

# Public Health and Communities Policy Committee Supplementary Information



**Date:** Friday, 14 March 2025

**Time:** 9.30 am

**Venue:** The Council Chamber - City Hall, College  
Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

## 6. Public Forum

(Pages 3 - 28)

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**Date:** Thursday, 13 March 2025



Public Health & Communities Policy  
Committee  
14<sup>th</sup> March 2025



Public Forum – Questions

**Please note:** The views and information contained within the public questions are those of individuals concerned and not of the Council.

**Public Forum Questions**

The following Public Forum Questions have been received for the Public Health & Communities Policy Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> March:

Number	Name	Subject
Question 1	Paul Wheeler	Libraries
Question 2	Katherine Jacob	Easton Leisure Centre cuts (netball)



## **Public Forum Questions**

### **Question 1 – Paul Wheeler**

#### **Libraries**

Can you tell me if the working party being established to consider the future of the libraries service will have meetings open to the public and if these meetings will be included in the calendar of meetings on the Council's website.

#### **Officer response:**

A report on the establishment of a Libraries Task & Finish Group will be submitted to the Public Health & Communities Policy Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> May. Task & Finish Groups generally meet in private but will ultimately bring forward any recommendations to a Public meeting of the Public Health & Communities Policy Committee.

### **Question 2 – Katherine Jacob**

#### **Easton Leisure Centre cuts (netball)**

Why is Bristol City Council going ahead with plans to reduce the size of the main sports hall at Easton Leisure Centre in favour of a new reception area, women's gym and soft play, that would see the loss of regular adult sports groups such as netball, volleyball, indoor football, cricket and basketball? If this question can be answered in the light of a 2022 consultation where only 35 Easton Leisure Centre users responded, where 40 people commented the full sports hall size needed to be maintained and where none of the existing activity groups have been specifically invited to comment.

#### **Officer response:**

The upgraded facility will enable a broader range of services to be delivered for the local community and ensures Easton Leisure Centre remains financially sustainable for years to come. Once the works have been completed the new sized sports hall will be available for all existing groups to continue using.

The upgrade to Easton Leisure Centre followed the council's consultation process as part of the Leisure Facilities Investment Strategy. This was advertised widely and throughout the leisure centres and swimming pools, to gather the views of both users and non-users of the facilities. 35 is **NOT** the total number of respondents to the consultation who use Easton Leisure Centre. Out of 1988 respondents to the consultation 465 were users of Easton.

# Public Health & Communities Policy Committee 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025



## Public Forum – Statements

**Please note:** The views and information contained within the public statements are those of individuals concerned and not of the Council.

### Public Forum Statements

The following Public Forum Statements have been received for the Public Health & Communities Policy Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> March:

Number	Name	Subject
01	Anna-Clare Temple (Step Together Volunteering)	Bristol Impact Fund 3
02	Stacy Yelland	Bristol Impact Fund 3
03	Katherine Jacob	Easton Leisure Centre cuts (netball)
04	Lucie Martin-Jones	Bristol Impact Fund 3
05	Nathalie Sherring on behalf Black South West Network	Bristol Impact Fund 3
06	Hannah Young (SARI, on behalf of the Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service)	Bristol Impact Fund 3
07	Danielle Johnson (Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership)	Bristol Impact Fund 3
08	Carol Casey	Hengrove Park For Community Health and Wellbeing
09	Rebecca Mear (Voscur)	Bristol Impact Fund 3
10	Black South West Network and Voscur	Bristol Impact Fund 3
11	Merriel Waggoner	Easton Leisure Centre Sports Hall
12	Clara Collett (Knowle West Media Centre)	Bristol Impact Fund 3
13	Jon Hamilton-Smith	Wall for St George Park collapsed into private property in 2023

## **Public Forum Statements**

### **01 – Anna-Clare Temple (Step Together Volunteering)**

#### **Bristol Impact Fund 3**

I wanted to let you know how important the funding we have received from the Bristol Impact Fund has been for us.

Our first project supporting young people in Bristol was able to get off the ground in 2017, thanks to some initial funding from the first Impact Fund. The charity subsequently secured support for this work through annual grants from a range of grant-making organisations. However, not having multi-year funding presented job insecurity for frontline staff and hampered the charity's ability to plan.

The 4-year funding from the current round of the Bristol Impact Fund has been nothing short of transformative for our project. It has provided security for our project staff and allowed us to develop the project in response to feedback from the young people we support.

Having the project supported by Bristol City Council has given our work credibility, which has enabled us to unlock further funding for our work supporting young people facing multiple disadvantage in the city:

Henry Smith Charity	£138,900	3 years
Nisbet Trust	£45,000	3 years
St James's Place Charitable Foundation	£10,000	1 year
Quartet Community Foundation	£5,000	1 year
Wessex Water	£2,000	1 year
Society of Merchant Venturers	£1,615	1 year

Additionally, having our core youth work in Bristol anchored stably has allowed us to widen our reach to include young people either already in contact with or on the fringes of the justice system:

Medlock Charitable Trust	£15,000	18 months
Hedley Foundation	£2,500	1 year
Avon & Somerset Police Prosecution Service in partnership with Rise Mutual CIC and The Nelson Trust)	£252,000	4 years (delivering Deferred

Therefore, it is not unreasonable to say that the funding awarded to us under BIF 2 (£88,000) has enabled us to leverage additional support exceeding £450,000. This funding is supporting young people in the city who face multiple disadvantage and struggle to find support elsewhere due to the complexity and multiplicity of their needs. We have employed 4 additional team members, all working

for young people in the city, and we have been able to deliver greater financial stability to the whole charity.

We would like to thank the Investment & Grants team, who have curated a programme of support activities enabling smaller organisations to upskill in areas including digital communications, storytelling and outcomes recording. This “funder plus” model has helped us to improve our impact measurement and communication, all of which supports our fundraising activities.

The Bristol Impact Fund is a vital source of support for voluntary organisations in the city. For organisations like ours, having the backing of Bristol City Council demonstrates to other key stakeholders that we are delivering support that is needed in the city, and which aligns with the council’s priorities. The impact of this backing is greatly appreciated by grantees and should not be undervalued.

We appreciate the financial challenges and difficult decisions facing many local authorities. However, Step Together Volunteering strongly believes that the Impact Fund delivers social value in the city well beyond the financial amounts granted to local voluntary organisations. From better health and wellbeing to stronger community cohesion, to improved confidence and skills enabling people to progress to training and/or employment, we believe that such a versatile, city-wide fund accessed by organisations that really know and understand their target beneficiaries provides enormous social return on investment.

We hope that the members of the Public Health & Communities Policy Committee will approve the proposals put forward by the Investment & Grants Team for BIF 3.

Feedback from our clients and stakeholders

*“I think my experience with Step Together has been really good. I feel more confident and have really improved my social skills. Now I’m going out to places by myself and working in the café as a volunteer. It’s still scary, but I don’t break down anymore. Working at the café has made me feel more positive about the future as I have learnt to deal with different people and work with new people. It was a bit intimidating at first, but I have made friends with some of the people I work with now. I think the café was the best introduction to volunteering, everyone is so nice. I’m now doing English and Maths lessons and hoping to do some more volunteering. I’m also hoping to get some paid employment soon.”*

Young person

*“I’ve found Step Together to be a fantastic first step for young people who aren’t quite job ready... Providing support through the process of finding volunteering work is so important for the young people and gives them an opportunity to build on their confidence, communication and team building skills. I feel Step Together is filling that gap between personal development skills building that we focus on here at the Trust and employment, ensuring that young people engage actively and confidently with others and supporting them on their journey into society.”*

The King’s Trust, Referrer

*“Step Together is an invaluable local service which offers hope, and opportunity for change to the young people I work with. Although there continues to be a lack of timely, psychological services for these young people, Step Together offers a more holistic form of support, creating a sense of purpose and belonging which is such an important part of the mental health recovery journey.”*

Mental Health Nurse, The Old School Surgery

*“My experience with Step Together has been amazing. I’ve loved it. Step Together has helped me a lot with getting out and continuing to do things I enjoy and care about. It has helped me try new things I am not confident with and reinforced the things that I do know, which has helped me feel a lot more confident about the future. Now I am looking for part time work. Ideally, I’d like to find a job gardening or in animal care and continue to come to the allotment for as long as possible.”*

Young person

Anna-Clare Temple, CEO

**02 - Stacy Yelland (Eastside Community Trust)**

**Bristol Impact Fund 3**

I am writing to give my thanks and support for Bristol Impact Fund 3. The community sector play a huge role in tackling challenges facing the city for example tackling climate change, the health and social care crisis and restoring community cohesion after the summer riots.

The funding provided by the council will not only enable organisations from the grassroots to community anchors to work with residents on impactful projects, it will also be an increase in investment as community organisations draw in other funding and resources that the council cannot.

The sector is an employer and an innovator - always dynamic and responsive. Organisations funded by BIF are creative and flexible and excellent partners to the council to deliver what the city needs to thrive. This is an investment in the future and the citizens of Bristol with a focus on equity and inclusion.

As a community anchor that works closely with the council and lots of grassroots groups we just want to thank the committee for recognising the vital role of the sector and approving BIF 3. We also want to thank the community development team for the huge amount of work they have put into this process and ensuring it has been consultative and inclusive.



**03 – Katherine Jacob****Easton Leisure Centre cuts (netball)**

I am writing to express my anger and frustration with the undemocratic processes leading up to the proposed “refurbishment” of Easton Leisure Centre and subsequent plans to cancel provision for a number of regular team sports at the site including netball, basketball, volleyball, cricket practice and indoor 5 a side football, all of whom need a full size sports hall to operate. As a 59 yr old member of the netball team, I’ve seen the shabby way local residents and regular paying members of the Centre have been treated. Far from communicating with them in a timely manner, empowering them to be involved in decisions, supporting resident led activity and growing community sports provision – Bristol City Council and Everyone Active have instead cobbled together a bunch of random proposals that no one has asked for but have a massive impact on regular sports provision. Off the back of a weak consultation in 2022 (in which the focus was South Bristol and only 32 Easton Leisure Centre users offered their views), the Council and its partners are downsizing the main sports hall, turning a third of it into soft play. They are spending money on a new reception area and a women’s gym – of which there are plenty around the city. Hardly good use of precious finances! The consequence of these changes is to force a host of team sports out of Easton. Having read the Sports and Leisure Strategy, it’s unclear how such changes support either the Strategy or the health of our neighbourhoods as existing residents participating in sport can no longer get their preferred exercise or be part of a chosen team offering sociable contact and friendship. Our own netball team has discovered the wide range of sports groups who will be affected are actually unaware of these imminent proposals. We’ve also been unable to find an Equalities Assessment to ensure any real impact has been properly examined. For example, the sports groups include a significant proportion of older people (50 plus), people from African, African Caribbean or Asian backgrounds and women along with intergenerational activity. All the positive objectives you could wish for, if anyone from Public Health really cared about them! Easton Leisure Centre serves a huge area that includes Eastville and Fishponds which have no sports facilities of their own. We cannot operate with a downsized sports hall or bumped over to St Pauls Sports Centre which currently has no space or time available! I call on Bristol City Council to halt the current proposals at Easton Leisure Centre, review the 2022 consultation, undertake discussions with existing sports groups and explore options for expanding sport in an appropriate way.

**04 – Lucie Martin-Jones (WECIL)**  
**Bristol Impact Fund 3**

Now more than ever, investing in the VCSE sector through BIF funding is essential. Communities, individuals, and organisations are navigating ongoing crises and economic hardship, making it crucial to sustain and strengthen local initiatives. BIF funding empowers grassroots groups to respond directly to the evolving needs of their communities—delivering tailored, impactful support where it is needed most.

At a recent BIF grantees event, it was inspiring to hear from a range of BIF-funded projects that are building resilience, fostering inclusion, and driving positive change. These initiatives demonstrate the immense value of community-led approaches—where those with lived experience take the lead in shaping solutions that work.

From WECIL’s perspective, BIF funding has been transformative in our mission to improve the lives of people with a learning difference in Bristol. Crucially, it has allowed us to ensure that those with learning differences are leading this work themselves—by creating meaningful employment opportunities, providing the necessary resources for skill development, and expanding our reach to make a greater impact across the city.

Continued BIF investment is not just beneficial—it is vital. Without it, many essential services and community-driven initiatives would struggle to survive, let alone grow. To build a more inclusive, resilient future, we must sustain this funding and ensure that those who understand their communities best have the support they need to create lasting change.

## **05 – Nathalie Sherring on behalf of Black South West Network Bristol Impact Fund 3**

BSWN is a Bristol-based racial justice organisation working locally and regionally to build dynamic, strong Black and Minoritised communities, businesses, and organisations. which both flourish while also challenging systemic barriers and forging pathways toward structural transformation. We aim to remove:

### Sustained Challenges Facing the Black and Racially Minoritised VCSE Sector

- Historic under-funding, capacity constraints, poor quality service design and provision, under-utilisation of community assets
- Lack of connectivity and collaboration within the sector and with stakeholders
- Long term pandemic pressures providing front line support since it began
- Impact of austerity and a hostile environment undermined growth and exacerbated racism
- The cost-of-living crises reinforced the impact of systemic racism in people’s daily lives
- The 2024 Race Riots, driven by the far-right, created instability and fears in communities

### Real Support in Tough Times

An example of direct impact with grassroots initiatives has been with Preventative & Restorative Counselling Services (PARCS), a Black-led mental health initiative. When Lynn approached us in 2023 for help registering her Community Interest Company (CIC), she faced multiple barriers including a lack of knowledge of governance structures and funding pathways. Through BSWN’s capacity-building support, we guided her through CIC registration, helped secure an initial £5,000 grant from Quartet Community Foundation, and a further £39, 500 from The Phoenix Way. We followed this with policy development and system setup. PARCS has since expanded its services, reaching over 150 community members with culturally competent counselling and mental health support.

Lynn, who has now built a core team of trained counsellors and volunteers, told us: *"You are a light in the community. Thank you for helping me move forward in our vision for a safer and better community. I could not have done anything without you."*

This case highlights how early investment and strategic guidance can transform grassroots initiatives into sustainable services that address deep-rooted racial inequalities in mental health provision.

### Strategic, Collaborative, and Sustainable Approaches

BSWN’s approach is rooted in collaborative, community-led problem-solving. We ensure that policy and practice are shaped by lived experience rather than imposed top-down. Key principles include:

- Building trust and fostering sustainability through objective and empathetic guidance.
- Unpacking context and remaining power aware to create effective strategies.
- Collaborative co-design and shared problem-solving rather than imposing change.

- Embracing disruption as a tool for transformation and testing innovative models.

#### Steering Group Model: St Paul's Adventure Playground

In 2023, St Paul's Adventure Playground was on the brink of closure. Recognising its contribution as a community hub, BSWN helped facilitate its recovery by establishing a Steering Group. Over 12 months, we worked alongside its last remaining director, Bristol City Council with key stakeholders, including councillors, external funders, and volunteers from the Playground. Collectively, we supported volunteers by listening, better understanding the obstacles, sharing ideas, removing barriers. Each made a contribution to help with debt reduction, recruitment of trustees and staff, fundraising, and policies. BSWN's support is planned to continue to ensure this vital resource sustains for the long-term.

Sharon Benjamin, Director of APE Project CIC and Trustee of St Agnes Adventure Playground said:

*Thank you to BSWN for all the hard work in supporting the St Paul's Adventure playground through one of its biggest crisis periods. The support was essential to realise the depth of many issues the playground was facing. As the chair Director at the time it was critical to have financial support and governance training to stay on track. I hope BSWN continues this work to help community organisations in the future. We are in a much better position with their ongoing support. We will be for every link in partnership going forward.*

#### BSWN'S AREAS OF WORK

##### 1. Evidence-Based Policy Making:

A strong evidence base underpins BSWN's approach, to ensure responsive, transformative and lasting change. Our housing work exemplifies how we apply evidence to shape policy & practice. Our *Housing Clinics*, delivered in partnership with Bristol City Council, access direct support to communities. Clinic data unpack discriminatory factors in housing allocation, affordability crises, and insecure tenancies. It also highlights policy gaps and informs advocacy efforts, which helps drive the pursuit of more equitable housing solutions. Our *Housing Rights Workshop Programme*, developed in collaboration with Shelter, empowers communities with legal rights knowledge while sharpening insights into their challenges. This participatory approach enables advocacy for stronger tenant protections and just housing policies. Integrating evidence, lived experience and practical interventions, BSWN ensures racial justice can become a tangible reality achieved by structural change.

##### 2. Community Building:

Our community engagement shares the community perspectives on symptoms, root causes and solutions which need testing and informs a co-designed and shared action plan. Our key areas of [sector development support](#) are:

- [supporting organisations out of crisis](#) and [growth & development](#) of emerging and existing organisations with governance, fundraising and other capacity building needs
- [leadership programmes](#) which have strengthened links between leaders, unpacked racial justice (95%) and raised awareness of City plans (87% participants)
- [convening collaborations and community organising](#): to connect local residents, grassroots organisations, and activists to explore issues and network, and find solutions.

This work can reduce duplication and devise community led solutions: we have facilitated 3 new collaborations, held 36 networking & collaboration events and connected 467 attendees.

### 3. Strengthening Sustainability and Investment

BSWN supports business planning, income generation, & capital investment like the Community Resilience Fund. Making use of 193 funding opportunities shared, we leveraged £945,846 into the sector and also trained young people in decision making on 4 funding panels. Communities value community assets as stabilisers in turbulent times, and credit Community Development Workers and the Officers in build a sense of belonging, a sense of community & links to opportunities.

*Mohammad Islam, of Bangladesh Association (Bristol, Bath and West) said:*

*My sincere appreciation for the invaluable support provided by Nathalie Sherring & Sona Mahtani of BSWN. Their guidance and assistance have been instrumental in securing funding & strengthening our capacity-building initiatives, and their support in managing CRF crucial in our growth & sustainability.*

In conclusion, BSWN welcomes the investment and opportunities to work with the Communities team at Bristol City Council and Voscur on sector development. We ask Members to recognise the achievements made so far in these challenging times, and to note willingness of communities to embrace change, to both protect rights & also to take responsibilities. We seek continuity with support, and consider resources from BIF3 to meet sector needs. We appreciate the efforts being made in this tough financial context, and feel Bristol is leading the way to innovate its approach to working with the sector.

**06 - Hannah Young (SARI, on behalf of the Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service)  
Bristol Impact Fund 3**

Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service (BHCDS) recognise the unprecedented pressures on Bristol City Council's finances and services and the competing priorities and difficult choices that our elected representatives are faced with in trying to achieve the best outcomes for Bristol's communities.

The decision of the Public Health and Communities Committee 2024 in June 2024 to extend Bristol Impact Fund (BIF)2 grants to ensure no funding gap between BIF2 and BIF3 made a very real and substantial difference to delivery of hate crime and discrimination services in Bristol. Without this our organisations would have seen redundancies, loss of skills and reductions in direct support to clients at a time of pressing need. Less than two months later Bristol witnessed attacks on hotels housing asylum seekers, street violence and threats towards community-led organisations supporting minoritised communities.

In this context, we have been extremely worried at the potential impact of budget proposals to reduce BIF3 allocation by 15% on the capacity and capability in our city to challenge hate and discrimination. We were heartened and reassured by the decision of the full Council in February to oppose this cut, demonstrating their commitment to empowerment and cohesion across our city's diverse communities. We urge you, in line with the will of the full Council, to maintain the budget for BIF3 at £8.8m for the next 4 years.

The communities you support and empower by funding our services are those most affected by systemic inequalities, by cost-of-living pressures, by even small shifts in the global and national economy, and by wider resource constraints on Council and other public sector and VCSE budgets. We provide critical support for those experiencing hate or discrimination. Our early intervention and education within schools, social housing, employment and communities also prevents the escalation that creates additional demand on numerous other public services.

We know that experience of hate crime and/or discrimination can and does have a significant impact on ability to work, participate in education, on housing, social isolation and mental and physical health. This is increasingly fully evidenced in a body of national academic research (references available) through our own service monitoring and evaluation and our day-to-day client interactions. It is this evidence that leads us to believe strongly that every additional pound invested in empowering communities through BIF - in services like ours - has a greater cumulative impact on Bristol's most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities than alternative uses within the Council and that this represents best value for money in securing the best outcomes for Bristol citizens.

While the Council faces extreme budget pressures, equally the situation has never been so pressing for each of the partners in our service. Police-recorded hate crime has tripled in the last decade, community tensions have been heightened with a global rise in right-wing misinformation and promotion of actively anti-EDI agendas. Global and national economic factors continue to affect levels of philanthropic giving and there is significant competition for this support. While we seek new and different ways to generate income, each of our partners is negotiating a volatile funding environment. We are grateful for the commitment of the Public Health and Communities Committee to our work and hope you will continue to demonstrate this in the decision you make today.

BHCDS is a partnership of six specialist charities - Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI) and including Brandon Trust, Bristol Mind, Off The Record, Bristol Law Centre, and Resolve West (see <https://www.bhcads.org.uk/>) who provide a holistic signposting, support, advocacy, conflict resolution and reparation service to empower victims of all types of hate crime and discrimination to take action and to cope with its physical, emotional and psychological impact. We also run one-to-one and group training and

empowerment sessions, workshops and peer support; provide specialist strategic policy advice, community tension monitoring, and coordinate a wide range of voice and influence networks.

## **07 – Danielle Johnson (Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership) Bristol Impact Fund 3**

5 organisations have worked in partnership and have received BIF funding to support refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol. With the funding we have brought communities together, improving community cohesion across the city.

Why has the funding been so valuable?

We are deeply grateful for the funding. It has enabled us to offer 5 refugee welcome centres across the city, working together in partnership to ensure they are delivered on different days providing a city-wide response. We have offered Bristol newcomers a safe and welcoming space and have provided them with volunteering opportunities to connect, build relationships, acquire new and share existing skills and knowledge. In addition, being able to share the funding with other welcome hubs, supported collaborative working in the VCSE sector, sharing knowledge as well as challenges and lessons learned.

Bristol Refugee Rights has been able to build 90 volunteer opportunities, supporting to run the welcome centre, including cooks to provide hot meals, barbers to provide hair cuts, information and advice volunteers, bringing communities together across cultures.

For Refugee Women: it has enabled us to offer a safe and welcoming space for women to connect, build friendships, and enhance their mental health and well-being. By providing essential services in their first language, we empower women to actively engage and participate in our activities. Our goal is to boost women's confidence, foster a sense of belonging, and encourage both community engagement and cohesion.

For Refugee mothers: the funding has been essential to ensure that Project MAMA has been able to deliver support to refugee mama's with babies in their first two years of life. It provides refugee mama's with the opportunity to build community, support networks, provides space for them to relax, cook together and engage with creative activities and workshops.

What would happen without the funding or with a reduction?

Across the partnership we have seen thousands refugees/asylum seekers per year.

A reduction in the funding would result in closing welcome centres, which would mean we couldn't meet asylum seekers' basic needs (food, safety, warmth) as well as supporting them to access vital health services and escalate any safeguarding concerns. Without this space and capacity to run the welcome centre in a safe way, we would simply not be able to do the above anymore.

The funding saves the local authority hundreds of crisis situations. With our Early Action we prevent mental health crises, homelessness, and poverty.

Many people we work with face cultural and language barriers that prevent them from accessing other services. Without this crucial funding, Refugee Women of Bristol's capacity to support 58 different ethnicities will be severely diminished or potentially eliminated. As an equity hub and a by-and-for organisation, we rely on this funding to deliver essential and equitable services to the most vulnerable



women in Bristol. From Project Mama - we are able to provide a space where mamas feel safe to remove their hijabs and express themselves openly which would be lost if we needed to cut our service.

Why is investment in the VCSE sector important?

The VCSE sector plays a crucial role in supporting Bristol's communities by providing complementary services to statutory provisions and preventing crisis situations. Their unique position within the community allows them to offer accessible and appropriate services that are culturally sensitive. The importance of their work has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and recent responses to riots/ civil unrest.

Throughout the years, the VCSE sector has become more specialised and developed skills and knowledge to support specific groups of vulnerable people, like asylum seekers and refugees. Without this expertise and the VCSE capacity, statutory services would not be able to meet the increased demands.

We believe it's an important principle for the local authority to value the grass roots organisations who are closely connected to the communities. We are able to be flexible and responsive in our approach as well as bringing significant expertise in our given fields. We build the trust of the communities and are often created by the communities we serve.

We are very grateful for this funding and the impact is bigger than the numbers demonstrate, it's both quantitative and qualitative, changing lives and creating stronger, more resilient communities. Thank you for your ongoing commitment.

**08 – Carol Casey****Hengrove Park For Community Health and Wellbeing**

Hengrove Park Campus is an outline plan for over 1400 new houses. Phase 1 is underway; phase 2 awaits consultation. But there is a major problem with this plan: house-building without community services simply builds health and social problems in the near future for all the residents. We need adjustments to the plan which preserve the existing athletics facility and family cycling centre and create a unique hub to support community health. We do not need to dig up our existing resources in order to cause problems; we need to build on our strengths not just houses to harm our environment and our health. Hengrove Park Campus centres on not only the 10 most deprived areas of Bristol but 10 areas which rank in the most deprived of England: Hartcliffe & Withywood, Filwood, and Hengrove & Whitchurch. Instead of destroying functioning resources, the development is an opportunity to apply an innovative, local-community, health and well-being model, combining leisure, outdoor pitches, South Bristol Community Hospital, South Bristol Skills Academy, together with a family cycling centre and an athletics programme, co-located in South Bristol. This is certainly a unique integration for health and well-being for England. Our concern is that phase 2 of the outline plan requires the removal of the existing athletics facility and the re-location of the cycling centre (a proposed £14m cost to Council). Our discussion with local schools, with police and the GPs network, emphasise the need to adjust the plan for community cohesion, citizenship and well-being. From Bristol City Council Ward Reports, Hengrove-Whitchurch and surrounding Hartcliffe, Withywood and Filwood (predominantly white-English) have more obesity, less weekly activity, poorer education, more special educational needs, more youth offenders, less confidence in going out in the dark, less satisfaction in living there, and generally poorer health. It is an area of special concern for health and social care. Bristol Health Care Services already face a huge financial deficit and must implement cuts ...but the actual solution is in improving community health. Similarly, working age adults with disabilities are seriously affected by spiralling social care costs. Individuals with long term care needs face significant financial strain. The solution is in making people healthier by offering supportive activities. This becomes even more pressing for the medium-term if housebuilders do not pay attention. The Hengrove Park Campus is actually a real opportunity to address these issues. There is space to meet the housing target, but also to retain, not destroy, the only functioning 8-lane of athletics (track & field) and family cycling centre, to offer low-cost physical activity to the community (as required in the Bristol One City Activity Strategy for 2020 – 2025.) Enthusiasm for use of the facility by existing first phase residents has been noted in our interviews; opportunities by local schools interviewed and the possibilities for rehabilitation of patients by the hospital and training by the college students have been made clear. We need to preserve and regenerate the facilities we have for the sake of the community. Athletics is a social, community programme which bring in children of primary age right through teenagers to adults in their seventies. It engages parents and carers, provides a focal point for interventions in nutrition and physiotherapy. It will include rehabilitation and sport for college students. It will integrate the family cycling centre which involves those with disabilities. Required consultation with Sport England in 2019, did not divulge the existence of the cycling centre or the athletics facility. Our proposed business plan is sustainable with a range of sponsorship, partnership with Sport England, Wesport, Access Sport and also rehabilitation contracts. It is ideally placed to work within the VCSE framework. We ask for an asset transfer. Social value and medium-term health impact on the community is paramount. We have over 5,000 signatures which agree with us. We request this Committee to call for a rethink of the Phase 2 plans for Hengrove Park Campus because of the deprivation levels which are increasing and to avoid more medium-term health problems and social difficulties. The maintenance and development of the athletics facility offers a sustainable health hub for the whole of South Bristol. Alternative housing opportunities exists which are not yet in the Local

Plan for an even greater number of homes. Houses are fine, but people have to live in them, and health and social services have to patch up the damage. The present targets for houses are fine, the future costs are not.

## 09 – Rebecca Mear (Voscur)

### Bristol Impact Fund 3

We would like to submit the following statement to the Public Health and Communities committee on behalf of Voscur:

We would like to provide further insight into the role we play at Voscur and at Black South West Network as local infrastructure organisations supporting, developing and enabling charities, social enterprises and community groups.

By investing in VCSE infrastructure to further build and sustain a robust VCSE sector, Bristol City Council will play a key part in enabling communities to thrive. All of us stand to benefit when communities are enabled to drive their own solutions.

Please see attached information on our work from Voscur (information on BSWN’s work submitted separately).

A brief overview of our work at Voscur to enable powerful communities, advance equality, and unleash new possibilities that improve lives.

#### Capacity building

- We deliver 300+ 1-1 advice sessions per year on capacity-building per year for community groups and charities; for VCSE organisations from areas of multiple deprivation, for equalities-led organisations or groups and for those with an income of under £10k p/a. (Capacity building includes support on issues such as governance, fundraising, staff and volunteer management, and business planning.)
  - This allows organisations to form and grow where needed to serve community needs and solve problems through co-design & co-production.
- We deliver training through our VCSE Academy to 200+ staff and volunteers per year.
  - Upskilling the VCSE workforce to increase their impact.
- We're leading on the community end of social enterprise - particularly in terms of capacity building support offers - through our work on the Social Economy West and Local Access Programme. 83% of over 115+ social enterprises we've supported come from the most deprived wards in Bristol thanks to our pipeline approach.
  - Allowing social and community businesses to contribute to local economies, create employment and lead systemic change in business practices.
- We deliver or co-deliver several different peer networks for job roles or thematic networks (Bristol Charity CEOs; Volunteer Organisers Forum; Community Transport; Women in the VCSE sector; and Community Development/hyper-local networks at place).

- Providing space for the wellbeing benefits of peer support, as well as a starting point for partnerships and collaborations that benefit communities, statutory partners, and the VCSE sector.

#### Strategic Development for Impact

- We deliver three Communities of Place, Practice and Equalities networks for VCSE Voice and Influence, bringing them together to make their voices heard and to shape policy and change. We host a six-monthly event, the VCSE Sector Forum, to build networks and voice further.
  - The voices of local people come through the VCSE sector, reflecting the diversity of the community, are heard & influence decision making and policy formation.
- We've led strategic work with a number of One City partners to deliver the Taking the Pulse work - leading to initiatives such as the Ecosystem Resilience panel.
  - Allowing partners to understand the strengths, creativity, needs & opportunities in local communities & the VCSE sector.
- We're consulting with the VCSE sector and shaping the newly-announced Civil Society Covenant, including taking the Bristol sector's views to Parliament.
  - Allowing the VCSE sector to act as an ecosystem leader to drive change, working effectively in partnership and cross-sector.

#### Partnership Brokerage and Leadership

- We've led, managed or facilitated VCSE sector partnerships including the Pathfinder – the alliance for survivors of sexual violence - Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seekers Partnership and the BS13 Strategic Network.
  - Facilitating joined-up solutions that attract additional funding for “best practice” roll out.
- We have led the formation of the city's new and emerging LGBTQ+ Partnership, bringing together over 80 groups from this community to forge a civic voice for LGBTQ+ people.
  - Creating space for more inclusive communities – including and especially those that experience marginalisation, deprivation and minoritisation.
- We are a founder member and host of the BNSSG VCSE Alliance, to improve wellbeing and health for people across Bristol, North Somerset and South Glos in partnership with the NHS and Social Care.

- Supporting the contribution of the VCSE sector to service delivery, to prevention and to the core determinants of health and productivity - ensuring this is acknowledged and valued.
  
- It's not all about funding - so much of our work starts with a funding enquiry and leads to a governance need, a training need, a need to link up with others to work in partnership or to advocate or lobby - but between April 2022 to September 2024, we helped the VCSE sector bring in £3.8million in funding (so for every £1 invested in us we helped the sector bring in £6.44 for our communities in Bristol).

We hope that this statement provides additional insight into the crucial work of Voscur, and more generally of local infrastructure organisations.

## **10 – Black South West Network and Voscur Bristol Impact Fund 3**

Voscur and BSWN strongly supports the commitment by Bristol City Council to funding the VCSE (voluntary, community and social enterprise) sector through the proposed BIF3 grant programme.

By committing to funding charities, community groups and social enterprises in Bristol through this programme, BCC will be providing vital support to community-led services and community-driven initiatives at a time when many other funding options have greatly reduced, and services are needed more than ever.

Since the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, VCSE organisations have been on the frontline of responding to community needs, yet face a perfect storm of increased costs of operating and decreased funding options. For more insight into this situations, see our work on rising costs, rising demands, [Taking the Pulse of the VCSE sector](#) highlighting the risks to VCSE sector resilience due to the cost of living crisis.

In addition, our VCSE organisations in the city are telling us that grant funding is harder than ever to obtain, with a huge number of trust and foundation funders closing their doors on both a temporary and a permanent basis. This is supported by [research released last week by Nottingham Trent University](#), which highlights that securing grants is becoming harder, success rates are declining, and the sector is facing an increasingly uncertain funding landscape as a result.

Further to this, during the VCSE sector ‘Voice & Influence’ networks hosted by Voscur, members in attendance raised the fact that BIF2 had been a force for positive change and there was universal agreement that a commitment to BIF3 could make a huge impact for the communities they support.

Our collaboration with BCC to enable the Bristol Impact Fund to strengthen what communities can deliver has to date helped support some of the most marginalised community groups and organisations in the city.

Together, we have enabled community groups and organisations to receive vital capacity building support for their funded projects. This has enabled them to become more resilient and sustainable long term, to raise their organisation’s profile and connect with others across the city.

Our longer-term aim is to work collaboratively with Bristol city council to ensure that the BIF3 fund can play a vital role for the VCSE sector in Bristol. This will enable communities to play an active role in driving both social change and service delivery for the city. By committing to BIF3 funding, Bristol City Council can contribute towards a thriving VCSE sector and communities shaping and being part of long-term solutions.

**For more insight into how the Bristol Impact Fund has supported the VCSE sector in Bristol, please see the following case studies:**

[Voscur BIF case studies](#)

**11 - Merriel Waggoner**  
**Easton Leisure Centre Sports Hall**

3 weeks ago Easton Leisure Centre told us that their Sports Hall will close ending community basketball, netball, volleyball, cricket nets and indoor football. A soft play will replace a quarter of the hall. For 15 years we have played netball in a group called St Paul's Rebels. We left St Paul's Leisure Centre when courts were removed and then at Horfield Leisure Centre until that court was turned into a soft play. We have since had 8 successful years in Easton and have gone from strength to strength. 80 women of all ages, abilities, backgrounds are welcomed on a drop in basis. We laugh from beginning to end, support each other and it is a mainstay of many players' lives. It is particularly important as a suitable place where Muslim women have the security and confidence to play. But we have not been considered. The Consultation conducted during COVID shows 6 centre users replied and the Equalities Impact Assessment says "groups have not been reached". There was no mention of soft play or netball. We ask for the Sports Hall to continue to deliver Sports to the community as per Every One Active Equality and Diversity Policy and the soft play to be relocated. This Committee's job is to protect, advance and enhance sport. Please can we arrange a meeting with the relevant people responsible to discuss.



## **12 - Clara Collett (Knowle West Media Centre) Bristol Impact Fund 3**

Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) implores the continuation of the Bristol Impact Fund (BIF) beyond 2026. BIF has been a source of long-term trusted support and enables organisations like us and others across the city in supporting the resilience and empowerment of communities experiencing the greatest inequities. Without it, the depth and reach of our work would be significantly diminished, leaving some of the most vulnerable people in our city without vital support.

Knowle West is a diverse working-class neighbourhood of 14,000 people. It's in the top 10% of wards in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. It has poorer outcomes compared to Bristol averages, including long-term health, poverty, education, premature mortality, and unemployment.

Thanks to BIF, KWMC has reached 11,912 local people since 2021. We have provided 1,300 sessions offering a high-quality array of dynamic participatory experiences with 24,253 attendances. These programmes that span digital inclusion, creative skills, and wellbeing activities, have had profound impacts, reducing isolation, increasing confidence, and equipping individuals with essential tools to navigate an increasingly complex world. At KWMC, we are committed to ensuring that local people, particularly those historically excluded from creative and digital sectors, have equitable opportunities to participate, connect, learn, and shape the future of their community. From exploring digital skills and employment pathways to addressing climate resilience and community wellbeing, BIF has allowed us to respond to local needs with agility and innovation.

BIF has not only enabled us to sustain this work in our community but also to amplify it. Over the past three years, it has helped us leverage an additional £154,265 into the community, further expanding opportunities for local people. The social value created through our programmes is estimated at £484,527.65 per year (based on BCC Social Value Measures BT17 which applies to the core cohort of participants). These figures reflect real lives changed. For example, volunteers gain valuable experience through our flexible offer, which the BIF grant enables by funding staff time and core costs. This support allows local people to develop new skills, build confidence, and strengthen their connection to the community. Isolated individuals find a sense of belonging through weekly creative courses, where they learn new skills, collaborate with local artists, and engage with state-of-the-art creative and digital technologies right on their doorstep. Young people aged 16-30 have been enabled to discover pathways into creative industries, opening new opportunities for their future.

However, the need is growing. Over recent years, we have witnessed the closure of key charitable services in the local area, such as Re:Work and Knowle West Health Association, which has a significant ripple effect on the service users they provided for. For example, young people aged 16-30 having regular services and training cut that support raising aspirations, skills building and work experience opportunities for those not in education; this is detrimental to the trajectory of those young people's lives and pathways. Without long-term, sustainable funding like BIF, more vital services could be lost, worsening inequalities for our community and city wide, affecting those who are most in need. There will be less VCSE provision meaning socio-economic issues will be exacerbated and there will be more dependence on statutory services which costs more in the long term. We believe we are positioned to continue being able to provide a holistic offer for local people. Not only providing access to new and exciting experiences in the arts, alongside creative tech and cultural activities in their neighbourhood but to be able to boost mental health and wellbeing through building on the foundations of the trustful relationships that we have built through long-term engagement with the

support of BIF1 and BIF2.

The impact of this work is best expressed by those who have directly benefited:

One volunteer said: “The people here have been so supportive, and it's really opened my eyes to the different things I could do.”

One nature activism participant said: “This project made me look at the world around me differently.”

One participant at our weekly Creative Cuppa session said, “I feel a sense of belonging in my neighbourhood now.”

Bristol must remain a city that invests in its communities, ensuring that no one is left behind. The Bristol Impact Fund is not just a grant, it is a strategic investment in the resilience, cohesion, and future prosperity of our city. We urge the Council to commit to a new round of BIF funding to ensure that organisations like ours can continue to make a lasting difference.

Yours Sincerely,  
Knowle West Media Centre

**13 – Jon Hamilton-Smith**

**Wall for St George Park collapsed into private property in 2023**

Dear Committee Members, I represent the residents of Park Edge which is a block of flats on Church Road in St George. In March 2023, a retaining wall at the back of their car park collapsed, causing a landslide from St George Park. The landslide damaged many of the residents' cars and destroyed the flat's communal bins. Thankfully, the incident occurred in the early hours of the morning, and no one was hurt. An independent report, commissioned by us in 2023, concluded that the wall is owned by Bristol City Council and that the council is responsible for its maintenance and repair. Despite this, it has now been two years since the wall collapsed, and no repair work has been undertaken. Residents are struggling to sell their properties due to the damage, and their allocated car parking spaces, which form part of their property, remain unusable because of the debris. We have been in contact with Councillor Asher Craig, Councillor Rob Bryher, and Parks Services Manager. They informed us that the council commissioned its own independent survey, but almost a year later, we are still awaiting the results. Our question to the committee is: When can we expect this matter to be addressed, and when will repair works begin? Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue. We look forward to your prompt response. Kind regards, Jon Hamilton-Smith Facilities Manager BNS Ltd.