



BUSINESS PLAN 2023-28

July 2023



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

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Foreword from the Birmingham Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum

As children and young people in care and with care experience, having a sense of belonging and identity is important. Our groups meet regularly throughout the year and all our groups come together in the school holidays as well. We decided to come up with a name for all our groups. We split into smaller groups and came up with some great ideas; we all chose the one we thought was best. We decided on: **U&U - United and Unique 'Empowering minds of the future'**

Our goal is to:

- Educate people about our experiences
- Make change
- Provide for everyone
- Empower those who feel isolated
- Improve mental health
- Boost people's confidence
- Give them experiences they'll never forget

Why do we attend?

There are lots of reasons we attend our groups:

"It's nice to talk to people who get it...people in the same situation as you and not be judged. Outside they might judge you, but not here"

When we are together at the participation meetings, we feel listened to, we are around other people, with similar experiences and we can share our views. It's good to have a voice and to feel that we each make a difference and make change together.

Children & young people making change

We have a great relationship with the Practice Academy and key people in the Trust. They enjoy working with us and really listen to what we say and we feel like changes happen. Our groups are recognised by so many people and organisations who now come to us and we have shared our views about LOADS of different topics, making lots of change.

We make change in lots of different ways and we look at what things are most important to change and these become **Our Campaigns**. Professional honesty is one of these. We know you think you are protecting us but it's our life and we want and need to know. We have also done lots of work to improve children's experience of coming into care.

We have done a huge amount of **Co-Production**, where the Trust and other organisations want children to work on specific things. We have influenced the Trust's Practice Standards, designed the animation for the Practice Model (one of us even went to the studio and did the voice over!) and influenced the Child's Journey work. We have a Children's Rights Officer who knows what we want and who sits on working groups for us and keeps our views central.

Our young parents have done so much work and have co-produced the Perinatal Pathway work with the NHS. This is making sure young parents get the right support they need both before and after pregnancy. There is still work being done, which includes developing training videos for midwives.

We have done lots of work on health and mental health, which is something that we are all really passionate about. We have helped in the design of the new Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Hub (a single point of access to all services) as well as the new TESS therapy space and 18+ drop-in service. We are working with the NHS to design their new Priority Card for care experienced young people which gives them access to a better level of service and encourages 'trauma informed' thinking.

On top of this we have done loads of **Consultation**, where we are supported to share our experiences so that people see things from our shoes. We have helped with the new fostering service welcome into care pack, introduction profiles for foster carers and social workers, introduction video for the IRO service, the Local and Regional Care Leavers Offer, Annual health reviews for the children in care nurses and so much more!!

We have continued **interviewing** for lots of positions from social workers to senior managers. We have also had impact through our **training** offer. This takes our voices and experiences (through in person, video and audio clips) and directly challenges how attendees think and work. Oh, and we even presented to **Ofsted** on all the work we have done, we think they were left impressed!

The year ahead

We work on all these things, knowing that we are making a difference and that the Trust really listens and works hard to make the changes that we say we need. There is so much more to come for this year, one of the campaigns we have just started is on Transitions and when we leave care. We have two 'Takeover Boards' a year at the Corporate Parenting Board and this will be something we hold our corporate parents responsible for!

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



Section 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

This is the sixth annual business plan produced by Birmingham Children's Trust. It is written in a very different context than that of previous editions.

In March 2023 the Trust was inspected by Ofsted and as a result social care services in Birmingham are now judged to be Good. This comes after a decade of 'Inadequate' judgements up to 2018. In effect, services have improved to Good in a five-year, single inspection cycle. That two of these five years were spent in unprecedented circumstances of pandemic, lockdown and post-pandemic readjustment, the achievement is all the more noteworthy.

In March 2023 Birmingham City Council decided that rather than enact the second five-year term of our contract they would instead agree a new 10 year contract term. This reflects the confidence that has built in the Trust over its first five years of life, as well as the depth of relationship with the Council, across both elected members and officers.

In May 2023 the DfE revoked the statutory direction meaning that children's social care and family support services are no longer subject to Government intervention.

None of these developments would have been possible without some exemplary leadership and management, and without the commitment of every single member of the Trust team. The feedback we received from inspectors about the commitment, dedication and skill of the people in the Trust with whom they met was remarkable and consistent, and as Chair and Chief Executive we could not be more proud of everyone.

And, of course, the work continues! The minute we think 'we're done', we go backwards. So this business plan sets out our next set of challenges and priorities as we continue to drive ourselves to be the best we can be. Our focus on quality of practice is unremitting, and we will of course respond to the recommendations Ofsted give us. In addition, we must complete our work on the Child's Journey programme, using the intelligence we have gathered to shape the organisation for its next phase to deliver maximum effectiveness, efficiency and value for money.

The improving quality of relationship between the Council and the Trust was recognised by Ofsted, and we want to further deepen this critical strategic partnership, as well as with other key partners, across the public and third sector, to cement and drive improving service and outcomes for the city's most vulnerable children, young people and families. The Year of Change for Children is a key opportunity to promote this.

We have reached an important milestone as an organisation. We can be pleased, and proud, but no less determined to push on, to be the best we can be as we continue our journey.

The coming year brings much change for the Trust: a new contract with the Council, the DfE Improvement Direction lifted, our formal Regional Partnership support to Solihull, and significant leadership changes, as Andrew retires, Andy moves from Chief Executive to Chair, and as we look to recruit both a new Chief Executive and a new Director of

Practice. This report, we hope, sets out a firm and confident base for the Trust that enables us to embark on these new challenges and opportunities with confidence.

Thank you

Andrew Christie

Chair

Andy Couldrick

Chief Executive



Section 2

2023: Our Vision and Values

2. Birmingham Children's Trust 2023: Our Vision and Values

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 will do this:

- with compassion and with care.
- through positive relationships, building on strengths.
- in collaboration with children, young people, families and partners.
- by listening, involving and including.
- in ways that are efficient and deliver value for money.

Success will mean significant progress towards these outcomes:

- healthy, happy, resilient children living in families.
- families able to make positive changes.
- children able to attend, learn and achieve at school.
- young people ready for and contributing to adult life.
- children and young people safe from harm.

BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S
ONE **T**TEAM
ACCOUNTABLE AND **R**RESPONSIBLE
Q**U**ALITY
RELATION**S**HIPS
HIGH SUPPORT**T** HIGH CHALLENGE

These values are reflected in the model that underpins our practice right across the Trust:

- **Relationship-based:** practice invested in relationships with child and family; understanding of relationships and attachments and their importance in assessments and plans. Built on the idea of 'High Support, High Challenge'.
- **Contextual:** understanding the context in which people with whom we are working are: family; economic; social; school; employment. Understanding context is pivotal to learning how we can help.
- **Trauma-informed:** practice based on an understanding of the impact of past adverse events and experiences, that is sensitive to trauma and focused on the means of moving beyond trauma, for children and young people and for families, building resilience and confidence.

Our Practice Model, 'Connections Count' reflects these values and equips staff with knowledge and tools to practice in this way. We know we have grown a culture across the Trust that supports this.



Section 3

Key Developments 2023/24

3. Key Developments 2023/24

Birmingham Children's Trust faces an exciting year ahead.

With an improved Ofsted rating under our belts we will now work hard to make all of our systems and processes, our organisational shape and structure the most effective and efficient we can, building on the established platform of value for money that we have demonstrated to date. The 'Child's Journey' programme will support this work.

We will work with partners in the Council and the NHS to explore opportunities for greater local integration of services, making them easier for citizens to navigate and engage, under the auspices of the Children's Plan and Partnership, and the Integrated Care Board (NHS).

We are pleased that much of what we have sought to establish and implement since our establishment has borne fruit and was evident in the inspection. The organisational culture we have built shone through; the improved quality of practice was evident, as was the skill and dedication of our social workers; staff felt well-managed and supported; the new services we have established to support children to remain safely with their families were shown to be effective. We will use this as our springboard for further improvement and we hope the Trust will increasingly and more widely be seen as an excellent environment in which to do good social work and family support with children, young people and families

The Year of Change for Children will afford opportunities for the Trust, working with partners, to celebrate the importance of children in our city, and the importance of effective services, universal, targeted, Trust and partner, and to demonstrate our progress and showcase some of the great work we do. Our partnership with the Council is strong and growing. We have great relationships with the NHS locally, with West Midlands Police and with the voluntary and community sector organisations working with families. We will build on these to deliver increasingly effective and strong services.

We have been asked formally to support Solihull Council as they seek to improve their services following a difficult period and a critical Ofsted inspection. That we have been asked is a positive acknowledgement of our progress and our improvement capacity, and we will share expertise and learning to build greater strength across the region. This work has been commissioned and supported by the DfE.

2023-24 will see some transition in the Children's Trust at Executive and Board level and we will ensure this is managed well so that our momentum is not upset and our continued improvement is not jeopardised.

Of course, as we enter this new period, some of the priorities we had previously continue to be important:

- recruitment and retention of social workers, residential and family support workers: the market remains difficult. We will refresh and improve our marketing to reinforce the message that Birmingham Children's Trust is a great place to work.
- similarly our relentless search for more carers, foster and adoptive, will continue as we seek to provide loving homes for the children we care for who need them, locally.
- our drive to be an anti-racist organisation will continue and we will ensure all matters of equality, diversity and inclusion, in all its forms, are addressed by the Trust as a service provider and as an employer.



Section 4

Strategic Context for the Children's Trust

4. Strategic Context for the Children's Trust

The Children's Trust is well-established as an important service provider and public service provider in Birmingham. We have built a brand and a reputation. We are a trusted partner.

This matters because the scale of challenge faced by children, young people and families in the city continues to grow. The cost of living crisis has highlighted and exacerbated existing inequalities. The rise of serious youth violence, knife crime and exploitation pose real challenges, and the rise in demand for all of our services, from Early Help through to social care illustrate the need for agencies to collaborate to have the greatest positive impact.

Funding for social care remains a significant issue: the Care Review identified the need for investment to the tune of £2.6bn. The cost of care rises above inflation, and the national shortage of available qualified social workers, all pose an ongoing threat to which we must respond.

The Government's response to the Care Review will, we hope, create opportunities for us to explore new models, new ways of doing things. Proposed restrictions on agency social work recruitment will help us over time, but there are no immediate 'fixes' coming from the centre, so we need to be agile, smart and disciplined in how we lead, manage and deliver services so we can have the impact we need to and live within our means.

We begin the year with a new, longer contract with the City Council, and with an improved Ofsted rating: firm foundations from which to rise to the challenges we face.



Section 5

Trust Priorities 2023/24 and Beyond

5. Trust Priorities 2023/24 and Beyond

BETTER OUTCOMES



Responding to Ofsted's recommendations



Implementing the Child's Journey redesign



Driving collaboration and accountability with partners



Deepening our strategic partnership with the council



Developing our Improvement Support Offer



Managing succession and transition in the Trust

ENABLERS



Equality, diversity and wellbeing



Recruitment and retention



Digital and data



Strategic and operational financial management



Placement sufficiency



Participation and Engagement

Priorities for 2023/24

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to Ofsted's recommendations following inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services further strengthened in line with Ofsted's findings Compliance with 'best practice'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to HMIP's recommendations following inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further improvements in our Youth Justice service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing the work on the 'Child's Journey' programme, leading to a changed shape of organisation geared toward further improving our effectiveness and our efficiency, and enabling us to respond to the implementation of national changes following the Care Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services organised to deliver great value for money, effectiveness and efficiency Design built on feedback from children, young people, parents, carers, Trust staff and partners Strengthened leadership, management and professional development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working within the key partnerships to drive system improvement and accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement of the ambitions of the new Children's Partnership and Plan Improved opportunities and outcomes for children as part of the 'Year of Change for Children' led by the Children's Partnership Support real accountability for services and outcomes: Trust and partners Support stronger joined-up efforts to tackle key issues and risks for children as set out by the Children's Partnership and the Safeguarding Children Partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building our relationship as strategic partners with the Council, and demonstrating value for money to our commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened collaboration on key shared priorities: SEND; Elective Home Education and Children Missing from Education Transparency and partnership in the management of our commissioner/provider relationship

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a formal Improvement Support partnership with Solihull MBC, ensuring no detriment to Birmingham whilst gaining from the opportunities such a partnership brings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for Trust staff and managers to share learning with a neighbouring authority Opportunity for greater collaboration, capitalising on our shared relationships: NHS, Police External financial support to deliver package of support Shared learning opportunities Enhanced reputation for Birmingham and for the Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and managing some critical transitions in the Trust, in relation to changes in senior leadership and governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitions managed in a carefully planned way so as to minimise disruption within the Trust and between the Trust and its partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining a focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, as service provider and as employer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments and services that address EDI and its impact on children with whom we work Maintaining progress on our challenge to become an anti-racist employer and service provider Improving our diversity at Board level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to find new and better ways to recruit and retain social workers, residential and family support workers, and carers 	<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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Trust, with the Council, will complete a review of the short breaks offer available to children with additional needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are two elements to this review: the 'universal offer', which the Council is leading, and the targeted offer the Trust provides to children and families with whom the Trust is working (under section 17 of the Children Act 1989)



Section 6

Performance

6. Performance

The Trust has performed well, in 2022/23, in relation to the contractual performance indicators.

Areas of particularly strong performance in the year have included placement stability for children in care; care leavers living in suitable accommodation; timely reviews for children in care and initial child protection conferences.

Challenges have included:

- timescales for adoption: the indicator measures over a three-year period. Evidence supports that current performance is good and the performance indicator will improve over the course of the coming year as a result.
- agency social workers: this has remained persistently higher than we would want. While we perform better than regional and statistical neighbours, we continue to refine and improve our offer to make the Trust an attractive place to come, and to stay, to build a good social work career.

Summary of Trust performance 2022/23

PI	Measure	Number of months where target met or within tolerances last 12 months	% where target met or within tolerances last 12 months
1	% of all referrals with a decision within 24 hours	11	92%
2	% of re-referrals to children's social care within 12 months	12	100%
3	% assessments completed within 45 working days	11	92%
4	% Initial CP conferences held within 15 working days	12	100%
5	% of children who became the subject of a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within the last 2 years	12	100%
6	% of children (under 16 years) who have been looked after for 2.5 years or more, and in the same placement (or placed for adoption) continuously for 2 years or more	12	100%
7	% children experiencing 3 or more moves in a year	12	100%
8	% of children in care reviews held on time	12	100%
9	% of care leavers who are in education, employment, and training (EET)	12	100%
10	% of care leavers who are living in suitable accommodation (19-21)	12	100%
11	Average time between a child coming into care and being placed with an adoptive family (A2)	0	0%
12	Number of children who have been adopted in year or who leave care	N/A	N/A
13	% of agency social workers (including team managers)	0	0%
14	Average caseload of qualified social workers	12	100%
15	% of social workers who have had supervision (in month)	8	67%

Performance indicators 2023/24

A revised set of key performance indicators for 2023/24 is set out below. Some of these are activity measures (KPIs 4 and 8), some are shared with the Council (KPIs 7a, 7b, 12a and 12b). The rest sit with the Trust.

No.	Indicator	Current performance	2023/24 year-end target
KPI 1	Percentage of re-referrals to children's social care within 12 months	21%	22%
KPI 2	Percentage of assessments completed in 45 working days or less	87%	85%
KPI 3	Percentage of children in need on a plan for more than three months	59%	60%
KPI 4	Rate of section 47 enquiries per 10,000 of the u18 children and young people population	170	N/A
KPI 5	Percentage of initial child protection conferences held within 15 days	78%	85%
KPI 6a	Percentage of child protection plans lasting two years or more	12%	10%
KPI 6b	Percentage of child protection plans for a 2nd or subsequent time in the last 2 years	12%	14%
KPI 7a	Rate of children looked after per 10,000 under 18 population	76	76
KPI 7b	Percentage of children in care living in foster care	70%	70%
KPI 7c	Percentage of children in care living in residential care	18%	18%
KPI 7d	Percentage children in care living with their family networks	8%	8%
KPI 8	Number of children waiting for adoption	202	N/A
KPI 9a	Children in care with 3+ home (placement) moves within 12months	9%	9%
KPI 9b	Children in care in home (placement) for 2.5 years or more	68%	72%
KPI 10	Percentage of children and young people placed within 20 miles of home address	82%	82%
KPI 11a	Percentage of care leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 17th to 18th Birthday	62%	66%
KPI 11b	Percentage of care leavers in employment, education, or training (EET) on their 19th to 21st Birthday	61%	62%
KPI 12a	Care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 19-21 (reported monthly for Q1-4)	93%	95%
KPI 12b	Care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 16-18 (reported monthly for Q1-4)	92%	95%
KPI 13	Average caseload per social worker	18	17
KPI 14	Percentage of agency social workers	22%	12%
KPI 15	Reoffending rate	19	25%



Section 7

Governance Arrangements

7. Governance Arrangements

The Trust is owned by the Council. But its day-to-day operational delivery is controlled by the Trust Executive Team which is accountable to the Trust Board in order 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.

With the removal in May 2023 of the statutory Direction children's social care and family support services are no longer subject to Government intervention.

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 volume of work generated for Trust NEDs, and a wish to improve the diversity of the Board, has led to initial discussions about increasing by one the number of NEDs supporting the Children's Trust, in agreement with the City Council and DfE.

The Board consists of a chair and 8 non-executive directors, one of whom is appointed by the City Council. Details of current Board members are available on the Trust Website at: https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/who_we_are.

The Trust Board has established the following committees:

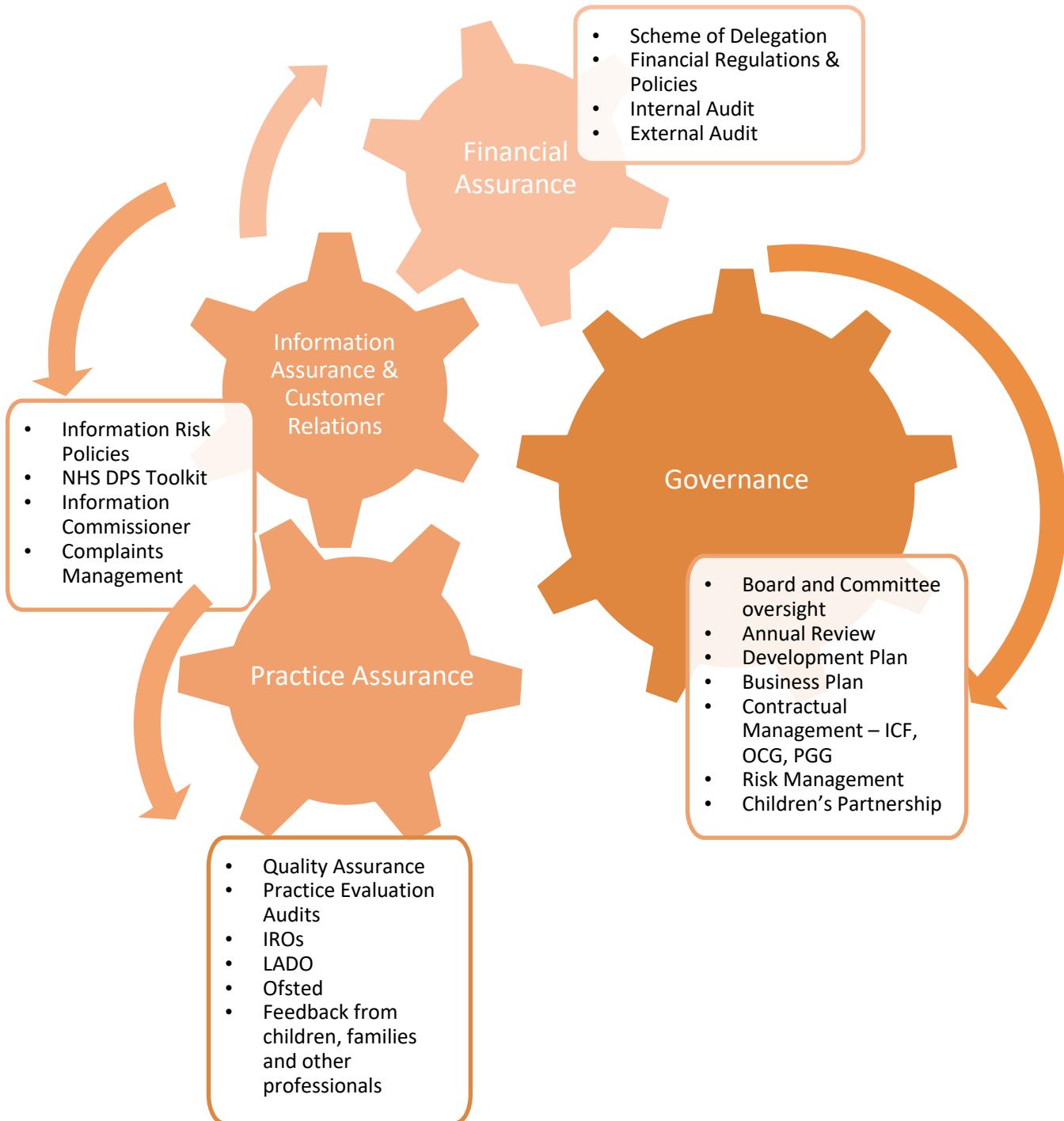
- Finance and Resources.
- Performance and Quality Assurance.
- Workforce.
- Nominations and Remuneration.

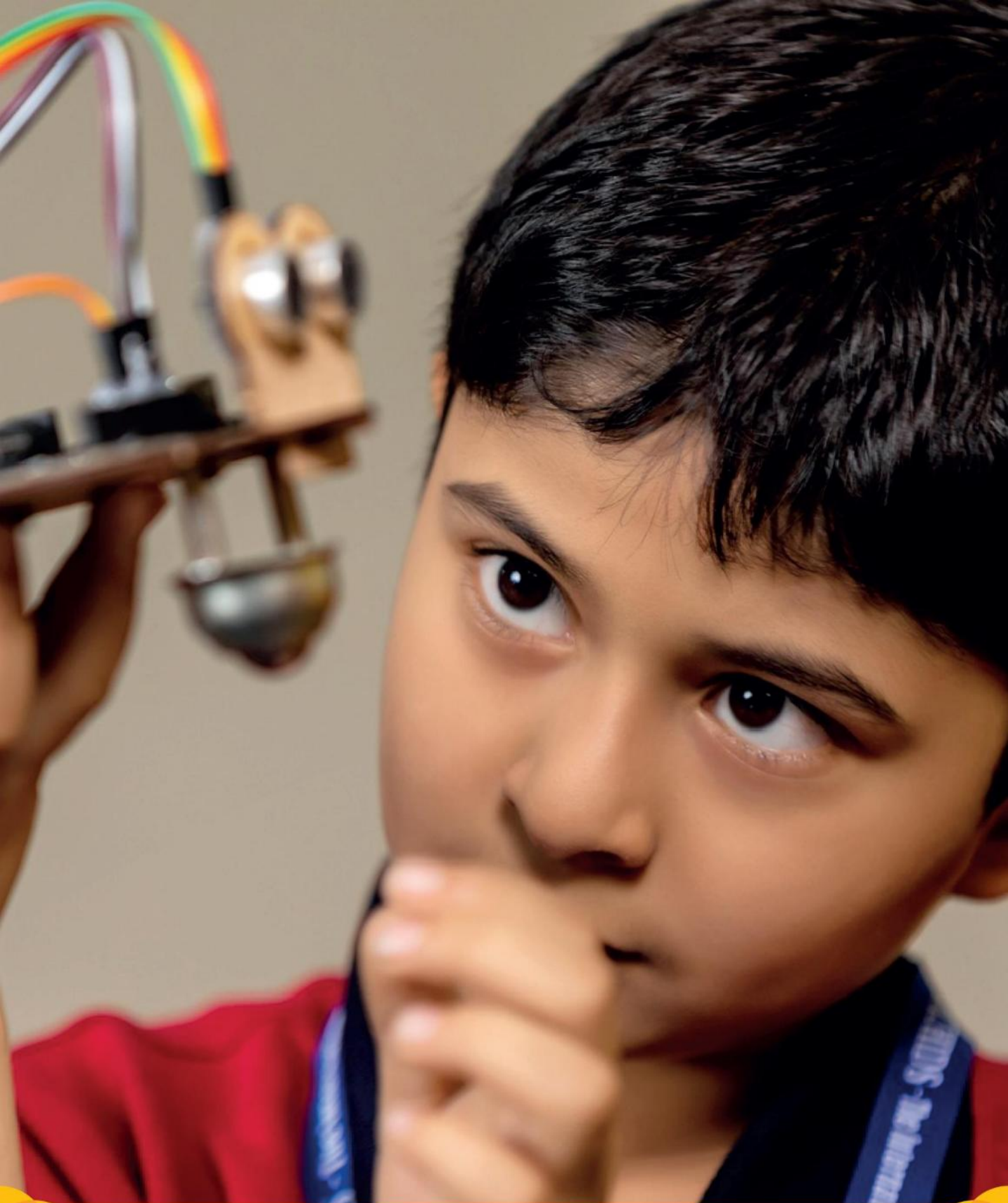
The governance arrangements between the Council, Trust and DfE, have worked effectively during the Trust's first five years. The framework of Operational Commissioning Group, Trust Partnership Governance Group and routine engagement at Overview and Scrutiny, alongside regular meetings between the Trust Chief Executive and the Council Chief Executive, 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 Practice, the Director of Commissioning & Corporate Parenting and the Director of Finance & 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.





Section 8

Trust Services

8. Trust Services

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

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

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



Section 9

Our People

9. Our People

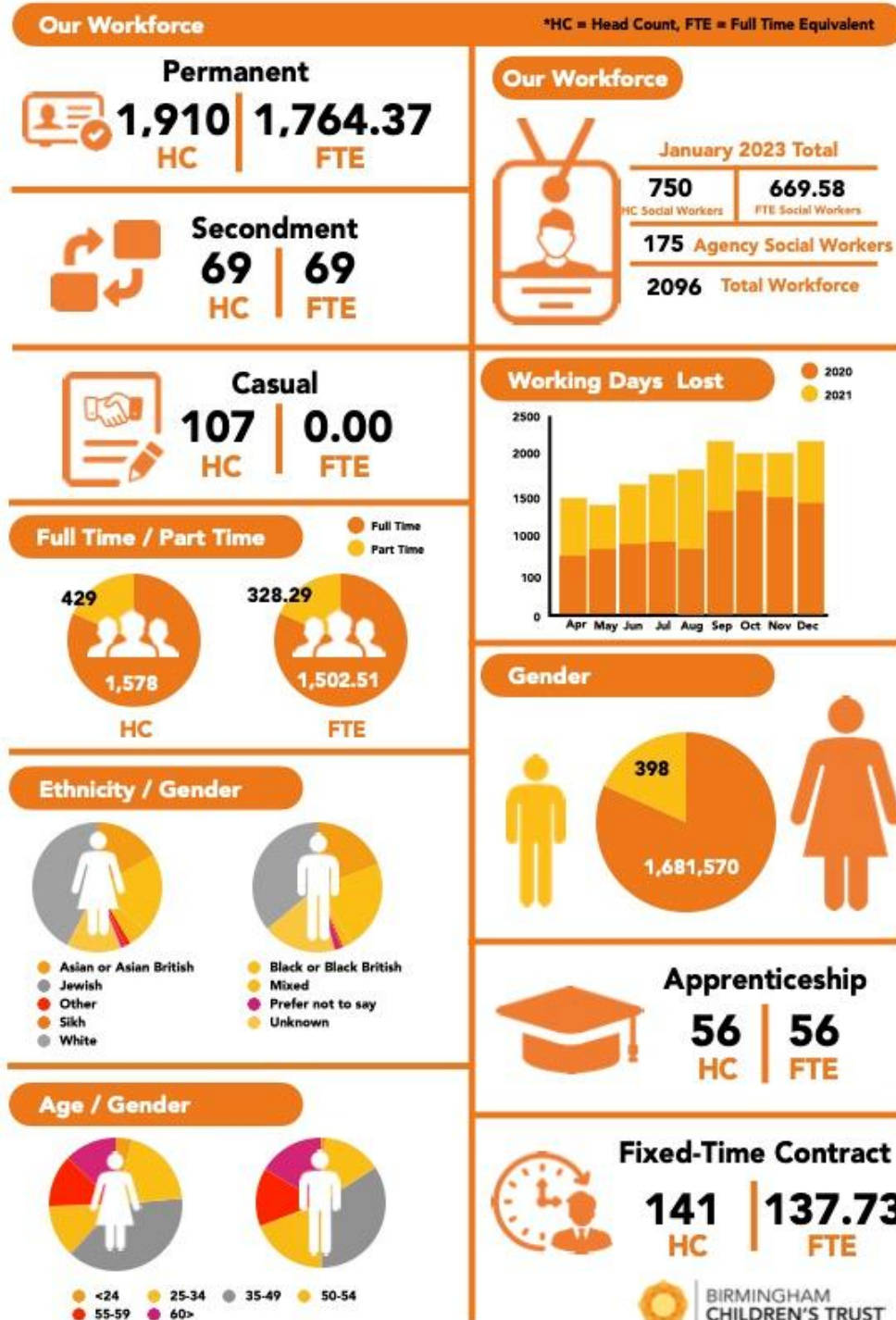
The Trust is committed to the development of our staff both in terms of how we invest in their learning and continuous professional development and in how we recognise and reward our workforce so that we are attractive as a potential employer and our retention levels are high. This is all encapsulated in our Trust workforce development plan.

A key element of the Trust workforce development plan is to promote the Trust as "an employer of choice". Some of the key initiatives include:

- a development of 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.
- developing an improved emotional support offer for our people, based on our trauma-informed principles.
- implementation of regular, consistent digital recruitment campaigns across various platforms to target, in particular, regional experienced social workers to increase application rates and interest in our permanent vacancies.
- strategies and processes to streamline our supply of temporary and agency staff that minimises our unfilled vacancies and increases the size of our talent pool.
- continuing our successful social worker ASYE programme and apprenticeship scheme to "grow our own". We have developed our Trust Academy to support their development in the early stages of their social work career.
- investment and support in the career development of unqualified roles eg. Family Support Worker/Social Work Assistant, within our social work teams.
- a training offer aligned to "Knowledge and Skills" for all the workforce.
- Trust-wide access to the benefits of the apprenticeship levy for existing and new staff for a range of professions.
- an established health and wellbeing initiative with a range of diverse support measures.
- a review of our practice operating model and roles in an effort to build clearer and stronger career pathways for experienced social workers.
- improvements to our workforce succession planning, development and progression opportunities across all roles.
- improving employee engagement at all levels, through the creation of workforce specific task groups to include employees in the Trust's decision-making and improvements to enhance their loyalty, inclusion and sense of belonging to the Trust and becoming a regional lead employer of choice.
- a high importance placed on equality and diversity matters for all employees. This is supported by an Equalities Forum and the Equalities and Diversity Manager role that supports the development of this work.
- an 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.

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 total working days lost.
- qualified social workers shown against the total Trust workforce.
- ethnicity and gender breakdown.
- age and gender breakdown.
- HC means head-count. FTE means full-time equivalent.



In response to the Council's plans to close buildings out of which the Trust operates, we have reviewed our accommodation requirements and will be acquiring a lease on a new headquarters building, replacing Lancaster Circus, Sutton New Road and New Aston House. This new premises, and Lifford House in the south of the city, will be our key administrative centres, but both buildings will be public-facing and accessible to those using our services. The rental for accommodation will be funded within the current financial envelope.

Our overall footprint will reduce, as we embrace a hybrid, flexible working model which finds the 'sweet spot' between flexible and home-based working that has been largely successful during the pandemic, and the need for staff to maintain human contact and relationships to support their work: with peers and colleagues, with managers, and with partners.



Section 10

Trust Financial Position and Budget

10. Trust Financial Position and Budget

The Trust's financial position for 2022/23 has been very challenging not least as there was no real increase in the core contract sum for 2022/23, thus creating a "baked in" pressure of some £9.8m (5%) being carried forward from 2021/22. The forecast rise in the care population has again proven to be very accurate, however the number of asylum-seeking children has increased significantly and was not planned. This, together with complexity of need and a continued rise in the number of children in high-cost placements, has resulted in a gross cost pressure of £26.7m for 2022/23. Management action and efficiencies delivered across the Trust, together with additional grant from the Household Support Fund and use of the Supporting Families reserve, has provided off-setting savings of £2.7m, reducing the overall deficit to £24.0m (10%).

The additional in-year pressure of a further 5% still compares very favourably with national comparators and the rate of children in care per 10,000 is still the lowest when compared to the West Midlands and Core Cities (confirmed by an independent review of budget sufficiency by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy [CIPFA] commissioned by the Council and published in 2022). Prior to this CIPFA had rated the Trust as having "strong financial management in place" and rating it 3 out of 5 stars.

The Trust recognises the financial challenges faced by the Council and continues to bear down on costs to deliver good Value for Money. While the rate of children in care is rising it remains well below comparator authorities and core cities. We can evidence the avoided costs resulting from our Stronger Families programme, and in the coming year will complete a review of our shape and structure to improve further our efficiency as well as our effectiveness.

With the support of the Council, the Trust has continued to invest in early help and wider intervention and prevention initiatives. A recent independent review highlighted that the cost avoidance from this activity is £17m (excluding early help) and the Trust's own assessment is that early help is delivering cost avoidance of £5m compared per annum cumulatively.

The on-going pressures have formed the basis of the budget negotiations with the Council in respect of the core contract sum for 2023/24. The Trust's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) includes a real increase in the core contract sum of £23.6m. The agreed contract sum which will form the basis of the Trust's revenue budget for 2023/24 is £272.0m. The breakdown and key assumptions behind this are as follows:

- £232.5m core contract sum carried forward from 2022/3.
- £15.0m provision to cover pay and non-pay inflation – this represents an increase of more than double the previous year's assumption reflecting higher rates of inflation.
- £0.9m towards the continuation of early help for another twelve months.
- £20.0m to reflect a real increase in the cost of placements.
- £3.6m for the continued impact of demography changes.

The Trust's capital proposals approved by the Council at a Cabinet meeting in March 2022 includes capital funding of £1.1m in 2023/24 as part of a five year capital programme of £6.25m as shown in the table below.

	22/23 £m	23/24 £m	24/25 £m	25/26 £m	26/27 £m	Total £m
Capital programme	1.65	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.1	6.25

Key elements of the 2023/24 capital investment will enable the Trust to:

- create new residential facilities for children with the opening of up to four satellite homes to operate alongside the newly opened Bridgelands (former Braymoor) which provides additional capacity to support children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- invest further in our existing residential care homes including replacement of outdated kitchens, bathrooms and boilers, etc.
- create an environment which supports our practice model of a relationship-based approach to working with children and families with the opening of a new North Hub to replace Lancaster Circus and refurbishment of Lifford House as the South Hub, both of which include new and improved child protection conference facilities.

Construction inflation has affected the existing five-year capital programme and the Trust has been in discussion with the Council about the need to increase capital funding which will also include a bid to modernise space for restorative work by Youth Offending services in the light of the recent inspection findings.

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 2023/24.

Spending and funding analysis		2023/24 (£m)
Employees		119.1
Premises		3.4
Transport		1.6
Supplies and services		6.4
Payments to third party providers		143.7
Transfer payments to other public bodies		4.5
Total planned spending		278.7
Funded by:		
	Core contract sum from Birmingham City Council	259.7
	Government grants paid via Birmingham City Council	12.3
	Total contract sum	272.0
	Other grants and contributions received direct by the Trust	6.7
Total funding		278.7



Section 11

The Children's Trust and the Council

11. 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, virtual school for children in care, 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.



Section 12

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** - a range of factors, including the legacy of covid as lockdowns ended, and children returned to schools and settings, increases beyond current capacity creating delivery and financial pressure and consequences.
- **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.
- **Trust Development** - as a relatively new organisation with an ambitious development agenda, the risk is that key developments are not delivered, that unnecessary slippage/delay occurs or that external factors impede development.
- **Placement sufficiency** - there are insufficient regulated placements for children who require them, resulting in placements within unregulated or insecure settings.
- **Oracle (1B)** - Trust Support Service teams have no clear view of how the Oracle system will operate, end to end processes, required resource to undertake new processes and the cultural change required by the Trust to implement the new system.

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 various Trust's activities

Appendix - Pen portrait of our children and our service



Pen portrait of our children and our service (31 March 2023)



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.



Get in touch: birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk Twitter @BhamChildTrust Facebook @BirminghamChildrensTrust

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