

# BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S TRUST NEWSLETTER



October 2024

Issue #9

## BALANCING THE BUDGET AND DELIVERING GOOD SERVICES

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

The Trust continues to work hard to help ensure that the Council can set a a balanced budget going forwards, at the same time as continuing to deliver good services. We are delighted to share the outcome of our latest Ofsted Focused Visit on **pages 3 to 6**.

This is further evidence that we are making positive steps in our delivery of children's social care services and developing our staff to be the best they can be to support children and families across Birmingham and beyond.

October is also an important month for many of our staff and our children and young people, as it celebrates Black History Month (read more on **pages 7 and 8**) as well as National Care Leavers' Week starting on 28 October (**page 8**).

This issue features an update from Foster Birmingham (**page 11**), our Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) on **page 8**, and an announcement about our new recruitment platform - which is now live (on **page 13**).

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



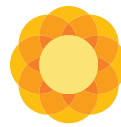
The Trust has been celebrating winning an LGA Award by taking the trophy on tour. Recently the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress visited our One Avenue Road base to join in the celebrations !

## Black History Event

The Trust is hosting a special event for children, young people and the community, to celebrate the final day of **Black History Month 2024**.

The event, taking place at the **Lighthouse Young People's Centre** on **31 October 2024**, from **12.00pm - 4.00pm**.

If you would like to pop along please email: [melissa.jackson@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk](mailto:melissa.jackson@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk)



BIRMINGHAM  
CHILDREN'S TRUST

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# Meet our new **Trust** Directors

In **September 2024** we announced our new senior leadership structure, which included some director role title changes, plus two new director roles. We were very pleased to be able to internally promote two new directors from their existing assistant director roles.

Overall we have achieved a 20% reduction in the size of the Leadership team.

Our two brand new directors are:

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



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



They will join three existing directors:

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



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



- **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](mailto:james.a.thomas@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk)

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

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

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**Lisa Jamieson - Director of Corporate Parenting**

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

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**Marshelene Williams - Director of Quality Assurance**

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# FOCUSED VISIT FINDINGS

Social Workers are the 'shining stars' according to Birmingham Children's Trust Chief Executive, James Thomas, following the latest **Focused Visit by Ofsted** inspectors to look at children's services in Birmingham.

The visit, conducted in September 2024, had inspectors looking closely at Birmingham City Council's services for children in care, with a particular focus on the quality of matching, placement and decision-making for children in care, experiences of disabled children in care and progress of children living in supported accommodation or an unregistered children's home.

Since 2018 Birmingham City Council has commissioned Birmingham Children's Trust to deliver children's social care services, including for children in care, but maintains an oversight over children's services in the city.

**James Thomas, Birmingham Children's Trust Chief Executive, said:** "I am extremely proud of the outcome of the latest Ofsted visit to inspect children's services, with a focus on the Trust responsibility for children in care.

The findings reinforced our continued development as a citywide children's services partnership with the city council, proving our collective dedication to providing the best possible support for children, young people and families in Birmingham.

"The development of children's services in Birmingham since the Trust launched in 2018 has been one of sustained improvement, from being judged as 'Good' in April 2023, to this Focused Visit.

"The work we do as Trust is never done alone, and whilst the visit focused on the Trust's work supporting children in care, we wish to acknowledge the ever-stronger partnership with the city council, with our statutory partners and with the voluntary and community sector, as without this collective effort we would not have this stability and sense of reassurance that we are headed in the right direction."

**Sue Harrison, Strategic Director for Children and Families at Birmingham City Council, said:** "The outcome of this latest Focused Visit by Ofsted is one of sustained progress, meaning children's services in Birmingham are continuing to improve.

# FOCUSED VISIT FINDINGS

“We were delighted to read that inspectors were impressed with how well Trust social workers know their children, and their relational practice, highlighting their passion and confidence. Ofsted noted social workers spoke with pride about their children and were not afraid to express their love for them.

“There are still improvements that we can collectively make, but at a time when children’s social care hits the headlines usually for the wrong reasons, we are very grateful to our social workers and all their Trust and city council colleagues that enable our social workers to be at their best.”

**Councillor Mick Brown, Birmingham City Council Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, said:**

“Whilst the city council faces significant financial challenges it was very rewarding to read Ofsted recognise that we have kept the needs of vulnerable children, especially children in care in Birmingham, as a priority.

“Birmingham Children’s Trust is doing a terrific job in progressing the way it is providing children’s social care at the highest level, and staff across the Trust need to be applauded for their unwavering focus on supporting children and families to thrive.

“To have Ofsted recognise key elements of children’s social work practice in a positive light, from strong listening skills to doing all that is safely possible to keep families together, is excellent news, and we thank all the city council and Trust staff for their continual commitment to safeguard and support children and families.”

## What Ofsted said...

### **On relationships between Trust social workers and children in care:**

“Many children benefit from meaningful relationships with social workers who have taken time to build strong and caring relationships with them. Social workers speak with pride about their children and say things like, 'I love them'.”

### **On listening to the voice of children in care:**

“Children are listened to, including their views about where and with who they live. Social workers use the relational practice model effectively promoting ongoing relationships and supporting children to spend time with family members in appropriate venues.”

# FOCUSED VISIT FINDINGS

## **On support to children in care:**

“Visits to children are used by social workers to explore children’s wishes and anxieties about how well family time is progressing. Plans are adapted in accordance with children’s views. Where children in care are at risk, they receive timely and proportionate responses to reduce risk and help to keep them safe.”

## **On the health needs of children in care:**

“Children’s health needs are promoted. Children have regular health assessments and attend opticians’ and dental appointments as required. Children’s emotional wellbeing and mental health needs are met through the Trust’s own therapeutic emotional support service (TESS) as well as receiving therapeutic support provided where children live and go to school.”

## **On the educational needs of children in care:**

“Most children are making academic progress at school. Social workers work collaboratively with the virtual school and education partners to good effect. Regular personal education plan meetings (PEPs) take place to ensure that appropriate support is in place for children.”

## **On the social needs of children in care:**

“Children are encouraged to pursue their interests and hobbies. This helps them to have fun and socialise. Children’s wide-ranging needs are well met, including access to legal advice to progress asylum claims. Social workers place an emphasis on education with all attending school or college.”

## **On the living arrangements of children in care:**

“Children are supported to live close to others from their community with access to local amenities to support their cultural and identity needs. Social workers are also curious and alive to the vulnerability of this group of children. As a result, children are settled and supported.”

## **On children in care with disabilities:**

“Disabled children who are in care benefit from consistent and strong relationships with their social workers. Social workers visit children regularly and communicate with them in a style that meets the child’s needs.”

# FOCUSED VISIT FINDINGS

## **On support to children in care:**

“Visits to children are used by social workers to explore children’s wishes and anxieties about how well family time is progressing. Plans are adapted in accordance with children’s views. Where children in care are at risk, they receive timely and proportionate responses to reduce risk and help to keep them safe.”

## **On kinship care for children in care:**

“Social workers complete comprehensive and timely initial viability assessments when plans are explored for children to live in kinship care. For some children in long term kinship care consideration is given to plan of special guardianship orders being made.”

## **On early permanence for children in care:**

“Children in care are well supported by caring social workers with a focus on achieving early permanence for them. Opportunities for early permanence through foster to adopt are explored when parental or kinship care is not possible. Social workers have a good understanding of children’s needs, the impact of moving on from carers and how to manage this support sensitively.”

## **On children in care living in supported accommodation:**

“Children who are living in supported accommodation are receiving the right level of help to enable them to develop their independence and prepare for adult life while living in a nurturing environment. Their views are respected and advocated for with children’s voices shaping future care planning. Children are visited regularly by social workers who know them well.”

## **On caseloads for Trust social workers:**

“Caseloads are manageable, and social workers report that they are busy, but they feel well supported in their practice. Consequently, social workers are able to develop meaningful relationships with children.”

## **On leadership within the Trust:**

“Senior leaders in the Trust understand the strengths and challenges within their service. A recent planned restructuring of the senior leadership team has taken place, streamlining capacity. New improvement plans overseen by an improvement board have also been developed to drive forward plans focusing on earlier intervention, embedding and gaining greater consistency of practice.”

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

# 2024

The Trust is embracing Black History Month (October) by sharing resources with staff and launching some brand new podcasts. We are also launching an appeal for 100 black male volunteers to support our children and young people.

## Recruiting black male volunteers

Hosted by Jadieal Millwood, a Senior Youth Worker at Birmingham City Council, this is the first of our special episodes for Black History Month.

Our guests are Antonio Henry, founder of MADE CIC, Omar Junior, founder and director of The Study of Men and Michael Gordon, director of Gordon Brooks Property & Crossroads Housing and Support. Alongside Jadieal, the trio sit down to discuss why Birmingham's children and young people need more black men to volunteer their time to work with and support them.



See page 5 for more details about our 100 Men campaign.



## Our young people's perspective

This is our second special edition to celebrate Black History Month, and sees Melissa Jackson, a programme manager for Develop Me, in conversation with Rhoda and Justine, two care-experienced young people we're all very proud of here at Birmingham Children's Trust.

Develop Me is a mentoring programme that helps children in care and care leavers develop new skills and build a brighter future. Rhoda and Justine, for example, are both now studying at university and sit down with Melissa to share their journeys through foster care, explain how they've overcome the challenges they have faced, and discuss topics such as identity, representation and what Black History Month means to them.



Scan this QR code using your camera on your mobile to go to the Birmingham Children's Trust Spotify page, where you will find links to all of our podcasts.



# 100 MEN

During **Black History Month**, we have been working with city council colleagues to recruit 100 black men to volunteer with our children and young people.

We specifically need more black men to support our children and young people because it's important that we have volunteers that look like our young people and represent them. Representation Matters.

Two events were held earlier in October for men interested in becoming a volunteer.

If you know anyone that could be interested please send an email to [trustcomms@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk](mailto:trustcomms@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk) using the heading '100 Men'.

You can  
watch a short  
introductory  
video:



## Care Leavers' Week 2024 - 28 October - 3 November 2024

Birmingham Children's Trust has three FREE events happening during National Care Leavers' Week for young people to attend in person, all taking place at the Lighthouse Young People's Centre. The theme for 2024 is 'All of Us, We are One'.

- **United and Unique – Groups and Forums taster day**  
29 October 2024
- **17+ Care-Experienced Conference**  
30 October 2024
- **Black History Month Celebration Event**  
31 October 2024

All the events are free for care-experienced young people and their carers to attend. More info about National Care Leavers' Week can be found by visiting this link below.

<http://bit.ly/3S0ibY8>



Join us in celebrating  
**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**  
It's OK to be Black

Thursday 31 October 2024 | 12 pm - 4 pm | The Lighthouse, Youth centre; 100 Alma Way Aston B19 2LN.

Braid workshops & FREE hair products | African Drumming | FREE food and refreshments

MY Tomorrow Barber Shop  
FREE haircuts for men, please ensure hair is washed beforehand | Performances

FREE FOR ALL AGES

Exotic fruit tasting | Arts and Crafts | Face painting and lots more  
Poetry | Inflatables | Dominoes | DJ Ty

Scan the QR code to for more info and to get a ticket

Birmingham City Council | BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S TRUST | LIGHTHOUSE YOUNG PEOPLE'S CENTRE | Bfriends

develop me | BURN | MADE | NEXT STEPS



# Bfriends launches new website



About us ▾

Become a friend ▾

Our stories

Contact us

Make a donation



## Donate

Thank you for your donation

If you would like to make an immediate donation to Bfriends that would be fantastic. Simply complete the form below on this page.

We are using cookies to give you the best experience on our website.  
You can find out more about which cookies we are using or switch them off in [settings](#).

Accept

Settings

**Bfriends**, the official charity of Birmingham Children's Trust is proud to now have its very own website - [www.bfriends.co.uk](http://www.bfriends.co.uk)

The website features the following sections:

### About us

- Information about the Trustee board
- Name and logo history
- Bfriends priorities
- Bfriends values

**How to become a friend** and ways to support Bfriends, **news articles**, **contact details**, and most importantly **ways to donate directly to the charity** directly on the website (using Donor Box).

You can also now sign up to receive news and information about Bfriends, directly into your inbox, by completing a short form, found at the footer of each of the web pages.

Natalie Loon, Operations and Fundraising Manager at Bfriends, said:

*"This is another major milestone in the history of Bfriends. Having a website enables us to have a window to the entire world, as well as a place to share all our good news, events and activities."*

*"The website will also make it very easy for any organisations or individuals to be able to make donations, or reach out to us to offer their help."*



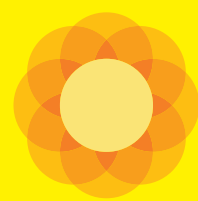
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SCAN THIS QR CODE ON  
YOUR PHONE TO GO TO  
THE BFRIENDS WEBSITE:





# Summer events recap



The Trust had a very busy Summer, with a wide range of activities taking place for children, young people and families. **Read some highlights below...**

## GEN 22 residential

Bfriends Charity is proud to work in partnership with Birmingham City FC Foundation and Unitedby2022 as part of the GEN22 Commonwealth Games Flagship role.

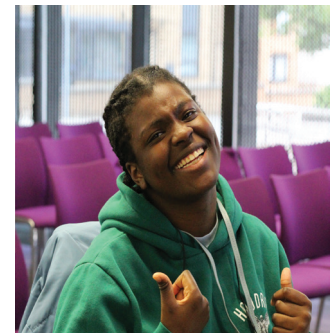
Gen22 provides an opportunity for young people (16-24) from the West Midlands to gain employability boosting opportunities through the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.



As part of the flagship offer 125 30-hour volunteering assignments have been created, that include physical and wellbeing activities alongside creative and digital opportunities.

In August 2024 we launched our first residential as part of GEN22, which saw 20 young people take a sports leadership qualification and first-aid training at Denstone College in Uttoxeter.

Gen22 has been co-designed by young people to ensure it best meets the needs of the participants and is something they will enjoy and benefit from.



## Care-experienced fun

Every four months we hold an in-person conference for all care-experienced young people.

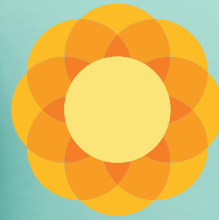
Our early Summer conference was a huge success, with employers and training providers hosting stalls. Free Caribbean food was served. The next conference is on 30 October 2024.

**Pictured above:** Kirstie (left) and Lele (right) enjoying themselves at the Summer conference.

## Social Work taster day

In July we worked with Rees Foundation to host a social work taster day, for all care-experienced young people to get an insight into children's social work.





**Foster Birmingham**  
Birmingham's biggest family

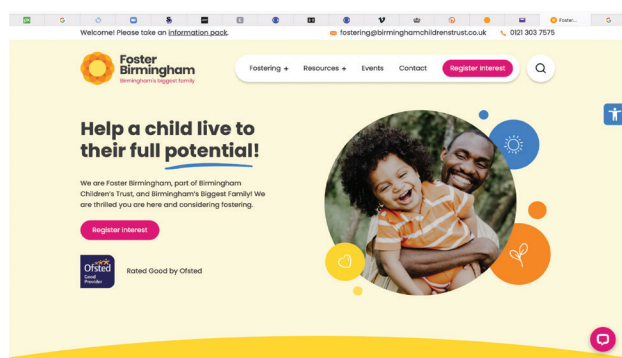
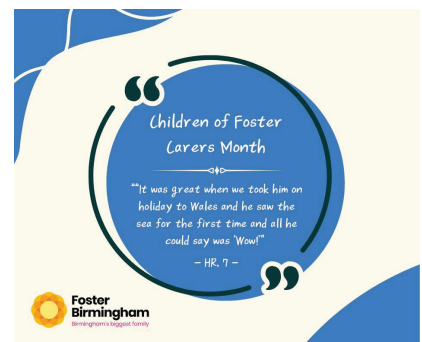
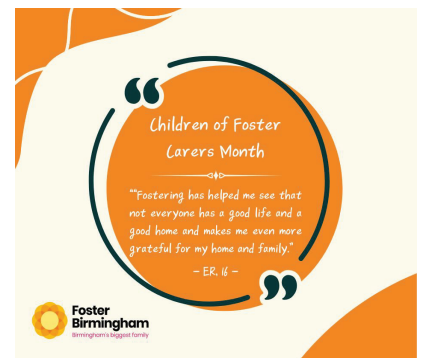
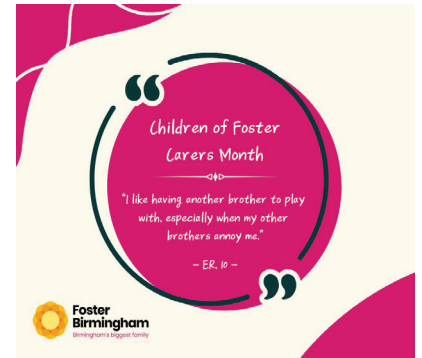
# October is Children of Foster Carers' Month

October 1 marked the start of **The Fostering Network's Children of Foster Carers' Month!**

This month is all about raising awareness of the hugely important role that children of foster carers play in their fostering families.

To celebrate, we will be posting a quote a day every day this month from children of foster carers highlighting their experience of being part of a foster family. You can see five of these quotes on this page!

To all of the incredible birth children of our foster families, Birmingham Children's Trust would like to express our heartfelt thanks for the important role they play in each family's fostering journey.



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.



# How FDAC is empowering women to overcome addiction

BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL

**FDAC**   
The problem-solving court

The Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) is an alternative model for care proceedings, giving parents the support and understanding they need to turn their lives around themselves...

Kelly, Tracey and Al-Christine are three mothers who had their children taken into care. At the time, all three were addicted to drugs and alcohol.

Through FDAC, the Family Drug and Alcohol Court, they have each overcome that addiction, along with abusive relationships, mental health issues and difficult housing situations, to be reunited with their families.

They are just some recent examples of the many success stories being achieved from a small, lively hub between Kings Heath and Stirchley, where parents come for regular appointments with the Birmingham and Solihull FDAC team, which includes mental health, addiction and acupuncture specialists.

Visiting, it felt like one closeknit family itself.

Al-Christine, a mother of five, said: "They reassured me and encouraged me to be the person I can be. At first, I was like, you know what, I'm never going to change.

This isn't going to work for me. I'm never going to get my kids back. I lied and lied at first. But I realised I had to be honest and open if I wanted to get my children back."

From its inception in 2021 to 2024, Birmingham and Solihull FDAC has reunited 69% of children with one or both parents, or their family and friends. Of those, 88% were positive reunifications with no further court proceedings.

As for the parents, 58% stopped misusing substances over the three years and 63% did not lapse or relapse.

"I've done everything they asked and now I'm staying clean, staying positive and having my kids back home is a really, really, good feeling.

"Working with FDAC was brilliant: it was very encouraging knowing there was someone who could show me the light at the end of the dark tunnel I was in."

The initial apprehension is understandable: parents are committed to fortnightly court appearances and regular drug tests. Even more so given they must both come to terms with and reevaluate their roles as mothers.

"You have to relearn how you are being a mom to your kids," Al-Christine added. "You have to see it from your kids' eyes. That's how we learn together in the parenting group. It was a breathtaking moment for me when my baby came home. I was a mother again. I had lost that."

It was a similar journey for Kelly, who admitted: "When I first got here, I just wanted to tick all the boxes and get out of the door. It was scary for me. But without FDAC, I don't know how I would have gotten my son back. I'm really glad I've been through this process because it's made me identify what type of person I am and what fight I had in me to change things."

With a familiar judge who sees their personal growth in real time, from beginning to end, it becomes a way for FDAC parents to stay accountable and on track towards their ultimate goal. For Tracey, this meant not only reuniting with her son but "getting well, being well and staying well".

The process has taught her to accept and take ownership of her past, surrender to the fact she cannot use again if she wants to keep her child, and become more reflective and responsive to her emotions in the future.

Tracey acknowledged the transformative effect, stating that: "You build up a rapport with the judge. And they get to see your progress every two weeks. Judge Birdie was amazing. He's amazing. He knew the process, knew me and knew how far I'd come.

**To find out more about FDAC scan this QR code on your mobile phone:**



# HR ROUND-UP

## Disability confident

The Trust has registered and committed to 'Disability Confident'.

Disability Confident aims to provide groups a supportive community that can help with disability employment challenges like disclosure, adjustments, and provision of mental health support in the workplace to.

The Trust has agreed to five Disability Confident core commitments and identified other commitments, which will make a difference for disabled people.

The Trust has signed up to be Disability Confident Level 1 Committed, which means our Disability Confident journey has begun.



We've received a Disability Confident badge (see above) and certificate.

The Trust has also recently welcomed our new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Partner, Anumit Kaur.

Anumit will be supporting our work towards the Trust being Disability Confident Level 2 Committed.

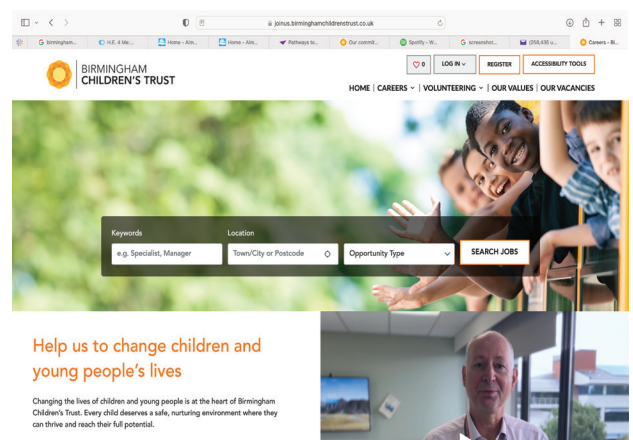
Anumit will also be supported by our new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Advisor, Bethany Gallagher.

We look forward to going on this journey with all our dedicated staff.

## New recruitment platform launched

Earlier this month we launched our brand new recruitment platform 'Eploy'.

The transition has been seamless, as anyone who visits the Trust website and clicks on the 'Jobs' link in the top menu, will now go directly to the new recruitment platform.



The new platform features a lot of fresh imagery of real Trust staff, new videos, and vastly improved navigation, meaning current vacancies are much simpler to find and apply for.

The registration process has also been simplified, giving potential candidates the ability to easily upload their C.V.

The new platform also has a dedicated area to find out about volunteering with the Trust, where you can find out about being a befriender or even a mentor to young people.



SCAN THIS QR CODE TO GO TO THE NEW RECRUITMENT PLATFORM



Bfriends - the official charity of Birmingham Children's Trust and Birmingham City FC Foundation has hit its next key milestone, with the launch of a new **Community Hub** at The Willows - right next to St Andrew's football ground.

The centre, which will be operated in conjunction with Birmingham Children's Trust, will serve the nearby streets with provisions that directly impact them.

From youth clubs to English for Speaker of Other Languages classes, the **Community Hub** will be the base for dozens of activities aimed at improving the lives of people in Birmingham.

Alongside the above sessions, the space will provide food and respite for many vulnerable people across the city.

It will be a home for mental health assistance. A community kitchen will provide food and cookery classes, and it will be available for local residents to book to host their own functions.

Bfriends is working in partnership with the Foundation to ensure that the **Community Hub** is available to as many young people in the neighbourhood.

The collaboration has been pivotal in rebranding and opening the Emmeline Street venue.

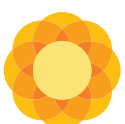
**Pictured above:** The ribbon was cut by Birmingham City Chief Executive Officer, Garry Cook (left) Trust apprentice Shannon Donovan, BCFC Foundation representative Mohammed and the Chair of the Trust, Andy Couldrick (right).



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

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