

Welcome to the Birmingham Forward Steps Newsletter September 2020



Families are facing many hardships due to drops in income, reduced hours of work and job losses. BFS staff, including engagement workers and health visitors, continue to go above and beyond to provide support and dignity for our families.

Providing Food & Dignity for Families

BFS Children's Centres in Perry Barr have supported families by utilising existing foodbanks to keep children fed. Links were also made with a local mosque to meet the Asian community's dietary needs; staff also worked with the mosque to set up a baby bank with nappies, wipes and formula milk.

Other links were made with *The Trussel Trust* (one of the largest foodbanks in the West Midlands) and *The Active Well Being Society* who provided fresh fruit & vegetables. *FareShare*, *Asda* & *Tesco* donated food on a weekly basis and *Brum Together* donated 100 dignity packs. After receiving all these food donations, staff were able to create an emergency food bank at Rookery Children's Centre.



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Community Engagement in Erdington & Perry Barr

Community Development Workers Natalie Haymes, Kelly Hunt (both of Erdington District) and Nasrin Akhtar (Perry Barr District) attended The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS), a community cooperative project, and were given 200 dignity packs as donations to BFS.

Natalie and Nasrin said: *“Whilst sourcing food items we liaised with staff from TAWS and discussed the needs within our communities and that we were struggling with sourcing hygiene products for our families.*

Providing these packs to families has encouraged and enabled families to meet their child’s basic needs and maintain their personal hygiene and household cleaning.

Within the Erdington District, 40 packs were given to two local Domestic Violence Refuges. We donated these to provide a positive networking relationship between professionals and families within our local community.”

One family member who received the packs commented:

“We absolutely loved the items we received in the pack – the body wash was great. I found the products really lovely and they all smelt beautiful, thanks again.”



Tackling Hunger in Northfield

Frankley Plus Children’s Centre has been unable to provide its regular Holiday Kitchen due to COVID-19. The group linked up with FareShare Midlands to source food supplies and create recipe packages that were delivered to families. They then hosted a special online cooking class to help people cook nutritious food.

Joy Lester (Community Development and Parental Engagement Worker) explained how a £100,000 donation to FareShare Midlands from Central England Co-op has played a major part in ensuring that people have not gone hungry in the area. She said:

“We decided to get out teams to refer the families most at need and we then have been interacting with them virtually via Facebook. We have helped over 320 families in the area as a result – it has been a great success.”

“In terms of FareShare, they have been amazing. We get food from them, sort into parcels, pick a recipe, deliver to families and then head online to do some virtual healthy cooking. We also include an extra bag of food to help them out.”

Alongside its work with Frankley Plus Children’s Centre, the six-figure sum donated to FareShare Midlands has resulted in 22,245 people receiving 297,500 meals from 1 April to 30 June via local good causes in the Midlands. <https://faresharemidlands.org.uk/>

Heroic Health Visitors



Our Health Visitors continue to provide the best service possible in trying times. Here's some great feedback received from a parent for two of our Health Visitors, Tracy McKenzie and Alison Thompson from the Charlotte Rd team:

"My healthcare visitor is a lady called Tracy and she has been absolutely phenomenal. My baby has had some health issues and Tracy has been brilliant at identifying what I should do. She has been very happy to have a look at pictures of nappies and discuss the best course of action. She has been very reassuring in what I should do and that everything is going to be okay.



Alison Thompson and Tracy McKenzie

When I was having an issue speaking to the doctor, Tracy made the decision to contact them herself and to see if she could get things moving. She managed to get the doctor to call me, which was fantastic. Another mention should go to Alison. When we were unable to have my baby weighed last week, Tracy arranged for Alison to do it at the clinic. I turned up and expected Alison to just weigh my baby and I would go. Instead, Alison spent almost half an hour with me, going through the problems that my baby has been having, making sure that he was the correct height, plotting everything on the graph etc. Like Tracy, she was incredibly reassuring, and it was lovely that she had the time to spend with me in this capacity.

I have been very grateful for the support of these individuals at this difficult time for me, and I'm pleased that they get some sort of recognition for being so fantastic." Well done to both Tracy and Alison.

Health Visiting



Student Update

A new generation of Health Visitors can continue their education as students resumed the 'Specialist Community Public Health Nursing' (SCPHN) course on the 13th July. BFS health visiting teams have 17 University of Wolverhampton students and 19 Birmingham City University students currently out in practice.

The University of Wolverhampton students have just completed Semester 1 and will move into Semester 2 at the end of September. Birmingham City University students commenced part 1 of the practice element of their course on 7/9/2020.

In Profile: IDVA – Independent Domestic Violence Advisors

BFS have appointed two IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors) to work across all ten districts of Birmingham. *Amelia York* and *Jayne McDowall* will work specifically with BFS, giving direct specialist support to women and children experiencing abuse. Domestic abuse is a major issue for the women and children supported by BFS. The IDVAs are employed by Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid (BSWA) and based within BFS Children's Centres.

Jayne explained her background, *"I'm fairly new to Women's Aid. I started about a year and a half ago and I was working in the DVPP (Domestic Violence Perpetrator Project). I was actually an Adult Senior Social Worker in Dudley, so I'd always worked with adults but decided I wanted a change of career. I actually worked with Barnardo's for a short while as a Family Support Worker in Doddington Green."*

Amelia added, *"I've worked for BSWA as an IDVA for the past 5 years now. For the first 3 years I was a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) IDVA so I supported all high risk women that had been affected by domestic abuse and I did that over in Solihull. For the past year I've been an Umbrella IDVA covering the sexual health services in Birmingham and Solihull."*

Amelia discussed how vital IDVAs will be, *"During the pandemic we've seen a considerable increase in contacts from women over a number of our projects. I truly believe, now that the children have gone to school, contacts are going to go up even greater because women will now have an opportunity to leave the home and access that service."* Jayne also said *"We've extended our services at Women's Aid by now having a helpline on weekends, and are also having a virtual chat room, making sure that people are aware that these services are available as they are fairly new."*

Jayne explained that they work in a *"non judgemental and a women centred way, to believe and empower women and to support choices and decisions they make."* Amelia went on to say, *"This really gives opportunities to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and to empower women to live a life free from fear and violence."* Amelia will be based at Frankley Plus Children's Centre and Jayne at Kitts Green Children's Centre, though both will travel to all centres to meet service users. Keep an eye out for the referral pathway as Jayne and Amelia will be taking referrals soon. Team managers will have the information required. A duty system is in place and can be contacted at: Early.Years@bswaid.org

Job Opportunity – Nursery Officer (£17,251 – £18,933 term time)

The Springfield Project is delighted to increase nursery provision through taking on the running of Park Road Nursery in Sparkhill.

They are looking for an experienced and passionate Nursery Officer to help them provide high quality early education to children age 2-5.

- To support the Nursery Manager and team in the high quality and performance of the nursery.
- To provide nursery care for children working within the EYFS framework ensuring the children are safe and cared for
- This opportunity will be based at Park Road Nursery, Sparkhill
- Build and maintain strong partnerships working with parents to enable children's needs to be met

All posts are subject to a satisfactory DBS check.

If you are interested please copy the following link in to your browser:

<https://hr.breathehr.com/v/nursery-officer-13499>

The closing date for all applications is Monday 9th October 2020 at 5pm



St Paul's Welcomes Two Students from Germany

St. Paul's Community Development Trust has welcomed two students from Germany who are with them for the next five months.

Charlotte and Kathi are in the UK as part of their degree programmes working with children, young people and families. Their German University has a partnership with Newman University in Birmingham who have worked with St. Paul's for a number of years.

They both said that St. Paul's work in Balsall Heath was *"very complimentary to their studies and they felt St. Paul's could offer them a learning experience that was holistic and would enable them long term to work in a range of organisations that deliver children and families services"*.

Chief Executive David Cusack said *"We are delighted to host Charlotte and Kathi at St. Paul's and to offer them a high-quality learning experience while they are with us. I am pleased they chose us and these placements strengthens our relationship with Newman University"*.

