



A word from our new Chair of Trustees ...

Dear friends,

I write to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees for Brentwood Catholic Children's Society.

I succeed Chris Tisi who was a trustee for four years and Chair of the Board for a further four. Chris was Chair during the years of the recent pandemic and ably supported and guided the Society through that turbulent period. He also oversaw the move to our new premises in Billericay which was a major undertaking in itself. We are very grateful to Chris and would like to thank him for his time, energy and enthusiasm over the years. His are big shoes to fill and I hope that during my term of office, I will be able to provide a similarly dedicated and committed service to BCCS.

My background is in social work and education. I am a registered Social Worker and qualified teacher (post 16). I have three children and four grandchildren. I live in Chelmsford, and I am a parishioner at Our Lady Immaculate and The Holy Name.

I was Deputy Director at BCCS for five years between 2010 and 2015 and since then I have witnessed the Charity go from strength to strength, diversifying their work and continuing to enhance their professional reputation under the leadership of the Director, Bernadette Fisher. Last year saw the Society

move into their new wonderful home and we are all excited at the potential to further develop and extend our services.

We have been fortunate to recruit ten new trustees very recently and we are looking forward to welcoming them onto the board and benefitting from their expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm. This will be particularly pertinent and helpful as we move into celebrating our 40th year in operation during 2024 and we have already met to share ideas and inspirations. You will hear more of this in the forthcoming months.

Brentwood Catholic Children's Society exists to serve children and families in Essex and East London. Everything that we do is towards this end. Bernadette and the team of counsellors, social workers, and therapists are supporting more and more children, young people and their families. It is for these children that we not only ask for your financial support but also your prayers.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the forthcoming months.



Maire Maisch

BCCS in numbers

During the period April 2022-March 2023 we supported **738** children and young people. To give some context to this, as well as directly supporting those children, we also offered support and guidance to the school staff and parents or carers. Our support is rarely ever stand alone and aims to be holistic in its entirety.



- 623** new cases opened and **9033** therapeutic sessions delivered
- 100+** professional meetings attended
- 380** supervision and staff therapy sessions delivered to exhausted school staff
- 392** food vouchers issued to families needing support at Christmas
- 25** families supported with school trip and uniform funding via our Crisis Fund
- 180+** young people participated in process group therapy
- 50** sessions a week delivered in our therapy rooms at our new premises.

Volunteer Spotlight

In May this year we heard about one of our supporters who hosted a fundraising coffee morning and managed to raise an amazing £500 to boost our community pot! We were obviously delighted to hear about Stephanie's fundraiser and asked her to tell us a little bit about why she decided to do it.

How did you hear about us?

I am a teacher and many years ago BCCS supported me when I was at school; I would not be doing the work I do today had it not been for the help that I received from them back then. I know they have continued their work helping many children and that these services need funding to continue.

Why did you decide to do some fundraising?

In my profession I know how vital these services are and the range of therapy and support BCCS offers to schools, families and individuals is so crucial to helping young people. Local services also benefit significantly from local donations, and I felt the money we raised could be utilised effectively by BCCS to have the best impact.



Our community heroes

How did your event work?

We ran the coffee drop-in between 10.30am and 2pm so that people could pop in at a time that worked for them. Our guests were very interested in the work of BCCS and understood that mental health services for children and young people at the moment are desperately needed. They recognised the need these services have for third-party fundraising such as our event and were so generous on the day.

The event itself was not costly to run as some friends brought cake and donated raffle prizes and this minimised our outlay. We also had a silent auction for one of my mum's beautiful handmade quilts which raised £45. Guests made donations for refreshments and this meant people felt it was manageable. It was also a lovely way for people to socialise and spend time chatting together. We were delighted to be able to send our donation of £500 to BCCS and know that our efforts at community fundraising really will make a difference to young people.

If this has inspired you to hold a third-party event, please contact Damian at ddillon@bccs.org.uk who will be delighted to hear from you.

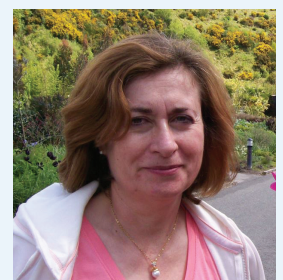
Mental Health Awareness Week May 2023

We were pleased to have the opportunity to work alongside one of our trustees, Katharine McKnight, in the run up to Mental Health Awareness Week in May. This year, the theme was **Anxiety** which is an important issue for us as most of the cases we see in children involve anxiety. Katharine was able to give us the benefit of her experience and knowledge for our social media posts over the week and we enjoyed the collaboration.

"As a Trustee with my own interest and personal experience of mental health, I was delighted to be asked to support with the MHAW social media campaign. This is particularly relevant as I have lived experience of anxiety, which is the theme for 2023. I am passionate about advocating for others on social media and it means a lot to do this for BCCS."

Farewell to our friend Louise

We were very sad to learn that our dear friend and former BCCS Social Worker Louise Geddes had died in July. Following treatment for cancer, a milestone birthday and a postponement due to the pandemic, Louise was finally able to walk part of the Camino de Santiago last October to raise funds for BCCS and we were delighted to share her story in our newsletter and on our social media channels. A regular table host at our Annual Charity Ball, Louise also nominated BCCS to receive royalties from the sale of a book she published to help children with anxiety. Louise will always hold a very dear place in our heart; she will be greatly missed by us all and we send our sincere condolences to her family and friends at this time of loss.



Why our work is important

Mental health problems can often be seen simply as ‘bad behaviour’ and treated as such. As a result, children are unable to access the help they need, or they have to wait for long periods before they can be seen by a professional. This is where BCCS bridges the gap.

Caden’s story

Caden’s mum contacted us as she believed her son was displaying signs of anxiety. He was attempting to stay off school to stay close to her and regularly used delaying tactics to go to bed. Caden was able to monitor his mum’s location on an app on his phone and as a result, was constantly checking up to see where she was. This meant that he was prone to feelings of panic if he saw his mum was somewhere she hadn’t told him she was going.



We met with both parents for an assessment and began to understand the family history and dynamics. After meeting with Caden, we began to unpick Caden’s anxiety which was connected to his attachment with his mum and his fear that something would happen to her. We began with several sessions with Caden’s mum to explore her own anxiety and then continued with further sessions with Caden, during which time we were able to work through Caden’s anxieties and reduce his need to have a constant check on his mum. This allowed Caden to return more easily to school and gradually to begin to go to bed free of worry and anxiety.

Caden’s mum spoke to us of the relief she felt now that her son was free from the burden he was holding. He was happy to attend school each day and she was now able to go out to work and socialise with friends without the feelings of anxiety from both sides.

What we are finding

With rising bills, soaring energy prices and the cost-of-living crisis dominating the national conversation, it is inevitable that many children and young people, just like adults, are worried about money. This is evidenced in our work as we have seen an increase in domestic violence, family separation, self-harm and suicide ideation in our referrals over the last two years. Anxiety was still the most common reason for referral into our services last year and our Director, Bernadette explains a little more about these findings:

A large proportion of our work (56%) is in relation to anxiety (46% in the previous year). Anxiety is typically an umbrella term for worry, stress, distress, preoccupation etc. and, as such, we are not surprised it remains our largest area of concern.

Sadly, we have noticed a steep increase in issues resulting from parental separation. We believe we continue to see the far-reaching impact of Covid in our work, and parental stress and disharmony has caused children and young people high levels of stress and confusion.

We have also been working with what feels like higher volumes of self-harm. This doesn’t just take the form of 1:1 work with the child or young person. We have also been upskilling staff and parents about the issue and delivering process group therapy sessions in schools, helping everyone involved with the young person who is self-harming to understand more about what is happening for them and how best to help.

An encouraging statistic is the reduction in bereavement work from 10% to 7% this year. This element of our work sadly peaked around the time of Covid, and we are thankful to see a dip in the number of children and families we are supporting in this regard.

We are delighted that our Child and Family Counselling Service (formally known as our Self-Referral Pathway) is offering over 50 sessions a week compared to 12 sessions last year. We anticipate that this arm of our service will continue to grow as we maximize the benefits of having our own counselling rooms in Billericay high street.

BCCS counselling services are specially set up for young people to talk about what’s worrying them and to get advice. For full details of all our services please visit www.bccs.org.uk

Craft & Gift Fair

Our third Craft and Gift Fair will be held at The Mill Hall Arts & Events Centre, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh SS6 7ED on **Sunday 5th November from 10.30-4pm**. There will be lots of stalls selling crafts and gifts so come along and pick up a few early Christmas presents and enjoy some refreshments while helping us to raise vital funds for our work.

If you are interested in having a stall at our event, please email Damian on ddillon@bccs.org.uk or contact him on 0791230800 for further information. Pitches are £30 after which all proceeds made on the day are the stallholders' own.

Do you have something which we could sell on our stall? Christmas cakes, chutneys, Christmas tree or house decorations, candles, floral centrepieces, or wreaths, bric-a-brac, unwanted gifts - any or all are very welcome!

Please contact Damian who will arrange to have your donations collected from you, or drop off to us at 133 High Street, Billericay, CM12 9AB.

We are very grateful to one of our long-standing supporters who has organised this for us and are looking forward to a very successful event; we hope to see you there!



CHRISTMAS CRAFT & GIFT FAIR

Our 2023 charity Christmas cards are now in stock!



All proceeds from the sale of our Christmas cards will help make a difference to the lives of the children and families we support. Please place your order as soon as possible to ensure you have your first choices.

PLEASE NOTE IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF OUR FLYER BY POST, PLEASE KEEP IN A SAFE PLACE AS THIS IS THE ONLY COPY WE WILL BE SENDING OUT THIS YEAR.

To order your cards, you can complete a copy of our Christmas card flyer and return to us at **BCCS, 133 High Street, Billericay CM12 9AB**. Cheques should be made payable to **'BCCS'** or **Brentwood Catholic Children's Society**.

Or you can use the new payment platform on our website to order and pay for your cards. Simply visit our webpage at www.bccs.org.uk/Christmas and click on to our Christmas Card tab to order.

Repositories: If you run a repository shop and would like further information about stocking our cards, please contact Libby lphillips@bccs.org.uk who will be happy to help.

We are celebrating our 40th year in 2024!

2024 is a big year for BCCS as we celebrate our 40th year. We will be marking the occasion in various ways throughout the year and look forward to sharing our plans with you in a special edition of our newsletter early in 2024.

We would love to hear from any supporters who may be celebrating their 40th birthday or anniversary during 2024. Please contact Damian if you are undertaking a special challenge during the year and are interested in supporting children's mental health and wellbeing as you do it: ddillon@bccs.org.uk

We will be holding a very special **PRIZE DRAW** during 2024 to celebrate our 40th year. Please look out for our draw tickets in our anniversary edition in January. Thank you for your continued support.

Scan me to donate to BCCS

