

INFOCUS

INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE CREATING CHANGE

The Official **FOCUS Charity** News Magazine

SUMMER 2021

Registered Charity
No 1068467

Company Limited by
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The Pandemic

Like many charities, we at FOCUS have found ourselves having to adapt our services in response to the pandemic. Thanks to the hard work of our staff, we have been more than able to support our young people in spite of the challenges.

Income growth

Our services have been in huge demand, as the young people we support have faced personal challenges, and the fundraising landscape has changed around us. We have been overwhelmed by the ongoing support of our funders and donors, seeing our income grow by 7% since 2019.

Growing the FOCUS team

We've also grown our staff team. We are delighted to welcome our newest member of the team – Jerusha (Ru) Barnett, who joined us in April. She brings her experience as a writer, editor and designer to help improve how we keep in touch with all of you, including our social media and website.

Recent Achievements

To ready us for whatever the next twelve months have in store, we recently began the process of recruiting new trustees to our board.

We had an incredible response from some hugely impressive individuals, who will help ensure that we continue to inspire young people for the future.

Follow us on Social Media!

[f @focuscharityleicester](#) [t @FOCUScharity](#)

Our Projects

Everything we do is developed from the ideas, passions, needs and interests of young people in Leicester. Our current projects include:



Inspire

Inspire is a year-long personal development programme for adolescents between 13-16 years old. This project uses a range of activities, including residential experiences, community projects, mentoring and workshops, to help teenagers boost their social skills, confidence and aspirations for the future.



Leicestival

Leicestival is a vibrant and exciting project supporting people aged 13-25. This project gets young people involved with Leicester's incredible calendar of cultural festivals and events. This ranges from volunteering and supporting festival management and helping backstage, to setting up their own attractions and stalls.



Breathing Space

Breathing Space supports young people aged 13-25 to develop the strategies and confidence to overcome mental health issues. We do this through projects based on our own allotment and in other green spaces.



START

START is a project that uses mentoring, and environmental and adventure activities to tackle the issues faced by highly isolated young people, who are vulnerable to exploitation.

Project Highlights

Wooden Spoon Allotment Open Day

In 2018, we began a new initiative as part of our Breathing Space project: an allotment learning space for young people and community hub. We wanted to build a place where young people could not only learn to grow food and reconnect with the outdoors, but connect with older generations of allotment-goers in a peaceful environment.

Three years later, on the 7th July, our beautiful Wooden Spoon Allotment was officially opened to the public. A party of young people and their families, staff, volunteers and partners came together to open the allotment and see what we do with the space. The weather stayed clear for the event.

We invited our guests to partake in several activities we would regularly do with our young people. From planting flowers and pruning raspberry bushes, to writing positive messages for our 'Stressless Tree'. Later on in the day, staff, volunteers and two young people from Breathing Space gave speeches to our attendants about how the allotment came to be, and how much they've enjoyed their time there.

Stephen, a young person who has been with the project since its early days, had this to say: "Before I joined FOCUS, I wasn't able to leave my house for years, so it's really helped me to get out and find the confidence to be able to get on the bus again. I've really enjoyed coming to the allotment; it's been absolutely brilliant."

"I'm blown away by what I've seen here today. [...] I haven't got the benefit of seeing the before and after, but I can see, just by looking at it, how much hard work has gone into this. It looks absolutely fantastic." - John Harlow, Wooden Spoon

Thank you to Engie for the amazing help and expertise, KP Snacks and Terracycle for donating equipment, and Stephen Wain for creating the beautiful slates honouring our sponsors for the allotment. We would also like to thank Harini's FUSIC for catering for us on the day, and Free Cakes for Kids Leicester and Rutland, Sue Wicks (relative of one of the young people) and Nisha for donating delicious cakes for the event. Thank you to Pete Martin for taking photos of the event, which can be found at petemartinphotography.pixieset.com/focus. Thank you also to Joe, the former staff-member who got us started. Finally, a huge thank you to Wooden Spoon, whose fundraising allowed us to bring this dream to life.





Supporters Spotlight

Jenny Cross, CEO of Cross Productions and FOCUS Ambassador



"My name's Jenny Cross; I'm the CEO of Cross Productions. Cross Productions is a marketing agency where we educate, implement and advise on marketing. We do a lot of work in the local business community and support a lot of small businesses. We're very passionate about the local community. We've got generations coming through that are gonna be tomorrow's leaders. If we could help support and shape any of them, that can only be a good thing."

"We've worked with FOCUS for a number of years now and have seen the immediate impact of the positive work they do. We couldn't be prouder to shout about them, share the news of what they are doing. FOCUS are literally making a difference in young people's lives, and that's a major, major thing."

"I've seen the work FOCUS does - the different projects and initiatives, their setup. I've seen how the team interacts with the young people, and it's literally such a positive influence in so many lives. I just think it's outstanding."

"I was a Trustee for a number of years. Unfortunately, I'd recently become too busy and I felt I wasn't giving enough as a Trustee. I don't think you should be taking a title like that if you're not actually rolling your sleeves up and getting stuck in. [...] But I still wanted to support FOCUS, which is what I'm still able to do as an Ambassador."

"It's so important that we support all races, ages, sexes, and beliefs, and give everybody an opportunity to grow and develop personally within our community. I think, as Leicester, we've got such a diverse community and we're so lucky - there's so many pros from that. But, we need to support people. You can't expect the world to change if you don't roll up your sleeves and do anything."

Hot Topic

Social Media

The news that a whole host of famous and not-so-famous campaigners are boycotting social media platforms has captured headlines recently. For many of them, the rise in high-profile racist and bigoted posts and comments that have created a toxic atmosphere for many social media users.

For many people, including young people - the heaviest users of social media - this is devastating. Social media platforms could and should be safe places to connect with others, share ideas, learn and be entertained. But increasingly, it appears that these platforms are instead becoming places of bullying, misinformation, abuse, and manipulation. Something has to change.

Should we encourage all young people to boycott them? Maybe, but for those who do want to make a statement and take a break, it's not easy.

The tech giants and bedroom coders behind these platforms don't want to see anyone leave their sites. They are well-aware that every 'like', every bite-sized video clip, and every notification can spark a small, but highly addictive, dopamine hit in the brain of the user. It's why your 'average' teenager finds it so hard to put their phone down. This is how so many young people are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the world, trapped in a spiral of toxic posts.

So, let's seize the day and back those who are calling for change, because the lives of many young people depend on it. Even if you feel that leaving it behind completely is too much, here's three simple things we can all do to minimise the risk of falling foul of social media's dark side:

1. **Don't believe everything you read. Challenge it, question it and talk it over with people who disagree with you.**
2. **Give yourself a break. Take time away from your devices every day. You'll enjoy the upsides of social media far more when you return!**
3. **Get some of your kicks elsewhere. That dopamine hit can be achieved through more than a five-second cat video. Volunteer and socialise with your community. Engage in sports and other indoor and outdoor events with your family. Read books or try your hand at arts and craft, or get out into parks and green spaces.**



Meet Our Team



Hasina Mahboob Youth Support Worker for START

Hasina is one of our newest staff-members at FOCUS, having joined during the Covid-19 lockdown last year. In spite of this, she has settled in incredibly well. Hasina helps us run START, Life Flavourz and Breathing Space. Here's what Hasina had to say about her time with us so far:

"I want to say this is the best job I've ever had. Luke is my project manager, and he's supported me every step of the way.

"Starting a new job can be super unnerving - especially in lockdown, where you can't meet people face-to-face. I was really nervous during my first staff meeting, but the other staff put me at ease. They've helped me through highs and lows; even with some personal stuff. It really is like a big family.

"I enjoy all of the projects I work on. But one recent event that stood out to me was 'Community Reach Out'. It was something our community very much needed, and it was wonderful to see the youngsters really coming into their own. It was not only a ray of sunshine to support them, but to see how much they'd achieved since they started with us.

"Honestly, I'm really honoured to be working at FOCUS. I know everyone else has so much more experience than me, but it's experience I can learn from."

Volunteering at FOCUS



Liam Project Volunteer

Liam joined our volunteer team in 2018 and has since been an invaluable member. He lives and breathes 'Leicester', with a wealth of experience from working for the community. Liam studied contemporary dance at DuPont Dance School, and worked as a holiday camp rep for a number of years across England. He is presently a student at Northampton University and aiming to become a Pediatric Nurse after his studies finish.

We caught up with him recently to discuss his time volunteering at FOCUS:

"In my time with FOCUS, I've worked extensively with Leicestival and Inspire. My personal highlights are assisting two marvelous Caribbean Carnival events. They were a smash hit with young people." Liam also loved the challenging experience of Inspire project's residential in Gloucestershire in 2018.

We asked him what he thinks any new volunteer should consider when working with young people.

He emphasized, "Don't be afraid; it's okay to be apprehensive. Understand that to build rapport with young people takes time plus experience. The wealth of knowledge and support from FOCUS staff and fellow volunteers means we all build and grow together."

His final words were, "If you feel like you are struggling, FOCUS has got your back!"

Liam is looking forward to welcoming and working with the new intake of volunteers inducted this winter.

Want to have an Impact & Volunteer with FOCUS Charity?

0116 251 0369 | admin@focus-charity.co.uk | 73 Church Gate, Leicester LE1 3AN

Follow us on Social Media! [f](#) @focuscharityleicester [t](#) @FOCUScharity

FOCUS

ON BUSINESS

BECOME A MEMBER AND HELP SOME OF LEICESTER'S MOST VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

£25^{pm}
Standard Package

Standard package includes:

Use of our FOCUS On Business logo on your website | A membership certificate | Annual statement for tax relief benefits | Monthly e-bulletin updating you on the impact your support is having | Printed version of our inFOCUS Newsletter | Copy of our annual impact report | Access to all FOCUS On Business events | Exclusive Early Bird Tickets to our Annual Black Tie Dinner | Recognition on the FOCUS wall of supporters and influencers | Members networking events | Thank you message on FOCUS Charity social media posts on becoming a member

Contact: Emily Taylor for more information
emily.taylor@focus-charity.co.uk

WANT TO HAVE MORE OF AN IMPACT?

Upgrade your support through either a donation or fundraising activities

Provides a vulnerable young person with weekly one-to-one mentoring support

Feature in our monthly e-bulletin | Bronze FOB logo | Support for your fundraising events | Video Thank you message on FOCUS Charity social media posts | Enhanced recognition on the FOCUS wall of supporters and influencers

BRONZE MEMBERSHIP
RAISE OR DONATE AN ADDITIONAL
£500

Provides a young person with a place on a community action project

Video Thank you message on FOCUS Charity social media posts | Updates on what impact your support has on the charity six+ mentions during the year | Additional promotion/promotional opportunities, including having materials at FOCUS events, and a FOB pull up banner for your reception/office | Opportunity to host and be the Keynote Speaker at one of our FOB events | Recognition as a silver member on the FOCUS wall of supporters and influencers | Feature in our regular e-newsletter

SILVER MEMBERSHIP
RAISE OR DONATE AN ADDITIONAL
£1200

Provides a place for a young person on a 'life-changing' year-long personal development programme

Video Thank you message on FOCUS Charity social media posts and twelve+ mentions during the year | Recognition as a Gold member on the FOCUS wall of supporters and influencers | Facilitated half day team building session for your staff | Exclusive Staff Volunteer days for your company

GOLD MEMBERSHIP
RAISE OR DONATE AN ADDITIONAL
£2700

Christmas QUIZ Night

FRIDAY 3RD DECEMBER
QUIZ STARTS AT 7PM

EAST STREET EVENTS, LEICESTER

£20 PER PERSON OR A TEAM OF 6 FOR £120
FOOD INCLUDED

WHY NOT SPONSOR A QUIZ ROUND FOR £100

kazzoo
it solutions

FOCUS

kazzoo
it solutions

Christmas Charity Quiz Night

To book your place, or for more information, email
emily.taylor@focus-charity.co.uk

All
proceeds
go to

FOCUS
INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE, CREATING CHANGE

Where Our Money Comes From

Everything we do for young people is free to them. We rely on grants, donations, sponsorship and similar support from a range of individuals and organisations to fund our work. Without their generous support, none of it would be possible. Every donation, no matter how large or small, enables us to provide our vital services to young people, and we are always interested in talking to anyone who would like to work with us to achieve our goals.

In 2020, our major funders are the National Lottery Fund, Michael Bishop Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, KFC Foundation, Home Office, EEM, Wooden Spoon Charity, and Openwork Foundation.

From every £1 that we raise, 84p goes directly to support young people. We use the other 16p to keep the lights on, pay our bills and raise another £1.



**Want to Support us or get involved?
Get in Contact:**

0116 251 0369

admin@focus-charity.co.uk

73 Church Gate, Leicester LE1 3AN

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