

# Birchfield Big Local News

Autumn 2016 / Number 9

**Bringing together the gifts, passions, aspirations, skills and energy of local people to make Birchfield an even better place to live and work**



## Bloom in Birchfield wins two awards

This is the third year that Birchfield has entered the *It's Your Neighbourhood* scheme organised by the Heart of England in Bloom (HEIB) on behalf of the Royal Horticultural Society. Neighbourhoods are assessed on community participation, gardening achievement and environmental responsibility. The assessors—Carol Miller and Jenny Brewer—visited the area in July and the results were announced at an event at Ludlow Assembly Hall on 20<sup>th</sup> September. The event was

attended by Barbara Petris, BRAG Chair, and Lurlyn Salmon and Michelle Clarke, both volunteers at Livingstone Road Community Allotment. To everyone's surprise and delight Birchfield received not just one, but two awards: a Level 4 – Thriving Award, and a Special Merit Award. The awards were presented by Les Goodman, HEIB President, and Tracey Medlyn from the Royal Horticultural Society.

Left: Barbara Petris & Lurlyn Salmon with HEIB President Les Goodman  
Right: Michelle Clarke & Barbara Petris with Tracey Medlyn from RHS

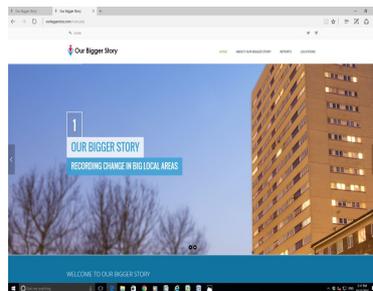
## Our Bigger Story Network Event

Birchfield Big Local is one of 15 Big Local areas chosen to take part in a multi-media evaluation project led by the Third Sector Research Centre, Birmingham University. Our Bigger Story is a long term evaluation of Big Local from 2015 to 2026. The evaluation uses film, podcasting and other media to record learning, progress and additional insights from the selected Big Local areas. Part of the evaluation includes the setting up of a website where progress in each of the Big Local areas is documented in the form of a timeline. The Birchfield Big Local timeline can be found at [http://ourbiggerstory.com/timeline.php?Area\\_ID=3](http://ourbiggerstory.com/timeline.php?Area_ID=3)

Bristol. The event was led by Angus McCabe from the Third Sector Research Centre and filmed by Paul Morgans.

It was an opportunity to reflect on what is working well and not so well, and share the ideas and experiences that have helped shape the Big Local plans in each area. One area was especially successful in getting the youth in the community involved in a play area. They were responsible for setting up and putting away the equipment that they had purchased with money from Big Local.

All 15 Big Local areas can be seen at the Our Bigger Story website—<http://ourbiggerstory.com>.



Birchfield Big Local hosted a networking event in July to bring together four Big Local areas involved in the Our Bigger Story evaluation. Representatives from Birchfield were joined by participants from Three Parishes Big Local in North Shropshire, Radstock and Westfield Big Local near Bath, and Lawrence Weston, in North West

## Environment Summit



Birchfield Big Local and Birchfield Residents Action Group (BRAG), together with the City Council, Midland Heart and others are organising an Environment Summit. The Summit is on 16th November and will look at some of the work that is already happening in the area to reduce waste and environmental problems such as fly-tipping. It will also explore how residents, local groups, the City Council, and housing providers can work better together in the future to ensure that Birchfield becomes greener and cleaner. Lisa Trickett, Cabinet Member for clean streets, recycling and environment will be attending. **For details and to book a place please contact Birchfield Big Local (See contact details below).**

## What are the priorities for Birchfield?

Like all 150 Big Locals across England, Birchfield is expected to review its community plan each year and revise it, taking into account achievements so far and any changes in priorities in the local area. This year the BBL partnership is aiming to produce a plan for the next two years. We would like your views on what you think should be the priorities.

We enclose with this newsletter a survey with a list of priorities, some of which are based on current activities, others are new ideas that came out of the recent partnership away-day. There is also space for you to add other ideas that you think we should consider. *Please do complete and return this to Birchfield Big Local in the freepost envelope provided or drop it through the letter box at 16 Grosvenor Road B20 3NP. You can also complete the survey online at: <http://birchfieldbiglocal.org/your-priorities>.* We look forward to receiving your ideas.

**Big Local**  
Birchfield

## How to contact Birchfield Big Local

Tel: 0121 448 5594 or Mobile: 07421 994752 (Andrew) - 07421 994753 (Suki)

Email (General enquiries): [info@birchfieldbiglocal.org](mailto:info@birchfieldbiglocal.org)

Community Development Worker: [andrew@birchfieldbiglocal.org](mailto:andrew@birchfieldbiglocal.org)

Volunteer Co-ordinator: [suki@birchfieldbiglocal.org](mailto:suki@birchfieldbiglocal.org)

Website: [www.birchfieldbiglocal.org](http://www.birchfieldbiglocal.org)

Twitter: @BirchfieldBigL

Address: Grosvenor Road Studios, 16 Grosvenor Road B20 3NP



**Dorrette Hanson—Editor**

I'm hoping you all had a great summer. A few exciting things happened; there was the meet up of 18 other partnership members from across the country and it was being filmed for Our Bigger Story. A lot of idea sharing took place on what worked and what didn't work so well (see feature on front page)

The secret garden summer activities were very well supported and the activities were enjoyed by all. May I take this opportunity to thank you all for making this event such a success. The regular clean up is going on but there is still a need for a few more people to get active and come along on a regular basis on a Monday morning to support Andrew and Birchfield Big Local.

The elders group was launched and the feedback and responses were all very good. Suggested activities included; Dominoes club, leading to arranging tournaments with other existing groups, trips out, board games, sharing cooking skills and addressing health concerns by having invited speakers come to deliver talks on a specific health matter. Maybe next year having a Macmillan coffee morning. I am especially encouraged to know that specific learning outcomes were identified. More than one person was interested to learn computer skills.

### Tackling Fuel Poverty in Birchfield

Many thanks to everyone who completed and returned the questionnaire about household fuel bills included with the last newsletter. This information has been used by Phil Beardmore, Calendula Consulting, to produce a report about what can be done to help households reduce energy costs and make homes warmer and more comfortable to live in.

The report highlighted that there are many people in Birchfield struggling to meet their fuel bills and heat their homes. Phil has made a number of recommendations in his report which will be used to make funding applications for a project targeting local residents most in need of support.



**Partnership Vice-Chair, Baljeet Singh Ghataora**

### Partnership News

Each year Birchfield Big Local partnership has an away-day to review the year and begin planning for the next. This year the away-day was on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October at the Senator Suite, Great Barr Hotel. Andrew Simons, Community Development Worker, gave a brief presentation about the key achievements in 2016 under each of the four themes.

Angus McCabe from Our Bigger Story joined us for the away-day and interviewed the partnership. This was a valuable interlude in which to reflect on what has been achieved so far and how we are progressing with the four Big Local outcomes:

- *Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them*
- *People will have increased skills and confidence, so that they continue to identify and respond to needs in the future*
- *The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises*
- *People will feel that their area is an even better place to live*

We then split into two groups to look at how we can engage more effectively with young people and what Big Local can do to help stimulate the local economy.



Finally the partnership discussed the idea of setting up a constituted organisation which would enable Birchfield Big Local to buy or lease its own community facilities; employ staff; and raise additional funds to support activities in the local area. Many Big Locals are now looking at this issue and it was agreed to hold a workshop to consider the pros and cons to constituting and what's involved.

## Volunteer Opportunities at Birchfield Big Local



**Why Volunteer? Gain experience and skills, get references, training, give something back to your local community, work as part of a team, build your confidence and help others!**

### Reception Volunteers

Can you spare 2 to 3 hours between Monday and Wednesday to be at reception and let people into the building for classes and sessions that we run for the community? The role would suit people who like speaking with different people and are able to communicate effectively. The building is used to run a variety of events and services such as English and IT Classes, Seniors Group, Book Club etc. We need people who are reliable and able to commit regularly and you can gain references and experience. Volunteers are required Monday to Wednesday between 9.30 to 2.30pm.

### Book Club Volunteers

We need people to help facilitate our two Book Clubs. The role involves setting up tea/ coffee and refreshments for the group as well as keeping a record of those attending. The role would suit someone who is interested in reading as it involves helping to initiate and sustain discussion throughout the session. It would also involve making sure that everyone was included in the discussion and made to feel comfortable and welcome as part of the group. Volunteers needed on a Monday at 12.45pm to 3pm.

### Stepping Forward Support Volunteers

We need volunteers to help run the Stepping Forward Project on Tuesday 12pm to 3pm. The session is aimed at people looking for employment, training, education and enterprise opportunities. We have put together six sessions that can support people to find suitable opportunities and become focussed on their future. Volunteers will provide one to one support for each person throughout the six sessions and help them to work through the sessions to gain a CV and certificate upon completion. Volunteers would gain hands on experience and knowledge of how to support people from different community backgrounds. You should enjoy challenges and be organised, proactive, using your own initiative when required.

### Senior Citizen Club Volunteers

We run a Senior Citizen Club every Wednesday 12.30pm to 2.30pm here at Birchfield Big Local. We need friendly enthusiastic volunteers to help run the sessions and engage with the senior citizens that attend. You can be any age, any background – just enjoy socialising with senior citizens and be patient and caring. We start with a light lunch and then play games such as Dominoes, Bridge, cards etc. If you have any ideas and skills that you can share with us that's great, you will be working as part of a team with other volunteers. This is a great opportunity to build experience, skills and knowledge of senior citizens' needs.

### Website success

The Birchfield Big Local website and Facebook page continue to attract interest from near and far. We had over 50,000 visits to the website in the current year; 62 Facebook friends; and 468 followers on Twitter.

The website statistics have helped to inform the annual review and update of the website. Please like the Facebook page and let us know



what you think of the changes we have made to the website.

## Secret Garden Project

When we first visited the Secret Garden in November 2014, this once well used community garden was overgrown with decaying raised beds and fly-tipping. Work to clear the site began in summer 2015 and later that year Birchfield Big Local successfully teamed up with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) to apply for Pocket Parks funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

With support from the TCV we have run regular volunteer work days, every Monday starting February 2016. The old raised beds have been replaced with new ones; a play shed has been installed for storing play equipment; compost bins have been built, and repairs carried out to boundary fencing to improve security. To date 25 volunteer sessions have been held.

Groundwork West Midlands offered to support play sessions at the garden and beginning with four days in the Easter holidays Birmingham Play Care Network (BPCN) were employed to run a total of 16 sessions. Play sessions were also held every fortnight during the summer term and on four consecutive days in the summer holidays. BPCN also ran 8 play training workshops, attended by ten local residents who were also able to complete a Paediatric First Aid course. Groundwork WM have contributed £9,596 towards the secret garden through Active Neighbourhoods which includes the purchase of play equipment for the play shed.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the play sessions or with the development and maintenance of the garden, please contact us.



*Before and after—the garden in 2014 and this summer*



## Small Grants Scheme

This year the Birchfield Big Local partnership decided to introduce a small grants scheme to encourage individuals or groups within the area to set up projects that would benefit local residents and address some of the priorities. There have been two rounds, with a third and final round planned towards the end of the year. Grants of up to £2,000 are available and five projects have received funding so far.

- Shabana Brou – a project to run health and fitness sessions for adults and children at local venues
- Masjid-e-Nimra Mosque and Community Centre – an environmental project to educate young people about litter and take practical action
- School's Out (Dorothy Dixon) – a holiday play scheme and coach trips
- Schoolplus+ (Shaida Nargis) – after school Maths and English classes for children at Key Stages 1 and 2
- Eco Gardening Services (Jimoh Folarin & Faith Pearson) – a project to recycle garden waste and up-cycle unwanted garden items such as plants, plant pots etc.



*Clockwise: Jimoh Folarin & Faith Pearson at Crick Lane, Yunus Memi at Masjid-e-Nimra & Community Centre, Dorothy Dixon at Holy Trinity CE Academy.*

Information about the projects can be found on the Birchfield Big Local website. This includes short videos filmed by Lee Martin from Steamroom media and BBL volunteer Seph Purdie.

For further information about the small grants scheme please contact [andrew@birchfieldbiglocal.org](mailto:andrew@birchfieldbiglocal.org) or ring the office on 0121 448 5594 (Mobile: 07421 994752). Applicants are asked to complete a straightforward application form and are then invited to give a short presentation to the small grants panel. We particularly welcome applications for projects that will benefit young people and seniors in the Birchfield Big Local area.

## Poetry Competition at Birchfield Library

During the summer holidays Birchfield Big Local organised a poetry competition at the local library. Here are three of the poems.

### Where I Live

I live in Handsworth.  
Is it deep inside Earth,  
I love my house loads and loads,  
When I'm bored at home I play PS4,  
When my mum tells me to stop I want  
to play more,  
But let's stop this chatter of my house,  
Let's talk about outdoors!  
It is not very busy,  
It's not a main road  
Let me tell you some information that I  
have been told.  
Handsworth is a safe place,  
But people rush around a lot and act  
like their having a race  
This is where I live.

Zohaib Khan

### Summer Holiday

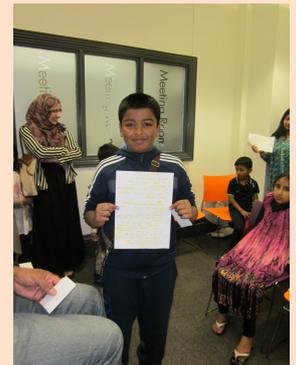
The sun shines brighter than a star,  
People drive around in their fancy cars.  
I go to beach on August 12th because  
that's my birthday,  
Me and my friends just want to play.  
Everybody loves having water fight,  
and flying their kites.  
Everybody has ice-cream, and rides  
that make them scream.  
All the storms run away, and the sum-  
mer sun says "Hey".

Eesaa Hussain

### Summer Holiday

Today I am in my holiday bed,  
Relaxing and feeling comfortable.  
The sea is sky blue, and the sun is  
shining among me.  
The sand is scattered every-where with  
colourful shells.

Ammara





# Events Calendar

If you are planning an event in the Birchfield area and would like to publicise it in the Events Calendar please contact us on 0121 448 5594 or email: [info@birchfieldbiglocal.org](mailto:info@birchfieldbiglocal.org). The newsletter is produced four times a year. Events can also be submitted at any time to the Events page on the Birchfield Big Local website: [www.birchfieldbiglocal.org](http://www.birchfieldbiglocal.org).

- MONDAY**
- **Practical volunteer session** (10am—1pm) at the secret garden behind Grosvenor Avenue, Westminster Road and Hutton Road. Please come and help us develop and maintain this community garden and play area. Meet 10am at the Grosvenor Avenue entrance—off Grosvenor Road. The sessions are supported by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). For further details please contact Andrew on 0121 448 5594 (Mobile: 07421 994752) or email: [andrew@birchfieldbiglocal.org](mailto:andrew@birchfieldbiglocal.org)
  - **Basic IT Class**—Every Monday 10am—12noon. Places available. Call Suki on 07421 994753.
  - **Creative Community Clubs**—Every Monday 1—3pm. Please see article below for further details.
  - **'Our Fantastic Journey' by Birchfield Big Local Writers Club. A one off performance on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1pm to 2.30pm.** Free entertaining afternoon of storytelling for all local people.
- TUESDAY**
- **English Conversation Class**—Every Tuesday 10am—12noon.
  - **Stepping Forward**—Every Tuesday 12noon—3pm. We have a team of friendly and supportive volunteers who can support you and help you develop your skills, knowledge and confidence. To book a place please call Suki on 07421 994753.
- WEDNESDAY**
- **English Conversation Class**—Every Wednesday 10am—12noon.
  - **Basic IT Class**—Every Wednesday 10am—12noon.
  - **Senior Citizens Club**—Every Wednesday 12.30—2.30pm.
  - **BRAG Community Allotment Project**—Meets every Wednesday morning 10—12noon at Livingstone Community Allotment, off Livingstone Road, Birchfield.
- THURSDAY**
- **Women's Group**—Meets every month 12—2.30pm. Next meeting: Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Lunch and information session for local women. For more details call Suki on 07421 994753.
  - **Hope Community Acupuncture Clinic**—A low cost, multi-bed clinic set up with the aim of supporting local residents with chronic illness. Every Thursday at the United Reformed Church, 13 Wilton Road B20 3RX. Contact Dr Rhonda Lee on 07810 024687
- SATURDAY**
- **Creative sessions indoors and outdoors for children age 4—12years.** Inclusive creative sessions aimed at children with disabilities or those interested in art. Opportunities for youth volunteering. Saturday 1—3pm, 12th and 19th November and 18th December. Venue: St Peter's Nursery, 34 St Peter's Road B20 3RR. Contact Carol Reid, ATHAC CIC on 07977 880132.

All classes and activities will take place at Grosvenor Road Studios, 16 Grosvenor Road B20 3NP unless otherwise stated. For further details about these events please contact Suki Sohi on 0121 448 5594 (Mobile: 07421 994753) or email: [suki@birchfieldbiglocal.org](mailto:suki@birchfieldbiglocal.org)

## Creative Community Clubs

### Interested in Reading or Writing or Poetry?

Then come along and join us on Mondays at 1pm and be part of our friendly clubs for local people who want to explore their creative side and meet other people in a relaxed atmosphere. See clubs and dates below.

We have a **Book Club with 'Book of the month'** each month and this is for anyone interested in reading a selected book and sharing their views with others. Next dates: Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016 to discuss 'Moby Dick', Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016 to discuss 'The Catcher in the Rye', Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017 to discuss 'Pride and Prejudice', Monday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2017 to discuss 'Of Mice and Men'.

We have a **Writers Club** once a month to talk about writing and share information and ideas with other writers. Whether you're a complete beginner or a published author you are welcome to come along and explore your writing alongside others. Next dates: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017, Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017, Monday March 13<sup>th</sup> 2017.

We have a **Poetry Club** once a month for people who are interested in poetry and want to explore their creative side. Again if you are a complete beginner or have a catalogue of poems you are welcome to come along and explore your poetry alongside others. Next dates: Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017, Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017, Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

We have an **Alternative Book Club** once a month for people to speak about books they have borrowed from our small collection or your own collection/ library. You can review the book and share this with other people who may be inspired to read it. Next dates: Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016, Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2016, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

All Clubs are on Monday 1pm at 16 Grosvenor Road, Birmingham, B20 3NP, tea, coffee and biscuits and warm welcome provided. For more information call Suki on 0121 448 5594, text 07421 994753 or email: [suki@birchfieldbiglocal.org](mailto:suki@birchfieldbiglocal.org)

## Birchfield Big Local Christmas Events

### Christmas Carol Choir Concert

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 11am to 1.30pm at 16 Grosvenor Road, Birchfield, B20 3NP**

You are invited to attend our Christmas concert for the local community where people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds can come together to celebrate Christmas. The concert will be held in a lovely relaxed and friendly atmosphere where everyone is welcome to come along. Don't worry if you can't sing or don't know the words we will have karaoke style lyrics available or you can watch performances from other local choirs. Light lunch and refreshments will be provided, please arrive on time as the concert will start 11am promptly. Call Suki on 07421 994753 to book your place or for more information.

### Senior Citizens Christmas Lunch

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2016 12pm to 3pm at Sons of Rest Building, Handsworth Park (TBC)**

We would like to invite local Senior Citizens to our annual Christmas lunch which will be organised by a team of volunteers from Birchfield Big Local. If you know any local seniors from the Birchfield Big Local area who you would like to attend the lunch please let us know. There will be entertainment, prizes, music and games, the event is free but places are limited so please book to confirm your place. We may be able to provide transport for people who need it and are isolated. The lunch will be a two course traditional Christmas meal with Halal and vegetarian options. Call Suki on 07421 994753 to book your place or for more information.

