



BUSINESS PLAN 2025-30



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

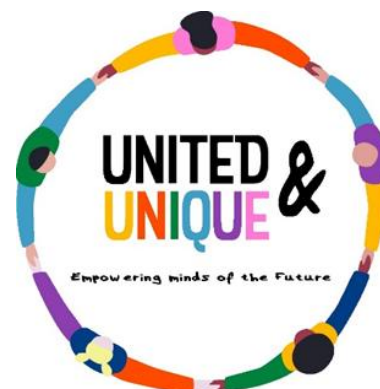
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Foreword from the participation groups U & U - Unique and United

Our Groups and Forums

'United and Unique' reflects our expanding participation groups that include our Junior Children in Care Council (Junior CIC), Children in Care Council (CICC), Care Leavers Forum, Don't DISability, All is One (LGBTQ+), Young Parent's Project and our new BIAS (Beauty In All Shades) for our Global Majority children and young people.



We are continuing to build upon our Participation work with a big focus on Co-Production. This year we are planning to reach more children and young people from different areas of the Trust and open more opportunities for children and young people to be involved in the work we do including consultations and interviews.

Our priorities for 2025/26

- **Improved Transitions and Supporting our Independence.**

This still a big area of focus for our groups. Our Children in Care Council think independence work could start a lot sooner and be a lot more fun to complete. They are making this a key project to look at how they create their own Preparation for Adulthood programme. Our Care Leavers Forum are keen to focus on Pathway planning, key areas shared by our care leavers are managing social isolation and supporting independence. We have seen with our Next Steps programme the difference it can make when making new friends, having a mentor/befriender and building a strong network of support around us.

We are still keen to look at how our Corporate Parents can help us better when living independently, managing our finances and with furnishing, decorating and maintaining a home. We also want support with key opportunities in education, training and employment. We still want a central space to 'drop in' to find out more about the opportunities and support we can get, and to meet other young people.

- **Coming into Care and Returning Home and Trust 2025**

Our Young Parents group are also supporting Trust 2025 to look at how we can prevent children from coming into care and can live with their own family. We support early intervention and things that can prevent children from having to be in care.

When children come into care, we want to make sure they have all the information and support they need. We are helping the Principle Social Worker to develop what this looks like. Our Care Leavers Forum are doing work on ensuring services and

professionals clearly explain their roles and what they do and they can support them. Many of our care leavers say they were confused about what different people and professionals did and their role in their life.

Our Children in Care Council are also supporting Trust 2025 to look at how children and young people could return home safely. This is something that we don't always feel is discussed or looked at often enough.

- **Hearing from young people who are often unheard and experience multiple forms of disadvantage**

Our Don't DISability, All is One and BIAS (Beauty In All Shades) are working hard to ensure their voices are heard and issues specific to them are better understood and supported. Our All in One Group is supporting our learning and Development team with training and helping to shape content for how workers are trained. Our BIAS group are working with an external partner to support research into their specific experience as children in care.

Our Junior Children in Care Council is reforming and we need new members. We are keen to ensure younger children in care are heard and their experienced better understood.

- **Connecting with more children and young people**

We need help from professionals, and carers to get more children connected to our groups and what we do. For any child wanting to you want to join a group, email or look at our social media pages or website.

advocacy@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk or connect through Instagram or TikTok.

[Rights and Participation Service](#) | [Child's Voice opportunities](#) | [Birmingham Children's Trust](#)



@unitedunique_



@unitedunique_

Signed on behalf of all our children and young people's groups and forums.

1. Introduction

Our business plan sets out the Birmingham Children's Trust's strategic intentions for the next five years in order that we can continue to deliver effective support for the children and families of Birmingham. The Trust moves into our eighth year with the confidence of the Council, government-appointed commissioners and Ofsted that we are sustaining our track record of continual improvement. More importantly we continue to listen to the voices of children and families as central to all that we do, both to do more of what works and to learn and drive improvement from what does not.

The Trust has reset our headline strategic objectives for the next five years with a focus upon outcomes for children and families. A basket of indicators is being used to measure progress against these high level objectives and as we refine this approach the evidence currently suggests progress as follows:

- Earlier intervention – cautious positive
- Reducing risk – inconclusive
- More in family networks – inconclusive
- Children in Care and Care Leaver outcomes – cautious positive

The context in which the Trust operates continues to be dynamic and the Trust's leadership team ensures that we are an outward-looking organisation that expects to adapt, respond and lead on the local, regional and national stage. Our relationship with the Council is central to the Trust and we are pleased to have strengthened our links and approach to joint working at the same time as fulfilling the comprehensive accountability framework that is in place. Key to the local context remains the s114 status of the Council and the appointment of government commissioners who provide oversight, and the Trust has worked very hard with Council colleagues to achieve the right balance between contributing to the Council's legal duty to set a balanced budget, and ensuring that the Trust has sufficient capacity to deliver our duties effectively. As you might expect given Birmingham's scale, we play a very active role within the West Midlands region and lead on a number of our shared priorities including in relation to sector-led improvement.

For Children's Social Care we are in a period of significant change through the national reforms contained in the Families First Partnership Programme, and the Trust is being proactive in developing our own approach through the Trust 2025 programme to deliver effective earlier support for families through a new model of Family Help, as well as leading the development of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams. We are providing shared leadership with partners in ensuring that these changes are delivered as a whole partnership through the Birmingham Families First programme centred around the design of a shared district operating model.

It is a marker of the Trust's maturity that we have developed a significant role in providing sector-led improvement support to other local authorities, most notably to Solihull as they progress on their improvement journey. We provide leadership for the region in relation to the slow but positive progress in developing the Safe Centre as a new secure children's home. And we are striving to be more systematic in drawing in more peer review and scrutiny to provide external eyes on what we do, such as the joint work we have done with Worcestershire in respect of our care leavers.

Our staff and our foster carers are our most precious resources and must take the credit for all that we achieve. We remain grateful and respectful every day for their skilled relational work, and we will continue to be focused upon ensuring we deliver the best possible system conditions for them to be effective in terms of workloads, supportive management, the working tools and environment, and competitive pay. Recruitment and retention remains a real challenge for a number of roles.

This business plan sets out our next set of challenges and priorities as we drive continual improvement. Our focus on the quality of practice, on children's outcomes and the experiences of children and families will be relentless. We will seek to strengthen our approaches to ensuring every child is cared for within their family network when it is safe to do so, to supporting families with our partners at the earliest opportunity, to working in co-production with children, young people, and families, and to strengthening the Trust's approach to recognising and addressing inequalities and discrimination. We will continue to pay attention to the organisational culture that will be key to supporting those approaches, in particular through collaborative and team working, and through seeking to maintain a balanced high support/high challenge culture.

This business plan, we hope, sets out a firm clear direction for the Trust that enables us to address the many challenges ahead with confidence.

Thank you

Andy Couldrick

Chair

James Thomas

Chief Executive

2. Birmingham Children's Trust 2025: Our Vision and Values

Connections Count with Children, with Families, and with our Team.

Birmingham Children's Trust is committed to the following values at the heart of our culture as an organisation:

- Working in collaboration with children, young people, families, communities, and partners.
- Treating everyone with compassion, care, dignity, and respect.
- Placing relationships at the centre of everything we do, building on strengths.
- Driving systemic change to achieve equity, equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Driving continual improvement through an honest culture of high support and high challenge.
- Working together as one team across the whole Trust.

Birmingham Children's Trust is completely focused upon improving the lives of children, young people, and families through four core outcomes:

- Children and families benefit from effective earlier support.
- Children and young people face reduced risk from neglect, abuse, and exploitation.
- Children and young people are supported to be cared for within family networks.
- All of our children in care and care leavers are supported to realise their potential.

3. Key Developments 2024/25

The Trust 2025 Programme will be at the centre of our drive for continual improvement, as we build upon the successful piloting of a Family Help approach in Hodge Hill and look to roll out these new ways of working across the other nine districts of the city. In line with the national reforms we are seeking both to support families at a lower tier of intervention and to achieve a significant reduction in handovers, step-ups and step-downs as we prioritise the continuity of the lead practitioner who has built a relationship with the family. We are aligning our Child Protection Teams to the district model of working with the benefits of being closer to the communities we serve, enabling better partnership working with consistent relationships within each district, and reduced travelling time. We will continue to work out of our two core bases at One Avenue Road and Lifford whilst seeking opportunities for co-location with partners at the district level. The Trust 2025 Programme also has a significant focus upon improving care planning for children in our care, increasing our fostering capacity and reducing our residential costs. It is through reducing the overall costs of care that the Programme will deliver our very significant contribution to the Council's overall savings plans for 2025/26.

Partnership working remains key to all that we do in our work with children and families, and we are working very positively with partners to develop the multi-agency aspects of whole system change to effective earlier support for families. The Birmingham Families First Programme is building a refresh of whole system working with a particular focus upon a shared set of outcomes and a district operating model, on which the Trust is providing key leadership. There is also joint work underway to improve information sharing and to shared use of our collective estate. Aligned to this programme is the work led by the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership to commence the development of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams, which will complement the new approach to Family Help, in line with the national reforms.

Having achieved positive feedback from Ofsted in the past year through a Focused Visit in respect of children in care, and our Fostering Inspection with a very strong GOOD judgement, we prepare for this year's anticipated inspections. We have a key role to play in the forthcoming SEND Inspection, which carries particular significance due to the previous adverse findings and appointment of a government commissioner to oversee improvements. We are in the second year of the ILACS cycle which means either a Focused Visit or a Joint Targeted Area Inspection. And we anticipate inspections in relation to both Youth Justice and Adoption services, as well as the usual annual cycle for our children's homes.

Our improvement work in relation to the Youth Justice service is a particular priority both for us and the statutory partners in the delivery of this service. We have appointed a new permanent Head of Service, we have sought to strengthen the Management Board and we have deepened our quality assurance as a core engine of improvement in relation to casework. We also continue to develop our EMPOWERU service and work with partners to meet the challenges of preventing and reducing children's exposure to harm outside the home through Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence.

There has been good progress in raising the profile of Corporate Parenting well supported by the Council, and so the year ahead will be key to realising the commitments made. We will continue to place the views and experiences of our children and young people at the heart of our work to support them and develop the service. There will be a core focus upon placement stability as key to improved outcomes, upon care planning that takes a longer term view including opportunities for reunification with birth families, and upon the engagement of older children in education, training and employment. Particular highlights will be the resumption of annual celebration events for our children in care and our care leavers.

Sufficiency of placement provision will continue to be a priority focus. We start with a focus on continuing the momentum of increasing the numbers of children cared for within their extended family network, supported by the more systematic use of family group conferences. Then we are working tirelessly to increase the numbers and capacity of our foster carers, supporting existing carers so that they feel valued and able to do more, at the same time as exploring all avenues to recruit the additional carers that we need. We are introducing greater rigour in our commissioning of residential provision as well as exploring whether a deeper partnership approach with a small number of providers will lead to both better quality and better value.

Building on the existing work that we do within the region in terms of sector led improvement, we will continue to be outward looking and will develop a more fully articulated offer of support that we offer to other local authorities and trusts. We believe we have a lot to offer in this space, resting on the core foundations of the quality of our work in Birmingham, benefitting from the scale of the organisation such that we both have a range of specialist functions and that we have some flexibility in our ability to release staff for sector led improvement work, and having evolved a well articulated approach that supports others to take forward their own improvement in their particular context rather than seeking to lift and shift approaches that work in Birmingham.

The Trust's Board and Leadership Team share the commitment to sustain a long term prioritising of our equalities work. We still have much to do both in relation to children and families and in relation to our workforce. The evidence of data and of listening carefully to lived experience makes clear that there are still too many ways in which discrimination and disadvantage can be imposed on those with protected characteristics. We have made progress in building stronger foundations for this work in particular through more explicit leadership, more systematic use of data, mobilising of our refreshed staff networks and action groups, and threading actions through all our strategies and improvement work. We need to maintain our priority focus upon this work year on year, and ensure that actions lead to measurable impact.

We have worked hard to ensure that in the key ways we drive improvement and in the way we develop the culture of the Trust, that we ensure every single member of staff and every part of the organisation is fully included. Priorities for us in the year ahead relate to further strengthening of our quality assurance across all our work; widening the reach of our learning and development offer with a particular focus upon leadership and our team manager cohort; recruitment and retention with more

proactive approaches for our hard to fill roles; the use of data and Artificial Intelligence. We look forward to bringing all our staff together again at a Trust market place event in December, which will give us another opportunity to celebrate achievements and people going the extra mile, as we do every week in our shout outs.

4. Trust Priorities 2025/26 and Beyond

BETTER OUTCOMES



Meeting children's needs through earlier support



Improving the outcomes for children in care and care leavers



Improved care planning and reducing drift and delay



Enabling more children to be cared for in their family networks



Improved support for children in the youth justice system and experiencing harm outside the home



More foster carers recruited

ENABLERS



Equality, Diversity and Wellbeing Plans



Recruitment and Retention



Participation and Co-production



Strengthened partnership working



Delivering the system conditions for 'Connections Count'



Deepening our quality assurance and learning culture

Priorities for 2025/26

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits
Meeting children's needs through effective earlier support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering "Right Help, Right Time" so that families experience services as supportive • Rolling out the Family Help district delivery model to minimise handovers of the lead professional role • Seeking to meet the needs of more families at a lower tier of intervention
Improving the outcomes for children in care and care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving measurable outcomes in respect of placement stability, educational progress and attainment, and health outcomes • Education, Training and Employment (ETE) and suitable accommodation for care leavers • Qualitative measures of children and young people's experience
Improved care planning and reducing drift and delay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt response following referral • Care plans drawn up in co-production with children and families in a timely way • No drift for children in care – IROs to have more impact
Enabling more children to be cared for in their family networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children whose Care Order can be revoked to enable care in the family should have this achieved • Increased numbers of children achieving permanency through Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) • Reduced numbers of children coming into care in late adolescence • Increase in the proportion of connected carers
Improved support for children in the youth justice system and experiencing harm outside the home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved experience and outcomes for children • Reduced levels of harm to children and the public
More foster carers recruited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone child who needs a foster placement should have access to one • Reduced use of residential care
Equality, Diversity and Wellbeing Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments and services that address equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and its impact on children with whom we work • Maintaining progress on our challenge to become an

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits
	anti-racist employer and service provider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving our diversity in leadership roles
Recruitment and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved brand and marketing 'presence' • Reduced reliance on agency workforce • More children placed with Trust foster and adoptive carers
Participation and Co-production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care plans that are drafted with children and parents/ carers • Increasing use of Family Group Conferences • Co-production priority workplan with our participation groups
Strengthened partnership working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased impact of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership • Stronger partnership offer through the Birmingham Families First Programme • Effective joint working between front-line practitioners
Delivering the system conditions for Connections Count	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manageable caseloads and workloads • Support first line managers • Strong continuing professional development (CPD) offer • Competitive salary • Support systems and tools that support
Deepening our quality assurance and learning culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative auditing programme across the Trust • Increasing evidence of learning being implemented

5. Performance Overview

The Trust contractual performance indicators include activity measures (KPIs 4 and 8), some that are shared with the Council (KPIs 7a, 7b, 12a and 12b) and the remainder sit with the Trust.

Across both 2023/24 and 2024/25, the Trust has consistently delivered strong performance against these indicators.

In 2023/24, Birmingham Children's Trust delivered commendable results across the majority of its contractual indicators. Targets were met, and performance remained within agreed tolerances for nearly all measures. There was only one instance during the year when the timeliness of all assessments fell below target and outside tolerance levels. Despite this brief dip, timeliness at the front door remained robust, with over 90% of assessments completed on time throughout the year.

Performance has continued to strengthen in 2024/25. The timeliness of assessments has not only remained within target but has consistently exceeded expectations. Additionally, the proportion of agency social workers, which was initially above the desired level, has been steadily declining month on month. This downward trend is particularly encouraging, as the Trust is now outperforming both regional and statistical neighbours. Our targeted efforts to convert agency staff into permanent employees have proven highly effective, with many choosing to continue their careers with us. This not only enhances workforce stability but also strengthens continuity of service for children and families.

Overall, our performance reflects a strong and sustained commitment to excellence and good outcomes for children. These outcomes reflect the Trust's unwavering commitment to high-quality, timely, and impactful service delivery in terms of both operational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. We remain focused on continuous improvement and delivering services that make a meaningful difference to children and families across Birmingham.

Summary of Trust performance 2023/24 and 2024/25

The key performance indicators for 2023/24 and 2024/25 are set out below.

No.	Indicator	No. of months on target or within tolerances or last 12 months 2024	% where target met or within tolerances last 12 Months 2024	No. of months on target or within tolerances or last 12 months 2025	% where target met or within tolerances last 12 Months 2025
KPI 1	Percentage of re-referrals to children's social care within 12 months	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 2	Percentage of assessments completed in 45 working days or less	11	92%	12	100%
KPI 3	Percentage of children in need on a plan for more than three months	No target or tolerance set	No target or tolerance set	No target or tolerance set	No target or tolerance set
KPI 4	Rate of section 47 enquiries per 10,000 of the u18 children and young people population	No target or tolerance set	No target or tolerance set	No target or tolerance set	No target or tolerance set
KPI 5	Percentage of initial child protection conferences held within 15 days	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 6a	Percentage of child protection plans lasting two years or more	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 6b	Percentage of child protection plans for a 2nd or subsequent time in the last 2 years	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 7a	Rate of children looked after per 10,000 under 18 population	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 7b	Percentage of children in care living in foster care	12	100%	12	100%

No.	Indicator	No. of months on target or within tolerances or last 12 months 2024	% where target met or within tolerances last 12 Months 2024	No. of months on target or within tolerances or last 12 months 2025	% where target met or within tolerances last 12 Months 2025
KPI 7c	Percentage of children in care living in residential care	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 7d	Percentage children in care living with their family networks	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 8	Number of children waiting for adoption	No target set	No tolerance set		
KPI 9a	Children in care with 3+ home (placement) moves within 12months	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 9b	Children in care in home (placement) for 2.5 years or more	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 10	Percentage of children and young people placed within 20 miles of home address	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 11a	Percentage of care leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 18th Birthday	12	100%	10/12	83%
KPI 11b	Percentage of care leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 19th to 21st Birthday	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 12a	Care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 19-21 (reported monthly for Q1-4)	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 12b	Care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 17-18 (reported monthly for Q1-4)	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 13	Average caseload per social worker	12	100%	12	100%
KPI 14	Percentage of agency social workers	0	0%	0	0%
KPI 15	Reoffending rate	Annual	Annual		

6. Governance Arrangements

The Trust is owned by the Council. Its day-to-day operational delivery is controlled by the Trust Executive Team which is accountable to the Trust Board 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.

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. The Council retains “reserved powers” for certain significant matters including, for example, approval of this Business Plan.

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 Board consists of a chair and eight non-executive directors, one of whom is appointed by the City Council. Details of current Board members are available on the Trust’s website at: [https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/who we are](https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/who_we_are).

The Trust Board has established the following committees:

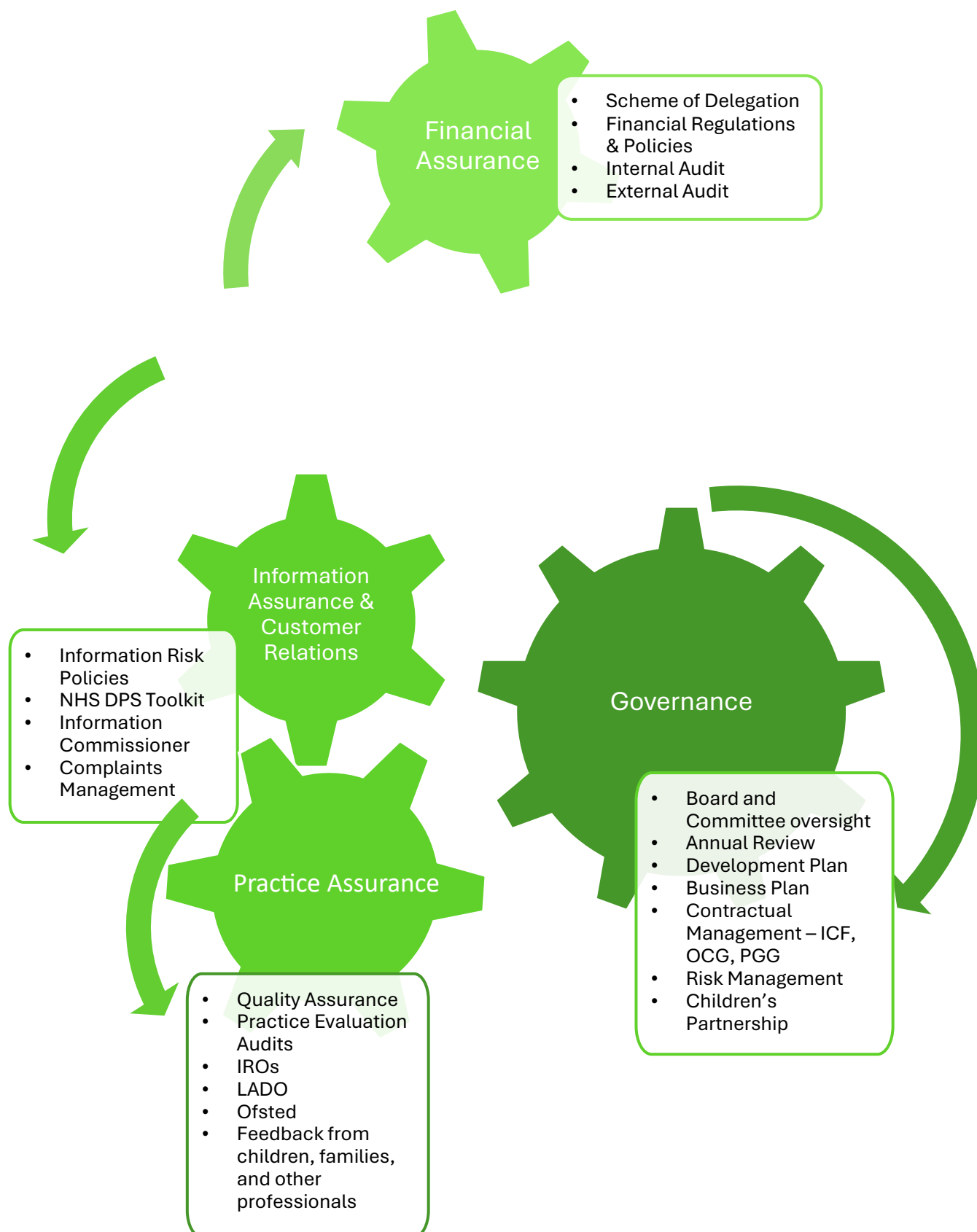
- Finance and Resources.
- Performance and Quality Assurance.
- Workforce.
- Nominations and Remuneration.

The governance arrangements between the Council, Trust and DfE continue to work effectively. 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 Managing Director, 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 Help and Protection, the Director of Corporate Parenting, the Director of Commissioning and Specialist Services, the Director of Quality Assurance and the Director of Finance and 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.



7. Trust Services

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

- Early Help Services
- Families Together
- Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- Social Work teams
- Contextual Safeguarding Hub EmpowerU
- Services for Disabled Children: social work; short breaks
- Adoption (Regional Adoption Agency) and Fostering
- Residential Care
- Placements and commissioning
- Rights, participation, and advocacy
- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, No Recourse to Public Funds, Homelessness service, Edge of Care, Family Group Conference service
- Care Leavers' Service
- Youth Justice Service
- Family Drug and Alcohol Court
- Independent Review Service and Child Protection Chairs
- Support Services (including Finance, Legal Services, Commissioning, ICT, HR, Business Services & Support, Customer Relations)
- Business support to the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership

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

8. 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. This is captured within our Workforce Strategy 2025-2028 which is currently being refreshed.

Our Workforce Strategy is designed to ensure that we attract, develop, and retain a talented and dedicated team committed to delivering exceptional services for children, young people and families.

Over the next three years, we will continue to focus on creating an environment where every employee can thrive, feel valued, and contribute to our mission of improving the lives of children in Birmingham. We will do this through our continued commitment to four key areas:

1. Attracting and Retaining Talent
2. Raising Skills and Standards
3. Health, Wellbeing and Belonging
4. Reward and Recognition

Some of our commitments include:

- Ensuring the Trust's recruitment processes are safe, inclusive, effective and reflect best practice. Developing our brand and "value proposition" to attract and retain staff through an improved digital marketing and social media presence and by increasing the Trust's visibility in the job marketplace.
- Scaling up our apprenticeship offer for Social Workers, Family Facing roles and Professional Services, making effective use of the apprenticeship levy. Continuing our successful social worker ASYE programme and apprenticeship scheme to "grow our own".
- Strategies and processes to streamline our supply of temporary and agency staff that minimise our unfilled vacancies and increase the size of our talent pool.
- Providing ongoing training and development opportunities to ensure our team members are equipped with the latest skills and knowledge. Supporting career development of differently qualified roles eg. Family Support Worker/Social Work Assistant, within our social work teams.
- Continuing to invest in all levels of leadership and management development so that our People Managers have the skills to support their employees and get

the best from their teams.

- Reviewing our practice operating model and roles in an effort to build clearer and stronger career pathways for experienced social workers alongside improvements to our workforce succession planning, development, and progression opportunities across all roles.
- We will continue to cultivate an inclusive culture where diversity is celebrated, and every individual feels a sense of belonging and respect. Supporting our leaders to be empathetic and supportive, ensuring they have the skills to lead with care, appreciation and to support wellbeing in the workplace.
- We will continue to understand the pressure of work and take a trauma-informed approach to managing and supporting colleagues. Developing an improved emotional support offer for our people, based on our trauma-informed principles.
- We will continue to develop a clear offer to support colleagues with both visible and hidden disabilities, ensuring everyone has the support and tools to reach their full potential. Delivering health and wellbeing initiative with a range of diverse support measures.
- Establishing regular recognition programs to celebrate milestones, outstanding performance, and innovative contributions. Ensuring that our recognition programs are inclusive and accessible to all employees, regardless of their role or location.
- Ongoing review of our pay and non-pay benefits to ensure they remain competitive and attractive.
- A review of our HR service and functional products to ensure alignment with the business need.
- Constant review of Trust HR policies to ensure the organisation's people processes can be managed in the most effective and positive way.

By investing in our people, we are building a resilient and adaptable workforce ready to meet future challenges and deliver the highest standards of care and support.

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

- a comparison of full and part-time in terms of total head count and total FTE.
- a comparison of the sickness days lost.
- qualified social workers shown against the total Trust workforce.

- ethnicity and gender breakdown.
- age and gender breakdown.
- HC means headcount. FTE means full-time equivalent.



OUR WORKFORCE

31st March 2025

OUR PEOPLE

 **2,346**
Headcount

 **2,124**
FTE

 **751**
Social Workers

 **81%**
Female

 **19%**
Male

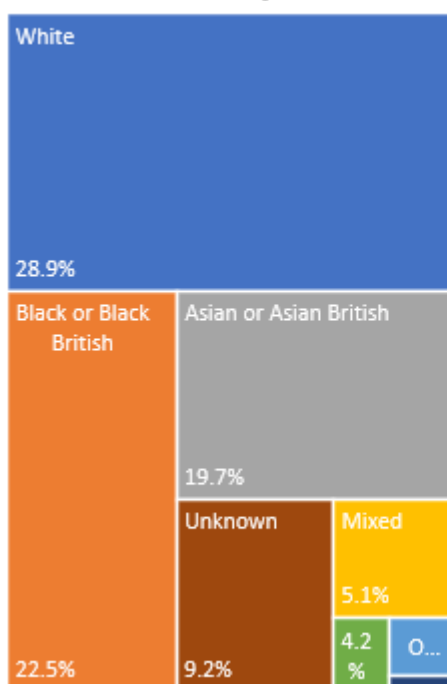
 **2.9%**
Disability

 **79%**
Full Time
21%
Part Time

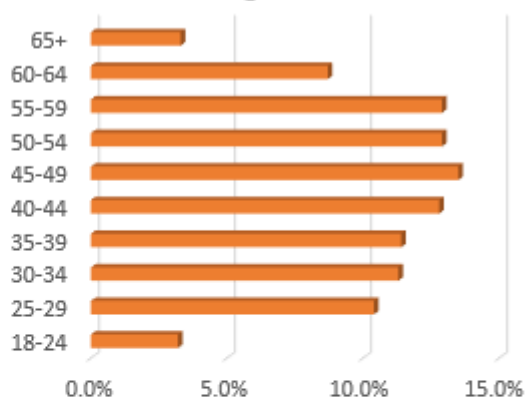
54 
Apprenticeships

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Ethnicity



Age



Sexual Orientation	
Sexual Orientation	Percentage
Bisexual	0.7%
Gay	0.6%
Heterosexual	64.3%
Lesbian	0.2%
Other	0.5%
Unknown	33.7%

OFFICIAL

9. Trust Financial Position and Budget

The Trust's financial position for 2024/25 has been challenging. The forecast rise in the care population has again proven to be very accurate, this, together with complexity of need and a continued rise in the number of children in high-cost placements, has resulted in a placement cost pressure of £9.3m for 2024/25. Management action and efficiencies delivered across the Trust, together with additional grant from the Household Support Fund and other one-off savings of £12.8m, has reduced the overall position to a net surplus of £3.5m (1%).

The on-going demand pressures experienced by the Trust, together with the financial position of the Council have informed the budget negotiations for 2025/26. The agreed contract sum which will form the basis of the Trust's revenue budget for 2025/26 is £329.8m. The breakdown and key assumptions behind this are as follows:

£307.1m core contract sum carried forward from 2024/25

Add:

- £17.6m provision to cover pay and non-pay inflation
- £27.5 to cover demography changes across 2024/25 and forecast for 2025/26 (including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children)
- £1.6m for other pressures.

Less:

- £24.0m savings target

The Trust recognises the financial challenges faced by the Council and continues to bear down on costs to deliver good Value for Money. The Trust continues to invest in Early Help services as part of a wider strategy of early prevention and managing demand.

The approach taken by the Trust to deliver savings is as follows:

- Trust 2025 transformation will deliver savings through work to support families earlier, reducing the Trust's spend on placement costs for children in care and enabling more children to remain with their families. Robust governance, including benefits tracking, is in place through the programme.
- Efficiencies, Headcount and Commissioning Savings - The Trust will be delivering this saving through various efficiencies, including deletion of vacant posts and better value commissioning.
- Maximisation of grant income.

It is anticipated that the Trust's capital programme for 2025/26 will utilise approved resources of £1.9m. This is the remaining balance of the capital funding approved by the Council at a Cabinet meeting in March 2022.

Key elements of the 2025/26 capital programme will include:

- Fire door remedial works across the Trust estate, to ensure health & safety requirements are met;
- Further investment in our residential care homes, including a programme of refurbishment works at Trinity Road Children's Home;
- Carrying out essential repairs to the Trust estate.

We are seeking to refresh the programme beyond 2025/26 to take forward Trust priorities including seeking further investment in Children's Homes, Relocation of the Youth Justice estate and supporting the rollout of Trust 2025, as well as an ongoing programme of maintenance. Without additional funding the programme beyond this year is at risk.

The Trust is the lead for the West Midlands Safe Centre project which will provide additional secure welfare capacity in the region, with the facility providing 20 secure welfare beds. The project is currently at Stage 4 which will provide funding to submit the planning application, procure a contractor to enter into a Pre-Construction Services Agreement and to develop RIBA Stage 4 design. The capital cost of this project is estimated to be circa £70m and will be fully funded by grant received from the Department for Education (DfE).

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 2025/26.

Spending and funding analysis	2025/26 (£m)
Employees	147.8
Premises	3.7
Transport	2.0
Supplies and services	24.1
Payments to third party providers	161.3
Total planned spending	338.9

Funded by:		
	Core contract sum from Birmingham City Council	305.3
	Government grants paid via Birmingham City Council	24.5
	Total contract sum	329.8
	Other grants and contributions received direct by the Trust	9.1
Total funding		338.9

10. 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, the virtual school for children in care, youth services 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 most recent Ofsted inspections of SEND.
- provision of the Virtual School for our children in care, ensuring children in care, adopted and 'care experienced' children make the best possible progress and receive appropriate support to enhance their potential in school.
- 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.

11. Managing Risk

The Trust Board and Executive have agreed nine strategic risks as follows:

Relationship between Trust and Council - a consistent, stable relationship with the Council is critical to the Trust.

Workforce - effective delivery of service relies on maintaining a sufficient, high-performing and motivated workforce.

Demand pressure - demand for services has increased at a rate above our resourced capacity resulting in unmet need and a rise in serious incidents.

Significant safeguarding incident with a child with whom the Trust is working - a child with whom the Trust is working suffers significant harm that might have been avoided had the Trust acted differently.

Regulatory issues - progress in practice improvement is not sustained or is interrupted by other factors (key staff absent; unprecedented demand etc.) leading to regulators identifying service failure in the Trust.

Data intelligence, use of that intelligence - poor access to, ineffective use of and lack of capacity to cleanse data affects the Trust's understanding of demand/supply, effectiveness of service planning, efficient use of resources and quality of work to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Placement sufficiency - there are insufficient regulated placements for children who require them, resulting in placements within unregulated or insecure settings.

Oracle - the Trust continues to be impacted by the way in which the Oracle ERP system was implemented by the Council and support service teams in the Trust are still not clear on the system solutions.

Financial Pressure - the Council's ongoing financial challenges resulted in the need for the Trust to deliver savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26 and to contribute to further savings in 2026/27 and beyond.

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 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 Trust's various activities.

Appendix - Pen portrait of our children and our service



Pen portrait of our children and our service (31 March 2025)



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST

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
£330m



Number
of employees **2,346**



Child breakdown by age

Under 1 - 551 children
1-4 - 1,317 children
5-9 - 1,933 children
10-15 - 2,794 children
16-25 - 2,337 children/young people

1,096
care
leavers

8,932
open
children

172 unaccompanied asylum seekers
597 Trust foster carers - **833** placements
12% of children left care through adoption
85 children adopted
4 homes for disabled children
1 home for children with EBD needs
27.8% youth reoffending rate (32.0% Eng & Wales)

Number of
children with a
child protection plan



1,697

Number of
children
in care



2,312

856 Number of
disabled
children



1,643
Children
in need
with plan

Over
6,894 families supported
during the year



Get in touch: birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

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