

# Highlights

from Thrive's work in

# 2023

*Thrive Together Birmingham  
supports and grows the  
movement of people,  
often motivated by faith,  
who tackle poverty and build  
community in Birmingham  
and the wider region*



# A few words from Thrive's CEO Fred Rattley

Thrive staff and trustees share a vision for Birmingham and the wider region to be a place where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and flourish, where neighbourhoods and communities are places of belonging and poverty has been eradicated.

We strongly believe that everyone has something to offer and can play a part in enabling change to happen and this report summarises a range of activities that we support that contribute to achieving our vision and values.

We recognise that we are not alone in this approach and that we achieve progress because we collaborate with a wonderful, wider movement of people who are motivated to make a difference in their neighbourhoods, communities and in the lives of those around them, especially those living at the sharp end of poverty.



Map showing the diocese of Birmingham



## Much to Celebrate

The King's Coronation was a particular highlight for BMSP partners in 2023, many of whom ran brilliant celebrations and activities in their neighbourhoods.

Each of our partner organisations runs activities appropriate for their local setting whilst all root their approach on our model of Encounter, Participation and Mutuality. One of our BMSP partners, St Francis Bournville, received an excellence award for their Memory Café supporting people with Dementia and Alzheimer's along with their carers.

Despite pressure on council budgets BMSP were delighted to be awarded a new 3-year contract approved through Birmingham City Council, which will run until Sept 2026.

Jo Bagby, who oversees the management and development of BMSP said,

*"Our BMSP Model, of reaching out to those we don't yet know, welcoming the participation of all and sharing the many gifts, skills and talents of local people is building community and nurturing the strong relationships that sustain us all through life. We are delighted this fits with Birmingham City Councils prevention agenda and adds to the flourishing of people's lives and neighbourhoods in our city."*



Josie, at St Thomas Garretts Green, enjoying the celebrations



Helen, St Francis Development Practitioner receiving the Excellence Award

Body Mind Spirit Partnership hosts locally based activities inviting the participation of over the 50's through our churches and church-linked partners across the city using a participant-led and participative approach improves wellbeing, grows meaningful relationships that invite others to join in and builds generous community where they live.



Some of the activities enjoyed by participants at Memory Café

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# Neighbours Without Borders

On Sunday 19th November 2023, Near Neighbours partnered with St Catherine of Siena Catholic Parish Church, Birmingham Progressive Synagogue and The Faith & Belief Forum, welcoming a diverse group of friends to an event entitled "Neighbours Without Borders".

Rabiyah, our Near Neighbours Co-ordinator opened the event and welcomed all, commenting on the importance of gathering at this particular time and then handed over to Sam from St Catherine of Siena Church. Sam echoed Rabiyah's welcome and shared some thoughts from the story of the Good Samaritan, talking about the importance of being good neighbours.

Karl, from Birmingham Progressive Synagogue spoke next, sharing some of his own story and talking about the significance of the shared aspects of the Abrahamic faiths.

Mahmooda, from The Faith & Belief Forum shared a little of the work of the organisation and reiterated the importance of maintaining conversation and striving towards solidarity, unity and peace.

One of the attendees said,

*"Events like these really matter.  
I am glad I was here today; this was important.  
Conversation, communication and connection is vital."*



Near Neighbours brings people together in communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust, and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in.



Karl, Sam and Mahmooda



## Food Pantries



Your Local Pantry goes beyond the food bank model, creating a sustainable and long-term solution to food poverty. Members pay a small weekly fee, typically £3.50, for which they can choose at least ten items of food each week, along with additional opportunities of volunteering and training.

By the end of 2023 there were 21 'Your Local Pantries' open in Sandwell, Birmingham and the Black Country.

Thrive's involvement in the development of Food Pantries continues as Church Action on Poverty (CAP) now employ the Development Worker based, with the Thrive team to support and grow the Your Local Pantry franchise in the West Midlands.

This has real benefit for Thrive as it enables us to have the professional expertise to develop a food poverty response that differs from foodbanks while CAP benefit from all of the Thrive team networks across Birmingham and Sandwell.

In March 2023 Shabir Jivraj, Your Local Pantry Officer, met rapper and chef Big Zuu (pictured left), as part of promotion for the YLP and Coop partnership. They were part of a YouTube series where Big Zuu was challenged to cook delicious recipes with ingredients from the Food Pantry.



Your Local Pantry is creating a sustainable and long-term solution to food poverty. Members pay a small weekly fee, for which they can choose at least ten items of food each week, along with additional opportunities of volunteering and training.





# Warm Welcome Success

Thrive has been working in partnership with Birmingham City

Council to develop a network of over 250 Warm Welcome Spaces across Birmingham as part of Birmingham's Cost of Living crisis response.

This culminated in Thrive commissioning Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies, to facilitate the evaluation of the project by creating a special art exhibit, celebrating and expressing the impact that Warm Welcome Spaces are having in Birmingham. Participants were given their own personal tile to decorate, expressing what their Warm Welcome Space means to them. BCAT then formed these words and feelings into a vibrant and moving exhibit which they installed in St Martin's in the Bull Ring and launched at an event in July.

As part of Thrive's role we have been liaising with the National Warm Welcome Campaign, co-ordinated by the Good Faith Foundation, who secured funding for evaluation of the impact of Warm Welcome around the UK.



Close up of some tiles

Birmingham Warm Welcome aims to ensure that our communities have access to safe, welcoming, warm spaces where the focus is not upon poverty or an inability to afford heat but is dignified and does not enhance the stigma and shame associated with poverty and financial difficulty. We do this by offering hospitality and connection; connecting people to each other, services, wellbeing activity, opportunity, and warmth.



Attendees enjoying warmth and community



Originally developed in Birmingham, Places of Welcome is a network of Community and Faith groups, who offer an unconditional welcome to local people, each week.



Places of Welcome is a network of hospitality run by local community groups who want to make sure that everyone in their area has a place to go for a free cup of tea, build community and meet new people.

They are diverse in nature, reflecting the different communities in which they are located, the buildings they use, and the skills, interests and personalities of the people that run and belong to them. These are weekly spaces where everyone who comes feels safe to connect, belong and contribute. Cake is usually involved!

Many of the Birmingham Places of Welcome have joined the Warm Welcome movement in the city.



This map shows England dotted with 700 Places of Welcome around the country



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**THRIVE TOGETHER BIRMINGHAM**  
Inspired by Faith - Building Community & Tackling Poverty



## Real People Honest Talk

Early in 2023 Thrive hosted a **'Real People Honest Talk'** project targeted specifically for families with children under 5.

Drawing on our relationships with Children's Centres and those working with families living in Temporary Accommodation, parents were given the opportunity to talk honestly about the challenges of bringing up their children in Birmingham.

This culminated in a report launched at an event attended by a range of people including key people of influence from the council and from the health sector. The report was also given to the Government Levelling up Department, who funded the research.



December 2023 saw a very successful **Toys4Birmingham** campaign organised in partnership with Birmingham Mail, BPCN, Warwickshire Foundation, Children Centres, Health Visitors and around 50 community partners.

Over 11,000 new toys and gifts, and more than 4,000 books were donated and distributed. Media coverage included BBC, ITV and Sky covering the event, raising the financial challenges facing families with young children especially those in temporary accommodation.



The level of support from businesses grew significantly both in terms of collections and fundraising but also volunteering with great new connections made, along with returning supporters. One of our beneficiary organisations said,

*"This is truly wonderful and uplifting –  
you have made a real difference in helping us to bring hope  
and joy to vulnerable children"*



Thrive's Louise, receiving a cheque for £5,825, from Chris, David, Charlie and Tim, from MK Health Hub, Solihull. They did the 3 Peak Challenge in under 24hrs in December to raise money for Toys4Birmingham



**The Safe Sleep Scheme** has developed as a response to bed poverty for many families. A small pot of funding was secured for a pilot scheme to purchase Moses baskets, cots and beds which have been made available to families through Children's Centre staff and Health Visitors in one of the districts in Birmingham. The hope is that this is a project that can grow to support families in other districts in the future. Donations can be made to the Safe Sleep Scheme on the Thrive website.

*Thrive is one of the city partners for Birmingham Forward Steps (BFS), a partnership of organisations working to support families with under 5's. As part of this Thrive hosts a Poverty Strategy group which highlights issues faced by children and families in Birmingham. There are a number of activities and initiatives that have developed out of the relationships and connections Thrive has through our Early Years Partnership work.*



# Three Years Funding Secured!

Safe Spaces for Young People is an inclusive network for all faiths and none. Because of its links with Church of England Birmingham, Thrive does some specific work to enable churches to set up and run Safe Spaces for Young People.

With three years funding from the Church Commissioners Innovation Fund, development of new Safe Spaces for Young People in churches has been able to explore discipleship pathways, to strengthen the Safe Spaces Network as a whole, and to reflect and learn from the activities of the project.

In 2023 the innovation project began and enabled us to develop the cluster model for the network. This involved creating 4 cluster areas across the city coordinated by 4 local youth workers each running youth work in their cluster area. This is developing slowly and relationally with possibilities such as Youth Work Basics training now being developed. The Church Commissioners grant also enables five new church based Safe Spaces per year to be supported to set up.

With support from Thrive and Safe Spaces partners, each will receive a small grant of £5000 to develop their new Safe Space.



*Safe Spaces for Young People is a developing network of drop-in Youth Projects across Birmingham that provide regular, open access Safe Spaces for young people based in their local community. Each provides a safe space for young people to gather at the same time every week, where young people can feel welcome, connect, participate and build positive relationships.*

## POVERTY TRUTH BIRMINGHAM

# Birmingham Poverty Truth Commission Concludes

July 2023 saw the closing event of BPTC#2, which started in 2021, with an audience representing statutory, voluntary, and charitable sectors in Birmingham. The event took place in Birmingham Hippodrome and focused on sharing the process of how a Poverty Truth Commission works, as well as hearing the voices of Community and Civic Commissioners as they shared their experiences of being involved.

As always with any Poverty Truth Commission, welcome, connection and hospitality were as important as the formal presentation, and lots of time was made for conversation and sharing of experiences.

One of the aspects of our work was to document our experiences and conversations in poster form. These posters were used at events and have also been on a 'roadshow' of sorts around the city. We also condensed the posters into a booklet which you can see on our website.

BPTC#2 has now finished but legacy work inspired by the Commission continues.

*Birmingham Poverty Truth Commission brings together a group of people who have experience of various kinds of poverty, with those who have positions of influence in our city.*

*By building relationships it is hoped that the experience will deepen an understanding of the difficult and entrenched issues of poverty, leading to better decision making from leaders across business, public and voluntary sectors.*



*Community Commissioners described being part of BPTC as giving a 'sense of belonging, solidarity,' and a 'feeling of not being alone'*



*Some of the Commissioners sharing their experiences of being part of the PTC*

**Monika Rozanski,**  
(Service Manager - Inequalities, Public Health, Birmingham City Council),  
who has overseen the project, shared her enthusiasm for the PTC and the approach taken



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# Thrive's Team

**Fred Rattley**



CEO of Thrive Together Birmingham  
and Director of Community  
Regeneration for Church of England  
Birmingham



**Sarah Turner**



Operations Manager for Thrive  
Together Birmingham and  
oversees Thrive's work



**Esther Spence**



Project Support Worker for  
various aspects of Thrive's work



**Rabiyah Latif**



Near Neighbours Officer



**Louise White**



Places of Welcome, Warm Welcome  
Spaces, Toys4Birmingham  
and other projects



**Jo Bagby**



Consultant - Management &  
Development for Body Mind Spirit  
Partnership; Thrive & Church of  
England Birmingham



**Shabir Jivraj**



Your Local Pantry Development  
Worker for the Midlands Region



**Adam Larkin**



Consultant - Innovation Project  
Development Worker for Safe  
Spaces for Young People



**Carol Hebden**



Consultant - Facilitator for Body  
Mind Spirit Partnership and  
Birmingham Poverty Truth  
Commission



**Daphne Francis**



Consultant - Facilitator for  
Birmingham Poverty Truth  
Commission



# Thrive's Trustees



**David Tomlinson**  
Chair of Trustees



**Karen Preece**  
Trustee



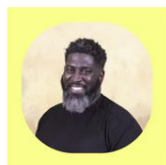
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**Douglas Machiridza**  
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**Rachel Groves**  
Trustee



**David Whyte**  
Trustee



**Bishop James Langstaff**  
Trustee



**Karen Lockett-Young**  
Trustee

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