-executive directors was recruited, bringing a real depth of knowledge and experience as well as commitment. Through 2017 and early 2018 monitoring reports found continued and steady progress, with the Trust launching in April 2018.

In 2023 all five areas inspected were given a 'Good' grading, with many positive highlights focusing on areas including the quality of staff leadership, partnership working, safeguarding and corporate parenting.

The 2023 Ofsted report stated: "Since the last inspection in 2018, much progress has been made by Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Children's Trust in improving the experiences and outcomes of their children. Children are now safeguarded through effective 'front door' arrangements, thorough child protection assessments and a strong response to safeguarding children at risk of exploitation."

Andrew Christie, Birmingham Children's Trust Chair, said: "We are all delighted that today's Ofsted report confirms the progress we have made, and the quality of practice provided by our fantastic team. We know there is more to do, but the improvements are evident. Our work throughout has been shaped by the voices of children and young people in Birmingham."

"We have worked incredibly hard to ensure that partnership working with Birmingham City Council, statutory and non-statutory partners has become one of our strengths, and I am so pleased that Ofsted acknowledge this as a major improvement."

"The Trust is here to improve the outcomes for children, young people, and families, so to be told by Ofsted that 'children in care and care-experienced young people are genuinely listened to and actively engaged in recruitment, staff training and service development' is testament to the way our staff meaningfully engage with children in care and care experienced young people."

Continued on page 4.



Continued from Page 3.

Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, said: "It is tremendous news to know that the devotion and dedication of staff in the city council, partners and Birmingham Children's Trust has been rewarded with a 'Good' grade by Ofsted inspectors.

"The city of Birmingham faces challenges on a bigger scale than most, supporting some of the country's most vulnerable children, young people and families. This has been a long journey with a tremendous amount of work from so many people and it is an historic moment seeing their efforts recognised.

"To everyone who has been a part of that journey: thank you."

Councillor Karen McCarthy, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, said: "I am really pleased with our recent Ofsted Inspection on our children's services. It is a good read and I am pleased that Ofsted found that our children, young people and families that need help the most are getting the right support and appropriate children's social care services to meet their needs.

"Working together with Birmingham Children's Trust and our partner agencies we are continuing to improve in all areas of service. We have a way to go but we are providing better outcomes for all our children, including those in our care, our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and our care-experienced young people."

Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services at Birmingham City Council, said: "I'm really pleased to see Ofsted acknowledging the great and improved partnership work between the council and the trust and the positive impact this has had on families, particularly around our early help strategy. The report also notes the priority given to children in Birmingham by political leaders.

"Working together the trust and council are making a real difference to children's lives and we will be relentless in ensuring these improvements are sustainable."

What Ofsted said about Birmingham children's services:



On the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families:

'The Trust has made strong progress in most areas which required improvement at the last inspection, and pace has been sustained through the pandemic and beyond.

'Political leaders give great priority to children in Birmingham. Despite the financial pressures the council faces, investment in strengthening services in response to increased demand is a continuing commitment.'

'There has been a positive shift in the quality and impact of partnership working between the council and the Trust, along with other key strategic allies. This is particularly evident in the implementation of the early help strategy, with many more families receiving effective help at the right time.'

'The response to exploitation through the EMPOWERU (contextual safeguarding hub) service is a real strength.'

On the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection:

'Since the inspection in 2018, Birmingham Children's Trust and partners have developed and implemented strong early help services for children and families. Children and families benefit from an effective early help offer, with services that support them at the lowest level of intervention. Children receive a timely and thorough assessment of their needs that leads to effective plans that improve their experiences.'

'The emergency duty service responds to children's needs in a timely and proportionate way. The service interacts and aligns with daytime and weekend services, with effective handover arrangements to daytime services.'

Leadership in the Children's Trust: Change and Continuity

Birmingham Children's Trust was established in 2018 by the City Council. Our job was to build a new organisation that would establish the conditions that enabled good social work to thrive in the city, after many years of 'Inadequate' Ofsted judgements.

In building the Trust and in leading its work since, its Chair, Andrew Christie, and Chief Executive, Andy Couldrick, were clear about what needed to be achieved: a 'Good' rating by Ofsted, the removal by Government of the Improvement Direction as a result, and a new contract with the Council, reflecting their confidence in the Trust as the vehicle they want to continue to deliver their children's social care services.

All three targets have now been hit. In March the Council approved a new 10-year contract with the Trust. In April Ofsted published the report of its inspection of all Trust services, all rated 'Good', and on 26 May 2023 the Government confirmed they have lifted the Improvement Direction on the Council after over ten years.

These achievements are as a result of extraordinary hard work and commitment from everyone in the Trust, superbly led by its directors and assistant directors, and of some real support and commitment from partners in public and voluntary services right across the city, starting of course with Birmingham City Council, our owner, commissioner and key strategic partner. We recognise that there is always more to do!

Having reached this important milestone, Andrew and Andy now plan to move on from their current positions. They are seeking to do this in a way that minimises disruption and maximises continuity for the Trust. Andrew Christie intends to retire as Chair. Andy Couldrick intends to resign as Chief Executive, and has been asked by the Council and the Trust Board to become the next Chair of the Trust.

This means he will stay heavily involved, supported by the Trust Board, liaising with the Council and supporting the new Chief Executive.

A new Chief Executive will be recruited. Andrew and Andy will continue in their roles until a new Chief Executive is appointed and has started work.



Andrew Christie, pictured above, said:

"I have greatly enjoyed my time as Chair of the Trust Board.

"I am lucky to have been supported by great Non-Executive and Executive Directors, and a strong team right across the Children's Trust.

"Our partners in the Council have supported us very well, and the recent Ofsted report is a testament to the great work the Trust has done over the last five years.

"I am delighted to be handing the reins to Andy Couldrick, knowing that his knowledge and understanding of the Trust will not be lost.

"I wish him, and everyone in Birmingham Children's Trust, every continued success and will watch on with pride as we go from strength to strength."

Continued on page 6.



Andy Couldrick, pictured above, said:

"It has been the privilege of my professional career to come to Birmingham, to assemble and then to lead the Children's Trust through its first five years. We have made great progress, thanks to the commitment and excellence of the leaders, managers and staff right across the Trust, the support and challenge we have received from our Board, and the commitment of our partners to 'get it right' for the city's most vulnerable children, young people and families.

"I am excited about our next steps and I look forward to becoming the Chair, and working with a new Chief Executive, with new ideas and fresh perspectives, who will help us kick on, from Good to Great! I hope I can provide some continuity and stability through this period of change, and look forward to continuing to work with the Trust's brilliant people."

Councillor Karen McCarthy, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, pictured below, said:

"The removal of the government's Improvement Direction after 10 years is a significant milestone and testament to the hard work of everyone across the Trust and Council along with our partners. "We know there is more to do but we are providing much better outcomes for our children and families and these improvements are ongoing and sustained.

"I'd like to thank Andy Couldrick and Andrew Christie for their fantastic work over the last few years and wish them well. Working with them and their colleagues has been a very positive experience."



Revised direction to Birmingham City Council (revoked May 2023)

You can view the revoking of the revised direction letter on the DfE website by scanning the QR code below on your smartphone.



Foster Care
Fortnight
The Fostering Network



Foster Care Fortnight 2023 recap

Too often, due to a lack of foster carers, children are placed with foster families away from their local communities, and sibling groups are separated. This warning comes from the UK's leading fostering charity, The Fostering Network, joined by Birmingham Children's Trust.

This issue was highlighted during Foster Care Fortnight (15-28 May), the charity's annual awareness raising campaign, as they called for more people to come forward to foster, to ensure that children in need of a foster home can be cared for locally.

In Birmingham, more fostering households are needed to make sure every child that can't live with their own family gets the care they need and are well supported within their community.

Foster carers who can support sibling groups and teenagers are particularly needed locally.

Currently, there are over 762 children living with almost 600 foster families in Birmingham and the number of children coming into care keeps rising.

The reasons children become looked after vary widely, including a parent's illness or another problem which means they can't be cared for by their own family. Some children may have witnessed domestic violence or drug abuse, and others may have been abused or neglected.

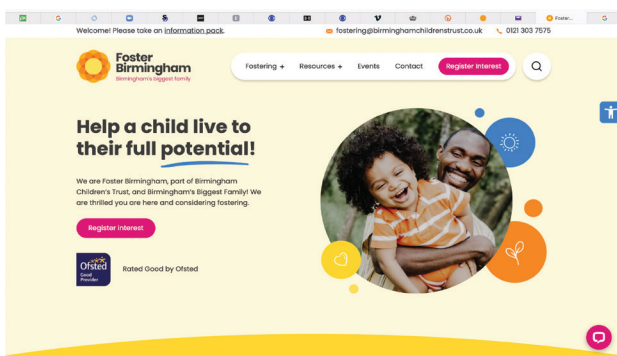
Some foster families look after children on a short-term basis, but for many, fostering offers them a secure, permanent home. Foster carers in Birmingham provide support and care in a family setting and enable children to stay in their local community with everything that is familiar to them. This minimises further disruption to their lives by helping them stay in their school, close to their friends, and maintaining connections with other family members.

Each child's circumstances and needs are different, but every child has the right to have their needs met within their own community, together with their siblings if they have any.

To find out more phone **0121 303 7575** or email **fostering@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk**

You can find out about the latest Foster Birmingham information events and drop-in sessions by visiting the **Foster Birmingham website**.

Scan the QR code below on your smartphone to go to the Foster Birmingham website events page.



Never, Ever Shake a Baby campaign: **A year on**

The '**Never, Ever Shake a Baby**' campaign, is being coordinated by Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP), working in close collaboration with Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and NHS Birmingham and Solihull. The campaign was launched in June 2022 in response to concerns surrounding shaken baby cases in Birmingham and the catastrophic consequences. The campaign urges parents and carers to never, ever shake a baby, regardless of how overwhelmed or stressed they might feel.

The campaign was endorsed by the Birmingham Children's Trust, West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council, HM Prison and Probation Service, and ICON – a programme which helps people who care for babies to cope with crying. After the campaign was shared with multi-agency teams across the West Midlands, the core campaign material, two short films, have since been adopted by safeguarding partnerships across the wider West Midlands region. To date, the digital campaign ad has appeared in the newsfeeds of over 320,000 members of the public.

The campaign has even been supported by Aston Villa Football Club, who have included the campaign in their match day programme, digital fan mail, safeguarding newsletter, Aston Villa Foundation Twitter feed, and their staff intranet.

In April 2023, the BSCP showed the 'Never, Ever Shake a Baby' films in the Bullring Shopping Centre to raise further awareness of the campaign's key messages.

To learn more about the campaign, check out the films on the NHS Birmingham and Solihull website by scanning the QR code below on your smartphone.



Private Fostering: **Everyone's business**

The Trust and Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership are continuing to raise awareness of Private Fostering - looking after someone else's child or children for over 28 days (if you are not a close relative).

You can see a promo poster on **page 9** of this newsletter with contact details so that you can share any Private Fostering arrangements that you are aware of in your area.

Please feel free to print this poster and share wherever you see fit.

Female Genital Mutilation: **Bring FGM out of the shadows**

The Trust and Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership are also working in partnership to share a very important message about FGM - Female Genital Mutilation.

We want the topic to be brought out of the shadows and talked about more openly.

You will find an awareness raising poster on **page 10** of this newsletter. Again please feel free to print and put up where you find appropriate.

The poster contains an NSPCC phone number to ring to report any incidents of FGM, as well as QR code, when scanned on a smartphone, will take you to further FGM awareness information on the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership website.

ARE YOU LOOKING AFTER SOMEONE ELSE'S CHILD?



If you have been caring for someone else's child for over 28 days, and you are NOT a close relative (such as a grandparent, uncle or aunt, brother or sister, or step-parent by marriage) this is called '**Private Fostering**'.

Here at **Birmingham Children's Trust** we need to be made aware of these arrangements. We are here to help you, and any children you are caring for.

Please phone: 0121 203 1888 (Mon to Fri office hours)

Please email: CASS@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

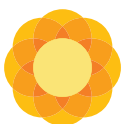
Website: birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/privatefostering



BRING FGM OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal and a form of child abuse. It has serious health consequences and can cause psychological damage.

If you, or someone you know is at risk of FGM, or has experienced FGM and needs support, you can confidentially report it to the NSPCC: 0800 028 3550.



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Safeguarding
Children
PARTNERSHIP

