

Journeys towards a brighter future

Young People's Strategy 2021-2026



Contents

1. Introduction	Pages 1-2
2. National & Local Context	Pages 3-5
3. Aspirations for young people growing up in Birmingham and Solihull	Pages 6
4. Young People's Voices	Pages 7-8
5. Our Strategic Aims for 2021-2026	Pages 9-13

1. Introduction

Our story began in the 1850's when Sir Josiah Mason opened his Almshouse-Orphanage for older women and young orphan girls, before going on to build a large orphanage and school that housed up to 500 children, leading to the foundation of the Trust in 1867. The change in the role of the state and the increasing financial burden of managing a huge Victorian building led the charity to close the orphanage in 1960 and saw a transition from the provision of education and care of young people to that of housing and social care for older adults.

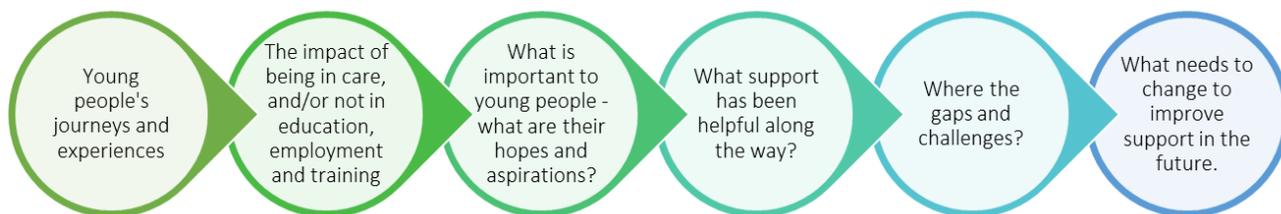
However, Josiah's vision and instruction to his Trustee's was to use his endowment to expand and replicate the provision of support to young people. Charity schemes from the 1960's onwards meant that part of the endowment was protected and dedicated to the education and 'relief in need' of young people. Since this time, SJMT has made small grant awards to individuals and external bodies and funded apprenticeships across the charity, but we have not directly provided services to young people.

In our 2018-2023 Strategy 'Building on Strong Foundations', we made a commitment to develop services for and to support young people once again. This work has been delayed due to other priorities or external factors including the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in our 2021-2022 Plan (refresh) we made a commitment to launch a service for young people and to 'commence plans for development of Almshouses for care leavers/homeless young people'.

As part of this commitment, we commissioned service design specialists Peopletoo to work with us on an exciting collaboration to design 2-3 new and pioneering services for young people who are in care or leaving care, and/or who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or who are at risk of becoming disengaged with learning and employment opportunities and who live in Birmingham and Solihull.

This Report presents the findings of the research undertaken by Peopletoo and how we plan to respond to these findings over the next five years.

A fundamental consideration in the design of young people's services for SJMT had to be the voice of children and young people. As such, Peopletoo undertook an extensive programme of engagement activity with young people across the area on our behalf to understand:



This engagement activity has laid strong foundations for on-going and meaningful co-production of services with children and young people, with young people energised and excited to work in partnership with an organisation who is providing new support 'just for them.'

This work also supported the creation of new and strategically important links between SJMT and wider statutory partners and VCS organisations in the area, and built on those relationships which have recently been emerging, presenting a range of future opportunity for service development and collaboration which can be progressed as the Trust establishes its foothold as a positive, engaging, and nurturing organisation which has outcomes for children at its heart.

To begin with, this report describes the National and local context currently surrounding children in care, care leavers and the NEET agenda, and provides an evidence base supporting the Trust's mission and ambition to target resource and support to these specific groups of young people who face some of the most complex and multiple disadvantages as they move into adulthood and independence. Our Strategy aims to enhance the local offers in Birmingham and Solihull, and add value to these based on our unique skills, capabilities, and approach.

This Report includes findings and feedback from the engagement activity with children and young people which has also been explored, tested, and validated by the following key partners who are willing and excited to welcome SJMT into the wider children's services partnership:

- Birmingham Children's Trust
- Birmingham City Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- West Midlands OPCC
- West Midlands Police
- The University of Birmingham
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- Witton Lodge
- St Basils
- The Welland Trust
- The Rees Foundation
- Compass Support
- North Birmingham Employment and Skills Board
- The CJS
- The Care Leavers Covenant

The findings from the engagement activity have also been tested and reflected against examples of positive practice from across the UK, and our Strategy outlines our commitment to develop service models which would be most valued by young people and partners

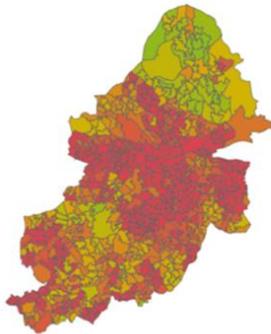
SJMT would like to thank Peopletoo who embraced the opportunity to undertake this exciting project with great energy and enthusiasm and a give a special thank you to everyone who has participated, sharing experiences which for some we fully acknowledge have been challenging to revisit.

We are completely committed to creating the best possible life chances and outcomes for some of the most vulnerable young people living in Birmingham and Solihull.

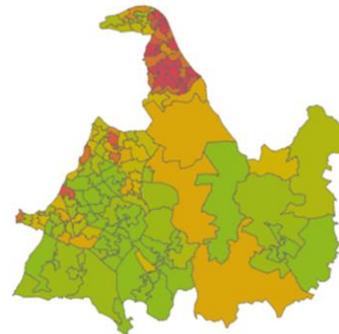
2. National and Local Context

At the time of writing, the UK performs poorly when compared to other countries and large economies in respect of children and young people's wellbeing. Whilst academically our young people appear to be achieving in line with our economic neighbours, the 2018 PISA¹ index suggests that our young people are unhappier, under more stress, and exposed to more and multiple vulnerabilities than children and young people living in comparable areas. This is resulting in more young people requiring care and support, and in more young people becoming disengaged with their communities and with education, employment, and training opportunities. Birmingham in particular faces some of the most significant levels of deprivation in the UK, and whilst on the surface it may appear that Solihull is more affluent with fewer economic and social challenges, there are hidden pockets of deprivation where young people are facing significant challenges relating to their economic, social, and mental wellbeing with PHE data showing increases in young people admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm and social, emotional, and mental health issues.² Data released by the Children's Commissioners Office also suggests that children and young people in Birmingham are exposed to significantly more and multiple vulnerabilities than those growing up in other areas across the UK.³

Birmingham Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile
(where 1 is most deprived 10% of LSOAs)



Solihull Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile
(where 1 is most deprived 10% of LSOAs)



2.1 Looked After Children

The NSPCC's Looked After Children Statistical Briefing reports that in 2018/19, there were approximately 102,000 looked after children in the UK and that the total number of looked after children in the UK has increased every year since 2010. In the last five years the population of looked after children in the UK has increased by 10%.⁴ Both Birmingham and Solihull are experiencing increased demand on children's social care services, with increased numbers of children entering the care system year on year. This specifically is an issue in Solihull, whose numbers of looked after children in 2020 far surpassed both National and Statistical neighbour averages.⁵

It is a widely known fact that care leavers are more likely to experience higher levels of disadvantage and have poorer outcomes than their peers:

¹ [PISA 2018: national report for England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672222/pisa-2018-national-report-for-england.pdf)

² [Child and Maternal Health - PHE](https://www.phe.gov.uk/topics/childandmaternalhealth/)

³ [We're all in this together? | Children's Commissioner for England Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/we-re-all-in-this-together/)

⁴ [Statistics about looked after children | NSPCC Learning](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learnings/statistics-about-looked-after-children/)

⁵ [Local authority interactive tool \(LAIT\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672222/pisa-2018-national-report-for-england.pdf)

- On average care leavers are 4 times more likely to experience mental health issues. A survey carried out by the National Audit Office in 2015 recorded that only half of all children in care have emotional health and behaviour which is considered normal.
- Many young people leave care to live independently at 18 years old. Without the support networks that would normally be in place for young people leaving home they often experience loneliness and social isolation and are more likely than peers to experience homelessness.
- Care leavers are more likely to become involved in drug and alcohol misuse and risk-taking behaviours.
- Care leavers represent a disproportionate number of young people known to the criminal justice system; One quarter of adults in prison have been in care and 40% of young offenders were in care as children.
- 40% of all care Leavers are Not in Education, Employment or Training.

2.2 Young People who are NEET/at risk of NEET

Data released by the UK Government in March 2021⁶ shows that 11.5% of the 16-24 population are classified as NEET. Whilst the Government reports that this figure is stable compared to 2019 data, it is important to note that 11.5% was the same figure reported 5 years previously which suggests that very little has changed for young people within this time.

Since 2014, more young people are NEET due to economic inactivity than due to being unemployed. The main reason for inactivity being long term or temporarily sick has increased since 2011, and the main contributing factor to this is mental ill health. Looking specifically at mental health conditions, the proportion of the 16-24 NEET population with such a condition has almost tripled from 7.7% in 2012 to 20.8% in 2020.

In relation to Birmingham and Solihull, numbers of young people aged 16-24 in Education, Employment and Training are beginning a downward trajectory, with fewer opportunities available to young people following recent recessions and following the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which is only now in its infancy. Spending time not in employment, education, or training (NEET) has been shown to have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health, and can result in an increased likelihood of unemployment, low wages, or low-quality work later in life. Being NEET can also have an impact on unhealthy behaviours and increase the likelihood that young people may become involved in crime.

For care experienced young people, care leavers and young people who are (or at risk of becoming) NEET the transition to adulthood can often be a challenging time: transitions are not always sequential – leave school, find work, form a stable, loving relationship, setting up home, parenthood etc. Young people can become an adult in one area very quickly, but not in others. It all depends on the individual and the experiences they have had. For many young people, their transition to adulthood can be extended and delayed until they are emotionally and financially ready and they have the qualifications they need and aspire to, so that they have the opportunity to achieve their economic potential. For most young people, support will come from families to help them make choices and to navigate through unforeseen difficulties, whilst for other young people and particularly care leavers this may not be an option and support needs to come from elsewhere.

⁶ [NEET annual brief, Calendar Year 2020 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

2.3 The Covid-19 Pandemic & impact on young people’s social, mental, & economic wellbeing.

This report must also acknowledge the fact that the UK is currently slowly emerging from a worldwide pandemic which has had a massively negative impact on young people’s economic, social, and mental health. Whilst the true extent of the impact of the pandemic remains as yet unknown, in their study exploring the Coronavirus and the social impacts on young people in Great Britain (2020), the ONS⁷ have identified that young people’s worries around their wellbeing and mental health, education and further learning opportunities, work and household finances have significantly increased. Results of the survey Peopletoo undertook as part of our engagement activity support this data, with the majority of young people who participated reporting that they do not feel particularly positive about their future. The majority of the recent studies surrounding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people’s mental health show that young people have been more detrimentally impacted than other age groups. However, it is important to note that numbers of young people reporting concerns around their mental health and wellbeing, and referrals into mental health services for young people across the UK, have been rapidly increasing in the years preceding this, with the isolation, fear and worry experienced by young people during the pandemic adding to the already increasing issues and pressures.⁸

It is also widely acknowledged that as young people’s lives have been disrupted throughout the pandemic, they have been separated from key protective factors and important safeguards such as schools, social workers, youth engagement opportunities and their friendship groups which support them to safely navigate their community and journey into adulthood and independence which for many young people is now unsupported. This raises significant safeguarding concerns and heightens the importance of Local Authorities and their partners working together at pace in new and creative ways to ensure that the widest range of support opportunities are available to young people.

2.4 Participation in the delivery of key strategic objectives for Birmingham and Solihull

There has been a high level of interest and enthusiasm within both Birmingham and Solihull Councils, and Birmingham Children’s Trust for SJMT’s commitment to returning to the delivery of services for young people. There is a real willingness to work in partnership with SJMT to grow the young people’s offer, and the development of further opportunities to give young people the best possible opportunities to achieve, and successfully move into independence and adult life is highly valued, and highly welcomed. By developing new service offers in Birmingham and Solihull, SJMT would proactively be contributing to the following key strategic plans, enhancing partners’ ability to achieve the objectives that they set out. The design and delivery of children and young people’s services by SJMT would also make significant contributions to a number of wider, and intrinsically interlinked strategic plans and objectives, adding value and increasing social value, tackling some of the most significant local issues, and improving outcomes, equity, and opportunity for some of the most disadvantaged young people:



⁷ [Coronavirus and the social impacts on young people in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

⁸ British Medical Journal Mental health of children and young people during pandemic, Ford, John & Gunnel 2021

3. Aspirations for young people growing up in Birmingham and Solihull

Throughout the research project, Peopletoo met with a wide range of key stakeholders. These discussions have enabled the exploration of the key strategic objectives and priorities of future partners, and to identify the key gaps in services and support for children and young people. Whilst partners acknowledge that the local offers in Birmingham and Solihull appear strong and effective, partners would more than welcome further services being developed for the core groups of young people identified by the Trust, with a shared view that there can never be too much support and guidance for vulnerable young people.

The opportunities that have presented themselves align perfectly with the Trust's vision, mission and values and would enable us to live our values in a way which is meaningful to young people in 2021. These opportunities play strongly to our core strengths, capabilities, and knowledge base, but also present the opportunity for us to learn and to grow as initial projects develop and expand, and importantly, as the needs of children and young people change over time.

The following diagram sets out the key gaps in support for young people in both Birmingham and Solihull and the aspirations of key local partners:



4. Young people's Voices

Peopletoo engaged directly with 46 children and young people aged between 11 and 30. An online survey was also circulated, generating a further 21 individual responses. Person-centred creativity is fundamental to this co-production approach, and the engagement methodology included virtual imagination spaces, online polls, and discussion boards, in-person workshops and 1:1 discussions providing all young people with the opportunity to participate in ways which were most meaningful to them.

IMAGINATION SPACE WORKSHOPS

Are you a young person living in Birmingham or Solihull?

Have you had experience of being in care?

Have you had challenges finding education, training and Job opportunities?

Join our online Imagination Space workshops to help us design new services for young people!

This is an amazing opportunity to share your story, get creative, and be a champion for other young people who might need our help in the future.

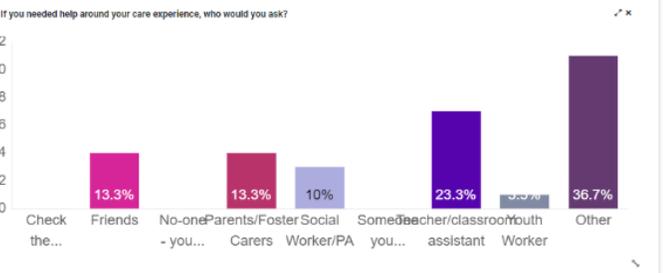
Dates and Times:

- 5th May 2021 at 5pm
- 11th May 2021 at 5pm
- 13th May 2021 at 5pm

To book a space or to have a chat about the workshops please contact
rose.thomas@peopletoo.co.uk or
stephanie.lyons@peopletoo.co.uk

How would you rate your care experience?

Progress: 100%



In conversations with young people, the following was explored:

- Young peoples' journeys and experiences, and the impact of these on their aspirations and engagement.
- The different types of support that have been most helpful to young people, and why.
- The support that hasn't worked particularly well for them, and why.
- What young people want to achieve in life and their plans around how they will achieve their ambitions.
- Worries and fears.
- What excites them and what they look forward to.
- What makes a good support worker.
- What they would want to see from future support services.

In conversations with young people, Peopletoo talked about the biggest issues they face and how a new organisation could provide them with the most meaningful support they feel that they would need on their journeys into adulthood and independence. This learning has been used to develop new evidence-based service models summarised in this Strategy so that we can work towards meeting the key needs of young people living in Birmingham and Solihull. Young people said the following was important to them:



5. Our Strategic Aims for 2021-2026

We have listened to what young people and other stakeholders have told us and for the next 5 years, we will focus our energy and resources on the following 3 aims:

Aim 1: To create quality affordable homes for young people

Between 2021-2023, we will build 6 brand new one bedroom apartments (almshouses) for young people from Birmingham & Solihull who are:

- Care Leavers (16-30 years old who have been ‘looked after’ at some point since they were 14 years old, and were in care on or after their 16th birthday)
- Young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- Min age and max age at time of referral: 16-25

The service will provide:

- A secure base to learn the skills to manage a home and to find long term permanent accommodation.
- A licence will be offered for a period of 3 years, but this could be extended to a maximum of 5 years at the discretion of the Leadership Team.
- A Support Worker offering structured, outcome focused one to one support and group based activities.
- Access to Apprenticeships, work experience and employment opportunities within SJMT.
- Intergenerational support and activities with residents in SJMT care and housing services.
- Referral pathways to ethical landlords who provide quality permanent housing and;
- Move on support and an enduring relationship with SJMT

To ensure that young people do not become dependent on benefits and can afford to live in the accommodation if they are working or in training, we will offer two units of accommodation that can be subsidised by SJMT at any one time.

In 2023, we will review the success of this project and if we are able to demonstrate the need and successful outcomes, subject to the availability of funding, we will commit to creating additional homes.



Young people have told us that having access to green spaces and that homes that are ecologically friendly are important to them and this will be integral to any homes we design and build. We are committed to ensuring that young people are part of any design process.

Aim 2: To help prepare young people to be ready for independent living

From 2022, SJMT will create and pilot two training flats for young people who are:

- Care Leavers (16-25 years old who have been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old, and were in care on or after their 16th birthday)
- Young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless



This service model will offer bespoke support enabling young people to learn about and understand their emerging responsibilities as young adults. This would provide meaningful opportunities to learn about budgeting, benefits, DIY and cookery, self-care and self-management, community, relationships and wellbeing for up to 8 weeks. In addition:

- Young people involved in this programme would be supported and coached by a paid member of staff.
- As part of our commitment to and recognition of the value of intergenerational work, we will provide a young person with an older volunteer mentor to buddy them during their stay with us.
- SJMT will deliver the ASDAN's Living Independently short course. The course would allow young people to develop their skills in a structured way and embed their learning, recognising and celebrating individual milestones along the way.
- SJMT will offer work experience opportunities, vocational opportunities, paid work and apprenticeships where this is appropriate for the young person.
- We will work closely with key partner agencies, ensuring access to specialists where young people require more targeted interventions, particularly linked to their emotional and mental health. Also, where appropriate we will signpost them to services and support available through other agencies for specific areas of need.
- SJMT is committed to work alongside the young person to identify appropriate move on accommodation during their stay with us and this may include SJMT housing.
- An 'After Care' offer will be part of this service model to ensure that young people always have somewhere to come back to.

Aim 3: To help young people identify and achieve their hopes and plans

From 2022, we will launch a brand new community based support service for:

- Young people aged 13-25 who are in care or care experienced and not engaged or at risk of not being engaged in education, employment or training who need support to help them navigate the world of: education, employment, training, business start-up and skills development

Our service model will be built on our values and our vision which is the belief that everyone should have hope and the opportunity to thrive.

There will be no wrong door when it comes to accessing this service and no restrictions on the duration of the service or the amount of times that young people can come back to access support.

The service will be provided wherever young people want to see us including, schools, careers centres, youth centres, children's homes, supported housing projects, local coffee shops as well as virtually.

Our service will be based on positive, nurturing and honest relationships between the young person and their Supporter (an SJMT member of staff) and where applicable their Volunteer Mentor. The Supporter will work with the young person to 'Explore' their hopes and plans and that act as a facilitator, broker and navigator. Where young people have a real desire to work in or establish their own business in a specific field, we will work to source a Mentor to guide them on their journey.



We will work to become an AQA Unit Award Scheme provider, enabling us to recognise and certify the achievements each individual young person makes, celebrating individual strengths and outcomes and improving young people's sense of self-belief.

Our service will work to source and co-design and provide meaningful work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for young people.

We will review our model in 2024 and if we see improved outcomes for young people, we will explore expanding this service to young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET who are not care experienced, subject to the availability of funding.

The following diagram shows some of the outcomes and activities we may ‘explore’ and support a young person with during their time with us. Our aim will be to get them closer to achieving their personal hopes and plans.



Outcomes Framework

As part of the research and service design project, SJMT asked Peopletoo to design an evidence based Outcomes Framework based on what young people had shared. This Framework will enable SJMT to work with young people to identify their individual goals in order to co-produce an action plan which supports and celebrates their progress and achievements at every step of the way.

The Outcomes Framework incorporates a range of KPI's which relate to each Aim/Activity we have committed to.

SJMT are committed to adopting and implementing this Framework in all of our activities with young people and we will publically share the results annually.

SJMT would like to thank everyone who has supported the development of this Strategy, especially the young people and professionals across Birmingham & Solihull who were so generous with their time and knowledge.

A special thank you also to Peopletoo who have been excellent to work with. More information about Peopletoo can be found at <https://peopletoo.co.uk/>

Peopletoo
it works better with you



© SJMT (Sir Josiah Mason Trust). Registered Office: Mason Court, Hillborough Road, Olton, West Midlands, B27 6PF. Call: 0121 245 1002. Visit www.sjmt.org.uk

SJMT (Sir Josiah Mason Trust) is a Registered Charity, a Registered Housing Association and a Company Limited by Guarantee. Charity Number: 1179890. Company Number: 11416213

Our family of charities include: Sir Josiah Mason's Almshouse Charity, Sir Josiah Mason's Care Charity, Sir Josiah Mason's Relief in Need & Education Charity, Holte & Bracebridge Charity, Holy Trinity Heath Town Almshouse Charity & Thomas Banks Almshouses.



HouseProud

