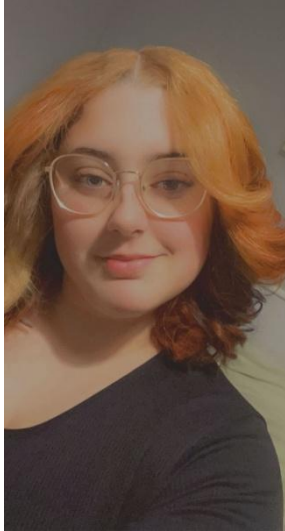




Valuing the Voices of the Next Generation: How you can help!



Jasimine Iqbal, Co-Chair of Birmingham Corporate Parenting Board.

Today's news will give a thorough update to those reading about the current position and shift within the [Birmingham Corporate Parenting Board](#) that has happened this year, sharing some perspective through the eyes of the recently selected Co-Chair, Jasimine Iqbal, which is me! I will also share how you, as someone who works for the council, can help. In this update there will be links and information sharing how you can do this.

Firstly, did you know due to legislation that, as someone who works for the council, you are a corporate parent to over 2,500 children in care and over 1,000 care leavers? (sharp intake of breath... now breathe!!) Well at the end you will find out more about what you can do as a corporate parent. So don't worry, I've got you!!! Being a corporate parent means treating us like you would, your own child, providing the same level of support, care, love and nurture that every child needs. It also means having high aspirations and supporting these. We know young people within families who have high aspirations do better. We also know that statistically care experienced young people do worse than their peers in areas like education, housing and employment. This is where you can make a real difference.

My role as Co-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and changes in the Board

Prior to being allocated the responsibility of co-chairing the Corporate Parenting Board with Birmingham Children's Trust's Chief Executive James Thomas, I had the opportunity to attend previous board meetings as a representative of some of the groups young care experienced people are



members of – formed by the Trust's Rights and Participation Service. There are a total of 7 current groups:

- Junior Children in Care Council (JCIC)
- Children in Care Council (CICC)
- Care Leavers Forum (CLF)

We have other groups created by young people as well:

- All is One (a LGBTQ+ group)
- Don't Dis-Ability (young people with varying disabilities)
- Beauty in All Shades (BIAS)
- Young Parents Group (YPG)

Amongst these groups are amazing, strong-willed and determined young people coming together as one despite their differing backgrounds and lived experiences, all aiming to see a change within the Children's Trust and the system they have grown up in.

By allowing their voices to echo in the board meetings, we have seen a wonderful shift in the dynamic between corporate parenting board attendees and an understanding of what really needs to change. Apprenticeship diversity has grown in numbers, in varying sectors such as within the Rights and Participation team and amongst the Trust overall; most importantly enabling previous care experienced individuals to be a driving force in gaining a perspective of the Trust's responsibilities for their current and future corporate children and being the setting foundation of frontline change!!!

Furthermore, by having care experienced and fresh faces supporting our teams, this allows a growth in opportunities to help young people find confidence in whatever situation they may be in, to be optimistic about their future education, learning and capabilities and to empower our young people and children to strive to be the best versions of themselves. Additionally, members of some of these groups have aided in training, research, interviewing candidates, and being part of co-production projects (which I



have also done for 7 years), opening doors to gain experience and be the frontline of direct change.

Continuing to Aim for Change

The Corporate Parenting Board's aim is to continue to welcome young people to our table to hear their views, wishes and complements to current and new ideas in how we can better the structure in which we nurture the next generation. By having the council closely interconnected to Birmingham Children's Trust, and attending the Corporate Parenting Board, we can continue to provide opportunities and widen our resources in supporting young people, during their time in care, education and transitioning to independence and post 25+ into adulthood. Knowing the versatility in revenue of connections throughout Birmingham (and beyond), this relationship will directly demonstrate the dedication of the Trust and Council in guiding young people through resources such as housing, financial guidance and support, prospective apprenticeships, work opportunities and positions, a deeper understanding of the system, engagement within the community and allowing forthcoming charities to champion our young people.

So how can you help now?

We don't want charity, we want opportunities to be seen and heard, to grow, develop and to make success in our lives.

Be an advocate, support and champion us. Think about us as you would your own child, challenge decisions, resources and support make sure we get what we are entitled to! Some children and young people are let down by a range of systems including education. You can help to change this.

Education and Learning is such an important thing for us as children in care and care experienced young people. We can experience a lot of changes and keeping our school and education consistent is so important. Help us get into a new school and stay in school, don't let us wait and don't move us as the easy option.



Be Informed, understand us, understand our challenges, be trauma informed and attachment aware. Treat us with compassion and empathy and not as a problem.

Challenge Stigma, don't call us CIC, LAC or any other acronym in person or in forms!! We are so much more than an acronym, statistics or image you see of us. If we are struggling think deeper about why this is and get others to do the same. Stand up for us (remember we are your child!!) We have so many talents and skills. Talk positively about us, celebrate our achievements, big us up!!!!

Opportunities can go a long way to help us and with your own children you would want them to succeed and do everything you can to help them. Well, we should be no different. Help us gain work experience, study, go to university, do a master's or a PHD, gain an apprenticeship or a job. This also means looking at what opportunities in your team or department you have for us.

Being part of our local community – help us with opportunities to get involved in clubs, out of school activities, friendships peer groups as not being socially isolated is so important to us especially as we leave care. Supporting us now can help us in the future when professionals leave us and support drops off. We need a strong community and network around us as many of us don't have the same support from our family like many of our peers.

Listen, and actively involve us in decision making, the results will be so much better!!! Don't assume to know what we need, take time to get to know us and build a relationship or ask someone who has. Take time to find out what we think, feel and what we need, work with us!!!



To find out more in how you can help visit our [Corporate Parenting | Birmingham Children's Trust](#) webpage.

There are a few ways you can make a **big** difference:

- **Ring fence opportunities – jobs, apprenticeships, work placements –** this can be life changing for us and we have some amazing talents and skills we can offer across the council (we know there are more young people needed!!!) Some of us need roles to give us a start in our careers, some of us our graduates and postgraduates! Some have got great experience already.
- **Volunteer to mentor or befriend** a child in care or a care experienced young person. You can build a relationship, get to know us, take us out and spend time with us. We know young people who have had a volunteer for more than 10 years and we know the difference this has made when schools might change, our carers may change but our mentor or befriender doesn't!! [Please have a look at our Volunteer Jobs page – could you make a difference?](#)
- **Support the Children's Trust's Bfriends Charity by volunteering for events or supporting the [Be a star! - Bfriends Christmas Campaign](#) to fund a meal or present for young people on Christmas Day – [Christmas Gift Donations](#)**



- **Support Foster Carer Recruitment** – we need more foster carers!!! we need opportunities to live in a family that we can call home
- **Remember be our champion, change the stigma** around us and **support us to achieve!!! Be a great parent not an absent one!!**

With upcoming Corporate Parenting Board meetings comes further changes and challenges, which demand and welcome the input of council members – YOU – for our young people, the future of society, the next generation. We look forward to welcoming and working alongside you.

Thank you!

Jasimine Iqbal, Co-Chair of Birmingham Corporate Parenting Board