

Report of Chair of Bristol Disability Equality Commission to Full Council November 2023

1. Alun Davies was appointed chair of the commission in September 2021. In December 2021 an open recruitment process for commissioners was undertaken. There were 22 applications. 17 Disabled people were interviewed. 11 applicants were appointed in February 2022. These are:

Beth Richards – individual commissioner

Gordon Richardson – individual commissioner

Justin Smith – Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People, organisation commissioner

Laura Welti – Bristol Disability Equality Forum, organisation commissioner

Leah Martindale – individual commissioner

Lynne Parfitt – individual commissioner

Marie Mighty – individual commissioner

Megan Belcher – individual commissioner

Phil Gingell – individual commissioner

Ruth Pickersgill – West of England Inclusive Living, organisation commissioner

Val Stansfield – Bristol Reclaiming Independent Living, organisation commissioner.

2. The members selected bring a very wide range of experience, knowledge and skill to the role. During 2022-2023, Leah Martindale and Phil Gingell have left their role as Commissioners. The chair would like to formally thank both Leah and Phil for their work and commitment in getting the Commission established.

3. Anela Wood and Devon Lowndes have joined as individual commissioners. Gordon Richardson is now the Bristol Disability Equality Forum representative, and Laura Welti is now an individual representative.
4. The Commission held its first meeting in February 2022 and has met bi-monthly since. It's terms of reference have been agreed. Commissioners have been identified to lead on specific work areas. Commissioners have been appointed to a number of One City boards, including Children and Young people, Culture, Homes and Communities, Transport and Commissioners participate in the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
5. The Commission chair continues to meet with councillors and senior officers of the council and other senior leaders in the city. The chair feels that positive working relationships have been established with the role of the commission seen as a positive one giving constructive challenge and seeking positive answers wherever possible.
6. One of the main issues has been the future of the commission in the new council committee structure. It is not yet clear to the commission what the role in the new structure may be. Clarification from members would be welcome as to their thoughts on this issue.
7. The Commission has not yet been successful in getting additional core funding for our work. The grants of £5,000 from Quartet for two years remain the only additional funding secured. The commission has not been able to do all the work it wants and achieve what Disabled people in Bristol need. Due to the lack of resources additional funding would provide.
8. In August 2022, the Commission successfully applied to the National Lottery for funding. This funding is to undertake engagement with

Disabled people to inform and guide the work of the commission. Due to a variety of pressures, this work was not undertaken in 2022-23 as planned. It will now take place in the winter and spring of 2023-24.

9. Commissioners have continued to engage with the relevant officers about the disproportionate implications of the Clean Air Zone on Disabled people. Dialogue is on-going. There has been progress on ensuring greater accessibility of the administrative systems, and consideration is being given to other mitigations. The commission remains concerned particularly over the issue of Disabled people who have a Blue Badge but not one specific vehicle.
10. The Commission has worked with Adult Social Care on a number of different areas. It has provided advice on the implications of budget reductions on Disabled people. It has also offered advice to Adult Social Care on its development of an Affordable Care Policy. Work is on-going regarding the delivery of the recommendations of the Sir Stephen Bubb report concerning Autistic people and people with learning difficulties. Unfortunately, this work has not progressed as quickly as was intended. The commission has been requested by the Director of Adult Care to develop a co-production policy and process for Adult Social Care. This work is underway and will produce a policy and process by April 2024.
11. The chair of the commission has met with the Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority. The focus of their meeting was regarding the accessibility of transport in the area.
12. The Commission has worked in partnership with the Chief Executive of the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care board to explore the experiences of Disabled people with a physical or sensory impairment of Health services. This work has revealed many challenges Disabled people experience. A report outlining those challenges and including recommendations for actions was discussed by the board in October and agreed.

13. The Commission has been made aware of challenges and difficulties experienced by a significant number of Disabled people employed by the council over recent years. The chair of the commission has raised these issues with the senior leadership of the council. They recognise and accept the seriousness of the situation, and a number of actions have been agreed.