



Director of Public Health Annual Report | City of Bristol 2019–2020

Investing in Bristol's *mental wealth*

The theory and practice of *Thrive-o-nomics*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all of you who challenge, require and agitate for us to be bigger, braver, and better in seeing and meeting our challenges, don't ever stop.

To those of you who have lived and breathed the importance of positive mental health, happiness and thriving over many years, keep inspiring us.

To Geraldine Smyth, Lyn Stanley, Mark Allen and Victoria Bleazard whose individual and collective contributions continue to make a difference in large and small ways.

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Christina Gray
Director of Public Health, Bristol City Council

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	3
Section 1 Thrive-o-nomics	4
Section 2 Thrive-o-nomics in the UK	6
Section 3 Building our mental wealth through social capital	9
Section 4 Building our mental wealth through cultural capital	11
Section 5 Investing in our mental wealth in communities	15
Section 6 Investing in our mental wealth at work	17
Section 7 Investing in our mental wealth through urban design	19
Section 8 Investing in our mental wealth for the future	21
Summing up and what next?	23
References	24

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, Bristol was booming, of that there is no doubt. We are one of the most successful cities in the UK. However, as coronavirus has taught us, economic growth alone will not create the conditions for a happy, fulfilled life. Neither will it address who benefits, who is left behind – and what the cost of this might be.

As Megan said to Harry *‘it’s not enough to survive, you have to be able to thrive’*; and indeed this is a view shared by such worthy institutions as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations, who all recognise that wellbeing is an essential component not only of personal health but of wealth creation, sustainability and the healthy economy of nations.

In my first report as Director of Public Health for Bristol I have chosen to focus on this most interesting of questions: if economics alone is not enough, what do we know about the alternative, thrive-o-nomics? How do we understand, quantify and invest in our *mental wealth* and what does that mean for us and our city?

What might the balance sheet look like? What are our assets and what are our liabilities? Have we got money in the bank – or are we living on our overdraft? What is our investment plan?

This report examines the concept of *mental wealth*, what it means for Bristol, and sets out a series of recommendations for investing in our mental wealth in a way that everyone can benefit.

This report was due for publication in March 2020. However, the global Coronavirus pandemic has since overtaken us and publication was unavoidably delayed. In reviewing the text I wondered if the content would remain valid as we adjust to impacts of lock down and the ‘new normality’ of living with a virus in our midst.

On reflection, it seems that the concepts of ‘mental wealth’ and ‘thrive-o-nomics’ are even more important than before. Or, at least, than we understood they were before. We have learned much during weeks of lock down, about ourselves, about each other and about the society we live in. We have learned about the value of connecting with others and we have experienced the richness of kindness. We have lifted our heads and looked at each other and the world differently. We have been

shocked at the deep vein of inequality which has been exposed and we have been forced to see that we are not all in this together. But we have had a glimpse of something different and better; and we have found that we do know how to create the conditions to enable us to thrive - individually, socially, economically and in harmony with each other and the environment. So in that sense, this report could not be more timely.

1. THRIVE-O-NOMICS

Governments have long been interested in ensuring that they have strong economic growth. This is measured through the concept of Gross Domestic Product often referred to as GDP¹.

GDP calculates all of a country's spending and income. GDP values goods and services produced in a specific time period and this can include anything from hospitality to car production. However, GDP has limitations because the value of public goods such as healthcare or education is not fully calculated and other factors such as voluntary efforts and home making are not given any value.

“ GDP..... counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, ... the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl... Yet it does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play... the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages... it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile² ”

Bobby Kennedy (1968)³

The concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) was an idea first promoted by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in the 1970s in Bhutan⁴. He observed that when people and governments strive for economic wealth, those people who manage to achieve this usually do live a comfortable life. However, he also observed that resources are not equally distributed, that not everyone benefits, that many people live in poverty and furthermore that the strive for economic growth does not take into account the damage to the environment and the natural world. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck recognised that people need good living standards, housing, education, health, income, and well-balanced time use in order to be happy. But he also recognised that people thrive through friends, cultural life, healthy family relationships and a positive community spirit. He went on to develop a framework for Gross National Happiness based on four pillars: good governance, sustainable socio-

economic development, environmental conservation, and promotion of culture.

You may find this short film about Gross National Happiness interesting <https://vimeo.com/groups/techteachers/videos/36961162>

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) built on the approach developed in Bhutan, recognising the importance of human and social capital alongside economic growth. The OECD developed a further framework for wellbeing which focuses on eleven dimensions including income, education, housing, friends and family, and environment and identifies four types of essential assets: natural, economic, human and social⁵.

In 2007, the *Beyond GDP* initiative was launched at a conference in Europe with the objective of clarifying which indices are most appropriate to measure progress⁶. This work

has developed into a global movement with the purpose of finding more relevant concepts and new economic models which have a longer term view of the world and its people.

“ We have to go back to being ourselves, to our cultures. Another world is possible; that is what we are working toward. Ancestral knowledge is science. “Living Well” is contrary to the dictatorship of having and consuming ”

**Bolivian Chancellor
David Choquehuanca (2014)⁷**

The World Bank (1998⁸, 2004⁹, 2019¹⁰) and the International Monetary Fund (2000¹¹, 2019¹²) have both recognised that an economic model alone won’t deliver the benefits required in a modern world and that attention to human capital and social capital are essential elements of effective and sustainable growth. In 2019 the World Bank sponsored an event called The Happiness Exchange¹³ which brought together experts and officials from Bhutan, Ecuador, Mexico,

Venezuela and Bolivia to look at the progress their countries are making with respect to measuring the population’s well-being - the purpose being not soft fluffy stuff, but how these countries can thrive politically, socially and economically.

The New Zealand treasury has adopted a Living Standards Framework¹⁴ which utilises a range of well-being measures, including cultural identity, environment, housing, income and consumption, and social connections to look at current and future state.

“ Wealth is about so much more than [...] dollars can ever measure. It’s time we admitted that there’s more to life than money, and it’s time we focused not just on GDP, but on GWB - general well-being ”

**New Zealand Prime Minister
Jacinda Ardern (2019)¹⁵**



THRIVE-O-NOMICS IN THE UK

The UK has also had an interest in the developing concept of wellbeing as an economic driver. Good levels of positive wellbeing have been identified as a national ambition and wellbeing measures are included in the census.

The census measures for wellbeing are limited however in that they focus on individual, subjective level indicators rather than social or environmental indicators and are collected every four years.

Of greater interest is the dashboard of wellbeing indicators developed by ONS, which has a much broader view of social and economic factors which look beyond GDP¹⁶. The personal and economic well-being dashboard includes factors for income and consumption, subjective wellbeing, and unemployment. The dashboard is updated quarterly and shows trends as well as being sensitive to in-year changes.

The February 2020 report¹⁷ found that household income and household net financial wealth had increased since the previous year and that the unemployment rate had dropped. Income inequality remained static, with, in effect, no progress in addressing this; however, household debt reduced and poor life satisfaction also receded.

The June 2020 report¹⁸ looked specifically at the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic during the period 20th March to 7th June.

Interestingly, the June 2020 report finds that emotions like happiness and anxiety improved at the beginning of the lockdown; however general life satisfaction has remained subdued since the beginning of lockdown, with varying levels of expectation about the future.

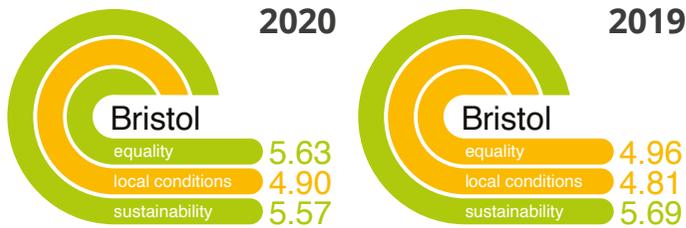
The economic impacts of the Coronavirus are only slowly emerging. It will be a national and a local challenge to mitigate the potential effects of job loss, industry failure and the changing nature of education and work, all of which will have direct and indirect impacts on physical and mental health.

The shock to the economy is reflected in an estimated 12.5 million people who reported that their households had been affected financially by the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19). The number of people actively

working fell in the first two weeks of lockdown and by June 2020 the % actively working across different sectors was between 67% - 79%. Half of all self-employed people reported having reduced financial income, while a third had experienced temporary closures of their businesses.

Income inequality appears to have been exacerbated, with people on lower personal incomes reporting reduced income, while people on higher incomes appear to have been less impacted financially. Parents were more than twice as likely to report reduced income, with more than half unable to cover a large, necessary expense. Parents were also more likely to have been furloughed than adults without children in the house, with over 20% finding childcare impacting their work.

However, what this national index does not reveal are the significant differences in life experience and life satisfaction which exist at local level; and it falls to us to understand what is happening in our city.



The 2020 report presented here was produced pre-Covid.

According to these measures Bristol has improved its scores since 2019 in the Equality domain and Local Conditions domain. However scores have dropped slightly in the Sustainability domain. Although some significant subdomain scores have increased, such as education scores for children and for adults, as well as, cohesion, local environment and safety, other subdomain scores have reduced, notably: mortality and life expectancy, mental health and unemployment. There are no scores close to a full score of 10, so there is plenty of room for improvement.

Looking at the subthemes for Equality, the index scores remain low for employment and social mobility and this reflects back to us what we know from other sources. We know from the Strategic Needs Assessment²³ and Public Health Outcomes Framework²⁴ that not everyone in Bristol has an equal opportunity to thrive. We have an inequality in life expectancy of up to 10 years and inequality in healthy life expectancy of up to 20 years between our most wealthy and least wealthy neighbourhoods. See table opposite.

The Local Conditions domain has a low score in both 2019 and 2020. This domain is the most complex with a high number of sub indicators. However, what the index reflects

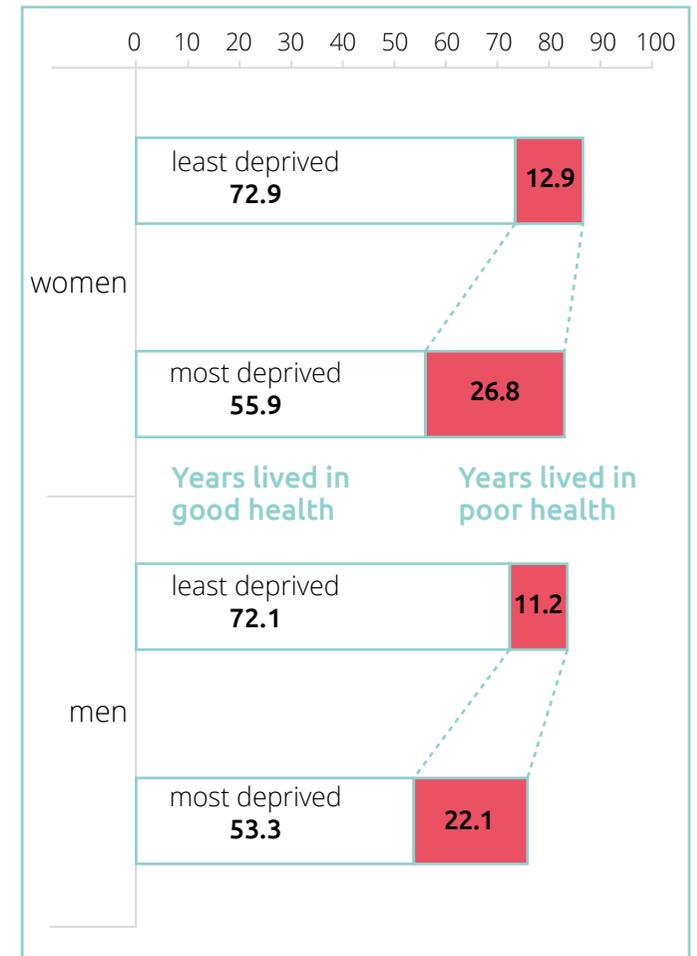
Helpfully, Bristol is the birth place of the Happy City movement¹⁹. Happy City has worked closely with the New Economics Foundation²⁰ to develop a Thriving Places index designed to measure whether the conditions are in place for a city to thrive at a local level²¹.

The Thriving Places index²² takes a broad set of indicators and divides them into three themes:

- Local conditions: good physical and mental health, a good job, access to green space, affordable and good quality housing, culture, community cohesion, and educational opportunities.
- Sustainability: CO₂ emissions, household recycling, energy consumption, land use, renewables.
- Equality: health inequality, income inequality, wellbeing inequality, employment inequality, social mobility.

The three themes are calculated using a 27 sub-domain index which is averaged to create a domain score and a headline element score of between 0-10.

are issues relating to safety, mental health, cohesion and children’s education. All of which are highlighted in our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)²⁵ and Health and Wellbeing Reports²⁶.



Bristol Health Needs: A Highlight Report, January 2020

Headline element	Domain	Sub-domain	Score	
Local conditions			4.90	●
	Place and environment		5.15	●
		Local environment	4.96	●
		Transport	6.78	●
		Safety	4.12	●
		Housing	4.72	●
	Mental and physical health		4.54	●
		Healthy and risky behaviours	6.14	●
		Overall health status	4.31	●
		Mortality and life expectancy	3.95	●
		Mental health	3.78	●
	Education and learning		5.64	●
		Adult Education	7.14	●
		Children’s education	4.14	●
	Work and local economy		4.97	●
		Unemployment	6.08	●
		Employment	5.57	●
		Basic needs	4.82	●
		Local business	3.41	●
	People and community		4.21	●
		Participation	5.25	●
Culture		4.18	●	
Community cohesion		3.21	●	
Sustainability			5.57	●
	Energy use		6.76	●
	Waste		6.10	●
	Green infrastructure		3.85	●
Equality			5.63	●
	Health		5.27	●
	Income		6.62	●
	Gender		7.45	●
	Social		3.91	●
	Ethnicity		4.84	●

Key:

● High ● Medium ● Low

Source: Thriving Places Index

Thriving Places Index 2020 summary scores for City of Bristol

BUILDING OUR MENTAL WEALTH THROUGH SOCIAL CAPITAL

Human beings are social animals. Social relationships affect mental health, health behaviour, physical health and ultimately the risk of dying prematurely. Social relationships can have short and long-term effects on health and they represent a major opportunity to enhance not only the quality of life but survival.

Research shows that lacking social connections can be as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day²⁷.

Coronavirus has taught us just how much we need human contact and how our physical and mental health is impacted by the experience of isolation or lack of social connectedness. The desire to contribute and the extraordinary motivation to help others that we have all witnessed, has contributed enormously to our collective wellbeing.

Volunteering is associated with improved wellbeing measures such as life satisfaction, happiness, and a greater sense of purpose, as well as improved general health. Volunteering is also associated with higher levels of self-efficacy and skills leading to enhanced education and employment outcomes. In 2014 the Chief Economist at the Bank of England gave a speech on the value of volunteering and he concluded that volunteering is big business with an annual

turnover well into three-figure billions²⁸.

As we are now all too well aware, we are connected to others through a series of different social networks. We have friends and family, we may go to work or volunteer, we may play a sport, we may belong to a club, we may belong to a faith group. However, social capital not only describes the connections between people, but it also looks at how productive and positive these connections are, who can you rely on to help you out in times of trouble or just simple things like looking after your children?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) proposed four main approaches to conceptualising and measuring social capital. This was used by the Office for National Statistics in their measurement of social capital in the UK 2017.

Personal relationships describes the networks of people that an individual knows. This will be made up of both close ties such as family, and

	Network structure and activities	Productive resources
Individual	Personal relationships	Social network support
Collective	Civic engagement	Trust and cooperative norms

wider acquaintances such as colleagues at work. This category describes the structure, size, source, and diversity of the network. These networks can both connect us to power, influence and decision making; or they can exclude us from this.

Social network support describes the different types of resources that an individual can receive from others in their network. This can be emotional, practical, financial, advice, guidance or professional support. Social network support can help people in times of need, for example, bereavement. Strong social network support can also help people succeed such as through employment opportunities.

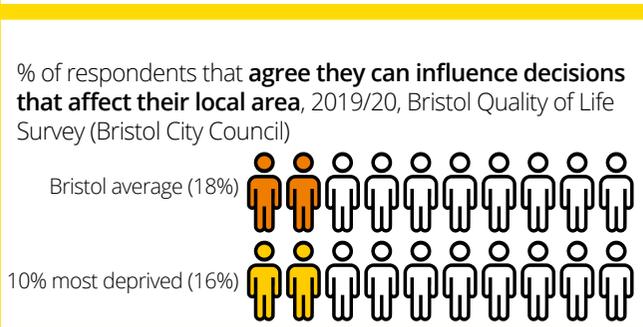
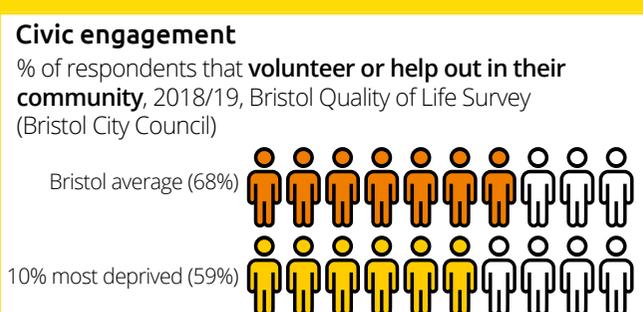
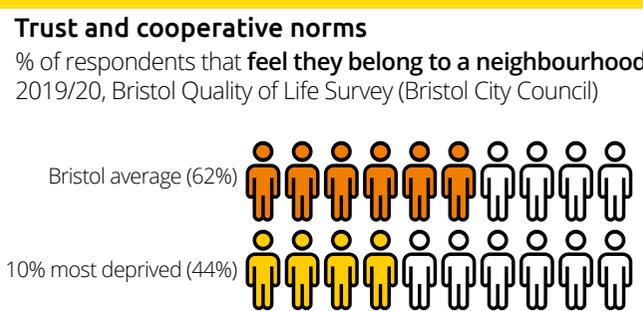
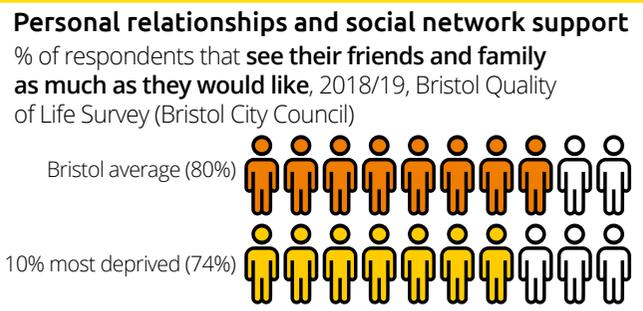
Civic engagement describes the activities which people contribute to community life. This includes volunteering, participation in political meetings, participation in clubs and activities, donating blood, donating clothes and food, and

other forms of community action.

Trust and cooperative norms refer to the qualities of trust, social norms and values which are shared by the group members. Trust includes trust in institutions such as national or local government, police and justice system as well as trust in others. The social norms are the rules, values and expectations that the group share. These are often unwritten and may include things such as what to wear, or how to behave in certain situations. Families, workplaces and communities all develop norms. These bind people together, but they can also make it difficult for new members to join these groups, and can leave people feeling on the ‘outside’.

We need to be aware that the impacts of individual social networks can be good and bad, both for individuals and for society. Exclusion from networks, from civic engagement or being outside of the ‘circle of trust’ can have negative impacts. Ever felt ‘left out’? If so, remember that feeling and what the experience was like physically and mentally, and then imagine what a lifetime of that might be like.

There is also such a thing as bad social capital and there are many fraudsters and money launderers in the business. People who are exposed to poor social relationships, for example domestic violence or exploitation, often have poor health and



wellbeing outcomes as a direct result of these relationships and contacts. Children and adults who are vulnerable may seek affirmation and connectedness from individuals and groups who act in ways which are harmful to them and others. Gangs, grooming and modern slavery all work on this very principle, exploiting human vulnerability and the need for connectedness.

The Bristol Quality of Life Survey (2019/20) records some data related to quality of social capital in Bristol²⁹.

The Happy City Index³⁰ suggests that Bristol could do better in terms of community cohesion, participation and equality, the domains which contribute to the People and Economy theme. Crime statistics tell us that we have issues with violence, with 15,559 incidents of violent crime and 6302 incidents of domestic violence registered by the police³¹

Based on this information, it would appear that while there is a great deal of positive social capital within Bristol, for example, levels of volunteering and a positive feeling of belonging, it is still a mixed picture. Less than 20% of respondents felt they could influence local decisions.

So in summary, we do have social capital in the Bristol savings account, and there are real opportunities to build on this through a forensic focus on connecting people to each other and connecting people to power.

BUILDING OUR MENTAL WEALTH THROUGH CULTURAL CAPITAL

The concept of cultural capital was first coined by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who defined cultural capital as 'familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society'³²

Bourdieu saw families passing on cultural capital to their children by introducing them to dance and music, taking them to theatres, galleries and historic sites, and by talking about literature and art over the dinner table.

He identified three sources of cultural capital: objective, embodied and institutionalised.

Objective: cultural goods, books, works of art

Embodied: language, mannerisms, preferences

Institutionalised: qualifications, education credentials.



Cultural Capital, is embedded in **our lives, our identities and communities**. It is the way we see ourselves and our place in the world. It is where we live, who we are and how we learn. It is how we live our lives. It is how we dress, communicate, eat and drink. It is how we build and decorate our homes. It is how we express ourselves – from music to sport. It is how we design and inhabit our streets and open spaces. It is what we do and why we do it.

Culture is also our heritage and history. It is our memories and stories, lived through our friends and relatives, here and elsewhere. It is what we imagine ourselves to be. It is our possessions and artefacts. It is the built and natural landscape. It is our story and how we re-tell it. It is who we were and who we are becoming.

Cultural Capital in a civic sense is visible in our museums, galleries, cinemas, music venues, theatres, libraries, festivals and events. It is how we record, collect, curate and present our identities and how we understand others’ identities. It is how we preserve and bring to life our stories. It is how we express our world to others.

Our diversity creates rich cultural capital bringing together many identities, stories and celebrations.

Bristol is a city full of art, cultural activity, energy and imagination.



Bristol is home to:

- Individual artists such as Banksy
- Museums and galleries such as M shed and Spike Island,
- Theatre such as Bristol Old Vic and Bristol Hippodrome
- Music venues large and small
- Community and faith festivals
- Bristol film festival
- Bristol Festival
- Graffiti Art
- Sports and physical activity events
- UNESCO Global network of Learning Cities.



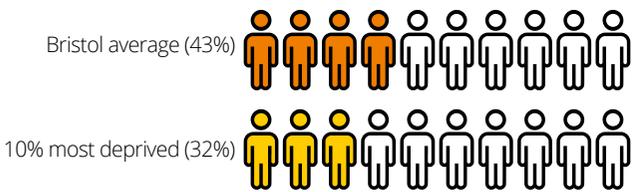
So, the question is - does everyone see themselves, their histories and cultures reflected in our public domain? And, how might it feel, and what effect might it have if we don't?. What more can we all do to learn about each other’s cultural capital, to make each other visible and to feel visible?.

The findings of Bristol Quality of Life Survey (2019/20) suggest that while we have some cultural capital in the bank, we have opportunities to strengthen our investment.

Interesting work is already being undertaken to try to address these inequalities and opportunities.



% of respondents that **participate in cultural activities at least once a month**, 2019/20, Bristol Quality of Life Survey (Bristol City Council)



The Bristol Cultural Investment Programme³³ provides opportunities for people and communities across the city to take part in the cultural life of Bristol, whether that is by attending a world-class music performance, a cutting-edge theatre production or taking part in a workshop, festival or exhibition in their local community. Between 2017 and 2019 fifty three organisations and projects were supported to provide opportunities for Bristolians to access culture, and advance diversity and equality in arts and culture.

Culture is, of course, also an important industry in Bristol, bringing jobs and revenue and the added value of innovation, productivity and brand. It is the creative and digital businesses. It is the design, production and trade of intellectual property. It is tourism and retail. It is the competitiveness of the wider economy. Overall the arts and culture industry in Bristol is estimated to have a turnover of around £48 billion³⁴

Art and culture are also known to be health-promoting in their own right, attracting increasing interest for this reason. The World Health organisation (2019) has recently released the largest report to date on the evidence of the impact of art and culture on health. This report has shown the wide-ranging impact art and culture can have on the prevention of illness and promotion of good health.

And, reflecting on the indicators from the Healthy Places Index, which suggest that Bristol could do better in terms of safety and cohesion, it is worth noting that art and culture can promote social bonding and can help form a bridge between different groups. For example, activities such as dance, art and theatre have been shown to foster greater social inclusion in patients with dementia and their carers, children and adults with and without disabilities, police and ex-offenders and adults across different generations. This all builds social and community capital within societies³⁵.

As this report goes to print individuals and communities in Bristol have come together, with those across the world, to insist that *Black Lives Matter*. Opinion and communities are divided over the unauthorised removal of the statue of Edward Colston, who made his wealth from the trafficking of people through slavery; and a painful conversation

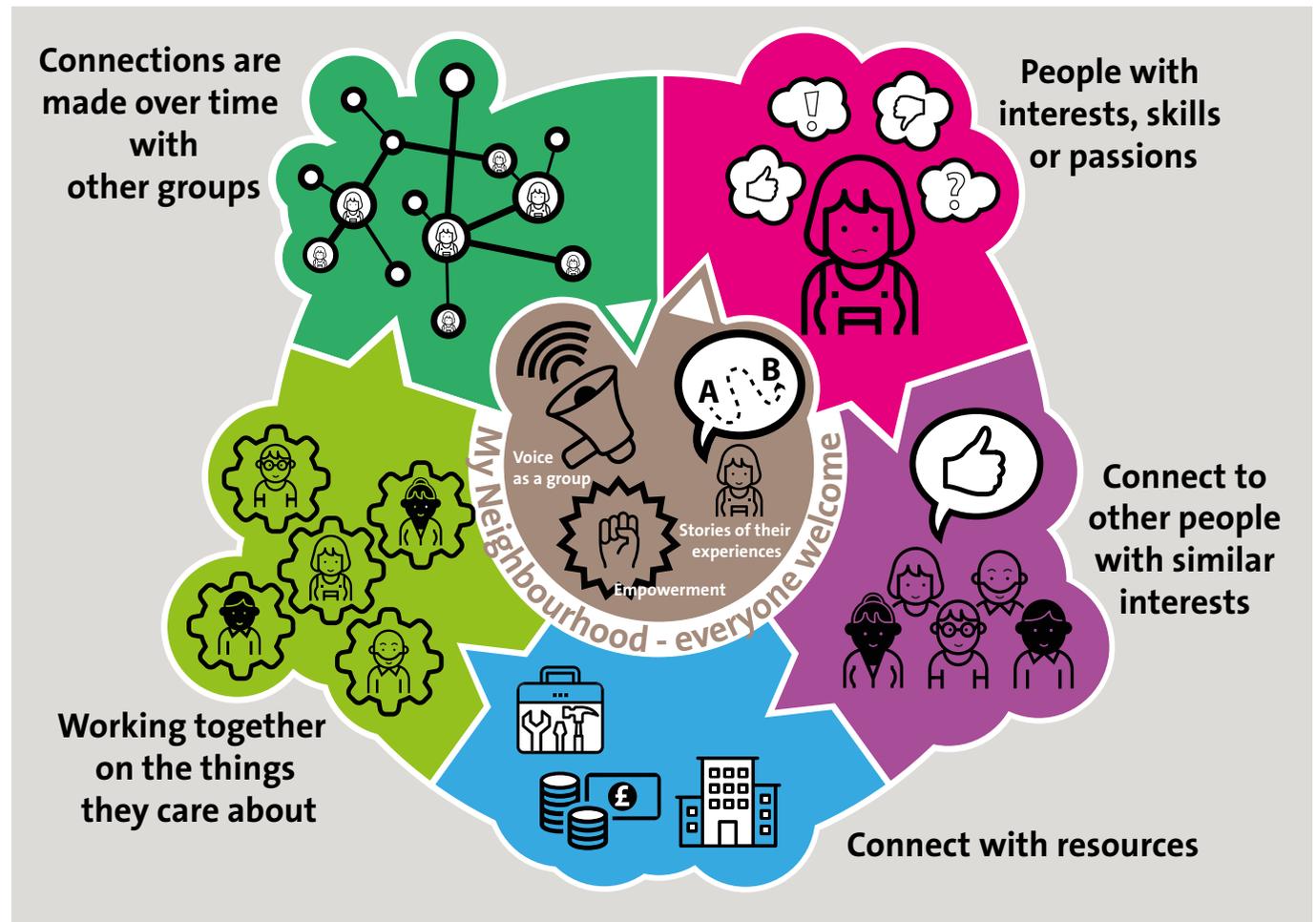
has begun as we examine this legacy and our own individual and collective histories. In this endeavor, we will begin to reshape a new sense of identity and shared culture within which we all need to feel we belong.

INVESTING IN OUR MENTAL WEALTH IN COMMUNITIES

Communities are live, dynamic, delicate eco-systems established through the connection and action of the people who are part of that community.

As we have so recently experienced through Coronavirus, communities are not always linked to a place or neighbourhood, but may be virtual, on line, or be a dispersed community of people with common interests and bonds.

Thriving communities grow social, economic and democratic capital – the greater the participation and engagement, the more people are involved, the more energy the community has and powerful it becomes.



An asset-based approach to community-building, is predicated on the principle that individuals and communities themselves have untapped resources, knowledge and skill, and that it is communities, not public authorities who are best placed to address local issues. Taking an asset-based community development approach, the Bristol Community Development Team engage in over 8000 community building conversations a year.

Applying our knowledge about social capital to communities, we need to be mindful that communities are not always benign. ‘In-groups’ can also result in ‘out-groups’ and bullying, exclusion and isolation. If communities become closed rather than open, exclusive rather than inclusive, then this is likely to be a liability rather than an asset to society as a whole. This is true for any community, anywhere.

The human need to belong and to connect, leads us to find this where we can. Gang membership brings identity, status, sense of belonging and protection. The stories of young women and men who have been sexually exploited, are almost always stories about looking for love, affection, attention. The induction of young people into extremist ideology of every sort, works on precisely this principle.

We noted earlier that only 62% of people in Bristol felt they belonged. That’s almost 40% who don’t feel they belong. That’s a lot of people.

In short, we cannot take community for granted. Community and social connectedness is the essential DNA of our mental wealth. We therefore must invest in these connections and in the positive assets which are in every individual, every household and every community.

We need to be proactive in supporting all of our young people in feeling valued, seen and engaged. We need to be mindful of inadvertently excluding those who feel ‘outside’ of the community and who feel cut off or alienated. We need to be able to see the signs, listen to the anger, hear the silences. We need to reach out and respond.

This will require us to build bridges between communities and to build bridges between communities and decision makers.

For this to happen, we need to learn how to celebrate, and experience many different versions of ourselves.

#WeAreBristol

www.wearebristol.co.uk

INVESTING IN OUR MENTAL WEALTH AT WORK

A skilled, healthy, diverse, inclusive, and productive workforce is essential for the economy.

Work also provides people with an income, a sense of fulfilment and is part of a person's identity. There is a strong economic and business case to ensure that the workforce is mentally and physically healthy.

The figure opposite describes how an unhealthy and unsafe workplace can impact on our physical and mental health. It clearly sets out the case for ensuring workplaces are healthy and safe.

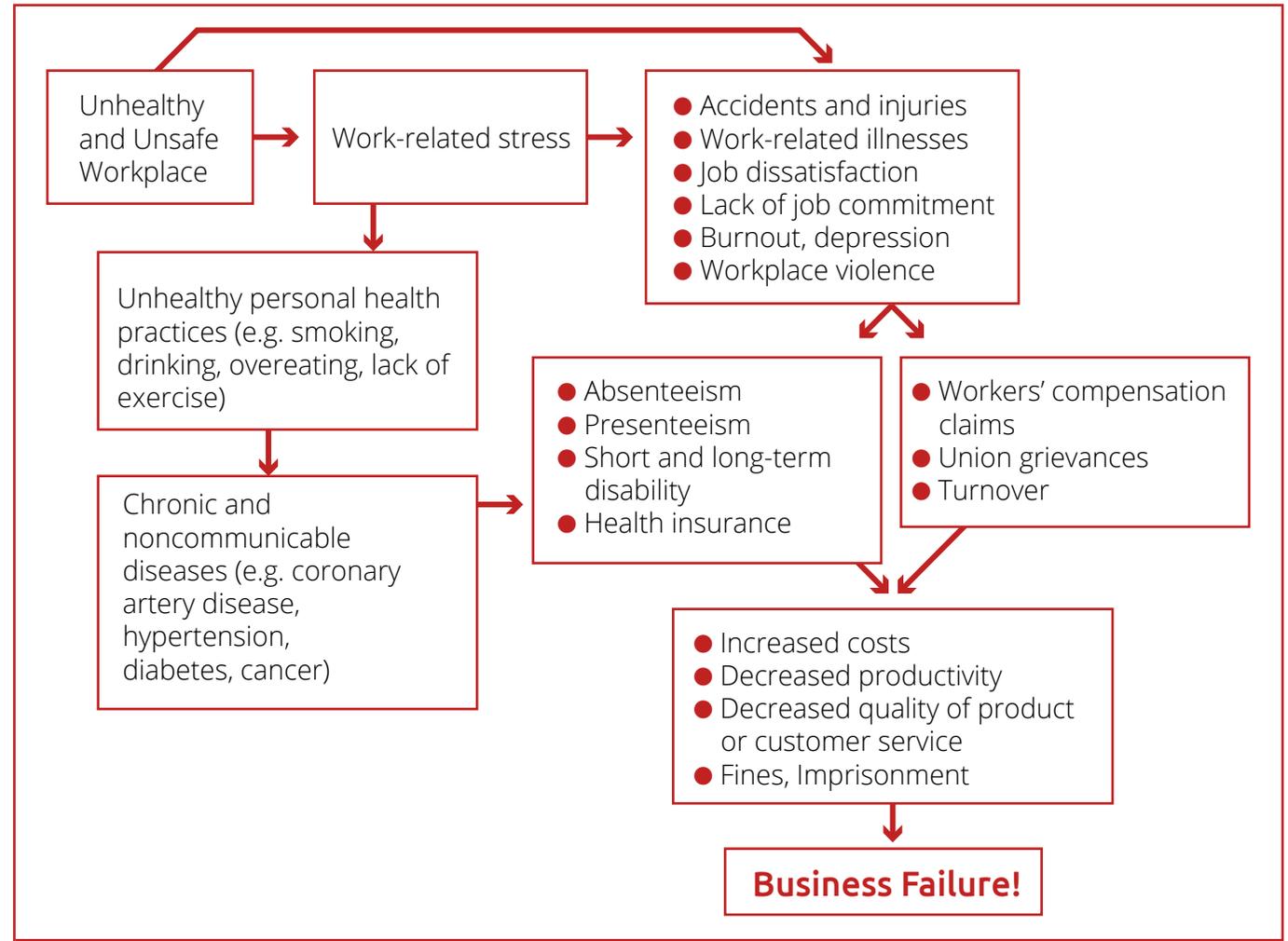


Fig 2: The business case in a nutshell – WHO Healthy Workplace Framework and Model³⁶.



In Bristol there are around 18,335 businesses in total, and from our population of just under 500,000 some 268,100 are employed or self-employed.

Bristol has a thriving economy with a range of employers of different sizes and sectors. In 2019 the *Inter Departmental Business Register records for Bristol*³⁷ shows:

- 90 large business (employing 250+)
- 335 Medium (employing 50-249)
- 1,800 Small (employing 10-49)
- 16,110 Micro (employing 0 to 9).

During the same period in 2019, 15,600 people were on long-term sick in Bristol. (ONS Annual Population Survey³⁸). A further 20,050 were claiming employment and support allowance (ESA) and incapacity benefits (DWP benefits claims).

In Bristol the cost of absenteeism is estimated to be around £84.101 million per year; with cost of lost productivity amounting to £168.21 million per year; and staff turnover around £29.12 million per year.³⁹

The Stephenson and Farmer Review (2017)⁴⁰ suggests six core standards which employers can use to build mental wealth at work:

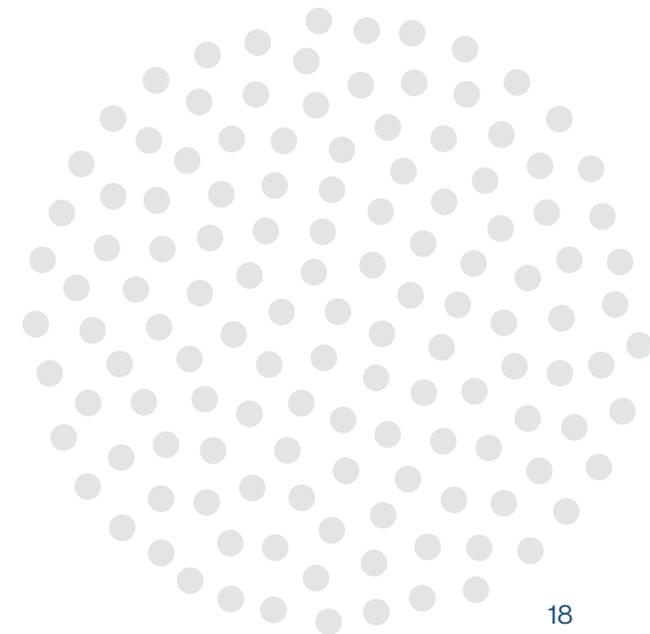
- Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan
- Develop mental health awareness amongst employees
- Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling
- Provide employees with good working conditions and ensure they have a healthy work life balance and opportunities for development
- Promote effective people management through line managers and supervisors
- Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing

The impact of health at work is much wider than the individual and the employer. The ripple effect on family, friends and the wider economy is considerable. If someone is out of work, there is a higher risk of getting into debt and of subsequent strain on relationships.

Thriving at Work Bristol is a collaboration of local employers focusing on improving mental health and wellbeing across our workplaces. Twenty-five public, private and voluntary organisations are working together to consider how best practice can be implemented at scale across the city. The group is chaired by

Bristol Mind and the law firm Burges Salmon, and includes representatives from Hargreaves, Deloitte, Rolls Royce, Windmill Hill City Farm, the NHS and unions. These employers across Bristol are testing and learning from interventions in the areas of culture and behaviour, led by OVO energy. Economics equals Thrive-o-nomics. Mental Wealth at work is worth the investment.

As we face the economic shock waves from Coronavirus, the protective nature of meaningful work becomes self-evident. We have the opportunity to work together to protect, invest in and reimagine our local industries and employment to create a sustainable future in which no-one is left behind. To truly build a Thriving City.



INVESTING IN OUR MENTAL WEALTH THROUGH URBAN DESIGN

Our places and spaces shape how we live our lives; The type of housing we live in, how safe we feel, how easily we can get about, whether we can walk, if the air is clean, and if we can sleep without too much noise disturbance.

How we live our lives shapes our places; whether we choose to walk, cycle, take the bus or drive; whether we drop rubbish; whether we recycle; whether we notice and talk to people around us.

How wealthy, or not, we are impacts on our experience of the place we live in; the type of housing, our neighbourhood, the activities we can afford to take part in; the shops we use.

Urban planning and the development of place impact on the health, well-being and quality of life of people in cities, for better or for worse. For this reason Bristol has been an active member of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and the University of the West of England hosts the WHO Healthy City Collaborating Centre

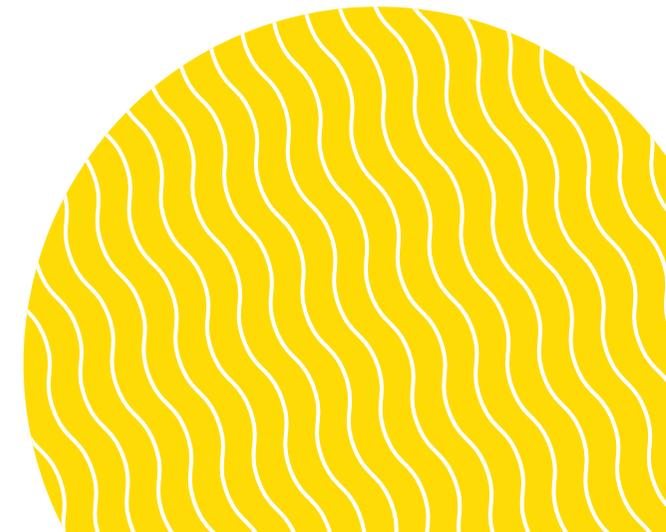
The Centre for Urban Design and Mental Health is an international think tank that seeks to answer the particular question of how can we build better mental health into our cities?⁴¹. They suggest four aspects of urban design that are particularly important for mental health and wellbeing.

- (i) Creating green places which reduce stress and help reduce pollutants.
- (ii) Being active by design – creating environments which support people walking, cycling and taking exercise.
- (iii) Creating spaces and places where people can gather, meet celebrate and socialise. This might include shops, plazas, cafes and parks, as well as indoor spaces such as halls, community and faith centres.
- (iv) And, of course designing safe places and spaces – which are well used by all, are well lit, open and comfortable.

There is a growing global body of expertise to draw upon. This includes work undertaken: in London by the host Olympic and Paralympic

Boroughs who produced an Urban Planning Checklist to promote healthy urban planning by ensuring that the health and wellbeing implications of local plans and major planning applications are consistently taken into account;⁴² in Canada⁴³ which has taken a national policy approach to Healthy Urban Design⁴⁴; in Utrecht who get mentioned in dispatches for their innovative approach to sustainable integrated transport and economy; and Latin America who have some innovative design programmes focus on cities, housing and infrastructure⁴⁵.

As Bristol expands and builds new developments, new homes and new commercial areas, we have an opportunity to include mental wealth in our place making.





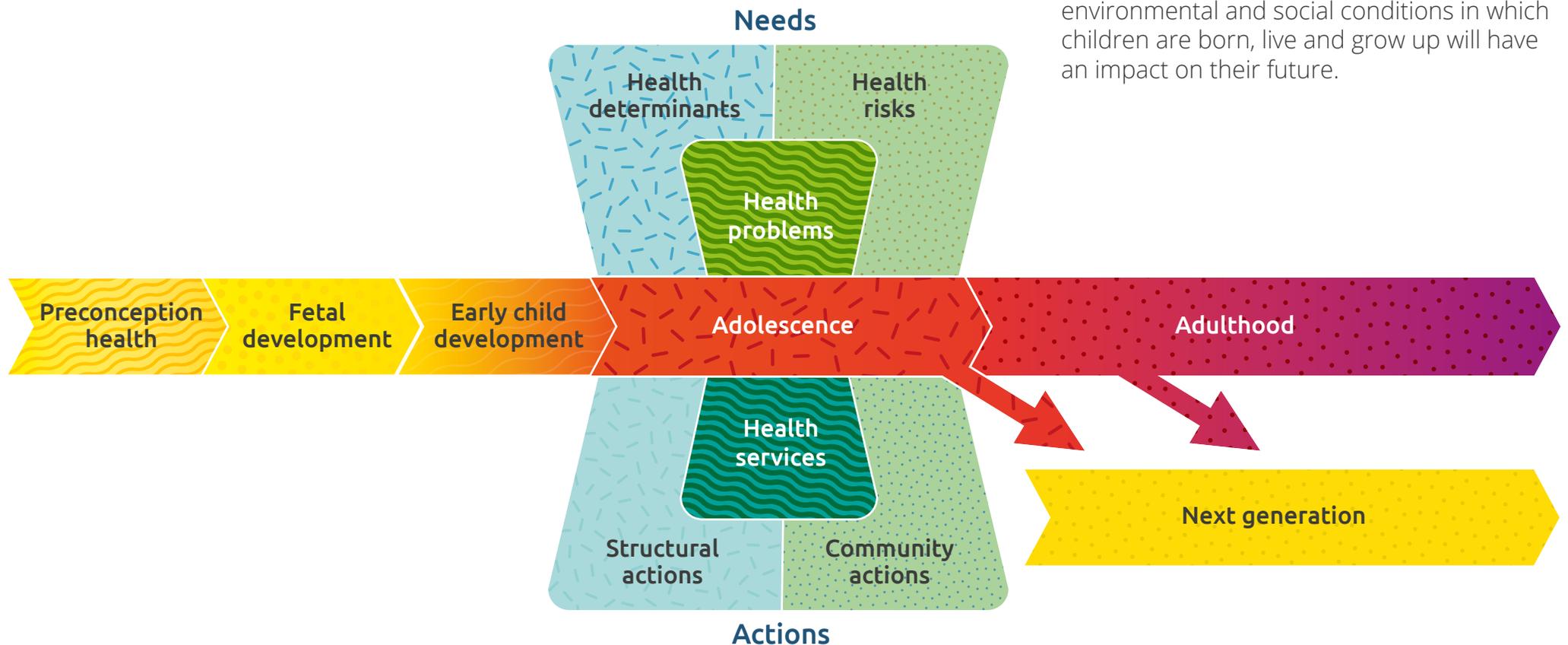
INVESTING IN OUR MENTAL WEALTH FOR THE FUTURE

We are fortunate in Bristol in that we are a young city, with more children aged 0-15 than people aged over 65.

In fact, Bristol is the 'youngest' city in the UK. In 2018 there were 5,820 births in Bristol. There are 85,700 children aged 0–15 and 73,000 young people aged 16–24^{46,47}.

Our young people are also even more diverse than the city as a whole with 38% of school age children being from Black, Asian, and other Ethnic Minority communities.

To develop well, children and young people need to be loved, supported and cared for. They need to have opportunities to learn, to play and build loving relationships. The environmental and social conditions in which children are born, live and grow up will have an impact on their future.



There is a great deal of evidence about the importance of the early years. The brain develops at an exponential rate in these early days and is influenced by nutrition and positive social interactions. The brain needs to be free from adverse childhood experience such as abuse and other forms of chronic stress⁴⁸.

Adolescence and early adulthood are also critical periods when young people acquire the emotional and cognitive skills necessary for adult life. To support this the brain is going through another significant period of development and adjustment. The quality and quantity of social relationships are crucial during this period⁴⁹.

On the positive side of the balance sheet, most school aged children and young people in Bristol say that they are happy most of the time (95% of primary school children and 65% of secondary school pupils). However there are several things that many young people worry about. More than half of primary aged children say they are worried about their family. They also worry about war and terrorism, crime, the environment, keeping safe and moving on to secondary school. 29% of primary and 67% of secondary pupils say that they experience frequent bullying⁵⁰, which leads to an increased risk of overall mental health problems, anxiety, and depression^{51,52}.

A very positive finding is that many children and young people say that there are people they can talk to when they have a problem, especially parents, carers and family members.

Healthy Schools⁵³ are focused on improving the health and wellbeing of the whole school community including pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. The Healthy Schools aim is that 90% of Bristol schools will have achieved the Essential Healthy Schools Award by 2025.

If we review young people mental wealth, we do find some areas of concern however:⁵⁴

- 19.7%, one fifth of Bristol’s children under 16 are living in low income families
- 193 per 10,000 of Bristol’s children are *in need* due to abuse or neglect
- 402 per 100,00 are first time entrants to the youth justice system

It is clear that our investment is not equitably distributed, and that some of our children, young people and families – one fifth in fact, if we focus on the low-income measure – are not benefitting as they could do from the opportunities the City has to offer.

Poverty is one of a number of factors which can adversely affect a young person’s life. Childhood trauma, including abuse, neglect and dysfunctional family life, has been associated with poor mental health. Traumatic events in childhood are also associated with a wide range of health harming behaviors, in children and adults, such as drug and alcohol misuse, smoking, risky sexual behaviour and involvement in criminal activity. Children who experience multiple adverse experiences are at the greatest risk of poor mental and physical health over their lifetime⁵⁵.

The children and young people of today are our future carers, parents, volunteers, nurses, artists, cleaners, bus drivers, teachers, inventors, scientists, business leaders. We must invest, and invest fairly. Because their future is ours.

SUMMING UP AND WHAT NEXT?

So what does Bristol’s balance sheet look like for Mental Wealth; and what might our investment portfolio look like? And where do we sit in the light of Covid-19?

In spite of the challenges of Coronavirus, we remain a wealthy city. We have wealth in our assets of both people and place, our creativity, in our energy and our collective intent. However, now, more than ever, we need to make sure that our capital is ethically invested, so that everyone can benefit.

It’s good to see that 62% of people in Bristol feel that they belong in the city. But let’s reach out to the 30% and make Bristol a place where everyone can feel they belong.

We can use our rich cultural capital to develop our human and social capital.

We can invest in positive, connected, communities which will provide the resilience against future economic and social shocks.

We can make sure that all of our young people feel valued, seen and engaged. This will build our futures account.

We have opportunities to be mindful of those who are not on the inside of connectedness and influence. We can make sure we see the signs, listen to the anger, hear the silences and invest in these areas before the fraudsters do.

We can connect people to each other and we can connect people to power.

We can recognise not only the value of work, but the value of investing in mental wealth at work.

We have opportunities to invest in creating healthy homes and urban spaces and places which support us to connect, be active, be safe and to thrive.

We can invest in and through a “circular economy” where we pay attention to how inputs can be reused or recycled in future production.

We can invest in environmental accounting which can support companies to take account of environmental as well as financial impacts.

As Bristol booms and even, or perhaps especially when it doesn’t, we can make sure that we are making the very best of our social and human capital and that everyone is protected from shocks and benefits equally from any windfall.

We can be at the forefront of a global movement which recognises the importance of thrive-o-nomics as the basis for Bristol’s future mental wealth portfolio.

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