

# BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S TRUST NEWSLETTER



June 2025

Issue #10

## IT'S THE YEAR OF 'TRUST 2025'

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

The Trust continues to fulfil the Council's statutory duties for children's social care and we continue on our journey of continual improvement. There is significant national reform underway through the Families First Partnership Programme and we are ensuring that Birmingham is on the front foot in implementing these reforms.

We have made significant strides with our 'Trust 2025' programme. Trust 2025 is a programme designed to improve support for children, young people, and families in Birmingham by providing earlier support to families through more consistent lead practitioners. We have completed a successful pilot in Hodge Hill which has already had a positive impact on how we support families. And we are working closely with our partners through the Birmingham Families First Programme to test out closer joint working through another pilot in Hodge Hill in the autumn.

We have added a quick guide on **Page 5**. May has seen Foster Care Fortnight which has been a great opportunity to celebrate our incredible foster carers and to promote our recruitment (see **Page 3**) as we always need more carers! We also have been doing all we can to support our staff, with new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion networks and working groups.

And in June we look forward to our latest Wellbeing Week, followed by a busy Practice Week to celebrate and recognise best practice across all of our services.

**James Thomas**  
Chief Executive,  
Birmingham Children's Trust



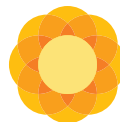
**Pictured above is the next generation of Trust social workers, taking a quick break from their induction with our Learning Academy and the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) programme.**

### **Birmingham Pride**

The Trust took part in the 2025 Birmingham Pride Parade on 24 May, in support of LGBTQ+ staff and allies in the city and beyond.

In addition, the Trust will be hosting two Pride themed events at their offices in June, with highlights including hearing from our young people giving a guide about use of pronouns.

Other activities taking place include a Book Club, film screening and arts and crafts.



**BIRMINGHAM  
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

### In the June 2025 issue:

<b>Update from James Thomas</b>	Page 1	<b>Trust in the media</b>	Page 6
<b>Meet our Trust directors</b>	Page 2	<b>Adopt Birmingham update</b>	Page 7
<b>Our senior leadership team</b>	Page 2	<b>Adopt Birmingham: Listening to Birth Parents</b>	Page 8
<b>Foster Birmingham needs YOUR help!</b>	Page 3	<b>Campaigns</b>	
<b>HR roundup - EDI and Pride</b>	Page 4	• <b>FGM awareness poster/advert</b>	Page 9
<b>Trust 2025 - A quick guide</b>	Page 5	• <b>Private Fostering poster/advert</b>	Page 10

# Meet our **Trust** Directors

- **James Thomas**  
Chief Executive



- **David Stringfellow**  
Director of Commissioning and Specialist Services.



- **Lisa Harris**  
Director of Help and Protection.



- **Lee Yale-Helms**  
Director of Finance and Resources.



- **Marshelene Williams**  
Director of Quality Assurance.



- **Lisa Jamieson**  
Director of Corporate Parenting.



Contact details for all of our directors can be found below.

## Contact our Executive management team

**James Thomas - Chief Executive**  
james.a.thomas@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

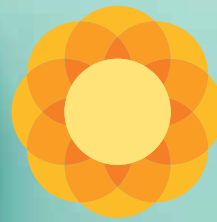
**David Stringfellow - Director of Commissioning and Specialist Services**  
david.stringfellow@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

**Lee Yale-Helms - Director of Finance and Resources**  
lee.yale-helms@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

**Lisa Jamieson - Director of Corporate Parenting**  
lisa.jamieson@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

**Lisa Harris - Director of Help and Protection**  
lisa.harris@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

**Marshelene Williams - Director of Quality Assurance**  
marshelene.williams@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk



**Foster  
Birmingham**  
Birmingham's biggest family

# Foster Birmingham needs YOUR help!



Foster Birmingham staff and colleagues across the Trust came together to support **Foster Care Fortnight**, a celebration of all things fostering, that runs from **12 to 25 May 2025**.

Led by The Fostering Network, the two-week event focused on 'The power of relationships' as the key theme, using the social media hashtag **#FCF25**

Whilst Foster Birmingham has a comprehensive recruitment strategy including regular face to face and online information events, Foster Carer Recruitment Ambassadors, a Recommend a Friend scheme, and an integrated advertising schedule to name but a few, more help is needed!

Every fostering household recruited makes a real positive difference to the life of a child. Therefore, we are asking you to please actively promote and support Birmingham Children's Trust's Fostering Agency, Foster Birmingham, by:

- Positively promoting fostering in your local area, particularly the bi-monthly information events, via any communications with your constituents e.g. newsletters, social media platforms, etc.
- Giving out Foster Birmingham literature.
- Liaising with Foster Birmingham about any opportunities for recruiting more foster carers such as events in your local area that the service can attend.

**For more information on the above and how you as Councillors can help, please contact:**

Pip Gagliano-Ransom, Marketing Manager: **Pip.Gagliano-Ransom@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk**

Priscilla Spence, Interim Assistant Head of Service: **Priscilla.Spence@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk**

## Contact information to share with your constituents

**The email address to use for the public is: [fostering@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk](mailto:fostering@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk)**

**Recruitment liveline: 0121 303 7575**

**Web: [www.fosterbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.fosterbirmingham.co.uk)**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/fosterbirmingham](https://www.facebook.com/fosterbirmingham)**

**Instagram: [www.instagram.com/fosterbirmingham](https://www.instagram.com/fosterbirmingham)**



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.



# HR ROUND-UP

## EDI Networks and Groups



The Trust has been making significant Equality, Diversity and Inclusion progress through the recent creation of networks and groups to support the needs of a diverse workforce.

We have three thriving networks:

- **Women's Network**
- **Wellness Network**
- **LGBTQ+ Network**

And two newly added working groups:

- **Race Equality Working Group**
- **Accessibility Working Group**

We are committed to expanding our networks and groups, and already we have had events and activities led by the leaders of each forum.

Events have included Wellness Walks, FIKA time (a Swedish social concept involving coffee and sweet treats), a Ramadan webinar led by a Islamic scholar and a webinar hosted by Jess Phillips MP.

if you would like to support any of the networks or working groups, by speaking in person or online, or if you would like to recommend any upcoming events or activities we can participate in, please email:

[EDI@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk](mailto:EDI@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk)



Staff from Adopt Birmingham, Foster Birmingham and the Trust's LGBTQ+ Network blew whistles and declared support for all LGBTQ+ communities at the Birmingham Pride Parade on Saturday 24 May.

The Birmingham Pride Parade march is one of the most important aspects of the entire festival weekend, enjoyed by tens of thousands of participants, walking, marching or aboard creatively decorated floats, and viewed by in excess of 75,000 spectators lining the streets of Birmingham.

Trust staff held up a giant banner supporting LGBTQ+ communities in the city, as they completed the full parade walking route to promote equality for all groups.

### Trust Pride Events

To further show allyship to LGBTQ+ groups and communities, the Trust will be hosting staff events at our office bases (One Avenue Road in Aston and Lifford House in Stirchley).





# Trust 2025 - A quick guide



## What is the Trust 2025 programme?

Trust 2025 is a programme designed to improve support for children, young people, and families in Birmingham. By providing earlier help and prioritising relationship-based approaches, it aims to achieve better outcomes and experiences.

## What are the programme's goals?

- Enabling families to receive earlier support and reducing the extent to which we need to deploy more intensive statutory interventions.
- Creating a district-based operating model for closer collaboration between communities, partners, and professionals.
- Reducing caseloads by delivering earlier support.
- Prioritising relationships with fewer handovers between teams.
- Improving care planning to help children achieve timely and permanent homes.
- Expanding foster care availability while improving the quality and value of residential care homes.

## What will this mean for Trust staff?

For some teams, this means changes to how, where, and with whom they work. For others, it's about incremental improvements to processes and practice. The ultimate aim is better outcomes for all children, young people, and families.

## Where is Trust 2025 focusing its efforts?

The programme has two main focus areas:

- Organising services more effectively at the start of the pathway - covering Early Help, Child in Need, and Child Protection.
- Providing better foster care options and residential support through the "Right Home, Right Time" workstream.

## Why do we need Trust 2025?

After extensive mapping of children's journeys and review of our current ways of working involving over 200 staff, findings showed that approximately 10% of children and families could receive help sooner if different approaches were adopted. The programme is using the learning from that research to design ways of working that deliver more effective support through relationship-based practice.

The programme builds on the Trust's Ofsted "Good" rating while addressing opportunities for improvement, and means that Birmingham is on the front foot in terms of our delivery of the national Children's Social Care reform programme.



# Trust in the media

Birmingham Children's Trust has had some very positive recent media appearances. In May 2025 Trust staff have been on BBC television and radio to promote social work related activity.

**Media:** BBC 1 - 'Morning Live' TV show  
**Date:** 12 May 2025  
**Topic:** Independent Visitors  
**Watch:** To view on BBC iPlayer click the link below and go to 44 mins into the programme.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Trust Head of Corporate Parenting and Rights and Participation, Jake Shaw (*pictured above*) spoke of the importance of Independent Visitors, before the show spoke to Mike, a Birmingham Children's Trust Independent Visitor and Ali, the young person he has supported for ten years. *Mike and Ali are pictured below.*



Independent Visitors are volunteers who befriend and support children and young people up to the age of 18 who are in care of the Local Authority. An Independent Visitor can be life changing for a young person, being a consistent and supportive person in their life, helping them learn to trust, have fun and grow.

**Media:** BBC Radio 5 Live

**Date:** 19 May 2025

**Topic:** Changing perception of how social workers are viewed

**Listen:** The link is below for the show (3 hours and 5 mins in total). The interview with Clair and Ken starts around 1h 15m 50sec in, until around 1h 25m 00sec. This clip is only available on BBC iPlayer until 18 June 2025.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Clair Graham, Trust Head of EMPOWERU - our Contextual Safeguarding Hub, along with Ken (*both pictured below*), a young man Clair supported to change his life, both spoke on BBC Radio 5 Live to support a new campaign led by Social Work England (SWE).

Called 'Change the Script' the campaign aims to change the public perception of social workers to a far more positive one.

During the interview Ken described Clair as a 'superhero'. explaining how important Clair was as a social worker in changing his life forever. Ken is now a youth worker, music writer and singer, and his highlight was performing at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games.





We wanted to share the updates **Adopt Birmingham** has been making to its Post-Adoption Contact services.

These changes reflect today's modern communication needs and research about what works best for children and families after adoption. Our goal is simple: to help build healthier connections between adopted children and their birth families, creating better outcomes for everyone involved.

Having on going contact with birth family goes beyond the idea of just 'keeping in touch' and the reasons why a child might benefit.

**After Adoption** states: *"it is not about maintenance of the relationships as they were with the birth family . . . what [children] like is to have some continuity that enables them to integrate the past with the present, and obviously then the future. I think contact can play a very useful role for the child in helping them understand their world and their life history."*

**Helen Oakwater** described the role that facilitated contact could play in assisting a child to *"integrate their past, allowing them to form a coherent narrative and more robust sense of self."*

Quotes taken from a speech by **Sir Andrew McFarlane** President of the Family Division for courts overseeing children's care proceedings. His speech from November 2003 is really worth a read.

To access a speech by Sir Andrew McFarlane: **Adapting Adoption to the Modern World - Courts and Tribunals Judiciary** - click on the link below.

[CLICK HERE](#)

## Breathe Trust Connect (BTC)

We've been working much more closely with the Breathe Trust Connect (BTC) team, a service that supports birth parents who are at risk or previously had a child adopted.

Together with PAC-UK's independent counselling services, we're making sure that when adopted children or adopters want more direct contact, everyone receives the emotional support they need during what can be a sensitive time.

## Lifelong Links

We have also been working more closely with our colleagues in the Lifelong Links team who support children and young people to re-connect with important people in their lives they may have lost.

Whether it's virtual or face-to-face meetings, one off's or lasting arrangements, Life Long Links has helped parties reach comfortable agreements and supported those crucial first encounters. This approach has been especially helpful when young people discover birth family members online or when adopters feel the time is right to connect.

## Letterbox service

Our Letterbox service is also getting a digital makeover. We will be piloting an upgraded online system that we hope will better match how we all communicate today, with options for sharing voice recordings, photos, and videos, bringing communication more in line with the modern day.





## ≠: Pascelle's Visit to BTC Parents

One of the most insightful experiences in developing our new approach came when **Pascelle Grewall**, our Manager for Post Adoption Support and letterbox service, sat down with a group of parents at BTC (Breathe Trust Connect).

These parents had previously had children adopted but have since successfully parented other children. Their candid feedback has been invaluable in helping us understand how our services really impact families.

*"I had the wonderful opportunity to meet these parents in an informal setting," Pascelle shares. "They opened up about what really matters to them in our service, and it was eye-opening. They told me that when letters arrive, it's such a relief – 'those letters get me through the year' was how one parent put it. Even when they've felt unable to write back, it meant 'the world' to hear that their adopted children are doing well."*

The parents spoke honestly about the challenges they face with traditional letterbox communication. Many find our guidance feels too rigid compared to what their hearts want to say, and the emotional weight of writing these letters can be overwhelming. The support from BTC makes all the difference in helping them respond, which got us thinking about how we can increase access for families without such support.

The most heartbreaking feedback was about when communication suddenly stops or is significantly delayed. *"One mum told me, 'I used to really look forward to the letters because they were full of updates. Then all of a sudden they stopped and I don't know why,'" Pascelle recalls.*

Several parents described the anxiety of waiting for delayed letters, with some fearing the worst: *"I understand life gets busy, I've got a two-year-old, but no letters – you fear the worst,"* fearing that something terrible has happened to the child and they have not been told.

The parents had brilliant suggestions too! They pointed out that even a quick message saying *"everything is ok, I'm just really busy, will write soon"* would bring peace of mind.

And they were unanimous that our current limitations on sharing media feel outdated. *"The ability to hear voice recordings from children would be 'life changing' and 'a dream come true,'" explained parents. Even drawings, written work or photos taken from behind would help them get a sense of how their children are doing."*

Pascelle was deeply moved by the experience: *"The warmth and connection between the parents and the children I saw was lovely to see and a real reflection of how people have an immense capacity to change."*

Adopt Birmingham recognises that in today's digital world, where birth families and adopted children can often find each other online from as young as 11, traditional approaches need to evolve.

We're working hard to build stronger foundations for relationships that can help children understand their past while developing a secure sense of who they are.

We express our greatest thanks to all the families who have shared their experiences and helped shape these improvements!

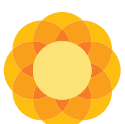




# BRING FGM OUT OF THE SHADOWS

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



# 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](mailto:CASS@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk)

**Website:** [birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/privatefostering](http://birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/privatefostering)