



Bristol Health and Wellbeing Board

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Title of Paper: | The Bristol Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector's City-wide Strategic Action Plan |
| Author (including organisation): | Chiara Lodi – Senior Researcher at Black South West Network (BSWN) |
| Date of Board meeting: | 7th September, 2:30pm to 5pm |
| Purpose: | Decision / information and discussion |

- Paper to be no more than two pages long; full reports or more information can be added as appendices
- Draft papers are reviewed by the Public Health team
- Final papers will be published on the [public website](#)
- Board correspondence: HWB@bristol.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

The paper sets out the context prior to the formulation of the Bristol Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Strategic Plan and examines key objectives and the four working strands of the plan itself.

The VCSE Strategic Plan is a live document aimed at developing a city-wide approach to working equitably with the VCSE Sector in Bristol, and it is the formal response from the VCSE Strategy Group to the asks, critiques and desires the Bristol VCSE Sector raised in the "[Designing a New Social Reality](#)" research report.

The VCSE Strategy Group was set up between the first and the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic as a cross-sectoral partnership with representation from Bristol's VCSE Sector as well as Bristol's political leadership, equalities advisors and key city's stakeholders, funders, and commissioners. This group was originally chaired by Bristol's Deputy Mayor Asher Craig and is currently being co-chaired by Bristol City Council's Councillor Ellie King and Black South West Network's Director Sado Jirde.

2. Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of submitting this paper to the H&W Board is to present and inform the Board of the key working strands of the VCSE Strategy Plan and request for their support in the implementation phase. The plan is a city-wide strategy that can be meaningfully implemented only with all key stakeholders and decision-makers in the city being involved and working together with the VCSE Sector and Bristol communities.

3. Background, evidence base, and what needs to happen

The VCSE Strategic Plan is a response to the asks, critiques, and the desires that the VCSE Sector has expressed throughout the process of the "Designing a New Social Reality" research. Over 300 Bristol VCSE Sector representatives came together and were in conversation for over 9 months to design a collective vision for the future of the VCSE Sector.

The key issue that was raised in this process is around the role of VCSE Sector itself within the city's ecosystem. The VCSE Sector is requesting for more equitable approaches from key city's stakeholders when engaging with its representatives. If the VCSE Strategic Plan is

implemented effectively, the Bristol VCSE Sector will achieve its collective future vision of being more equitable, appropriately funded, enabled to plan long-term, meaningfully included in decision-making, rooted in community, resilient and strongly connected city-wide.

4. Community/stakeholder engagement

The original “Designing a New Social Reality” research report was produced through community-led research methodologies and formulated through an equalities-lens approach.

It actively engaged with qualitative and quantitative data collection with over 300 organisations of all sizes, conducted 13 qualitative group sessions and 30 interviews. Moreover, it reached grassroots community organisations, anchors, frontline organisations and stakeholders from a city-wide range of institutions.

Particular attention was given to ensuring that the perspective of equalities groups that face structural disadvantage were included meaningfully in the design of the collective vision for the future of the Bristol VCSE Sector.

The VCSE Strategic Plan is a direct response from the VCSE Strategy group to the vision and recommendations that the VCSE Sector has formulated in the research report.

The VCSE Strategic Plan has been designed through workshops with all the parties involved in the VCSE Strategy group. For practical reasons, the working strand focused on funding equitably was assigned as main area of focus to the funders, whilst the VCSE Democratic Forum was assigned to the VCSE representatives in the group, and the Commissioning Equitably strand was assigned to Bristol City Council Commissioners to work on. However, the final plan is ultimately a product of unanimous agreement across all parties.

5. Recommendations

Particular attention should be given from the Board to the Commissioning Equitably part of the VCSE Strategic Plan, where Health & Care have been a main area of discussion. There is now growing evidence that a Relational Approach is an effective approach to engage marginalised communities and community organisations that face structural disadvantage. This approach increases access from smaller and under-capacitated VCSE organisations to commissioning frameworks and in general to contracts, finance, and investment, and it enables the co-production of services to achieve better outcomes for communities.

The evidence we have collected for this plan (and parallel projects) indicates that there is high potential also for marginalised communities’ engagement with Integrated Care Systems through a similar approach that focuses on building community agency and capacity-building within the voluntary sector.

6. City Benefits

The Bristol VCSE Sector took a leading role in responding to the pandemic emergency and has demonstrated to be a fundamental part of Bristol’s social fabric. Enabling the VCSE Sector to maximise its impact and build its capacity in the long-term to be better placed to respond to immediate crises and the consequences of long-term structural inequities is a city’s priority.

7. Financial and Legal Implications

n/a

8. Appendices – Full report