

BCCS



NEWS

SPRING EDITION • 2025

Shattered Lives

The silent cost of domestic abuse

Community Impact

Why your support matters

Lenten Appeal

Give hope to local families this Lent



Welcome

The theme for the Jubilee Holy Year 2025 is 'Pilgrims of Hope', and it is intended to be a year of hope for a world suffering the impacts of war, the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a climate crisis. In December 2024 Pope Francis launched this special year by opening the 'holy door' in St Peter's Basilica, Rome.



'We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision'.

Pope Francis

Our message at BCCS is always that of **hope**:

Hope that children and young people will lead contented and happy lives

Hope that children are supported in terms of their mental health and emotional wellbeing

Hope that all children feel cherished and loved and develop the strength and strategies to overcome life's hurdles in a world without poverty, fear, crime and discrimination

Hope that all children can live in safety, free from fear and suffering

Our mission is to give hope in everything we do. We are often the lifeline for a concerned parent, a vulnerable child or young person, or an over-stretched member of school staff.

We pride ourselves on developing the resilience of every child in our care, whilst equipping them to navigate and manage the challenges in our ever-changing society.

We felt the support of our community in February this year as we celebrated Children's Mental Health Week (CMHW) with the theme of 'Know Yourself, Grow Yourself' and embraced the sense of hope that talking about our feelings leaves us feeling lighter, understood, and calmer. Pupils from local schools participated in our poster competition, creating a fantastic display along Billericay High Street. We extend our gratitude to the local shops, cafés, and businesses for their involvement in various ways and for helping to raise awareness about children's well-being.

Schools engaged in our CMHW workshops with enthusiasm demonstrating knowledge and empathy with the theme. It was a pleasure to visit our schools and observe children discussing the importance of mental health with such enthusiasm.

As we approach Easter, with spring in the air, we feel energised and hopeful that our work will continue to make a difference: whether that be to a child, a family, or within our community. With your continued support and prayers, BCCS will continue its mission of providing hope and support for the children and young people in our care.

Wishing you all a holy and happy Easter.

Bernadette Fisher
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CASE STUDY

Shattered Lives - Ellie's story

We find our work takes on trends and currently we have a high number of children we are seeing who have been affected by domestic abuse.

In September 2024 the Department of Education published an updated version of the statutory safeguarding and child protection guidance for schools in England: 'Keeping children safe in education'.

We were heartened that in this update, the definition of 'abuse' was finally amended and recognised that children are psychologically affected by what they witness.

We have been working hard to provide in-school group work to children and families of domestic violence. We have been engaging with children who have witnessed this and are helping their parents understand the impact of their child's experiences.

Ellie is 16 and we have provided therapy to her since 2023. This is an unusually long time to engage in therapy with a young person, but the reality is that we, along with the school, have been Ellie's only constants.

Throughout our work, Ellie talked to us about having been "on my own for most of my life". She was taken into care and has been in various foster placements, having been removed from her home due to domestic abuse. Ellie witnessed things that are unthinkable, and she has been brave enough to share her experiences. Not only has she had to work through a lot of trauma, to recall distressing events, to share her worries about the safety of her mum, she has had to work through her relationship template. She has learned that she can't trust people or relationships, that people say one thing and do another. Relationships represent feelings of vulnerability and fear to Ellie. Our work has been involved in modelling to her that adults can feel safe, reliable, caring, and consistent.

Ellie talked to us about having never known a loving home, how she feels bereft, angry and scared all the time. She cries a lot and is

easily triggered: raised voices or unpredictable responses can leave her spiralling. We have worked with her teachers to support them to understand that when Ellie "loses it" if a voice is raised in the classroom, she isn't angry, she's frightened.



Ellie carries the burden of worry for her mum's safety. She talks with us about having learned not to show vulnerability. As sad as we were to hear this, it is sadder that we get it, and that it makes sense given Ellie's experiences. She has, however, been brave enough to show vulnerability in her work with us.

Ellie is now self-aware and knows that she has been a victim of a frightening childhood. She has learned to trust the care of some adults and is navigating teenage relationships.

Ellie has chosen to move to semi-independent living because she's tired of the isolation and disruption of living in foster care. Ellie's accommodation is basic and lacks homeliness, so we've given her money to buy some nice items for it.

Ellie's situation remains with us as we support children and young people and help repair their experiences within therapy. We would like to do more, but there are many like her who need practical help. Thank you for supporting our mission to bring hope to those in need.

Children's Mental Health Week



Poster judging on Billericay High Street with Councillor Mark Thomas

Throughout this week in February, we focused on highlighting the critical role that mental health plays in children's overall development.

It was an opportunity for parents, educators, and communities to engage in conversations about emotional well-being and recognise signs that a child may need support. This collaborative effort empowers young people to seek help and promotes better mental health for everyone involved.

Through providing community initiatives, educational programs, and resources for parents and educators, we are committed to ensuring that every child has the tools they need to navigate their emotions effectively and thrive both socially and academically.

Please take a moment to check out some of our photos of the week! They beautifully capture a truly collaborative community effort with children at the heart of it all.

These images showcase the joy and engagement that come from working together to support our children and young people.

Thanks to everyone involved in this important awareness week.



Billericay Catenians help at our charity collection at Waitrose



Connecting with our community at Human Kind café



Bernadette presents a hamper to one of our poster competition winners



Community Corner

Build-A-Bear workshop - St George's Shoeburyness

Our long-term supporter in Shoeburyness, Frank McEvoy is always looking for innovative ways to support our work.

Last December, with the financial backing and assistance of his friends at Foresters' Financial, Frank was able to invite children from the parish of St George to gather to help put together 120 bears.

The children wore festive outfits and, like Santa's helpers, eagerly gave their full attention to the task helped along by some motivational Christmas tunes. All 120 bears were then re-homed to schools and families whose children may not otherwise

have received a present at Christmas.

We are so grateful to everyone involved in the Build-A-Bear

workshop, especially the young people who gave up their time and talents to help others less fortunate than themselves.



'The sheer delight on the children's faces as they've taken the bears in their special bags has just brought such joy!'



If you'd like to get involved or support us in your community, please feel free to reach out. We would love to hear from you!

BCCS Bear spreads joy at the Holy Door

We were delighted to hear from St John Fisher school in Loughton who sent us a little update and a photo of their BCCS Bear, Bernie Elliot.

Their bear has been to many exciting places during the last year – to stadiums, cathedrals, First Holy Communions and school trips.

The highlight of his adventures, going through the Holy Door at the Vatican during the Jubilee Year, is particularly special and meaningful. It exemplifies not only the spirit of celebration but also the strong connection of the school to faith and community.

Our thanks to all our schools, clubs and groups and households for getting behind our Anniversary Bear fundraising last year and for entering fully into the spirit of our furry friends.



Caritas Networking Day 9th February 2025

We were grateful to be involved once again with the Caritas Diocese of Brentwood Networking Day where we met many wonderful people and had some interesting discussions about issues that are current within our work today. It was a pleasure to listen to Jo Kitterick, CAFOD Director of Fundraising and Participation who spoke about the Year of Jubilee and as ever, it was extremely useful to share ideas and thoughts with many of the other charities present.

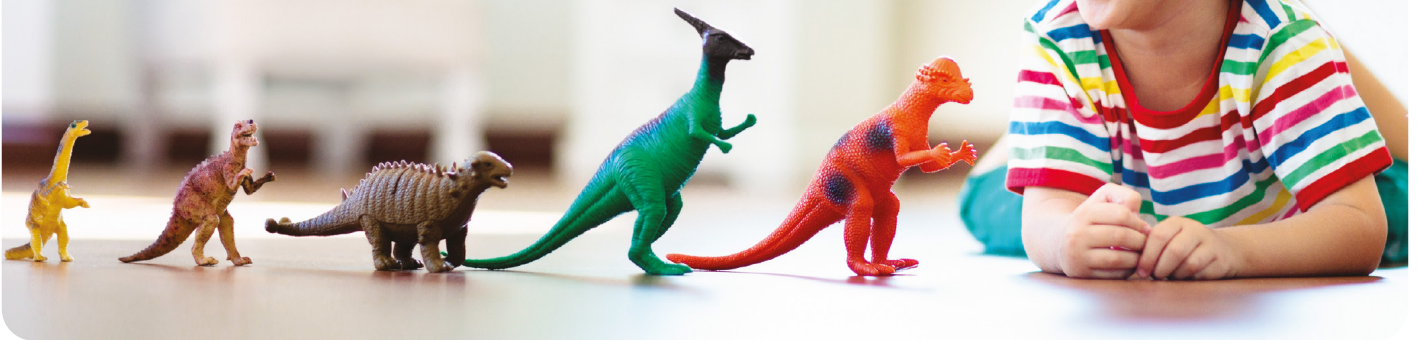
Community visits

Every year we visit different groups and parishes to update our supporters about the issues that our professional team are facing and seeing in the children and young people that we work with.

If you would like us to visit your parish or group one weekend or at a gathering midweek then please contact Damian who would be happy to schedule a time to meet and chat.

Damian can be contacted by mobile on 07912 308000 or by email at dillon@bccs.org.uk

Child and Family Counselling Service



The Child and Family Counselling Service (CFCS) is the privately funded arm of our service, located at our Billericay office. Here we have four thoughtfully designed therapy rooms: three are tailored specifically for children and young people, featuring a variety of engaging resources while the fourth room is focused on supporting adolescents and parents.

We are proud to have an incredible team of therapists at CFCS, who offer support to children, young people, parents, and families. Our team is continually growing and we now have 11 therapists providing support each week.

CFCS is committed to supporting all children and young people. We've worked with children as young as 3, and we currently support an 18-year-old who, after trying adult therapy, felt it wasn't right for her. We also offer support to young people with special educational needs (SEN) up to the age of 25.

As demand for our services increases, CFCS is constantly expanding. We are now at capacity with 54 slots filled each week and we also provide an additional 4 places online.

We currently have a waiting list for after-school slots,

so have extended our Wednesday hours to 7pm. This extension has been very successful, with the available slots filling within days.

We thought you might like to know more about how this arm of our service works:

Enquiry & Consultation

Within three days of receiving an enquiry, we arrange a 10 - 30 minute call to discuss the child's needs and how CFCS can offer support.

Availability

We email parents/carers with available session slots.

Initial Assessment

Once a time is agreed, an assessment is conducted, typically with just the parents/carers. During this session we discuss the child's needs (presenting issues, early development, past trauma, etc.). It also allows parents to meet the therapist and see

the therapy space their child will be using.

Therapy Begins

Therapy sessions begin the following week, or, in some cases, parental therapy may be recommended first.

Ongoing Review

The therapist regularly checks in with parents/carers to assess progress and determine when therapy should end.

Ending

The ending session is an important part of therapy. It provides a space for the child or young person to reflect on their therapy journey and think about how they can apply what they've learned in the future.

We are here to help. For more information, please contact Donna at dbooth@bccs.org.uk

Open your heart to giving

“It’s not how much we give but how much love we put into giving”

Saint Teresa of Calcutta

This Lent, we remember Jesus’ 40 days of fasting in the desert, which invites us to reflect on our own spiritual journey. It’s a valuable time for self-discipline and seeking a deeper understanding of God’s presence in our lives.

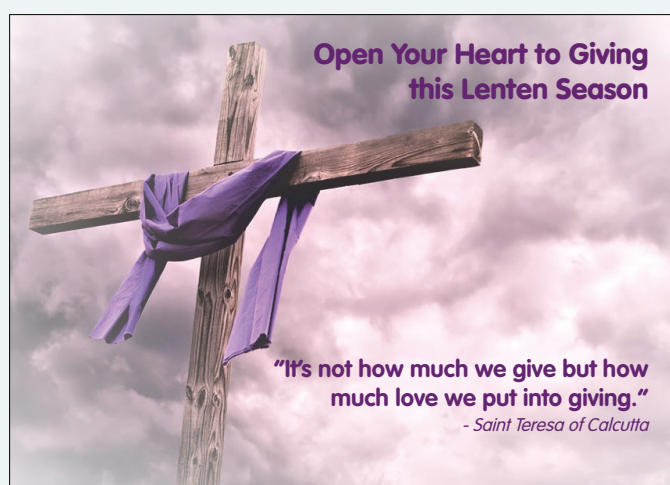
By giving up comforts during Lent, we can focus on the sacrifices Jesus made for us. This practice can also inspire us to support those less fortunate.

As you think about what to give up this Lent, consider how that sacrifice can help those in need. Whether it’s donating saved money or volunteering your time, your actions can make a real difference in your community. Let your sacrifice inspire kindness and support for others.

Every donation, no matter the size, plays a vital role in making our work possible.

Your generosity helps us spread hope and warmth to those who need it most.

This season of reflection is a perfect opportunity to turn our sacrifices into powerful acts of kindness. Thank you in advance for your generous support.



Spreading joy: the impact of your gift

Our Christmas voucher scheme has always been an important part of our work and there is no doubt that practical support has a direct link with improved wellbeing for our families.

We have had emails from many schools telling us of the joy and relief these vouchers gave to the families who received them at Christmas.

We thought we would share with you a lovely message we received from a grateful parent.

Last week, I received the wonderful gift for me and the boys, and I am truly at a loss for words to convey how thankful I am. It has lifted a huge weight off my shoulders, allowing me to look forward to sharing a Christmas dinner with my family this year.

Thank you all so much. Your kindness has made a significant impact on our lives, and I am truly grateful for your support.

A gift can provide support, joy, and hope, reminding someone that they are cared for.



Dates for your diary

Summer Luncheon - a new venue!



Friday 13th June 2025

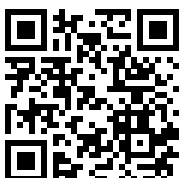
£37.50 per person

We have exclusive use of the elegant, grade II listed Georgian house, The Lawn, located in Rochford.

A delicious two-course luncheon will be served in the stunning Orangery, overlooking the beautiful landscaped gardens. This event is open to everyone, with guests seated at tables of 10.

Tickets are available now via our website: www.bccs.org.uk/get-involved/events/, by scanning the QR code below, or by calling Julie on 07912 277413.

SCAN ME



Christmas Craft and Gift Fair Sunday, November 16th, 10.30am - 4pm. *Explore unique crafts and gifts while supporting a good cause! Interested in having a stall? Email Damian at ddillon@bccs.org.uk*

The National Junior Golf Knockout

The National Junior Golf Knockout is gaining tremendous traction, with over 95 clubs already signed up for participation this summer.

This exciting national team tournament is geared towards golfers who are under 18 years old as of January 1st of the competition year, welcoming teams from any club in England and Wales.

In 2025, we will proudly host our fifth knockout event, and the players from Ashton-under-Lyne Golf Club are eager to defend their title from 2024.



We extend our good luck to all young players as they prepare for their first-round fixtures starting in April.



Can I just say what a great competition this is. The enjoyment that the kids get out of it, not to mention the quality of the golf is outstanding.



Sponsored Walks



Our supporters Claire and Lynda on their sponsored walk along the Flich Way in Dunmow in August 2024

The summer months usher in our annual sponsored walk schedule throughout the Diocese and we are enormously grateful to the Knights of St Columba, the Catholic Women's League and the Catenian groups who get involved, walking and fundraising for us year after year.

If you would like to organise a walk in your area or join an existing walk, take a look at the ones which are currently scheduled and contact Damian for more details: ddillon@bccs.org.uk

Chingford - 21st June

Basildon - 5th July

Canvey to Benfleet - September

Woodford Green - September

Dates for Chelmsford, Colchester and Romford walks are to be advised.

Register your interest with us by contacting Damian at ddillon@bccs.org.uk