



New Campaign Calls On Birmingham To Fight For Youth Mental Health

Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity has today – on World Mental Health Awareness Day (10 October) – launched a new fundraising campaign, Fight For All The Feels, aiming to raise awareness of the youth mental health challenge we are facing in Birmingham and with it, help tackle the stigma which still surrounds it.

Children and young people's mental health has taken a hit this year. On top of all the turmoil and challenges of growing up, they have faced wave after wave of uncertainty. Every fighter needs someone in their corner and with the new campaign – Fight for All the Feels – Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity will be fighting for those voices to be heard.

The campaign is in aid of Forward Thinking Birmingham, the city's innovative youth mental health partnership for 0 to 25-year-olds, which is a part of Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust. The public can join the fight, by raising vital funds that will go towards improving the lives of children and young people in Birmingham and prevent mental health issues being a barrier to achieving their dreams.

Initially, money raised by the campaign will look to fund a number of young people across the city – all with lived experience of mental health conditions – to be peer support workers, who will be available at every stage of a young person's mental health journey – whether that is an initial conversation about the struggles they are facing, as part of the care provided through Forward Thinking Birmingham, or as part of their discharge package.

This support cannot wait. The mental health challenge in Birmingham is evident. Birmingham is one of the youngest cities in Europe, with almost 40 per cent of its population aged 25-and-under¹. Forward Thinking Birmingham saw 16,830 referrals in 2018/19², with numbers set to rise, along with suicide rates, and with over half of all mental health problems having been established by the age of 14, rising to 75% by 24³, the need for early intervention is critical.

Alex Borg, Director of Mental Health Services at Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust, comments: "2020 has been a tough year for most. It's been well reported that COVID-19 will have a huge impact on children and young people's lives with increased rates of anxiety, depression and more serious conditions rising as a result of the pandemic, subsequent lockdown and the impact on jobs. That said, the fact of the matter is that the youth mental health challenge in Birmingham was here long before COVID-19, and it will be around for long after. By

¹Birmingham City Council: Working in Birmingham. (birmingham.gov.uk)

²BSoL CCG (October 2019) Birmingham Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Refresh Local Transformation Plan 2020/21

³Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. (2005). Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication.

standing up, and looking to tackle the issue head on, we hope to improve the economic, social and health prospects for all young people. Now is the time to act.”

Elaine Kirwan, Deputy Chief Nurse of Mental Health Services at Birmingham Women’s and Children’s NHS Foundation Trust, added: “Our children and young people are the future, so it’s critical that we support their mental health from a young age to give them the best start in life. We all need to understand the importance of mental wellness; we all need to care about our own mental wellbeing, so please get behind this campaign. There has never been a more important time to step up for the future generation.”

One of the young people who have benefited from the support of Forward Thinking Birmingham is 23-year-old Beth Booker. Beth’s mental health issues first started in secondary school, where the stress of wanting to do well led to disruptive behaviour, self-harm, and further down the line an overdose. Over the course of three years, Beth had 13 admissions into a mental health care facility, with her longest stint being for nine months. Things finally started to turn around when she met her fiancé and was correctly diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

She says: “I still experience those same feelings, but to have a structure in place, where if I feel I need help, someone from the Forward Thinking Birmingham team will come round to talk about things, has been so helpful. My fiancé and I have just had our first child and I’m excited about my future for the first time in my life.”

Let’s show how proud we are of every child and young person in our city by supporting their journey and giving them the freedom to access the opportunities they deserve. Join the ‘Fight For All The Feels’ by visiting fightforallthefeels.org.

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