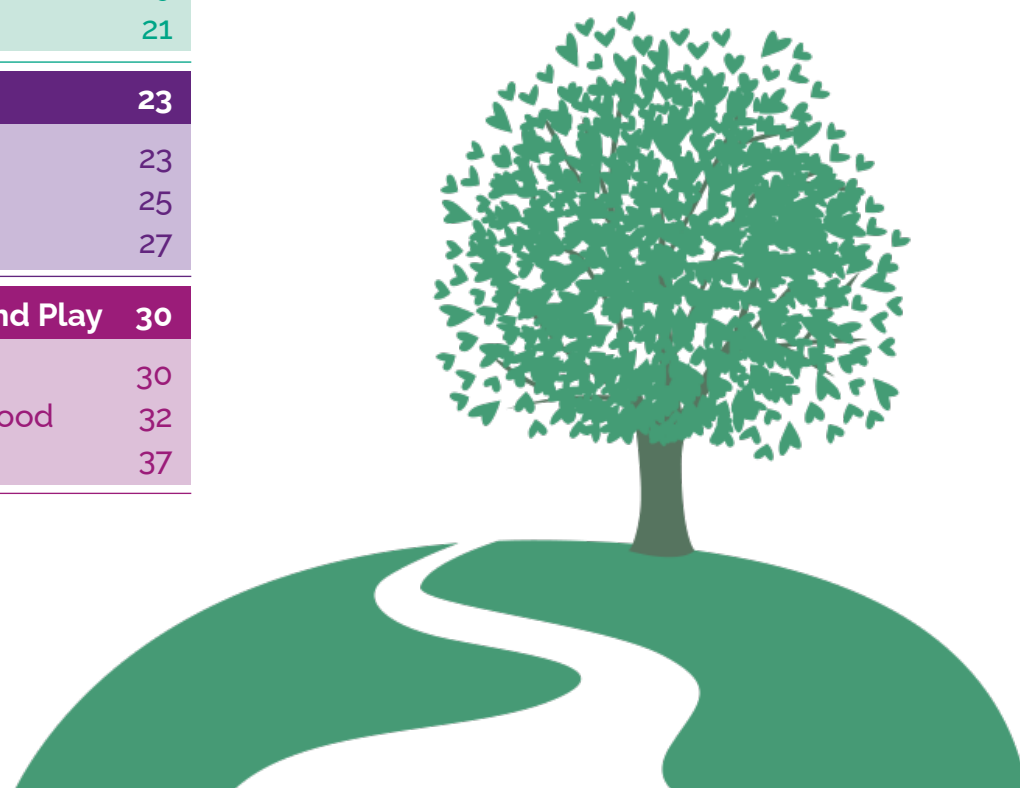


The Springfield Project Impact Report 2023-24



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Introduction from the CEO

Sarah Robbins



In February 2024 Sparkhill was on the receiving end of negative press after being described as a 'no go area' by an ill-informed MP with no connection to Birmingham. He couldn't have been more wrong. Those of us who live or work in Sparkhill know that it is an area fuelled by warmth, kindness, diversity and creativity, where community cohesion is visible and celebrated. The Springfield Project is proud and privileged to be deeply rooted within the Sparkhill community.

2023-24 was another year of development for The Springfield Project, with new opportunities to serve, and work alongside, the community of Sparkhill and surrounding areas. The Children's Centre team has embraced the move towards becoming a 'Family Hub'. The Sparkhill Child Friendly Neighbourhood team has worked with pupils from Moseley School who helped us to understand the thoughts, wishes and feelings of young people growing up in Sparkhill and what they would like to see in future. This will form the basis of our plans for the coming year when

we hope to develop new activities, co-created and led by young people.

Our work with our partners continued to have an impact across Birmingham this year, through our role within Birmingham Forward Steps and our leadership of the Sounds of Play project and the Birmingham Early Years Music Consortium. We look forward to continuing these partnerships in the years ahead.

I am always amazed by how much is achieved by our wonderful team of staff and volunteers. This impact report shows the depth and breadth of our offer to the community. By offering a range of different services we are able to have much greater impact, supporting the holistic needs of children, young people and families. Many children, young people and adults tell us that they feel at home in our centres and that they know that our staff and volunteers care about them and invest in them in a way that goes far beyond their usual experiences.

Thank you to everyone that has contributed to our work during the past year.

A word from our Chair

Tim Boyes



Making sure the project is supported by good governance is very important to us.

This past year has been one that continues to navigate a post pandemic world marked by the added disruption felt by a sharp rise in living costs. Our project responds to global pressures by wanting to pay our employees fairly, which in turn means running things as well as we can.

I am grateful to all who have helped fundraise, to all who have made our different activities run as smoothly as possible and I am very grateful to board members asking good questions and bringing wisdom to our decision-making.

We also want to make sure our project is inclusive at every level, and so it has been great to lay the way for new Board members who bring wider representation to governance, and who significantly lower the average age of the Board! A project that has lots to do with the very young, and seeks to work more with children and teenagers will benefit from having younger voices advising us.

Thank you to all who make Springfield a success, at all levels.

Who We Are

The Springfield Project is a charity based in Sparkhill, Birmingham.

Born out of St Christopher's Church, we believe that every child, young person, parent and adult in our community has the right to reach their full potential in life. Unfortunately, deprivation, social inequality and a lack of local provision often create significant barriers to achieving that potential, and many families in Sparkhill face hardship and isolation.

That is why we run a programme of community activities which empower, enable and enrich the lives of hundreds

of local children, young people and families. At our base in The Springfield Centre connected to St Christopher's Church, and at our Park Road site, we provide a range of services for local children and families to combat poverty and help people to lead happy and healthy lives.

This is how we fulfil our mission to show God's love in our community.








"I have come in order that you might have life, and have it to the full"

John 10:10



Our Values

We embrace our values and behaviours in our work, as well as in our professional relationships with colleagues, partners and those who use our services. We do this by always:

				
Being welcoming and inclusive	Listening	Serving	Being Professional	Growing



“They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

Jeremiah 17:8

Overview of Our Services

Springfield Children's Centre

Delivering Early Years Health and Wellbeing for children aged 0-5 in Birmingham, Springfield Children's Centre is part of Birmingham Forward Steps (BFS), a pioneering Early Years Health and Wellbeing initiative for all Birmingham children aged 0-5 and their families. It brings together health visiting and children's centre services, so that families can access the help they need from pregnancy until their child starts school.

Nurseries

Mini-Springers and Park Road Nursery are Ofsted registered nurseries which offer sessional places for children in receipt of the Early Educational Entitlement grants. This includes all three- and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds. Both are inclusive nurseries and provide places for children with special educational needs. The majority of children are grant funded and receive 15 hours in total each week.

Community Services

Our Community Services comprise a range of free activities for adults living in the Sparkhill community which aim to reduce loneliness and isolation, provide support and advice for those who need it, and a helping hand for those experiencing hardship. They include English language classes, our social group Place of Welcome, a cooking group, and until 31 March 2024, Springfield Food Pantry.

Seedlings

Seedlings is a stay and play group aimed at 0-4 year-olds and their parents/ carers. It is held three times a week on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in St Christopher's Church and it is open to all. Seedlings is often the first point of contact we have with children and parents in the area, from where we can introduce them to our other services and help them to get ready for nursery and school.

Child Friendly Neighbourhood

Through our CFN initiative, we are working to make Sparkhill a more engaging neighbourhood for children and families and make a lasting impact on the physical appearance of Sparkhill. We have launched several after school clubs, recurring activities and events, and broadened our youth offer as well as improving our existing holiday playschemes for children aged 5-11 from the local community of Sparkhill.

Volunteering

We have a strong track record of working with volunteers at The Springfield Project. They bring enormous value to our team through their wealth of skills and talents, their energy and enthusiasm and the hard work they contribute by volunteering their time. We are proud to see the ways they gain and develop from their time volunteering for us, many going on into work or training.



Our Impact in 2023-24

1 | Springfield Children's Centre



From April 2023 to March 2024, the Springfield Children's Centre supported a total of 1,984 individuals, comprising 866 adults and 1,118 children. The Centre received 508 referrals for families and children in need of early intervention and family support from various agencies, including the Children's Trust, midwives, health visitors, schools, and nurseries. After triaging the referrals, 298 new cases were assigned to Family Support Workers, who provided customised intervention and support packages. Additionally, 379 parents received support from family support staff during drop-in sessions for various needs.

Early Years Service

Over the past year, we continued delivering Early Years services at The Springfield Project, offering creches to allow parents to attend courses with free on-site childcare. Staff provided a safe, enriching environment following the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, with activities tailored to children's interests

and progress tracked through regular attendance. In 2023-2024, 723 parents attended and benefited from creches and stay and plays.

We trained two staff members for Integrated Mandated Development Review clinics, with another in training. These clinics conducted one-hour appointments for 2-year-old checks, focusing on physical, social, emotional, and communication development. Staff provided advice and referrals, supporting families in achieving developmental milestones and promoting healthier lifestyles. 87% of 2 year old checks were completed in 2023-24, well above the 67% target set.

We ran two weekly term-time stay and play sessions aimed at school readiness. These sessions supported identified families with tailored strategies to meet their holistic needs, helping prepare children for school.

During holidays, we offered targeted stay and play sessions for families in financial crises, focusing on budgeting,

healthy eating, and cooking nutritious meals, promoting Startwell's key messages. Families were also educated on sustainability and resourcefulness using recyclable materials. Some families received household grants to help with the cost-of-living crisis.

Two staff members trained to deliver the First Words Together programme, funded by the National Literacy Trust and developed by speech and language therapists. We successfully ran six programmes, promoting early communication, language, and literacy over five weeks, providing parents with weekly tips, handouts, and incentive books.

Freedom Programme

This is a 12-week programme for women who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse. It aims to enhance their understanding of domestic abuse and its impact on children's development and wellbeing.

In 2023-2024, 71 parents attended and benefited from the Freedom Programme, with referrals coming from various sources, including health professionals, GPs, housing departments, the police, Birmingham Children's Trust, and other partner agencies across Birmingham.

The programme significantly boosts the participants' confidence and self-esteem, helping them make informed decisions about recognising or leaving abusive relationships. Participants have shared positive feedback, such as feeling safe and understood, gaining valuable information, and feeling empowered to share their experiences.

This year, key impacts included increased awareness of available support services and improved self-confidence. The programme also facilitates group discussions, helping participants realise they are not alone. Over the year, we made 12 referrals to the National Domestic Violence Centre for legal advice, assisted 15 women with Claire's Law applications, referred eight women

to Roshni for immigration issues, and supported several women with child protection plans and safeguarding concerns.

Additional referrals include 15 women for emotional wellbeing sessions, 10 to the HENRY programme, 12 to the PHP parenting programme, and six to volunteering services. The feedback and outcomes demonstrate the programme's effectiveness in providing essential support and empowerment for women facing domestic abuse.

"I learned a lot about perpetrator behaviour and how it affects a child from birth to when they are, born/teenagers....Good solid session"

Freedom Programme participant

"I can recognise any red flags in unhealthy relationships now"

Freedom Programme participant



Breastfeeding Support

The role of the Antenatal and Breastfeeding Support Worker involves ensuring parents receive early assessments and targeted interventions. Through antenatal sessions, she equips mothers with the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices regarding infant feeding and ensure safe feeding practices. She supports mothers facing breastfeeding difficulties, which increases the number of women sustaining breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks and beyond. The aim is to ensure mothers feel confident breastfeeding independently, leading to higher initiation and maintenance rates beyond the initial weeks.

In 2023-2024, 529 pregnant women were supported in antenatal contacts, 48 attended Solihull Approach Antenatal Sessions and 1,089 mothers were supported for breastfeeding via one-to-one face-to-face support, phone calls, video calls, and Teams calls.

This early intervention had the following impact:



Breastfeeding Support: Ushma's Story [In Ushma's own words]

My name is Ushma Mistry, I'm 42 years old and live in Hall Green. Originally from Wolverhampton, I moved to Hall Green to start a new life with my husband. During Covid, I became pregnant and relied heavily on online support for breastfeeding and antenatal care. Hasmita's support enabled me to breastfeed my first baby for a full year. After my second baby was born via emergency C-section, I developed mastitis. Hasmita's home visits and guidance were crucial in helping me continue breastfeeding.

I struggled with mobility and pain, making the early days of motherhood very challenging. Hasmita's encouragement and support helped me persevere, and I was able to breastfeed my baby, who is now 18 weeks old. The Antenatal and

Breastfeeding team's service was invaluable during this distressing yet joyful time.

Thanks to Hasmita's knowledge and support, I breastfed my first son for a whole year. After my second baby's birth, Hasmita's guidance helped me manage mastitis and continue breastfeeding. The support I received has been incredible, and I have made lifelong friends through the breastfeeding sessions. I am deeply grateful to Hasmita and the team for their help and hope they continue supporting many more mothers in Birmingham.

The journey with the supporting staff at Springfield Children's Centre has been a successful and empowering experience. The friendships formed at the breastfeeding lounge have created



a supportive community of first-time mothers, making me feel less alone in my journey. Help and support were always available, making this a thriving experience.

HENRY

The HENRY programme (Health, Exercise, Nutrition for the Really Young) in the UK is a structured intervention aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles among families with young children. It focuses on

early intervention and prevention strategies to tackle childhood obesity and promote overall health and wellbeing from an early age.

This year, 131 parents attended and benefited from the HENRY Programme.



“We used to eat too much and there was no routine. At the programme we learned lots of new things. Now we have routine in our life, we go out and eat healthily. I praise my children more and I play with them. We read books together. My children are happy, and I am happy too. This is the perfect programme for parents. I learnt how to do descriptive guidance and praise when giving children activities to do and how to praise children and to lead by example.”



HENRY: Sabira's Story*

*Names have been changed

The Healthy Families: Right from the Start programme is a unique 8-week intervention for parents, offering a supportive and fun environment to share ideas and gain skills to address lifestyle issues. It adopts a holistic approach focusing on five key risk factors for child obesity: parenting efficacy, family lifestyle habits, emotional wellbeing, nutrition, and physical activity. This approach helps children thrive throughout childhood and beyond.

Sabira, a 33-year-old mother of two young daughters with a third on the way, struggled with the transition to parenthood. Previously, she worked full-time with no experience of caring for children, resulting in a chaotic

lifestyle without the knowledge to manage her family effectively.

Thanks to a referral from a Health Visitor, the HENRY programme was life-changing for Sabira. She learned to feed her family three healthy meals a day, manage her household responsibilities, and understand her children's needs. The course also helped her manage her own mental health and stress, and she benefited from connecting with other mothers in similar situations. Sabira gained confidence in parenting, learned to set healthy limits, and established a secure and happy routine for her children. The knowledgeable course leaders, Avinash and Farida, were empathetic and supportive, helping build a sense of community among the parents.

Parents Comments:



"The HENRY course has certainly transformed my life and relationships with my kids and given me the 'hand hold' I truly needed to see the light and gain the confidence needed, when I was feeling lost in taking up this new responsibility of parenting young children and I am very grateful."

Toddler Talk

Toddler Talk is an 8-week course designed for children aged 18 months to 3 years with speech delays or difficulties. The course aims to educate parents, helping them understand speech development and how to integrate fun, language-enhancing activities into daily routines. Key elements of the course include:

- The importance of play for language development.
- Understanding the four areas of speech and language development.
- Encouraging social communication.
- Promoting talk and speech sounds.
- Enhancing attention and listening skills, with tips for home practice.

Throughout the course, children and parents engage with a wide vocabulary, emphasising play and interaction. Activities focus on playing with sounds, naming objects, and exploring early concepts such as big/little, stop/go, and in/on/under.

In 2023-2024, 135 individuals participated in Toddler Talk. The course helped children build confidence and skills in expressing themselves, enabling them to communicate effectively in various situations. They became more willing to try new activities and articulate their needs. Tracked participants showed significant improvements in both understanding and verbal expression.

Parents tried activities at home and specifically mentioned trying activities from the handouts. One parent commented that she had learnt how to encourage her child by "leaving time to respond." Another parent mentioned learning the strategy of "getting down to my knees and being on the child's level."

"I learnt to repeat the same words constantly at eye level with the child. Toddler Talk is very informative."



"My child has enjoyed coming to Toddler Talk class and has learnt how to engage with other children."

"I now spend more one-on-one time with my child, showing him things and naming objects."

"My child is not shy and is participating in activities. He is using more words now."

"I have learnt different strategies and techniques to encourage talking, e.g., repetition and pointing."

Case Study 3

Toddler Talk: Evelyn's Story*

*Names have been changed

Evelyn, initially referred by an Early Years and Outreach worker due to low communication scores, faced a waiting list for Toddler Talk but benefited from School Readiness stay and play sessions first. After a term, Evelyn joined Toddler Talk every Wednesday with his maternal grandmother, with initial and final sessions via telephone and group sessions in between.

Assessments using the WellComm Toolkit tracked Evelyn's progress, guiding tailored communication activities like play with sounds and naming objects. This approach enriched Evelyn's language skills,

supported by his grandmother's newfound strategies from the programme. Regular advice empowered caregivers to foster Evelyn's speech development at home.

Despite ongoing communication challenges leading to referrals to SALT and KIDS groups for social interaction and additional needs support, Evelyn now thrives with increased confidence and enjoyment in sessions.

Grandma praised Toddler Talk's excellence and found the course invaluable for enhancing interaction with Evelyn, reflecting overall positive feedback and support from the team.

Women's Wellbeing Hub

This eight week Wellbeing Programme is for women experiencing poor wellbeing, poor mental health management and those feeling isolated. We supported women across the district virtually, in groups and over the phone. In 2023-2024, 153 women attended and benefitted from the programme.



All women who attended the programme showed improvement and gave positive feedback.



"Attending the Hub has helped me to build up my hopes again."

"I have benefited from having a safe, warm emotional space to come to, and it has helped me find myself again after having lost myself for a long time."

"I really look forward to every Monday. My kids love the creche and the staff there!"

"Thank you so much. I have found my village."

"I have learned a lot about myself and how I cope with my life. There are healthy and unhealthy ways; I have recognised what works for me."

"The programme has reminded me to be mindful and take time out for myself. I have used breathing exercises with my children."

"The sessions have been helpful... Mina helped me understand anxiety, which brought 90% relief to my problems."

"Now I can use different techniques to bring my stress levels down."

"I have learned a number of ways to calm and relax a busy and stressed mind. It reminded me of how beneficial mindfulness is to my mental health."

Case Study 4

Amelia's Journey to Overcoming Anxiety*

*Names have been changed

Amelia, a 29-year-old first-time mum new to the country without extended family support, faced overwhelming anxiety, relying solely on her husband who works full-time. Her anxiety led her to believe she suffered from serious health issues, and was often convinced something dreadful was imminent.

Amelia's struggle with anxiety made leaving the house challenging. Upon referral from a Health Visitor, Amelia sought wellbeing support to address her anxiety.

Through attending the Women's Wellbeing Hub, Amelia regained happiness and dispelled her fears. The sessions rebuilt her hope and strengthened her relationship with her husband. Equipped with tools to manage her moods and anxiety, she found solace in weekly gatherings that

improved her emotional well-being and social life. Sharing experiences in the group reassured Amelia she wasn't alone in her feelings, fostering a sense of solidarity among the women.

Positive thinking strategies learned in the group alleviated her anxiety, restoring her to her former self. Empowered by newfound confidence, Amelia applied for jobs and became a volunteer at Springfield Children's Centre.

"On the first day Mina came to see me at home, my anxiety dropped by 50 % because Mina described what I was feeling and thinking. Mina gained my trust and I started to look forward to the sessions as I believed and trusted Mina and she had the solution to help me. Thank you."

Our Impact in 2023-24

2 | Our Nurseries

2

Park Road Nursery

This year Park Road Nursery welcomed 75 children through their doors. 71 of these children had English as an additional language. Park Road is an inclusive nursery where all children are welcome and supported. This includes children with disabilities and those with special educational needs, who are well supported by fully trained and qualified staff.

Our survey showed that parents were pleased with the progress their children made this year. They reported that their children's confidence had increased, they had learned lots of new words in English, and told how supportive and caring the manager and staff were. Parents felt their children made good progress and that they would be well prepared for their move to school.

69 parents responded to our questionnaires.

100%

of parents who responded to our survey felt staff are welcoming and approachable

100%

were satisfied with the quality of care their child received

98%

felt included and supported in their child's education

100%

felt Park Road Nursery offers good quality provision

99%

felt that issues concerning children's behaviour were dealt with appropriately

We held several parent workshops throughout the year. These included a Reading Together Workshop; Understanding the Early Years Curriculum; the Outdoor Learning Environment; and Literacy In The Early Years. Parents told us that these workshops gave them a better understanding of their child's learning, and how they could support them at home.

We are very proud of our Forest School site at Park Road Nursery. During the year we used the outdoor environment and the changes in the weather and seasons as learning opportunities by giving our children space to explore and be creative, be loud, to be bold, take a risk and to try something new. We noticed a positive difference in children's behaviour when learning in a "classroom without walls", especially seeing children develop in confidence and self esteem.

A big achievement this year was when one of the staff successfully passed her level 3 Forest School qualification. Asma Ammora is now a fully qualified level 3 Forest School leader. She worked daily



with the nursery children to equip them with love and respect for the outdoors, nurturing their self esteem through outdoor activities. Congratulations to Asma for this wonderful achievement.



Mini-Springers Nursery

This year Mini-Springers Nursery welcomed 91 children, 28 of those have Special Educational Needs.

This year we focused on giving children experiences they may not otherwise have had exposure to. We had trips to parks, shops and the library, visits from musicians, and an animal encounter experience, where an array of animals were brought into nursery for the children to meet.



“He came home and could not stop talking about the animals that he had seen. He said he had a good day at nursery.”

**Parent of a child at
Mini-Springers Nursery**

We celebrated many cultural events such as Eid, Diwali, Guru Nanak's Birthday, Easter, Christmas and Black History Month. Staff and children enjoyed sharing their own personal cultures with the group and we all continued to learn about our diverse community.



We took part in the Community Welcome Pass Scheme which allowed our families to explore the city's museums for free. The scheme encourages people who might not otherwise visit museums to get out and see what Birmingham museums have



to offer. We used our pass to take all of our nursery children and their parents to the Thinktank science museum. We supported parents to use public transport and inspired them to explore our city.

Parent quotes from Thinktank trip:



"I didn't even know this was here, I walk past it almost every day! I can't wait to bring my other kids in the summer, I'm so glad you've shown this to me"

"This is amazing! We never knew about this place! We've had so much fun, thank you!"

"Thank you for bringing me to Thinktank, my daughter is loving this here and had so much fun today"

"He loved going to Thinktank. His favourite was playing in the garage fixing the car."

Helping to get children ready to start school is an important part of our role. Staff helped parents with the school application process, helped complete applications for families with English as an additional language, put on parent workshops to support parents in understanding school readiness, and we worked with local schools to help provide a smooth transition to the child's next chapter in life.

Parent workshop quotes:



"This workshop was helpful. It made me understand how I can help my child with his school transition"

"Janet was brilliant. I learnt some tips and will definitely implement them for this journey"

"The workshop was very useful because now I know what to start doing now so my child is ready for school"

Our Impact in 2023-24

3 | Community
Services

3

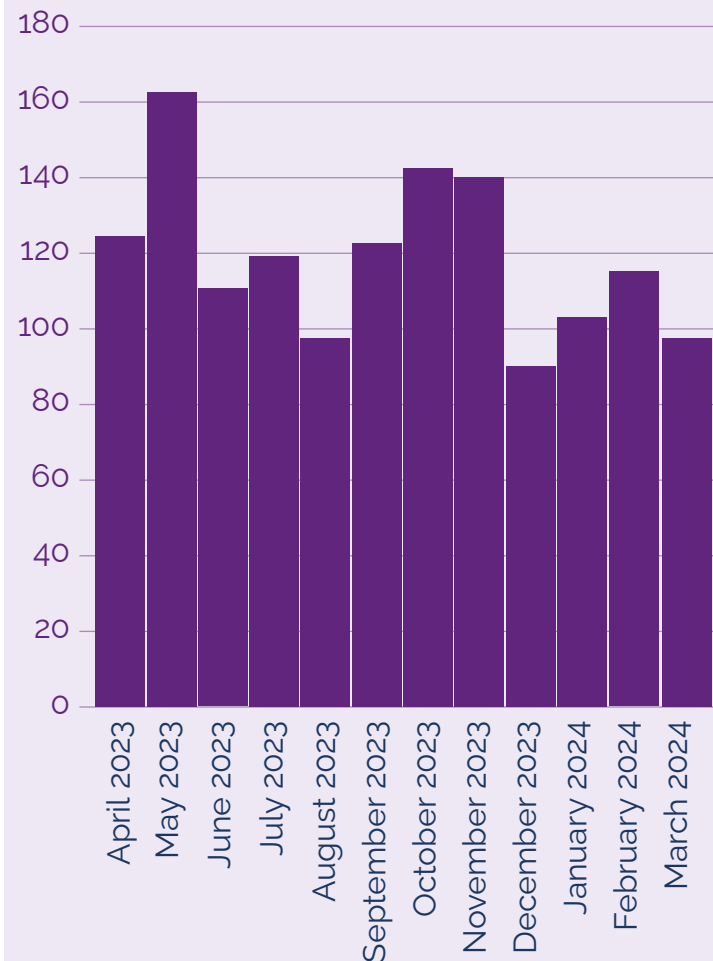
Springfield Food Pantry

Springfield Food Pantry offered fresh and nutritious food for an affordable weekly membership fee, whilst making good use of quality food which would otherwise go to waste. The Pantry was open to anyone to join, offering choice and dignity to people on low incomes during the time of rising food costs.

Total number of visits during the year 2023-24: 1,430

Located at St Edmund's Church, Springfield Food Pantry typically served 30 to 40 families per week. Most of our members were shopping for a family of two, three or more people.

Monthly visits to the Springfield Pantry



This was a year of big change for Springfield Food Pantry. The cost of living crisis continued to have a big impact on our community and on Pantry running costs. During the year we saw consistently high demand for the Food Pantry and faced rising food prices. Supermarkets were donating less, and we were obliged to purchase more essential and culturally appropriate stock, which was more expensive like-for-like than it had been the previous year. We also had a high demand for toiletries which were not available through our donation sources.



Faced with these financial pressures, we were proud to secure funding for the service right through to the end of the financial year. We are grateful to Birmingham City Council's Household Support Fund, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Emergency Food Aid for supporting Springfield Food Pantry this year.

The major development for Springfield Food Pantry was that we negotiated transfer of the Food Pantry management to the charitable organisation Narthex, based at St John's Church Hall. We have worked with Narthex for many years and are well aware of their expertise in food poverty relief. They have a central location which is easy to access for those living in Sparkhill. We are confident that those who rely on the Pantry will continue to benefit, and the future of Springfield Food Pantry is in safe hands.

While management remained with The Springfield Project until 31 March 2024, the Pantry relocated to its new venue at Narthex, on Monday 19 February 2024. The first session went very well, with



many users attending, including many from the old venue. The volunteers enjoyed it and the staff at St John's church and Narthex were incredibly welcoming and supportive.

We are very grateful to St Edmund's Church for hosting Springfield Food Pantry for the past year and wish Narthex all the best for the continued future of the Food Pantry.

Place of Welcome

The Place of Welcome is extremely important for our attendees, many of whom are those experiencing poor health, those who live alone, the elderly and frail. Attendees tell us that the service has impacted them enormously over the last year. Those who attend regularly have said their lives have improved and this is reflected in their improving mental health. The group gelled extremely well during the year and relationships have developed and flourished.

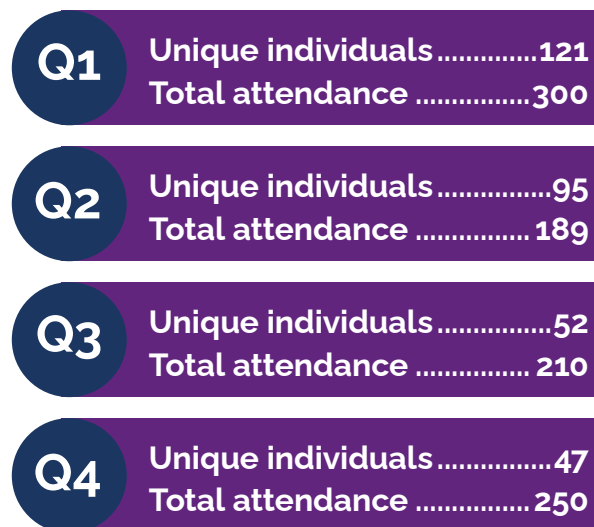
Place of Welcome is run on an asset-based community model, run by volunteers recruited from within the local community, and overseen by a member of staff. Participants and volunteers are directly involved in running the services, empowering themselves and placing them at the heart of decision-making. Attendees tell us that they feel they have a purpose and a role within the group. People can accept help as they need it with dignity, while contributing

where they can, for example through helping prepare the meal. Many of the volunteers were previously participants, becoming pillars of the group.

The hot meal remained an important part of the experience while food costs rose. We provide a hot meal each week which is always made from scratch using fresh vegetables, pulses or a pasta. The cooking group arrives early, and a hearty meal is made in under an hour, which we all eat together. The cooking group is always complimented for their time and effort, and the cooking group is always delighted by the empty plates.

We had representatives from Birmingham City Council's adult social care service on site each week offering drop-in advice sessions, as well as debt and benefits advice provided by Narthex for some of the year. We were grateful for the support of Stagecoach Giving for Good Fund towards the cost of delivering the Narthex advice sessions this year.

Those using our service are forging long lasting friendships and allies in the community. This also helps with the continuity of attendance.



The Place of Welcome moved out of its normal home this year whilst St Christopher's Church underwent some building work. We were temporarily housed at Hall Green United Church which went well. We are very grateful to Hall Green United Church for hosting Place of Welcome during the refurbishment.

In December 2023, Barratt Homes donated £500 to Place of Welcome to support our Warm Space, being held at that time at Hall Green United Church. This donation allowed us to extend the Place of Welcome running time by one hour per week until the end of the financial year, plus some money to put towards refreshments.



“As the UK’s largest housebuilder, it’s really important that we support the community

in the areas in which we build. The Springfield Project is offering brilliant services to its clients, and we are happy to support this with our recent donation. We wish its staff and volunteers the best of luck for the coming months and, in difficult times like these, we’re encouraging more people to support their local community where possible.”

Adrian Evans, Managing Director at Barratt Homes West Midlands



We are very grateful to Barratt Homes for their support of our warm space, and to HGUC for facilitating this relationship.

Funding from the Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund, protected our ability to continue providing essential support at the Place of Welcome during a time of increased running costs and in the face of higher demand and more complex needs from our beneficiaries. We are grateful for the funding from the UK Government for making this possible.



Photos courtesy of Barratt Homes

English Classes

English classes at The Springfield Project are for complete beginners. The course aims to support people who speak little or no English, through a programme of informal learning designed to build attendees' confidence in basic English. Led by Saira Hussain, District Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator, the sessions are fun and creative, with participants role-playing scenarios in everyday situations such as speaking to the doctor or their child's school.

This year, the classes had a focus on English for health, and focused on topics such as cardiovascular health and encouraging lifestyle changes. The classes included potentially lifesaving situations, such as what to do in a medical emergency, when to call 999 and 111, what questions to expect, how to speak to the respondent and other professional medical staff.



During the year, in response to growing concerns about mental health in our local community, Saira invited a representative from Birmingham Healthy Minds who delivered a health and wellbeing session with parents. She spoke to the parents about the different



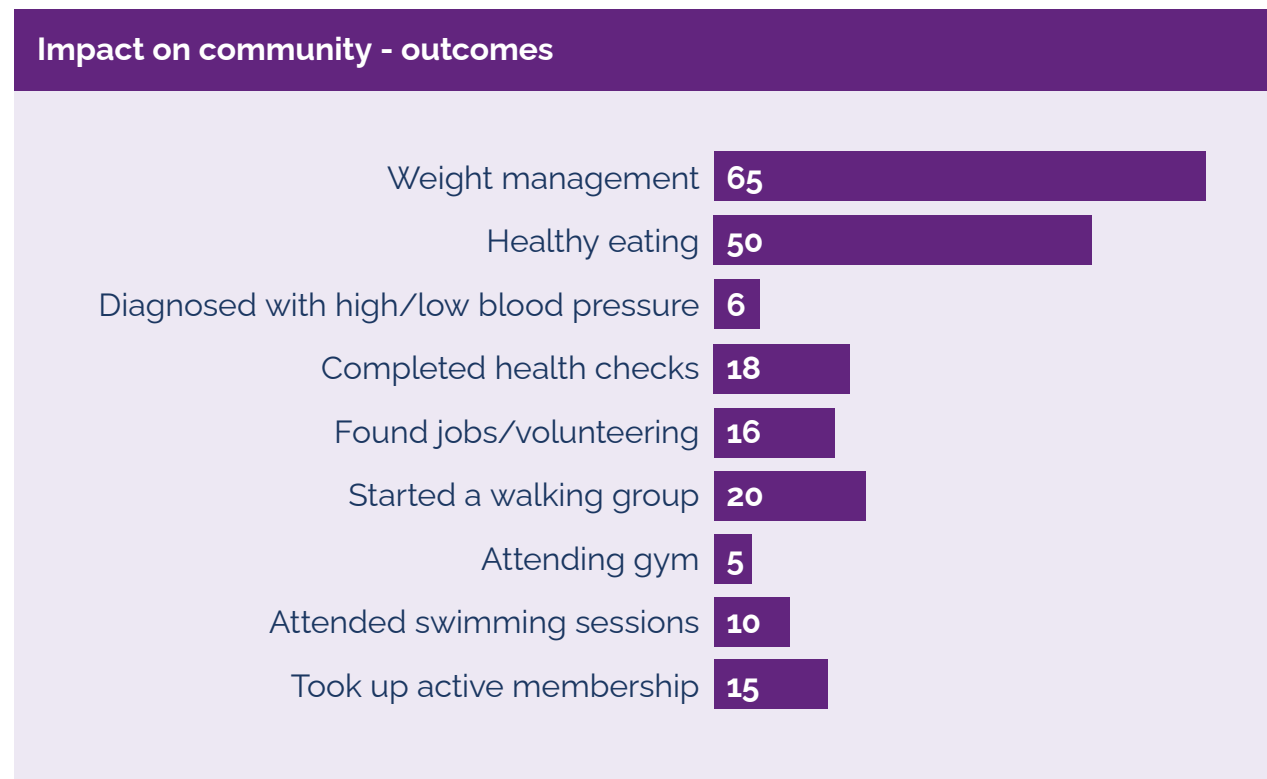
ways mental health can be impacted such as feeling low, low self-esteem, the symptoms of depression and anxiety. Participants were given advice on how to manage such feelings, were shown self-care practices such as meditation, and were signposted to additional services for further support if needed.

Feedback from Birmingham Healthy Minds showed the positive outcomes of the signposting as many of the parents went on to call the helpline post session to ask for help and advice, and have now been put on the right pathway to support their needs.

In 2023-2024, 139 parents attended and benefited from the Creative English classes.

In response to consultation with parents, we ran extra sessions to provide support with preparing for their B1 English tests and Life in the UK tests* to support citizenship applications. As a result, eight students passed their B1 English test and six passed their Life in the UK test.

We ran employment advice sessions helping one participant successfully get a job, and a lawyer from Rights In The Community provided a legal advice session.



*Those pursuing citizenship through Indefinite Leave to Remain or the Naturalization as a British Citizen route must pass the "Life in the UK Test" and "English Speaking and Listening Test" at the B1 level or above. The B1 level is an intermediate level.

Creative English: Participant's quotes:



"I owe my son's life to the creative English classes. I am so glad I came here. The teachers have helped me build my confidence to speak to the medical staff, pharmacist, teachers and all different organizations that are involved with my son."

"I can help my son more with his schooling now I can communicate with the teachers there better. I am able to call 111 for minor issues with the children. I have made lots of changes to my diet after the Creative English course. Thanks to all the teachers for their hard work to help me learn."

"I used to never make my own phone calls but because of the English classes I now feel more confident with those types of things."

"Coming here has given me information and opportunities to go to other courses. I am now going to be volunteering. The Creative English classes have increased my confidence in speaking English. The classes have helped me learn about life in the UK."

Case Study 5

Creative English

Anita* has recently come to the UK from Pakistan. She had no confidence in speaking English.

After coming to the Creative English sessions, she gained confidence and learnt how to call the emergency services. She had to call for an ambulance when her son suddenly started to have a fit. Paramedics said that she had saved her son's life by calling 999 in good time. She said that she would never have done that if she hadn't attended the Creative English classes. She has made amazing progress in such a short time. She can use the bus to get to the hospital now and can communicate with the hospital staff. She is also able to communicate with her child's school now to let them know if her son is poorly and can explain the symptoms.

*Names have been changed

Our Impact in 2023-24

4 | Children, Young People and Play

4

Seedlings

Seedlings stay and play group has had an eventful year. In the spring and summer terms of 2023, we welcomed nearly 300 different children to sessions, regularly seeing around 60-70 families per week.

Due to building work in our usual location, St Christopher's Church, Seedlings relocated to a temporary venue nearby for six months (September to February). The leaders and volunteers all worked incredibly hard to get the venue ready for families and we continued to welcome 191 children between September and February, around 35-40 families per week.

In February we provided trips to the Thinktank science museum and Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park, which gave children and their parents/ carers an opportunity to visit these exciting venues at a reduced cost.

Over the year, children attending Seedlings have experienced



opportunities to engage in play with high quality continuous provision to facilitate children learning through play. Having the same resources each week has enabled children attending regularly to embed their learning and has provided a good 'learning through play' model to both volunteer helpers and parents. We have also provided a range of creative and group activities in addition each week to promote learning, particularly in the EYFS prime areas of communication and language, personal social and emotional development and physical development.

Volunteer leaders and helpers have modelled and encouraged parents in facilitating play with their children, emphasising the importance of the parents' role in supporting children's learning through play. Many of the volunteers speak community languages which enables these messages to be relayed to parents in their home language. We are grateful to our amazing group of volunteers who show commitment and dedication in making Seedlings a high quality and welcoming stay and play.

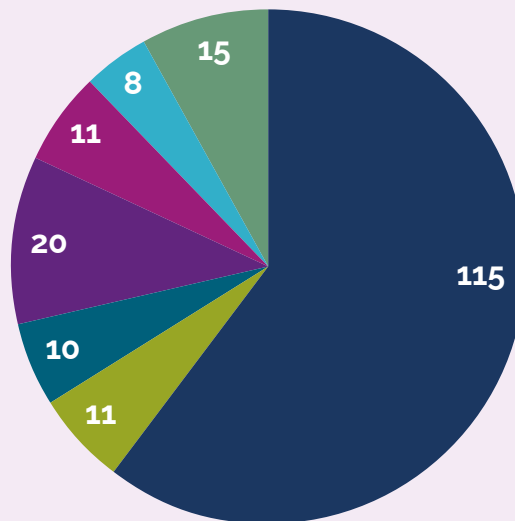


Child Friendly Neighbourhood

This year saw the expansion of our Child Friendly Neighbourhood Core Team to include a full-time CFN Coordinator, a part-time Play Support Worker, a part-time environment coordinator, and a part-time Creative Practitioner.

2023-24 was the second year of our NLCF (National Lottery Community Fund) Funded 'Child Friendly Neighbourhood' initiative. By offering children of all ages a rich diet of play experiences that are informed by children themselves, we help to tackle the inequalities faced by children in our area and make a lasting difference on their quality of life. Through our CFN initiative, we will make Sparkhill a more engaging neighbourhood for children and families, and make a lasting impact on the physical appearance of Sparkhill. During the year we have started a multitude of after school clubs, recurring activities and events, and broadened our youth offer as well as improve our existing holiday playschemes.

Attendances in clubs



- Playschemes
- Photography Club
- Afternoon Canoeing
- Art Club
- Music Explorers
- Youth Research
- Butterflies

After school clubs in numbers

Number of sessions delivered this year **28**

Number of individuals who attended overall* **69**

Number of attending children on Child Protection Plans/ Child in Need Plans **2**

Total attendance figure (volume) **175**

*Often, the same children attend multiple groups, so individual attendance is lower than numbers shown on chart

Holiday Playschemes

The Holiday Playschemes at The Springfield Centre and Park Road Nursery site provide rich play experiences for local children aged 5-11 as well as a nutritious meal during school holidays.

The children attending the playschemes at The Springfield Centre and Park Road Nursery are predominantly Asian, of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage, and come from households of lower socio-economic status.

The playscheme offers children from the area opportunities to play outside with a variety of forms of play and take trips to places such as IKON gallery, Thinktank science museum, and Cannon Hill Park.

Playschemes in numbers

Number of sessions delivered this year

36

Number of individuals who attended overall

115

Number of attending children on Child Protection Plans/ Child in Need Plans

6

Total attendance figure (volume)

856

Number of families referred on to other services

1

Number of volunteers involved in delivering this service

9





"I like to come to playscheme because I see my friends and I can play, not like school."



Child attending playscheme

"She has autism so I was hesitant to bring her, but she really enjoyed it. It really helped her. When she went back to school, they noticed the change and her confidence had improved."

Mum of Playscheme attendee

"A good variety of activities was available and appropriate for a variety of children. These were inside and outside. I spoke with lots of the children who were all enthusiastic about the lovely time they were having. The staff were positive with the children, and I saw lots of interactions and the children appeared confident with the team."

Trustee and early years expert on a visit to the playscheme

Photography club

This was run as an after school club for primary age children in the local area and provided them the opportunity to work with a professional photographer to capture images of Sparkhill. The photos are now displayed in the Springfield Centre. This is a unique way for children to express the experiences and perceptions of Sparkhill from a child's perspective



"This is a really great opportunity for us to have fun with our friends and learn something new"

Photography club student



Canoeing trip

In June 2023, we took a small group of children to Ackers Adventure Park where the children got to spend the afternoon canoeing. Eight out of the ten children had never been on water before and none of them had ever been canoeing.



"Did you see me? I was so good and I've never done it before. I have to come back!"

Child on trip to Ackers Adventure Park



Visual arts club for children aged 6-12, was started in October 2022 and is led by our Creative Practitioner.



“[My children] feel better and more confident. They are very confident. They love coming to art club every week and always ask if it’s art day”

Mother of children in art club

Music Explorers was an 8-week programme in which children participated this year. They received ukeleles, had music lessons and explored world music over the course of the 8 weeks.

Community Research Youth Volunteers programme was our first programme to be designed for young people aged 14+. For seven weeks, eight local Sixth Form students attended weekly sessions

in which they were trained to conduct research and interviewed their peers on the opportunities and challenges facing young people living in Sparkhill. The programme culminated in the group presenting their findings to the local councillors at the Council House.

The research has given us a clear platform on which to further develop our work with young people, co-created and led by young people.

We aim to support the young people of Sparkhill to have a voice in their community and in the world and to be inspired as active citizens and future leaders.

Butterflies, a new stay and play group for children with additional needs was started in Autumn term 2023 by our Inclusion Lead after getting feedback from parents of young children with additional needs that they were lacking a specialised stay and play group. It is run with support from the staff in nursery and this year was able to benefit 15 children and their families.

Special Events

The Springfield Project is intent on improving the quantity and quality of opportunities for play for the whole family.

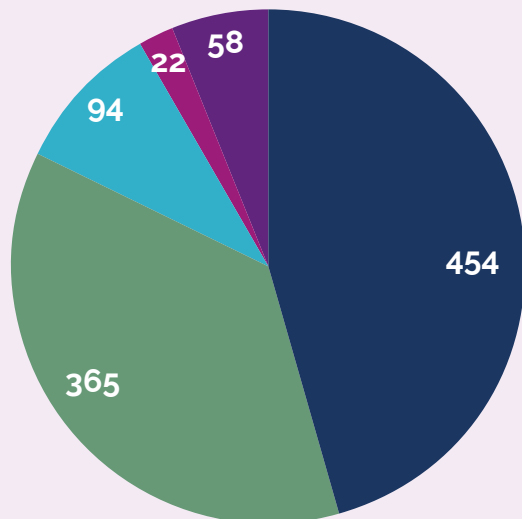
Throughout 2023-24 we ran events that are free to the community and offer experiences that many families in Sparkhill would not have previously had access to, such as the Family Fun Day, just to come and play and create 'on a shoestring' in order to role model simple family play; or the King's Coronation Garden Party which saw live music, fete games, free snacks, bouncy castles, and face painting.



"I think it's good to bring the community together, for families to have a place to go."

Parent at Family Play Day

Attendances at events



- King's Coronation Garden Party
- Creative Families Festival
- Santa Comes to Springfield
- Tree Planting Days
- Chinese New Year

Events in numbers

Number of sessions delivered this year

5

Number of individuals who attended overall

993

Number of families referred on to other services

1

The Creative Families Festival is our annual 2-day festival in which a variety of artists and musicians come together to deliver performances and workshops for children aged 0-11 and their families. We had Toni's Tots Drama, a cooking workshop with our own HENRY leader, Avinash, an African Weaving workshop, the Doodling Poet, a loose parts playground and our music club gave a performance. It was a wonderful event, and this year 365 children and families attended the festival.

The King's Coronation community event was a community garden party with live music, fete games, free snacks, bouncy castles, face painting and more! We were thrilled that over 450 people attended this event!



"I really like it cause there's a load of people I meet and I feel safe around them."
Child at King's Coronation Garden Party

'Santa Comes to Springfield' is a lovely annual event with arts, crafts, games and festive music for the local children we work with from the Sparkhill area, and each child receives a present from Santa. This year we were very grateful to receive a donation of £200 from Barratt Homes towards Santa Comes to Springfield. We were able to give presents to over 50 children and had 43 families attend in total.



"No child should ever go without presents at Christmas, so we are delighted to be able to contribute to The Springfield Project's

Christmas appeal. We hope that by making this donation, the children of Birmingham enjoy a Christmas with lots of toys and games to play with. The Springfield Project is doing phenomenal work and the generosity of the people in the city must also be recognised."

Adrian Evans, Managing Director at Barratt Homes West Midlands



We held two **Tree Planting Days** in Sparkhill Park with the Friends of Sparkhill Park, the park ranger, and 22 families and children from the community. Our environment lead sourced a number of the 70 trees that were planted and helped to clear the litter in the surrounding area.

We held a **Chinese New Year Family Day**, an arts and crafts day in which we invited children aged 2-11 and their families. We had lantern making, made beautiful dragon masks, and lots of crafts with a year of the dragon theme. We spoke with families and had feedback sheets and found that both adults and children made friends and tried something new.



“Me and my cousins had so much fun. We made so much cool things that will remind me of this fun active day. They people were very nice.”

Child at Chinese New Year Family Day

Case Study 6

Music Club

One of our club members, Adnan*, aged 11, is a Syrian refugee.

Adnan suffers with his mental health and goes to therapy. Adnan's mum has said that attending music club has made a difference to Adnan's happiness, and he is calmer. He and his mom had been coming every week and we were thrilled to learn that Adnan's mum had been a professional musician in Syria.

Our music club leader invited Adnan's mother to play music with him and some other guests. They played Egyptian and Middle Eastern music and one of the other children, Aaliyah*, lit up. She gasped and smiled, and she began to cry and explained that her family is from Egypt, but she never hears people play music from there. She was so happy to know the songs. Her and Adnan became friends and talked about music and their homes. They both performed at the Creative Families Festival and Aaliyah has now started to attend playschemes.

*Names have been changed

Our Impact in 2023-24

5 | Volunteering

5

Volunteers bring enormous value to our work at The Springfield Project through their wealth of skills and talents, their energy and enthusiasm and the hard work they contribute by volunteering their time.

We are proud to see the ways they gain and develop from their time volunteering for us, many going on into work or training. This year:

17

volunteers found employment in the year 2023-2024. Three gained employment within the Springfield Project and one apprenticeship.

5

volunteers started courses.

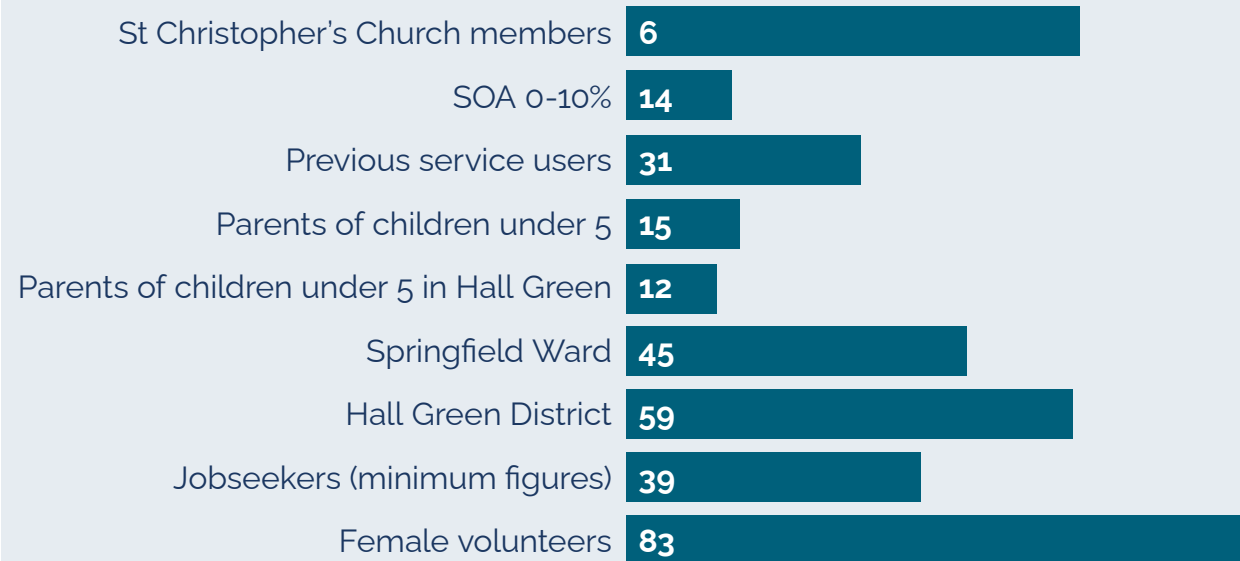
84

Total number of individual volunteers as at 31 March 2024.

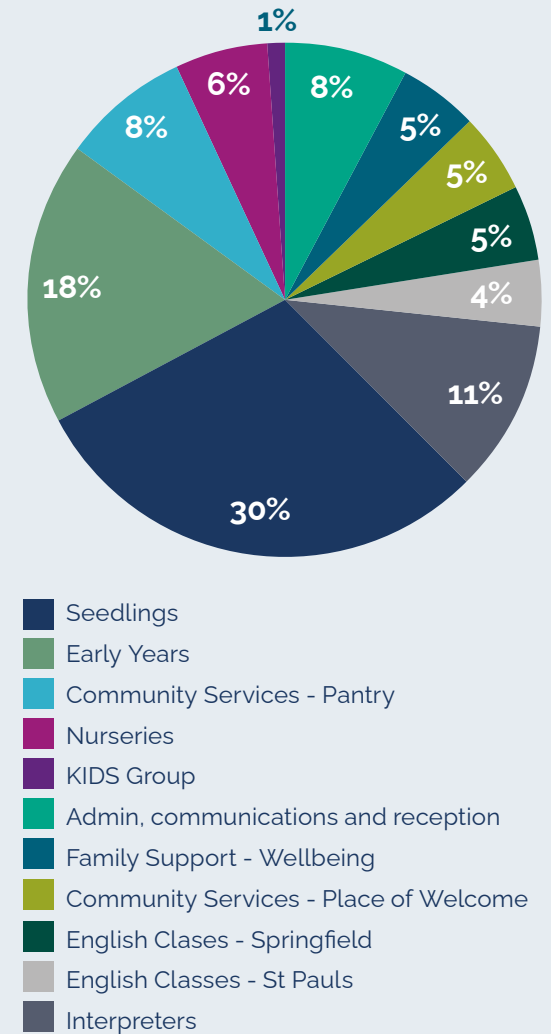
48

new volunteers received an induction to volunteering during the year to 31 March 2024.

Breakdown of individual volunteers from different groups as at 31.03.2024



Volunteer roles at 31.03.2024



Volunteering has continued to have a beneficial impact on both the services run by the Springfield Project and on the volunteers themselves. We frequently receive very positive feedback from staff members regarding their volunteers.

This year our hardworking Springfield Project volunteers clocked up a total of 2,880 hours. This is the equivalent of 76 working weeks (based on a 37.5 hour week) worth a value of £34,560 at the 2023 Real Living Wage rate of £10.90m per hour.

Volunteering: Sabah's Story*

*Names have been changed

Sabah is a woman aged 26 who lives in Birmingham. Before volunteering she had been struggling with low mood and getting back into a routine after being a stay at home mum for eight years.

"At first, I was reluctant to apply having no work experience or recent education, but The Springfield Project was so welcoming and supportive."

Sabah started her volunteering journey as an admin assistant for the Creative English sessions, helping Saira to run the classes. She also received additional admin training during this time.

Sabah has enjoyed her time volunteering at The Springfield Project.

"I was supported hugely by Saira in getting to know the services and service users. I was taken along to additional ventures to

help the students attending e.g. swimming sessions for mental health and fitness and job fairs."

Now Sabah continues to flourish in her role as an admin volunteer for the English classes. She is now also employed on reception at The Springfield Centre.

"I feel I have newfound confidence and have had the opportunity to learn and apply skills that I can apply to both my personal and professional life. I have also been able to find paid employment thanks to my volunteering role here. My mental health has improved, and I am able to give a happier mum to my children as an immediate result of this by the Springfield Project."

"It has given me the space to re find myself, using my abilities to be someone out of motherhood."

Feedback from volunteers

"I feel have grown and benefitted so much within six months. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity given to me through volunteering, which resulted in me having a job within 6 months."

"I remember when I went for my volunteer interview I was so confused, so nervous. I didn't know at that time how I would do, but I learned new things a day after: how to handle a child, how to teach them new things, how to encourage them. For myself it was a great experience."

"Volunteering has helped me gain confidence within myself."

"My mental health has improved very much."

"I had used the centre as a service user regularly for support over this time and wanted to stay a part of it."

"I am very, very happy because I have achieved so much thanks to your support, and I feel that I am an important person who can help people and everyone who needs my help, and all of this will help me in the future in my professional career because I will have set my goals."

"I was involved in the Creative English sessions and got to see the confidence of ladies from ethnic minorities grow."

"I really enjoy being able to speak to the parents who attend the sessions."

"I received a lot of support from Samina at the start of my journey. She helped me feel comfortable and found days and times to suit my family life and my interests. She made it known to me that if there were any issues at any time, I could contact her for these to be resolved."

Our Impact in 2023-24

6 | Environment

6

We are very proud of the changes we are making in our organisation towards our environmental policy. Here are some of our achievements this year.

- We launched a Growing Up Green steering group to embed environment friendly messages in all our activities. ✓
- We reduced paper waste by introducing electronic filing, and switching away from paper towels to paper rolls and air driers. ✓
- We gave out special codes for free bus travel to staff, volunteers and service users to encourage public transport use. We were pleased to see a good take-up of this offer. ✓
- Staff from all teams got involved in regular litter-picking sessions. As well as doing our bit for the local environment, we are leading by example and encouraging children and parents to take pride



in their environment and be responsible in preserving the nature in our surroundings. ✓

- We no longer use single use plastic items such as cutlery, plates and cups and instead are using washable kitchenware. ✓

- Park Road Nursery created a wonderful Forest School space which was regularly used by both nurseries throughout the year. We reused and repurposed found materials in Forest School, such as an old sink for our mud kitchen, and pallets to create a bug house.



- We began to reuse and upcycle household items in our creative activities to reduce waste creatively. The Children's Centre encouraged families attending stay and play sessions to use simple objects like food packaging containers and shoeboxes.

A popular activity was planting cress in yoghurt pots, which families decorated and took home. Mini-Springers Nursery started reusing old art work by using it again for cutting practice.



- We began to reduce the amount of wasteful packaging material when purchasing fruit and snacks.



- The Early Years teams created displays to encourage parents to reduce, reuse and recycle products to become greener and maintain a sustainable lifestyle.



- The Family Support team began actively encouraging parents to take public transport, walk and cycle to reduce pollution.



Acknowledgements

We would like to say a big thankyou to all our funders, donors, friends, volunteers and supporters who have given so much to our community this year.

Thanks to your generosity we have been able to keep providing vital support in Sparkhill throughout the year, helping us have a positive impact on the lives of people in Sparkhill, and reflecting our mission to show God's love in the community.

- Barnardos EPEC – Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities
- Barratt Homes
- Birmingham City Council Adult Social Care Directorate
- Birmingham City Council Household Support Fund, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions
- Birmingham City Council Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit
- Birmingham City Council's Cost of Living Response, available through the Household Support Fund, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions
- Bring it on Brum Holiday Activity Fund, funded by the Department for Education
- Communities and Housing Investment in People (CHIP) Community Chest Fund
- Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund
- Co-op Community Dividend Fund
- EcoBirmingham
- The Eveson Trust
- Faith Action
- Knowle Parish Church – from their general funds
- The National Lottery Community Fund – Reaching Communities
- The Souter Charitable Trust
- Stagecoach – Giving For Good Fund
- The Roger and Douglas Turner Charitable Trust

Acknowledgements



Support Us

If this report has inspired you there are several ways you can support The Springfield Project and the vital work we do. We always welcome people who want to get involved as volunteers, donors and supporters. You will be helping to make a difference for hundreds of local families each year and truly showing God's love in our community.

Make a donation

You can donate online and help us to support those who need us most. A one-off donation of any size will be greatly appreciated. If you can afford it, a regular gift will help give long-term security to our organisation, which in turn will protect our ability to continue to support our Sparkhill community. Your generosity will make a big difference.

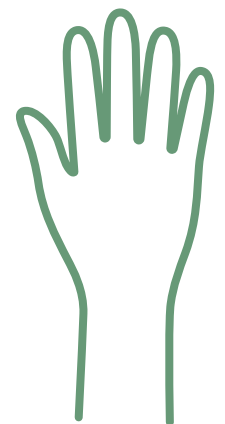
Visit www.springfieldproject.org.uk/support-us/make-a-donation



Volunteer

Anyone can apply to become a volunteer. We embrace inclusivity and diversity and value the skills, enthusiasm and commitment brought by staff and volunteers of different faiths and none

Visit www.springfieldproject.org.uk/support-us/volunteer to find out how you can get involved.





Can your business or community group help raise funds on our behalf?

Contact us on **0121 777 2722** or **info@springfieldproject.org.uk** if you would like to discuss how your organisation can support The Springfield Project.



Join us on social media

Find, follow and share what we do on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Be the first to hear about upcoming events, news and opportunities, and help spread the word about what we do.

f facebook.com/
SpringfieldProjectBirmingham

in linkedin.com/company/
the-springfield-project

 Park Road Nursery on Instagram:
instagram.com/_little.thinkers_



Pray for us

We would be grateful if you could include The Springfield Project in your prayers.

If you would like to find out more about the work of St Christopher's Church, visit: **stchristopherspringfield.org.uk**



Leave A Gift In Your Will

Find out more about remembering our charity in your Will on our website.

Visit **www.springfieldproject.org.uk/support-us/leave-a-gift-in-your-will**

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Company Registration no. 06582318

