Welcome to the Birmingham Forward Steps

Newsletter January 2021

This month's newsletter shows how colleagues across BFS brought joy to families most in need over the festive period.

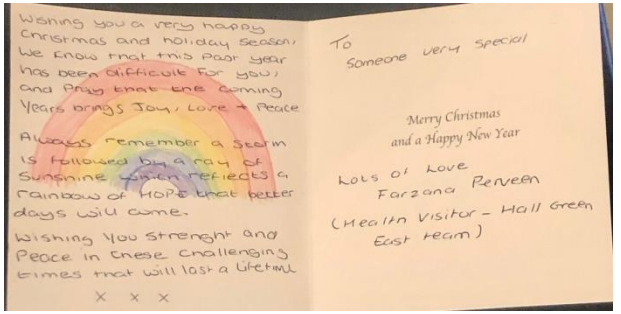
Health Visitor Delivers Festive Sparkle

Health Visitor Farzana Perveen has helped the community over the festive season by organising and delivering donations to women in refuge.

Farzana, who works in the Hall Green East district, is very passionate about supporting the community and women who have been affected by domestic abuse, saying; ***"I have been successful in my mission of spreading Christmas sparkle through our local community and to bring a smile to women currently in refuge.***

My journey included donating to women in the Barbary, who's mental health has been impacted due to domestic abuse. I also donated gifts and cakes to local refuges with a Christmas message of joy and hope. Finally, I donated to a woman who moved on from the refuge to a place of her own and was expecting twins.

I have found it a rewarding time to help others and feel that, as a health visitor, it is our role to bring together the community and support families to our very best so children are raised in happy nurturing environments." **Well done Farzana!**



Farzana's message of hope.

Farzana Perveen

Gifts

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Website: https://bhamforwardsteps.co.uk/ **Email:** BirminghamForwardSteps@bhamcommunity.nhs.uk

Christmas Gifts for Families in Need

Children's centres and community engagement workers in each district helped families over Christmas. Here are some examples.

SELLY OAK: ***GBNFC Children's Centre supported families by delivering; Early Years activities over Zoom , Activity Walks in the local community, preparing Christmas activity booklets and craft packs, receiving donations, delivering donations to the Children's Storehouse, preparing toiletry hampers and delivering many toys and gifts. Their food bank also continued to deliver food to vulnerable families.***

LADYWOOD: ***Christmas activity packs were created and handed out to families, filled with craft items and fun stuff.***

Big donations were received from JLR, Birmingham Play Care Network, Morrison's, The Vineyard and Aariya Diamonds. Engagement Workers visited and donated a combination of toys, food parcels and vouchers to a number of places including:

- ***Families in Hostels***
- ***Families stay in Park Regis Hotel***
- ***Families which visit our children's centre***
- ***Health Visiting Parents and families.***

Links were made with Birmingham Settlement for families who are struggling with housing, debt and advice.

" Thank you so much for the presents for my children we moved to a refuge and my children have been very sad. This made them smile"

"I was really struggling with money this year, I didn't think I could buy any presents. Thank you so much, really appreciate your support"

Pictures & quotes of parents are from the Perry Barr district

PERRY BARR: ***Staff distributed presents across the district. Community Engagement Workers selected organisations within the district to also receive donations. They nominated Seven Up, Spring Hub, Collingwood Autism Group and a local Women's refuge.***

Christmas presents were delivered right up until Christmas Eve to ensure families could receive Christmas joy.

EDGBASTON: ***It became apparent that more families were living in temporary accommodation.***

Edgbaston's Engagement Worker reached out to INUNITY and the new Community Connectors to work together ensuring all children in temporary accommodation had a gift at Christmas.

From early February INUNITY and the Edgbaston District plan to deliver activity bags and books to children and families living in temporary accommodation and provide continual support for families.

Special thanks to Sue Turner, Charneze St Juste, Sharon Clarke and Lorraine Lane for providing this information.

BFS Poverty Longer Term Plan Working Group

October 2020 saw the first meeting of the BFS Poverty Longer Term Working Group. The need for a planned response to poverty became compelling during 2020 as we saw the impact of COVID on the financial situation of so many families.

Prior to COVID, 41.9% of children in Birmingham were living in poverty. We know that COVID has had a huge impact on employment levels and that this number will increase. We also anticipate that we may see an increase in austerity measures once the pandemic is over.

At the start of the pandemic our partners at Thrive Together Birmingham changed the focus of their work to the issue of food poverty and launched the 'Feed Birmingham' campaign. During the first lockdown they were collecting around 4 tonnes of food a week to distribute to food banks and other emergency food providers. BFS staff across all districts have made many, many referrals to the resilience fund, and regularly support families to access food banks and other sources of emergency support.

Support for families experiencing unemployment and poverty have always been a part of the BFS model. Our Employment and Training Workers offer families a range of support in accessing education, employment and training. Through our volunteer coordinators we are able to support parents to build their experience and confidence through volunteering opportunities. Some BFS Children's Centres offer debt/money/housing and benefit advice surgeries, often bought in from partner organisations such as Narthex and Family Action.

The aim of the poverty working group is to develop a longer term plan for BFS to ensure that the wider needs of families for holistic support around issues related to poverty remain high on the agenda for all of us. We will advocate for the needs of children under 5 and their families experiencing poverty, identify gaps in provision and areas for improvement, and offer relevant training for staff around the impact of poverty and support available for families. We know that families with children with SEND often experience higher levels of poverty and this will be an area of focus. One area for development is around sustainable food provision linked to a Children's Centre in each district. Plans for this are already underway in some districts.

For more information and to share examples of good practice please contact:

Sarah Robbins s.robbins@springfieldproject.org.uk
or Maxine Burrows maxine.burrows@birminghamcommunity.nhs.uk

#EndChildPoverty - Lidl to increase value of Healthy Start Vouchers

Lidl has become the latest retailer to add to the value of Healthy Start vouchers in support of Marcus Rashford's campaign against child food poverty.

The vouchers, which are issued by the government to low-income families in England and Wales, were worth £3.10, but from January to March 2021, Lidl will add another £1.15. It will bring them to £4.25, the value the government is set to increase them to from April.

Lidl is one of a number of supermarkets that joined the Child Poverty Task Force which Manchester United star Rashford formed in September 2020, and which successfully lobbied the government for the increase from April.

The discounter has committed £1m to topping up the vouchers in the meantime, from 4 January until the end of March. *"I'm delighted Lidl has made such a positive move and committed to increasing the value of Healthy Start vouchers,"* said Rashford. *"This was one of our Taskforce's key asks and will make a huge difference to the most vulnerable people in our communities."*

Marcus Rashford

Mindfulness Sessions

Birmingham Community Healthcare are offering Mindfulness Sessions to all Birmingham Forward Steps staff . Join in one of the sessions available below by clicking on the Microsoft team's link.
If you have any questions please email the facilitator Reshma: Reshma.chudasama@bhamcommunity.nhs.uk

Session	Date	Time	Microsoft Teams	Facilitator
1	Friday 29th January	12.00pm - 12.30pm	Click here to join the meeting	Reshma
2	Friday 5th February	1.00 – 1.30pm	Click here to join the meeting	Reshma
3	Thursday 11th February	1.00 - 1.30pm	Click here to join the meeting	Reshma
4	Thursday 18th February	12.30pm - 1pm	Click here to join the meeting	Reshma

Early and Emergency Help for Birmingham Families

During Lockdown 3, we are aware that families will be facing another difficult period in a myriad of ways. The Birmingham Children's Partnership wants to ensure that any family in Birmingham which needs help is aware of how to find it quickly and easily. The attached is a list of information on where to get help including:

- **Emergency Food Assistance**
- **Mental Health Support**
- **Financial Assistance**
- **Domestic Abuse**
- **Early Help**

£100 emergency food & fuel payments available to Birmingham families who meet the criteria. Use a family connect form to apply for a family in your area.

For further information please visit:
https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50224/birmingham_children_s_partnership/2156/birmingham_children_s_partnership_-_resources

Ask for ANI
A 'Lifeline' to Domestic Abuse Victims

Victims of domestic abuse will be able to access much needed support from thousands of pharmacies across the UK, backed by the government.

The 'Ask for ANI' scheme allows those at risk or suffering from abuse to discreetly signal that they need help and access support. By asking for ANI (Action Needed Immediately), a trained pharmacy worker will offer a private space where they can understand if the victim needs to speak to the police or would like help to access support services such as a national or local domestic abuse helplines.

The attached document provides information about the scheme and encourages pharmacies to sign-up to it.

For further information please visit:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pharmacies-launch-codeword-scheme-to-offer-lifeline-to-domestic-abuse-victims