

May 2013



Welcome

from Mike Brown

Welcome to this year's edition of *Community matters* – the annual roundup of BLM's corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. It has been another busy and exciting year of CSR for BLM and it is testament to the dedication of everyone reading this edition that we have achieved so much in just 12 months.

One thing that has impressed me during my first year as BLM's national senior partner is the enthusiasm and eagerness shown by BLM staff towards getting involved in our CSR activities – be that taking part in a physical challenge, enjoying some friendly inter-office rivalry during 'Store Wars Returns', growing a 'mo' or simply dressing up or down for a good cause.

At BLM we realise that CSR isn't just about our charitable work and fundraising. It's also about our 'green' credentials and our commitment to recycling and reducing waste wherever possible in each of our offices. CSR is important to BLM and we are continually looking for opportunities to build on our broad range of projects.

This year has been our third year supporting the charity Barnardo's and as a firm, we have continued to learn more about the important and vital work it does to help children across the UK. Barnardo's has been extremely grateful for BLM's support over the last three years, which has allowed them to help children most in need. See the article authored by our Barnardo's contact Trina Gable on page 2 for more details.

The process to select BLM's firmwide charity for the next three years is well underway and I look forward to joining you all in continuing to support worthy causes.

Finally, I would like to personally thank the BLM CSR representatives from each of our offices who, under the leadership of Chris Newton, have worked tirelessly to coordinate our CSR programme. Your commitment and enthusiasm to helping make a difference in our community proves that BLM is much more than just a law firm.

Mike Brown
National senior partner, BLM

Contents

p1	Welcome
p2	Barnardo's education and training
p5	Birmingham CSR
p5	Bristol and Cardiff CSR
p6	Leeds CSR
p6	Liverpool CSR
p7	London CSR
p8	Manchester CSR
p9	Southampton CSR
p9	All offices CSR
p10	Barnado's Store Wars
p10	Comic Relief
p11	Interview with Akbar Hussain
p12	Forthcoming events

Believe in children



Barnardo's

Barnardo's education and training: Building brighter futures with BLM

BLM first launched its charity partnership with Barnardo's in January 2011 across all of their offices in the UK. Since then they have raised over £70,000 which is truly fabulous and testament to the hard work and support of all their employees. Originally a two year partnership, they have recently extended their involvement until the end of 2013 and have some exciting plans to see us through this final year.

Previous fundraising activities at BLM have included a national quiz where each office invited both staff and clients to a quiz and drinks evening; all on the same night in eight locations! This was a great success and they raised over £24,800 for Barnardo's. There is also the sponsored walk, in which everyone has the opportunity to take part. Again this is a very successful activity contributing over £8,000 in 2012.

Then along came the Store Wars Challenge in which BLM took part during 2011 and again in 2012. This award-winning activity invites teams to take over a Barnardo's store for a day and compete against each other to see who can make the most money for the charity. In 2011 this was won by the London office and in 2012 Manchester took away their crown. Over the last two years this challenge has added a further £31,300 to the Barnardo's total.

So what is in store for 2013? Well the vote is for another sponsored walk to take place in the autumn and, brand new for this year; a Wii challenge! This new idea aims to engage all offices, employees and clients with the emphasis on networking and of course fun, as well as continuing to raise those vital funds for Barnardo's. This is still in the planning stage but current plans suggest this could be coming to a BLM office near you sometime in early summer.

But not everything is about fundraising. Barnardo's also needs to raise awareness of the work they do with over 200,000 children, young people and their families each

Trina Gable, corporate relationship manager at Barnardo's tells us about the impact our fundraising efforts have had on the charity.

year. To help with this, BLM has engaged with some of their local Barnardo's projects to meet key workers who support the children, and to learn first hand about the issues and traumatic cases Barnardo's deals with every day.

So how has BLM actually helped so far?

Youth unemployment remains one of the biggest social issues of today, with millions of young people struggling to get into employment or to continue education or training. The highest rates of youth unemployment are also in some of the most deprived areas in the country making life even tougher for children growing up in these communities where they already face significant challenges.

Did you know...?

There are 1,027,000 16-24 year olds not in education employment or training (NEET) in England today.

In London alone there are 148,000 'NEET' young people.

Barnardo's supports over 4,000 children through over 40 alternative engagement and training services across the UK. This helps them to achieve industry-recognised qualifications, significantly improve their numeracy and literacy and to gain important life skills such as CV writing, communication skills and time management, whilst helping them to overcome personal hurdles. We believe in a holistic approach to helping young people fulfil their potential. We aim to provide a safe environment and to build trust with them so that they are in a position to begin to believe in their own abilities, increase their skills, improve confidence and raise their aspirations, and ultimately break out of the cycle of poverty and unemployment prevalent in their communities.



I had been excluded from mainstream school and this was my last chance – the vocational skills course helped me to realise that I could succeed.

Mark, former student at a Barnardo's training service

The children at our services have experienced a huge amount of disruption and problems in their lives, from parental drug and alcohol misuse to living with a disability or being excluded from mainstream education. But with the right support these young people can begin to realise and truly believe that their past experiences do not define who they can be in the future.

Young people turning their lives around in London

The Hub in East London is a vocational training centre which focuses on teaching a practical trade to young people. Here, tutors help young people to re-engage with learning through hands-on construction courses, whilst providing them with the practical skills and qualifications necessary to succeed in the world of work.

With the help of our brilliant specialist tutors, out of the young people that have just completed the year, **91.3% have achieved either a full or part construction qualification and 87% have progressed on to further education or training**, and we could not be more proud.



In 2012, The Hub worked with 139 young people at risk of becoming NEET, helping them to re-engage with learning and to overcome barriers they were facing to succeed.

What BLM's donations have achieved

£1,000 provides the materials required for young people to complete the carpentry and painting and decorating course at one of our services.

£2,000 contributes to qualifications for four trainees in 'soft skills' such as numeracy, literacy and IT that are vital for moving forward in today's difficult labour market.

£50,000 covered the cost for approximately **25** young people to complete a year's training at a specialist education and training service like The Hub, helping them to get the support they need to complete further training or give them that boost to get directly into employment so that they can provide for their future.

Going forward with Barnardo's – a different campaign

I could never have done any of this before, but they believe you can do it which helps you to believe in yourself... If I hadn't come to Barnardo's I wouldn't be where I am now. I wouldn't have any qualifications and I would still be fighting and getting nowhere.

Robert, age 17

Cut them free

Barnardo's are now in our third year of campaigning for greater protection and prevention against the sexual exploitation of children in the UK.

At the end of last year nearly 1,800 supporters took action to get their Police and Crime Commissioners to pledge, if elected, to support our campaign. Out of 41 newly elected commissioners, 23 are committed to tackling child sexual exploitation so far. A further 13,000 campaigners supported our work which saw 107 councils in England sign up to do everything they can to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Our 23 services have supported children as young as ten, and the number of sexually exploited children in the UK known to Barnardo's has risen by 22% last year to 1,452, and by 37% during the past three years.

More traumatised, sexually exploited children are coming to us than ever before. These children often have no-one to turn to, and nowhere else to go and that is where Barnardo's steps in. We reach out, and provide a safe and supportive environment, emergency supplies and food, psychological support and sheltered accommodation when required – helping children out of exploitation, and to transform their lives.

There is still so much more to be done. There is an urgent need to expand our services to reach more children in need. There are too many vulnerable children on waiting lists to

receive support as victims of this awful crime, as new figures reveal that more than 200 children who have experienced this abuse are waiting to access specialist care. Help us to reach these children and give them the support they desperately need.

We urgently need to raise **£1.5 million** to help us to expand our services for children affected by sexual exploitation, to help them escape their abusers and recover from their terrible ordeals.

Girls sold by their family into a paedophile ring

Unfortunately the above title is not taken from a television programme, film or book; it was the harsh reality which was conveyed to Julia Cliff, BLM Leeds associate, when she visited her third Barnardo's project to see where and who the fundraising will benefit.

Julia tells us more:

6 Barnardo's *Turnaround Project* in Bradford addresses the very real but rarely talked about or acknowledged issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE). It is project run in association with Bradford MDC, Bradford Children's Fund and Bradford & Airedale Teaching PCT. Despite some limited funding from the local government, the project is ultimately funded by charity through Barnardo's.

CSE has been in the media with what appears to be isolated occurrences (in connection with Baby P and more recently in connection with the Rochdale paedophile ring). *Turnaround* however informed me that CSE is very much a national issue, regardless of location or race of the young girls (and sometimes but more rarely boys) or adults involved.

CSE at one end of the spectrum could be a young girl (white or Asian) being groomed on the internet on a social networking site by a paedophile and then being 'saved' by a family member/friend before it goes further.

I was informed of the harsh reality of what happens if the grooming is successful. It can lead to girls of between 13-15 years old being sold or attached to a paedophile ring with child prostitution, violence, drug and alcohol abuse being the norm. Such rings can be connected through a child's family, associates or the internet, often leading to generations of girls from one family being subject to CSE.

Turnaround does very difficult, challenging but much needed work to raise social awareness at a regional and national level to educate young people and adults about CSE, both what it is and how it can be prevented.

Girls of between 5-18 years can be referred to the project with their consent, through a parent, carer or government agency, if they are thought to be at risk of going missing or of being or exposed to sexual

For more information about the appeal and to donate please go to www.barnardos.org.uk/UKAppeal

What makes the work that we do so important is the fact that we are on the ground in your local communities reaching the children and young people who really need this support. Where there is a need we aim to be there to address it, but we can only continue to do this with the committed supporters at our side. So **thank you** for your support, time and commitment to improving the lives of children in your communities.

exploitation. The girls will then receive individual professional support, guidance and advice through the project until they can return to society, only if and when the project are satisfied that they are no longer at risk. A befriending scheme of trained volunteers is also run to ensure that the young girls have persons they can turn to and trust. Despite the difficult, distressing and sensitive nature of the project, the key workers talk with great compassion and positivity about the girls they have helped and their success stories.

Given I visit Bradford a lot through work for Bradford MDC, it was extremely difficult to comprehend that this was occurring on our doorstep.

BLM is of course aware, more than most firms, of abuse cases through various clients which we represent nationally.

Turnaround however emphasised the need for greater social awareness, exposure and education throughout all society for all ages to CSE and for it to be an issue to openly discuss and not to be regarded as a social taboo. Unfortunately it is very clear from my visit, that this is not an issue which will go away, but is on the increase according to Barnardo's.

There are over 20 other Barnardo's projects nationally which specialise in CSE, which have been created in a specific region in reaction to the need to help the young girls in the area. Laura Parton, Joanna Dalton, Rachael Ellis, Lesley Payne, Erin Eckhoff and Chris Newton from BLM London recently visited another Barnardo's CSE project in North London. They spoke to Barnardo's staff about how they identify and reach out to young people at risk in the community. They discussed the logistics of engaging with young people and how they provide help, advice and support which includes one-to-one counselling, group-work sessions and drop-in support.

Without the amazing work of *Turnaround* and other national projects, it is clear many vulnerable young girls could fall under the radar and be victims to CSE.

Thank you for reading the above, I appreciate it is difficult to comprehend it is happening but if you have had a bad day in the office, the above will be a leveller and raise awareness of what is out there. 

Barnardo's is currently running a 'Cut Them Free Campaign'. If you would like to find out more, please visit www.barnardos.org.uk

Birmingham

BLM Birmingham walks for St Basils

18 employees took part in the annual St Basils Charity Walk Challenge around Malvern Hills on 9 June 2012, electing to walk either the full 26 miles, or a shorter 13 mile route. The team raised £1,258 for this amazing charity which helps young homeless people to find accommodation.

'I fought the law ...'

Partner Simon Hammond, along with other members of the legal fraternity in Birmingham and their clients, took part in the No5 Chambers' Ralph Lewis QC Memorial Cup. This was an exciting white collar boxing event which was held at the Aston Villa Banqueting Centre on Friday 6 July 2012 to raise funds for Marie Curie Cancer Care's Big Build appeal.

The black-tie event consisted of eight bouts between barristers, solicitors and clients. Simon fought superbly against a skilful opponent and went on to win his bout, which didn't at all surprise the two tables of BLM staff who were there to cheer him on. A fantastic night was had by all involved. Well done Simon!

Quiz whizzes

Matthew Shotton, William Clay, Amy Llewellyn, Hannah Parry, Hannah Jennings and Lucy Tolond joined in the fun at the Colmore Business District Charity Quiz Night in March, raising money for the Children's Liver Disease Foundation. The event brought together organisations from across Birmingham and raised over £2,000 for the cause.

Bristol and Cardiff

BLM Bristol and Cardiff's fundraising efforts over the last year have helped a number of worthy charities and organisations. Support and donations were given to the Noah's Ark Appeal, Bristol Children's hospital, Children in Need, Jeans for Genes Day as well as Help for Heroes.

Helping our heroes

BLM Cardiff trainee solicitor Sarah Price took part in a gruelling challenge in September 2012 to raise an outstanding £3,000 for Help for Heroes.

Sarah completed the Lares trek in Peru, spending 9-12 hours every day trekking through the mountains to climb

4,600m. Talking about the experience, she said: Collectively the team raised more than £50,000!



It was a very emotional journey as the team completed the trek in memory of lost friends and family. We also had three injured soldiers walking with us, one of which was a leg amputee. They were truly inspirational.



Eggs galore!

A number of staff from both offices donated their Easter eggs last year. The Cardiff office donated its eggs to the Noah's Ark Appeal and raised £42 for the charity and the Bristol team took its eggs to the Bristol Children's Hospital and gave them out on the wards.

All for a good cause

The Christmas spirit was alive and well last year with staff taking part in a variety of festive activities to raise money for Barnardo's. Staff wore their merry best for a Christmas fun day where everyone enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine. They held a Christmas spot the snow ball competition, and some members of staff donated money rather than buy their colleagues Christmas cards. The festivities helped to raise more than £200.



Leeds

Volunteering to help out Martin House Children's Hospice
 Four staff volunteered at the annual Jane Tomlinson Run For All Leeds 10K on Sunday 8 July 2012. Waseem Khadri, Hannah Beddis, Dan Egan, Pamela Dub and Pam's son Philip helped as marshals on the day to guide runners through the course.



Partner Henry Kirkup also helped spread Christmas cheer by volunteering at the 'Santas on the Run' event through Stockeld Park Enchanted Woods on Sunday 2 December.

Well done to all our volunteers!

A helping hand

Solicitor Roxanne Udale has been working as a mentor with students from the Notre Dame Career Academy in Law. The Academy was set up in 2009 to help bridge the gap between the legal and academic environments where students benefit from a one-to-one relationship with their solicitor mentor. Roy Woollard and Hannah Beddis also share a place on the Academy's board.

Liverpool

Step up for Sport Relief

BLM staff have been stepping up to the mark to raise money for Sport Relief, sponsored by Sainsbury's, by climbing the seven floors of the Liverpool office, all in aid of charity.

On 23 March 2012 a team of 32 willing volunteers took it in turns to climb the stairs on all seven floors of the office building, as many times as they could in 30 minutes, in a relay. They kept the baton going up and down from 9am-5pm.

The team did a great job and raised over £300 for Sport Relief, collectively climbing a total height of over 13,000 metres which is the equivalent of climbing Mera Peak Mountain in the Himalayas up and down again! Well done to everyone that took part.



Liverpool University Law Clinic still busy and going strong!
Solicitors from BLM Liverpool continue to volunteer at the Liverpool University Law Clinic.

The clinic offers free legal advice to students, staff and members of the public. Our solicitors attend at the clinic on a rota with other Liverpool firms and assist the law students in interviewing new clients. They then supervise the students when providing the advice. A range of problems come through the law clinic doors every week and our solicitors have helped many people with a range of issues including setting up a new business, settling family, neighbour or employer disputes as well as housing queries and contract disputes.

The law clinic is proving very popular with Liverpool University law students now able to choose to participate in the clinic as one of their law course modules.

It has proven popular with BLM staff as they find it an enjoyable experience by giving something back to the community, as well as giving law students an insight into what it is like to advise clients.

London

Inspire! the NEET people of London

BLM teamed up with Inspire! last year to participate in the City of London NEETS programme. Under the programme, a group of 12 NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people visited the office on two separate occasions during November and December.

The young people attended an 'employability skills day', where they learned interview techniques and appropriate workplace behaviour and an 'opening doors visit', to explore different job roles within the firm. Two of the young people undertook a week of work experience, which included time in court and in our occupational disease and costs teams. One commented:

“ I have learned about the experiences and qualifications needed to further my chosen career. ”

Positive feedback shows just how much students gain from the programme, on the 'employability skills day':

- 100% stated that they had found the day enjoyable
- 100% agreed that the day made them more aware of how to apply for a job
- 100% agreed that the day made them think more about how to use their skills to successfully apply for a job
- Before the day 58% of the young people would have considered working in a City company and after the day 92% agreed that they would now consider working in a City company

A huge thanks to everyone involved in the highly successful day. The next event is due to take place in the summer of 2013.



Continuing to support City Gateway

BLM welcomed 11 students from the City Gateway apprenticeship scheme in May 2012 to attend a speed interview workshop and insight tour around the London office.

The students were initially treated to a 'bad interview' sketch before being led through to our speed interviewing room for a grilling by 11 BLM volunteers. Each student had five 'speed interviews' for the same job with the same questions but were given feedback on each occasion, with the aim of improving performance as the interviews progressed. The day proved very popular with both students and volunteers. The day finished with an 'insight tour' which showed first-hand the various jobs at BLM and how the firm is made up of much more than just lawyers!

BLM Walk for London Legal 2012

In May 2012, 15 employees joined 6,000 walkers to raise over £525,000 for law centres and legal advice agencies in London and the South East. The participants walked 10km around some of London's legal landmarks. BLM is putting together another team for the next London Legal Walk on 20 May 2013, in support of the London Legal Support Trust, which provides such agencies with grant funding as well as other forms of support.

Royal Courts of Justice Citizens Advice Bureau

Solicitors and trainees provide pro bono legal advice once a fortnight as part of this scheme. There is a rota so volunteers usually attend a three hour session once every two months.

The London office has been involved in a number of other events including Dragon's Den at a local primary school, winners of the 12 King's Bench Walk Charity Quiz and a sponsored cycle ride for COCO to raise money for children's projects in Africa.

Manchester

Half marathon hero

Huge congratulations to Amy Garnett, paralegal in BLM Manchester, and her husband Andy for completing the Liverpool Half Marathon on Sunday 17 March 2013.

Amy and Andy braved rain and snow during their training for the 21km event, suffering their fair share of

sore muscles, blisters and twisted ankles along the way. But it was all worth it in the end as they finished the race in 2 hours 45 minutes and an astounding 1 hour 50 minutes respectively.

The pair helped raise much needed funds for the firm's charity Barnardo's. Ian Kendall, Corporate Relationship Executive at Barnardo's was quick to offer his congratulations:

You should be proud of yourselves and well done on completing your challenge. It was all worth it because Barnardo's relies on people like you and Andy, challenging themselves so that we can continue to support vulnerable children, young people and their families. You deserve a well-earned rest.

Raising money for Children in Need

In November 2012, the team in Manchester picked up wooden spoons and mixing bowls to bake a fantastic assortment of cakes and treats, all in the name of fundraising. The team raised over £620 for Children in Need, which will go towards helping children throughout the UK.



Recycling efforts



As part of the firm's ongoing commitment to reduce the amount of waste going into landfill and recycle at least 99% of all waste produced by the office, BLM has enlisted the help of a new waste management company to replace bins around the Manchester office to make it easier for everyone to recycle their waste.

Three Peaks Challenge

A team from BLM took on the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge on 23 June 2012. Not for the faint hearted, the challenge involved walking 24 miles in under 12 hours with the small matter of three rather large peaks thrown in for good measure.

The team took on the challenge to raise money for the Anthony Nolan Trust, which assists people who have blood cancers with bone marrow/stem cell transplants.

Ooh la la!

BLM Manchester paralegal Ben Howson successfully took on the Paris Marathon on 15 April 2013. Ben congregated with the other 37,000 runners on the famous Parisian street les Champs-Élysées to prepare for the 42km that lay ahead of him and completed the marathon in a very respectable time. Huge congratulations to Ben, who raised over £550 for the Alzheimer's Society.

Zippering along for charity

In October 2012 three brave souls from BLM took part in a hair-raising zip slide across Manchester Ship Canal. Joseph Duffy, Lauren Matthews and Julia Dyke launched themselves from the Air Shard at the Imperial War Museum from a height of 30 metres and zipped 250 metres over the canal landing in front of the Lowry Theatre.

The team participated in this event on behalf of RECLAIM, a fantastic leadership and mentoring charity based in Manchester. RECLAIM provides young people from the region's most disadvantaged communities with opportunities to engage directly with the decision makers who influence their lives by facilitating dialogue with the police, council, politicians and media. RECLAIM also provides young people with positive leadership opportunities, helping to raise self-esteem and make a difference in their local area.

Collectively they raised over £820!

Southampton

BLM Southampton goes pink

26 October 2012 was Wear it Pink Day at BLM Southampton and with a sterling effort from the whole office, a massive £124 was raised in aid of Breast Cancer Awareness. Not only did staff wear pink for the day, they also took part in other fundraising efforts such as biscuit baking. Well done to everyone that helped to raise the money.

Christmas jumper day

Staff donned their favourite Christmas jumpers in December to raise money to buy a scanner for its local hospital's baby unit.

650 miles in six days!

BLM Southampton senior partner Andrew Hibbert and London senior partner Garry Allison have set himself their biggest challenge yet ... In July this year they will be cycling from Melbourne to Sydney in just six days – that's a whopping 650 miles!

Andrew and Gary will be raising money for Walking with the Wounded, a UK-based charity which funds both the re-training and re-education of wounded servicemen and women with the aim of helping them find long term employment after they have left the armed forces. Andrew and Gary will be joined by members of the British Lions rugby team. Good luck!

11 marathons and counting ...

One marathon would be quite enough for most but not for BLM associate Chris Gambbs – he is training for his 11th marathon! Chris will soon take on the South Downs Marathon. Any money he raises will go towards the teams fund for Walking with the Wounded.

All offices



'Movember' time!

Movember was once again well supported by the men of BLM, with the Birmingham, Liverpool,

Manchester and Southampton offices taking part in 2012, to raise money for mens' health - particularly prostate and testicular cancer.

Over the month we saw some questionable styles of moustaches, but it was all for a good cause and collectively the teams raised over £2,000 for charity.

Christmas charities 2012

Once again, instead of sending Christmas cards, BLM and CXP made donations to a number of charities chosen by staff at each of our offices.

BLM Birmingham chose three charities - Help for Heroes, Cancer Research and Acorns Children's Hospice.

BLM Cardiff and Bristol chose two charities - St Peters Hospice, Bristol and Sense.

BLM Dublin - Jack and Jill Children's Foundation Ireland

BLM Leeds - Martin House Children's Hospice

BLM Liverpool chose two charities - Zoë's Place Baby Hospice and Cancer Research.

BLM London - Little Havens Children's Hospice

BLM Manchester chose two charities - The Royal Manchester Children's Hospital and Macmillan Cancer Support

BLM Southampton - Southampton General Hospital Special Baby Care Unit

Believe in children

Barnardo's

BLM Tough Mudders!
Billed as 'probably the toughest event on the planet', Tough Mudder events are hardcore 12 mile

obstacle courses designed by British Special Forces to test your all around strength, stamina, mental grit, and camaraderie.

Five brave BLM employees took on the challenge in 2012 to face the 30 obstacles including mud, fire, ice-water, 10,000 volts of electricity, 12 foot walls and underground mud tunnels – to name a few!

They tackled the course in aid of the firm's charity, Barnardo's and their hard work and dedication helped to raise £600. Well done to the team!

Walking through the Wye for Barnardo's

80 BLM walkers joined the national charity walk in the Wye Valley in October 2012, to raise money for Barnardo's. Over the weekend of 13-14 October 2012, the keen walkers, assisted by four members of the local ramblers association, enjoyed a fantastic walk and scenery, raising over £8,000.



BLM raises £19,000 for Barnardo's at Store Wars Returns event

BLM raised £19,000 in June by joining forces with the team at Barnardo's, to take part in *Store Wars Returns*.

Store Wars is a unique challenge which involved seven of the firm's offices taking over a Barnardo's store for the day. The offices battled it out to raise the most amount of money.

Birmingham - The store was transformed into a jubilee celebration theme, with a 'make a tiara/crown' workshop, guess the name of the bear competition, a raffle with some fabulous prizes, as well as lots of great items to purchase on the day.

Bristol and Cardiff - The Cardiff store became a magical, fairytale wonderland with fun children's games, face painting and lots of great items for sale on the day.

Leeds - Celebrity alert! – With some help from Ronnie the Rhino of Leeds Rhinos fame, the Leeds store became a British summer seaside. Shoppers were treated to face painting, lots of great bargains and a raffle on the day.

Liverpool - Celebrity alert! - The store was transformed into a best of British themed celebration, full of children's games, face painting and competitions. Chris Johnson-White, star of *Desperate Scousewives* and member of *The White Haus Salon* lent his support on the day and boutique children's store 'JAK' kindly donated children's clothes that were sold in-store.

London - BLM took over the Barnardo's Marylebone store, with lots of fun and games on the day including face painting, as well as plenty of great items to purchase to raise funds for disadvantaged children who desperately need support.

Manchester - Barnardo's green fairies took over the store, entertaining shoppers with a raffle to win an iPad 3, a silent auction for a signed photo of Roberto Mancini along with face painting and photo opportunities with BLM Olympic Torchbearer Laura Callaghan!

Totally Quackers 2012

June once again saw the BLM team 'Totally Quackers' race the Motor Insurers' Bureau at the annual Dragon Boat 2012 Festival at Willen Lake, Milton Keynes.

The BLM team was victorious, not only in its oar-some efforts against MIB (beating them in each of the three heats), but also in its fundraising efforts – pulling in close to £1,400 for the Children's Trust. Well done to the team!



Comic Relief

Blues Brothers, a bake off and 'wear something red day' can only mean one thing – Comic Relief! Our staff went to great lengths this year to raise money for this great cause, including fancy dress, wearing red clothes and 'dressing down' on the day. Collectively, the offices raised almost £700.

Trainees in our Birmingham office also got creative, running a red nose celebrity quiz – 'Who knows whose nose is whose' (thanks Eliza Kwok for the inspiration), as well as a Jessie J Comic Relief sweepstake where people were able to select from 60 different hair styles the one they think the singer will adopt when her hair grows back.

Well done to all involved.

Interview with Akbar Hussain



Your first experience of BLM was through the City Gateway programme. Tell us about the programme, and what your first impressions of BLM were?

City Gateway helps young people from the Tower Hamlets area to learn the right skills and opportunities they need for a career. We visited lots of different companies and other law firms where we met lots of different people, were taken on tours of the organisations and were taught practical skills such as interview techniques.

From all the companies I visited, there was just something I really liked about BLM – it had a welcoming atmosphere and all the people were really friendly. When it came to applying for a work placement I put all my effort and focus into applying for BLM, I didn't want to work anywhere else.

I had my interview with HR and a solicitor. It was the first interview I'd ever done so I was quite nervous, but excited. Sitting in reception before the interview I was studying all the notes on BLM I'd made, but as soon as I walked into the interview room I forgot everything! But I must have done okay, as I ended up getting a work placement.

During my work placement I started with the marketing team for a few months – where I helped out with the BLM Quiz night – and then I moved to general office. My contract kept getting extended, and then about two years ago I was offered a permanent job.

How has the City Gateway programme helped you in your career?

Prior to City Gateway, I had done a few different employment training programmes but they didn't help me

very much. City Gateway was great, although I actually didn't sign myself up for the programme in the first place! A friend of mine was working at City Gateway recruiting new students and, without telling me, he signed me up. The first I knew of it was during the summer when I got a phone call from someone at City Gateway – I didn't even know what they were talking about! But after speaking with them a few times I agreed to sign up and have never looked back. My friend really did me a favour when he put my name down.

The City Gateway staff are great, they are really committed to the students, making sure we do the best we can to get work placements.

What does a typical day in the office mean for you? What do you enjoy the most about your job?

There isn't really a typical day working in general office, I just help out the partners and other staff however I can. Copying files, booking and taking courier deliveries and setting up the seminar room for events are just some of the things I do each day.

I really enjoying working in general office; although we work hard, it's fun. I have great colleagues who make coming to work enjoyable – the people I work with are definitely what I enjoy the most about my job.

What advice would you give others in the City Gateway programme?

Give it a go. You've got nothing to lose by getting involved in the programme, and it is a really worthwhile experience. If you work hard, you have a great opportunity to find yourself a job you enjoy.

Where do you think you would be now if you hadn't taken part in City Gateway?

Who knows!?! My mum would probably be completely fed up with me though, as my favourite hobby is sleeping! If I didn't have this job, I would probably be spending a lot more time sleeping!

I didn't really have a solid plan for what I wanted to do after school/college, which is why City Gateway has been so great in helping me find a job.

Where would you like to be in five years' time?

Hopefully still at BLM, working with a great team and learning new skills that allow me to take on more responsibility in the firm.

Forthcoming events

Wii Fit tennis challenge (Wimbledon fortnight June to July 2013) – This will take the form of two evening events:

- 1) a local challenge for each office whereby teams within each office compete to be the Wii fit challenge winner of their office
- 2) the winners from each office for the first event would then go head to head with the winners from all other winning teams.

Charity Walk (14 September 2013) – This year's charity walk will take place along the beautiful South Downs.

If you would like to take part contact Chris Gambs.

Your

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