

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

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

It is a New Year, with both new and existing challenges to tackle together. I have had an incredibly busy and inspiring start to my role as the Trust's Chief Executive, including hundreds of conversations and attending some fantastic Winterevents organised by our charity Bfriends, that you can read all about in this newsletter.

The Trust will continue to work arm in arm with the Council, including in meeting the needs of the Section 114 notice, and we will continue to do all we can to support the requirement for savings.

I am already impressed with the depth of partnership working, and I want to build on the strong bonds we have between the Trust and the city council and other core partners. 2024 will be a huge challenge for us all, but we are confident that by holding true to our values and putting children and families first, we will be able to continue with embedding our 'Connections Count' model of practice and continue to safeguard and support children and families.

James Thomas
Chief Executive,
Birmingham Children's Trust

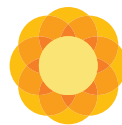


Current campaigns

On pages 9-10 you will find adverts for two current campaigns, both important, and both aimed at safeguarding children in the city.

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

- Bring FGM out of the shadows
- Private Fostering - Everyone's Business



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

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Trust property update January 2024

Trust staff have settled in very well in our new office base 'One Avenue Road' (see pictures) in Aston. The building has had high occupancy and work is now underway to add some wall art, designed by children and young people we support from Birmingham.



The latest phase of work at our other key base, Lifford House, is nearing completion, with all moves from any temporary sites to be done by April. We have now vacated Lancaster Circus.



The 'One Avenue Road' office is now the new home for our Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS), as well as our multi-agency Contextual Safeguarding team, EMPOWERU.

The 'One Avenue Road' office features a secure car park and on-site security.

Contact our Executive management team

James Thomas - Chief Executive

james.a.thomas@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

David Stringfellow - Director of Practice (Interim)

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Lisa Jamieson - Director of Commissioning and Corporate Parenting (Interim)

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New Trust web pages – Linking to support

Professionals working with families and families themselves are now able to access new webpages on the Birmingham Children's Trust website.

These new pages pull together helpful links to a range of support services for children and their families - early help support, financial support, schools and education, domestic abuse, housing, adult and child mental health and other support organisations.

The Early Help page will link to the Family Connect Form. Professionals supporting a family or the family themselves will be able to complete this form to ask for help from their local Early Help Locality Hub.

How the support now works

When you now click on the '**REPORT A CONCERN OR REQUEST SUPPORT**' button on the top right of the Trust website www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk you will be taken to a new page.

You then select if you are a family or carer, relative **OR** a professional. Depending on which button you press, you will be taken to a new page with different support options.

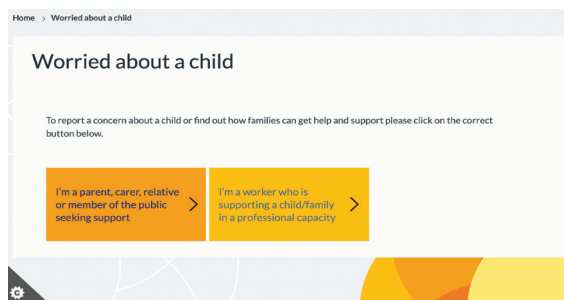
You can see the screens to the right of this page. Please take a minute to check this out for yourself, in case you need to support a family or person yourself.



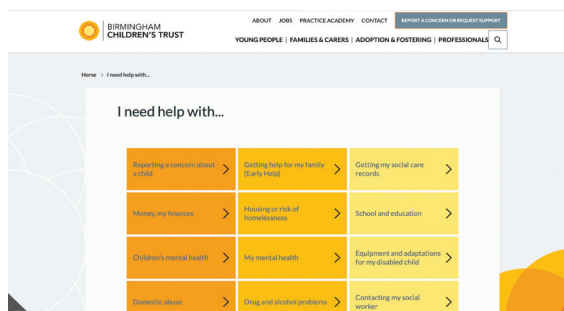
Above is the Trust website homepage - www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

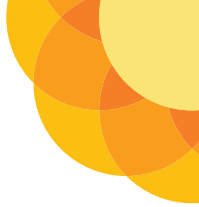
You will see in the top right a dark orange button, that now states '**REPORT A CONCERN OR REQUEST SUPPORT**'.

When you click on this link you will be taken to the web page below. At this point you select if you are a parent/carer or a professional.



The screen below then shows the different help and support options. This now means more targeted support.





BLUES PARTNERSHIP BEGINS

The Trust's official charity Bfriends is here to provide opportunities for children, young people and families through forging fantastic relationships with commercial and community partners.

One such partnership was struck in late 2023 when Bfriends started working closely with Birmingham City Football Club.

The Trust has a base (called The Willows) situated right next to the St Andrew's football ground, and now we have a flourishing partnership with the team.

To celebrate the relaunch of the Birmingham City FC Foundation an event was held at The Willows in early December 2023. A group of young people from the local community, supported by the Blesst Centre, were invited to come and meet some very special guests.

The guests were Blues owner and chairman Tom Wagner, Blues chief executive Garry Cook, and seven-time Superbowl (American football) winning quarterback Tom Brady (see below).



Young people had the opportunity to quiz all three special guests in a private Q&A session.

This was a very special occasion, as the Blues Foundation was launched in partnership with the young people it is going to support.

In late December additional young people, including Bella and Thomas, who attend short breaks at Charles House, came to The Willows to meet Blues players and be presented with a Christmas gift.

Bella even taught Blues men's first team captain Dion Sanderson how to sign 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year', with assistance from Charles House manager, and Trust employee, Julie Clark.



The gifts were donated by the Blues as part of 'Blue Nose Day' - **find out more on page 5.**

Young people and staff got the chance to meet Blues players and get autographs and pictures, below is the Trust's Clair Graham, Head of the Trust's EMPOWERU Contextual Safeguarding Hub meeting the players.



Throughout the day Trust staff came to The Willows to collect presents donated by The Blues and by the community, to ensure they got to children and young people for Christmas.

BLUE NOSE DAY 2023 RECAP

It was a memorable December for the Trust, our official charity Bfriends, and our new key partner, namely Birmingham City Football Club and their recently relaunched Foundation.

Thanks to the fantastic partnership working of our Bfriends Operations and Fundraising Manager Natalie Loon and Jeremy Dale at Birmingham City FC, an idea was concocted to hold 'Blue Nose Day' on 18 December 2023.



Birmingham City players Jordan James, Jay Stansfield and Juninho Bacuna support Blue Nose Day

'Blue Nose Day' was the culmination of a major fundraising campaign to gather donations from Blues fans and the local community to provide 11,500 Christmas gifts to be given to children and young people who are known to and supported by the Trust.

The campaign was a huge success as Blues fans bought sponge blue noses to help raise money as well as donations given from Blues corporate partners and sponsors.

'Blue Nose Day' itself was an incredibly busy and successful day. In the daytime work took place to prepare the distribution of the presents donated by the Blues. During the day 11,500 presents (teddy bears, winter hats, blankets and water bottles) were collected by Trust staff and community organisations, and delivered to children, young people and families across the city.

In the evening 200 Trust staff were invited to attend the men's first team game against table toppers Leicester City.



A member of Trust staff (Lawrence Vos) even became one of the official Blues mascots for the game.



Unfortunately the Blues lost 3-2, but at least fans saw five goals, including one by Jordan James.





Trust activities roundup

A number of activities are planned over the next few months. We especially want to remind you about our Corporate Parent briefing at the end of January.

Safeguarding Partnership Chair's Blog launched

In December 2023 Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) published their first Independent Chair's Blog, written by Penny Thompson CBE – '**Penny's Blog**'.

This month's edition includes features on their Practitioners' Conference, 'Child A' Webinar, Safeguarding Leaders Assembly, and Executive Board.

Scan the QR code below using the camera on your mobile phone to read:



Penny's Blog delves into the heart of crucial safeguarding issues, offering her unique perspective on current events, partnership activity, and more.

By subscribing, you'll stay informed about the latest developments in Birmingham and learn more about how BSCP is working to foster positive change.

Don't miss out - if you'd like to sign up for the next edition, as well as the BSCP safeguarding newsletter, subscribe now.

Use this link to subscribe:

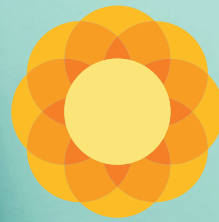
<https://lscpbirmingham.org.uk/newsletter-signup-form>



- The next **Corporate Parenting Board** is Monday 22 January 2024, and has a focus on Education.
- **Birmingham Housing Week** www.birminghamhousingweek.co.uk is from 5 to 9 February. We are working with Lovell on Trust involvement during the week.
- **Corporate Parenting briefing**
We will be delivering a briefing session on Wednesday 31 January – entitled 'Your role as a Corporate Parent'. The session will take place in Room 6 at the Council House, between 3.00pm and 4.30pm. You will have already had an invitation from Julie Goodall. This session will be hosted by Trust chief executive James Thomas, with support from Lisa Jamieson, Jake Shaw and Alex Hillman.
- **Continuing to make 'Connections Count'** - The Trust has its own way of delivering children's social care practice, called 'Connections Count'. This is the name of our relationship-based practice model. Training on the model continues to be delivered to social work teams to develop knowledge.

As part of the 'Connections Count' awareness a series of characters were developed into animations to better explain the model. You can watch one of the short films by scanning the QR code below:





**Foster
Birmingham**
Birmingham's biggest family

Foster Birmingham Awards Celebration

Birmingham's foster families attended a special evening in Winter 2023 to recognise and celebrate the amazing work they do every day looking after the city's most vulnerable children.

Foster Carers of the Year



Keith and Carroll Daniels were awarded 'Foster Carers of the Year' having been carers for Birmingham Children's Trust (and previously the city council) since July 1972, that's 51 years of service! During this time, they have cared for between 90 and 95 children, and they have provided both short-term and long-term care. They are still in touch with some of the children they have cared for over the years. Although Keith and Carroll were unable to attend the event itself, they were presented with their award at their home which they were very humbled to receive.

Tracy Collins, Head of Mainstream Fostering said:

"What a positive evening where we recognised and celebrated some of the achievement our foster carers have made to the children in their care.

"We heard some truly humbling accounts of the differences they have made to so many children and the excellent outcomes children have been supported to achieve, with many remaining part of their extended fostering family as adults.

Our foster carers are amazing

"What an inspirational evening! Our foster carers are amazing – they are all our unsung heroes and are committed and passionate about providing our children and young people with a loving, secure and positive family life.

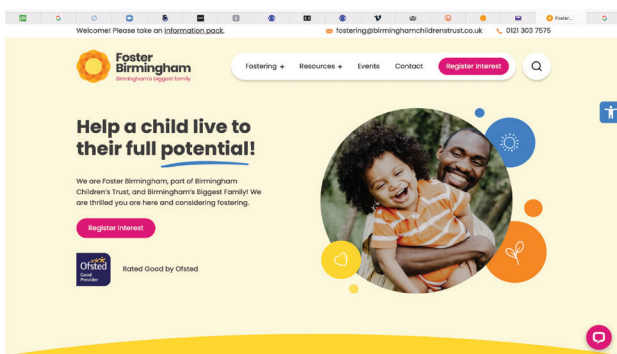
"The Foster Carer Awards is one of the highlights of my year and an absolute privilege to be part of."



**Foster
Birmingham**
Birmingham's biggest family

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.



Equalities and Diversity update - January 2024

Addressing race inequality continues to be a priority for the Trust and since the launch of our race equality strategy, the Trust has been able to focus on being a more equitable organisation by driving change through fairer systems, processes, policies and decision-making.

Forty-six recommendations from the Race Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2021 and twenty-five recommendations from the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) Plan 2022 have now been implemented across the Trust. In August 2023 we sought to build on this achievement by extending our work to include all protected characteristics with the launch of the Equalities and Diversity Action Plan and Timetable 2023/24 to support this work.

In addition to the nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 we have also committed to extend protection to employees who themselves were former children in care. Also, in accordance with Birmingham City Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant we have also embraced the Covenant's values of protection for this group.

The Equalities and Diversity function is now fully acknowledged as a key service area of the Trust. It is a well-used and valued service and cuts across all workstreams and service areas providing targeted support to Teams and individuals when needed.

Around 25% of our workforce identify as having a disability or serious health condition and for this reason we have recently focussed on this important area of our work. We do however have some good systems in place. Our Employee Assistance Scheme has an expanded range of support for staff. A Health and Wellbeing Forum has been established and our Health & Safety Committee continue to monitor matters that arise. In December, as part of our work for Disability Month, we invited staff with a disability or serious health condition to take part in a group discussion to share their experiences and for us to gauge our performance in this area. The voices of our workforce continue to form an integral and important strand of our work where we continue to learn from and respond to their needs - what we do well and not so well - in order to achieve better outcomes for all. Later this month we will be launching our Equalities Workforce Survey as part of our ongoing monitoring measures.

Festive thank-you notes

Some extra Christmas thanks to:

- Two Tesco branches (Aston Lane and New Oscott) who joined forces to collect donations for Birmingham Children's Trust. They ended up with 430 toys, games and clothing items. These items were kindly collected by Trust staff Alex Hillman (**pictured below with Tesco Community Champion Kelsey**) and Melissa Jackson.
- We also want to thank Hillsong Church in Digbeth, Birmingham, as they donated presents to our care leavers and their children for Brum Xmas Dinner.
- A big thanks too to all Trust staff who made any donations at our offices, and those who collected and delivered gifts to families and young people before Christmas.
- Special shout-out to Andy Lawrence, James Holmes, Natalie Polito and Jake Shaw for their support in delivering the 2023 Birmingham Community Christmas meal that took place on Christmas Day for care-experienced young people and their children. Led by Donate1Create1 and supported by the Trust, over 70 young people were treated to a meal, gifts and entertainment, along with free transport to and from the event.

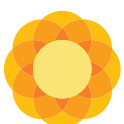




BRING FGM OUT OF THE SHADOWS

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.



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST



BIRMINGHAM
Safeguarding
Children
PARTNERSHIP



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