

# INFOCUS

INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE CREATING CHANGE

The Official **FOCUS Charity** News Magazine

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## Recent Achievements

As the nights draw in and autumn takes hold, we have been reflecting on some of our recent achievements through the Summer. There have been so many, but here's some highlights:

### Star of the Carnival

We kicked off a packed Summer with Joshua Omang - one of the young people involved in our Leicestival project - being crowned Carnival King of the East Midlands Caribbean Carnival. This was a huge reward for his efforts, as he was up against representatives from across the region. He was absolutely delighted and thoroughly deserved his award for his costume design and performance. Thanks must also go to all the other young people who supported him in creating his costume and performing alongside him

## Ensuring Our Funds Go Far

To further demonstrate our commitment to looking after all the funds that our donors and funders entrust to us, we have registered with the Fundraising Regulator. You'll see the logo below appearing on our website and other communications soon. It means that we can follow the latest guidance on responsible, ethical, open and transparent fundraising. You can be confident that all the funds we raise go towards our work supporting vulnerable young people.

## Charity of the Year

Finally, we are thrilled to have been selected by the Fosse Business Breakfast Network as their Charity of the Year. They're a philanthropic bunch and we're looking forward to working with them to support even more young people. Their network largely comprises small and medium sized local businesses, that not only support one another, but share a passion for supporting local people and creating a great place to live, learn and work.

Follow us on Social Media!

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## 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

### Inspire 2021 Residential

When the first lockdown hit in March 2020, we couldn't have imagined the circumstances of Covid-19 would still be deeply affecting our work with young people late into 2021. We were eager to do whatever we safely could do to provide the young people with a memorable summer-holiday experience, especially when recognising how tough the pandemic has been for them.

When the government announced on July 19th 2021 that pandemic restrictions were to be lifted, we worked as quickly as possible to run a residential trip for young people, while recognising the ongoing pandemic and mitigating any risks. Young people taking part in our Inspire project were invited to a weekend residential trip at Beaumanor Hall - making it our first residential trip since 2019.

Getting the young people away for a weekend residential trip, even locally, did wonders to boost the team spirit and morale of the group. Beforehand, Inspire had only been able to run activities with groups of five young people. The residential upped that number to 22, allowing them to feel connected to the wider FOCUS group. Communication and listening games played throughout the trip - such as a blindfolded nightline walk in the forest - acted as vehicles for young people to feel less isolated and more confident.

The positive experience created a buzz around the rest of our activities through summer and allowed them to take ownership of their graduation event. We are so glad about the success it became, and that young people have gone away with cherished memories.





## Supporters Spotlight

Bhavik Popat, Managing  
Director of Suit Yourself



"Suit Yourself is a menswear retailer first and foremost, but also a tailor and formalwear-for-hire specialist.

"I learned about FOCUS at BNI Foxes, from meeting its CEO, Matt Lilley, and we decided to make FOCUS one of the charities we work with. We started by matching donations with gift vouchers, so for anyone who donated to FOCUS we would match the donations with a voucher for our services. So, the customer technically

didn't spend any money but Focus still received the donation.

**"I think the work FOCUS does is excellent; we do think it's a charity well-worth supporting. There are a lot of young people in trouble at the moment, especially with the current times. We do a lot of stuff abroad, but it's nice to do something locally from time-to-time as well. I think it's good to do a bit of both.**

"Local charities are very important. A lot of people will send money abroad, but when there's people on your doorstep that need help, I honestly think you should be supporting them first. 'Charity begins at home', as they say.

"On all the points summarised, I suppose it's really nice to be able to support charities like FOCUS considering the pandemic. I'm sure there have been a lot of companies who have been unable to, which has hurt many charities in turn. It was nice to still be in a position where we could do something, and I'm sure those that FOCUS supports will benefit. That's what it's all about - even if you change one person's life, that's still a big thing. It doesn't matter whether it's one or a hundred people you help, just help. Do what you can. If you're in a position to, you should always try to."

## Hot Topic

### Belonging

As a species, we humans are fundamentally social creatures. We have a powerful need to feel a sense of belonging, to find a community that understands and accepts us, shares our values, has our back and needs our support.

For many people, the prolonged periods of isolation due to the pandemic have broken the bonds of those communities. And for young people who were yet to find their community - their tribe - before the pandemic began, finding a place where they belong has become a seemingly impossible task. Online services just do not cut it. We need people; we need physical contact, shared experiences, eye contact and the camaraderie that comes with being together.

Opportunities for young people to come together because they want to (not because they've been sent or told they need to go) have been limited and discouraged. But they are vital. We must not begrudge those who gather in the park, on a street corner, in a nightclub, or wherever. They are just being human.

Covid-19 has wreaked havoc on our economy, on our health services, in our classrooms and across our communities. Let's not allow it to prevent us from expressing our fundamental selves. Let us seek out, support and celebrate those weirdly diverse groups, where we meet those who seem so different to us, but who share our values, who get what we're about and who want to be with us.



### **We asked one of our young people where she felt she belonged the most.**

#### **This is what she wrote:**

The place where I feel I belong most is Focus Charity. Being at Focus is one of the best choices I've ever made. There are so many different people, and it feels great getting to bond with all of them. The best thing about being at Focus would be the few friends I've made. Before Focus I was struggling to make friends and be myself, but whenever I'm there I know I can be who I want without judgement.

At Focus we work together to come up with new ideas to overcome barriers and help each other grow to be the best version of ourselves. Every session is planned in advance, and we all come together to reach set goals. Everyone has an important role to play and we all respect and value each other's opinions.

**- Shannon**

## Meet Our Team



### **Shenèse Barzey, Assistant Project Manager for Leicestival**

“Leicester is such a multicultural city, but a lot of people don’t know how many cultural events are actually happening. Leicestival is about raising awareness and getting young people involved.

“I didn’t even know about FOCUS before I joined. One of my long-time friends works in collaboration with Harsha, Project Manager of Leicestival, for the Caribbean Carnival. When I left my nursing job in December 2020, she sent me Harsha’s details. She told me FOCUS was looking for someone fun and vibrant, into helping the community, and with knowledge on Leicester’s events. I didn’t know much about youth work, but decided I’d go for it and see what happens. Here I am now! It helped that Harsha and Cavan used to run the youth club in my estate, so I knew them before I came. That really helped me settle in.”

“I love that every day at FOCUS is a different challenge. Monday I could be doing admin, Tuesday I may have a session, Wednesday I could be meeting with businesses etc. Every day’s something fresh, something new.

“My favourite event to work on was the Comedy Awards. We literally had a week to plan, rehearse and film all the sketches. It was kind of a mad rush, but it was great. I personally prefer the processes of things to the outcome because I like to see how things develop over time.

“I just want to say to anyone reading, take opportunities as they come; make the most of them. Because you never know if it’s gonna be the one to change your life.”

## Volunteering at FOCUS



### **Nuriyah Volunteer with Leicestival**

Nuriyah began volunteering with us this year, being a positive influence on those around her. Approaching all situations with an open mind, Nuriyah is confident in working with our young people, as her age allows her to relate to their experiences. Nuriyah moved to Leicester to study sociology at De Montfort University. Shortly after completing her first year, she decided to do something meaningful alongside her studies and began searching for volunteering opportunities.

“I googled ‘youth volunteering’ in Leicester and straight away found FOCUS. I read all the info on the website and knew it was the place I wanted to be. I didn’t look anywhere else.”

Nuriyah’s interests include learning about others and world politics. She wants to use her experiences in volunteering to further her knowledge of working with and understanding others. She aspires to have a career in of a career in writing policies and making change.

Through volunteering, Nuriyah has gained a better understanding of how to work with people from various cultural and religious backgrounds. This has heightened her ability to enter situations with an open mind and non-judgmental view. She has strong religious beliefs and believes that “when you help others it brings you closer to God.”

Nuriyah also wanted to say, “thank you to all the staff and young people at FOCUS. Everyone has helped and supported me through this experience; you guys are always there to give me direction. Also, thank you for having confidence in me with volunteering.”

## CS Fitouts Golf Day

On Thursday 9th August, we teamed up with CS Fitouts for an amazing fundraiser at Beedles Lake Golf Club. Six teams of supporters with impressive golfing skills helped us to raise over £1000 by teeing off across eighteen courses. This event, which also included an excellent two-course meal prepared by the golf-club's staff, was sponsored by CS Fitouts themselves, as well as CR Civil Engineering Ltd and What The Duck Cards, who each sponsored a hole.

What is golf without a little competition? Each of our teams competed for one of four prizes, from 'Lowest (or winning) Score', to 'Longest Drive'. BNI Loughborough's team won the lowest team score, with photographer Anthony Tanton achieving the lowest individual score. Kiran Parmar, of The City Rooms, won one of our special trophies for 'Longest Drive' on hole seventeen, while Aaron Helps won the trophy for 'Closest to the pin' on hole three. Finally, the BNI Foxes team were given the wooden spoon for gaining the highest score. Remember: it's not winning but taking part that counts!



### **Paul Owen from CS Fitouts, stated about the event:**

"The most CS Fitouts enjoyed was getting all the people together and having a good laugh. We chose FOCUS because we also believe in helping people that don't have the best start in life. If we can help even one person with an event like this, that will be fantastic."

Thank you so much to CS Fitouts for organising such a wonderful event, as well as the sponsors; fundraisers like these help us support even more of Leicester's young people. Of course, thank you to all the teams that came to compete, and everyone who joined us for the dinner afterwards, for helping us to make the day as enjoyable as it was.

## 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.



# FOCUS

ON BUSINESS

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

£25<sup>pm</sup>  
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](mailto: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-bullition | 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 a 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

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

0116 251 0369 | [admin@focus-charity.co.uk](mailto:admin@focus-charity.co.uk) | 73 Church Gate, Leicester LE1 3AN  
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