

Full Council

14th November 2023



Report of: Penny Gane, Chair Bristol Women's Commission (BWC)

Director; Tim Borrett, Director Policy, Strategy and Partnerships

Title: Annual Update: Work of Bristol Women's Commission 2022/2023

Ward: City-wide

Member Presenting Report: Penny Gane Chair, Bristol Women's Commission

Recommendation

- To note the report
- To ensure Bristol City Council continues to support the Bristol Women's Commission to deliver on its programme of work
- To continue to support the Women's Commission

Summary

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by BWC during November 2022 – October 2023

The significant issues in the report are:

The report sets out the work undertaken by the Women's Commission in the priority areas of; Safety, Health, Education, Economy and Business.



Relevant Policies

1. European Charter of Equality for Women and Men in Local Life
2. One City Plan
3. Inclusive Growth Strategy
4. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Women’s Health Strategy
5. Bristol City Council’s Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2018
6. Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse

Consultation

1. Internal

BWC has a cross party membership of Elected Members and has been supported by Cllr Helen Holland in her role as Cabinet member Adult Social Care & Integrated Care System, Women and Women’s safety.

The Commission currently has no lead officer from BCC and no dedicated Equalities Officer. BWC receives business support for minuting meetings.

2. External

Please see the list below of all the organisations which make up the Commission and its 5 task groups. More than 70 external agencies are participants in the work of the Commission.

BWC has the following membership:

Bristol City Council (Councillors and Officers), One City, Bristol Women’s Voice (BWV), University of Bristol (UOB), University West of England (UWE), City of Bristol College (CoBC), Avon and Somerset Police, Trade Union Congress (TUC) vacant, Business West, University Hospitals Bristol (UHB) vacant, North Bristol Trust, Volunteering Organisation Standing Conference on Urban Regeneration (VOSCUR), Bristol Headteachers, Task Group leads on Economy, Health, Business, Education, Safety.

Chair: Penny Gane

Vice Chairs: Rebecca Mear, CEO VOSCUR, Joanne Ward, Vice Principal, Corporate Services and External Relations, City of Bristol College

The Women’s Commission is a City-wide partnership established to address multifaceted inequality faced by women and girls in the City of Bristol. Bristol Women’s Commission was set up in 2013 when the Mayor signed the European Charter of Equality of Women and Men in Public Life. See Appendix 1: A decade of achievements of Bristol Women’s Commission 2013-2023

The Women’s Commission currently has five task groups: Women’s Safety, Women’s Safety, Women in Business, Women and the Economy and Women and girls’ education. A further Task and Finish group was set up in addition to its five Task Groups and worked on the Councillor survey.

The commission has representatives on the Economy and Skills Board and Transport Board and several commissioners are on other boards relating to their own sectors

Three members of BWC are on the steering group set up by the PCC and Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police tackling Violence Against Women and Girls on a regional basis including a review of the Force itself. One of our commissioners also co-chairs the Women’s Independent Advisory Group to A&S Police.

Bristol Women’s Commission has hosted a full programme of speakers throughout the year and enabled follow up actions to support speakers in their work.

Context

This annual report summarises the activity of Bristol Women’s Commission since our last report to Full Council in November 2022.

The Women’s Commission seeks to draw councillors’ attention to some of the issues women are facing:

Women’s Health

- Recent data shows that rates of breast cancer are **16% higher** in Bristol than the England average (OHID). Screening rates are also significantly lower.
- In Bristol prevalence of osteoporosis is rising much faster than in England and 72% of hip fractures, a common consequence of osteoporosis, occurred in women (BCC, 2022s).
- Women in Bristol -13%- smoke, more than the national average of 10.4%
- Nationally, 1 in 5 women have a common mental disorder, compared with 1 in 8 men. In particular the perinatal period, menopause, long-term conditions and violence against women and girls. Locally, there is a relationship between poor mental health and deprivation.

Women and the Economy

- Women’s Budget Group/ Centre for Local Economic Strategies estimated that barriers to paid work for women costs £88.7bn gross value added per year.
- 62% of those working in care earn less than the real living wage
- 25% of children with a parent working in social care are growing up in poverty
- Last year around 12,000 people in Bristol -overwhelmingly women - were economically inactive due to the need to provide family care. In addition about 25% of all women are caring for children or adults restricting their ability to work full time or at their skill level.

Education

- The average age of children first seeing pornography is just under 13 (Children’s Commissioner)
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence continue to be a scourge in schools (Women & Equalities Committee 2023)
- Women are much more likely to go to university than men and have been for many years. They are also more likely to complete their studies and gain a first or upper second-class degree.

However, after graduation, men are more likely to be in ‘highly skilled’ employment or further study just after graduation. Male graduate average earnings are around 9% higher than female earnings one year after graduation. This earnings gap grows substantially over their early careers and reaches 31% ten years after graduation.

Women’s Safety

- It is estimated that around 67 thousand individuals aged 16 or over will have experienced domestic abuse over their lifetime in Bristol
- In Bristol 81% of domestic abuse cases involve women as victims and men as perpetrators
- 59% of survey respondents to a women’s survey in Bristol said they had experienced verbal sexual harassment on Bristol transport;

Women in Business

- Lack of affordable childcare provision in the city has a detrimental impact on women’s ability to apply for jobs, remain in jobs and progress to meet their full potential.
- Women are still under represented in the STEM and construction sector in the city
- We have seen the positive impact on women who work for organisations that are signatories to our Charter, supporting and creating awareness of the work we do and helping us to make Bristol a gender equal city.

2022/2023 Progress

1. Women and the Economy –

Leads: Diane Bunyan, Sue Cohen

Task group membership organisations:

Policy Advisory Committee Women’s Budget Group, Fair Play South West; Family Policy UoB, Health and Social Care- City of Bristol College, Stepping Up, Co-produce Care CIC, Bristol Women’s Voice, Carers’ Support Centre, Parenting in the Pandemic Project, Equity, plus involvement of Employment Skills and Learning Bristol City Council and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, North Bristol NHS

The Task Group have made significant progress in furthering the importance and value of care, formal and informal, to the social and economic infrastructure of Bristol with the support of partners and representation on the Economy and Skills Board. Building on the successful event that brought together training and care providers, grassroots groups, community researchers; political representatives; academics and employers the group identified a list of key actions that have since been supported in key settings. The Metro Mayor Dan Norris attended the BWC meeting in February and committed to highlighting the caring economy within the combined authority on a panel at a very successful and well attended workshop at International Women’s Day in March. The Task Group Convenors have since met with the WECA senior management team to discuss the issue in relation to their work on growing the local economy. The group facilitated care providers, City of Bristol College and voluntary sector organisations to come together to apply for skills funding to support those wanting to access work in care. The group presented their work at a meeting of the European

Sociological Association and to the joint meeting of the Health and Social Care and Economy and Skills Board. The group is now working with Bristol Women’s Voice to support local women to raise and campaign on issues for those providing and receiving care both paid and informal.

The task group is also working with the Women and Business Charter Group to identify how this issue impacts on their workforce and to identify examples of good practices that can be shared with all employers in Bristol.

See Appendix 2: The Caring Economy Manifesto

See Appendix 3: Report on Caring Economy multi agency event 17.10.22

2. Women’s Safety

Lead: Claire Bloor, CEO SARSAS

Member organisations: St Mungo’s, Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRISi), UWE, UoB, BWV, BCC, Bristol Drugs Project, Avon and Somerset Police, Probation Services, Working Links, Somerset & Avon Rape & Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS), One25

Womens Safety on Public Transport

Progress is slow but the group is ensuring that they are represented at key meetings including representation on the One City Transport Board and the VAWG on Public Transport Steering Group to ensure women’s voices are heard. This includes working with the public transport safer and equalities group – coordinated by SARI and the VAIWG on public transport - steering group coordinated by the British Transport Police. The group is working with Bristol City Council to support their training across Licensing to make taxis safer for women. The group is also working with A&S Police to develop a joint approach on tackling sexual harassment across First Bus services.

Night-time Economy

Women’s Safety Task Group will be represented on the Nighttime Economy Advisory Panel and the Purple Flag Group. For the latter people have had to walk around the city one night to see how safe/accessible it is as part of a self-assessment process.

There is an update to the training coming for nighttime economy workers and it is hoped that the Women’s sector will be involved in rolling this out across the City.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

Following the success of last years 16 Days of Activism, partners will join BWC in amplifying messages to end gender based violence this year (25th November to 10th December 2023)

Future of the Women’s Safety Group

BWC have decided to change the format of how women’s safety in the City is discussed at the commission level. This is because many of the WSTG members sit on strategic reference groups on the issues of women’s safety already and it has felt like a doubling up of resources.

Instead the Commission will be dedicating one of the BWC Full Commission meetings each year to focus on women’s safety. In July 2023 Commission piloted this approach with an excellent session on

tackling VAWG which included speakers from Bristol City Council and NextLink on the Domestic Abuse Strategy and service implementation. Commission received an excellent presentation from the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Inspector Steph McKenna A&S Police BWC commissioner on how the Police are tackling VAWG. Sgt Patrick Brimmer briefed commission on progress on the next VAWG Summit from new Asst Chief Constable Joanne Hall.

Three commissioners are active members of Avon and Somerset Police’s VAWG steering group and a Commissioner co-chairs the Women’s Independent Advisory Group to A&S Police.

See Appendix 4: VAWG agreed statement- Safer Places for Women and Girls

Women in Business Charter: Lead Sandra Gordon, Director Women in Business Charter

Women in Business Charter signatories: OVO, Burges Salmon, UWE, Moon Executive Search, Manor Community, National Composites Centre, Business West, Chickp Ltd, Hargreaves Lansdown, ADLIB, Flipper, Stephenson Law, Redington, Sawdays, Action M.E, Bishop Fleming, Pelican, BCC, Bristol Airport, TLT LLP, One Big Circle, Clarke Wilmott, GCP, Ian Williams, water2business, Rolls Royce, Simitive, Centre for modelling and simulation, SR2, Tech Talent Academy, Stride Treglown, Triodos Bank.

During the last 12 months the Bristol Women in Business charter has continued to increase membership with 41 employers representing over 45,000 employees.

They have also stated that the Charter has helped to solidify their commitment to gender equality in their businesses and hold them accountable to the goals that they have chosen.

“We have benefitted from being part of a wider community that shares good practice in improving and maintaining gender diversity and inclusion. Being a Charter signatory also demonstrates to our employees, clients and local community that we take these issues seriously and finally, being a signatory keeps gender equality on the firm’s agenda.”

The Charter new signatories are seeing a benefit from joining already. “Our first-year membership of the Charter has helped us maintain our ongoing focus on diversity and inclusion. Events held with Charter signatories have provided a broader insight into progressive approaches for us to consider, which has prompted healthy discussion internally about opportunities to further our gender equality.”

The group has continued to listen to the needs and suggestions from the Charter community throughout this year, to help improve the value of being a signatory and ultimately to achieve the aims of the Charter.

A common theme in the feedback from signatories revolves around mentoring and support from other signatories, which has led to the launch of the Peer 2 Peer Mentoring Program.

One of the benefits of being a Charter signatory is creating the opportunity to bring companies together to share their experience and knowledge and learn from each other through regular events. Throughout 2022/23 there have been 6 events, a blend of Signatory exclusive events and public events and for the first time since the start of the pandemic and the group becoming a CIC, the group has been able to host in person public events, covering important subject matters such as ‘untapped talent’, and ‘recruiting for difference’.

The group has seen progress made from signatories outside of their chosen goals on a number of other activities such as changes to key policies, recruitment, the implementation of inclusive leadership training and connecting with various networks that support women within organisations. See the latest impact report for details of progress made against each of the seven charter goals.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bd03pw07zF93SI80hN-3aMFO2Fbs9tUF/view>

Charter Objectives/goals 22/23

- Peer to Peer Support Programme
- BSI/ISO Gender Standards Work
- Consultancy expertise from the Charter
- Sharing best practice
- Increasing awareness of the work of the charter
- Focusing on developing an intersectional approach/lens to the progress our signatories are making.
- Implementing 6 monthly progress check ins with signatories
- Collaborating with the Women’s economy task group with the caring economy manifesto – the impact this is having on women working in businesses.

See Appendix 5: Annual Impact Report- Bristol Women in Business CiC 2022-3

Women’s Health

Co Chairs-Monira Chowdhury, North Bristol NHS Trust, Penny Gane Chair BWC
 Membership-North Bristol Trust, Healthwatch Bristol, Womankind, Bristol Health Partners, UWE Incontinence, UWE Nursing & Dorothy Hospice Care, Karin Smyth MP, Bristol GP, BWV, Next Link, Self-Injury Support, Black Mothers Matter, Public Health, Caafi Health, BWC Chair

Over the last year, the Bristol Women’s Health Task has grown in strength with new community sector members Black Mothers Matter and Caafi Health joining health specialists from voluntary sector organisations and the public sector and volunteers with an interest in women’s health. Bristol Health Partners and Healthwatch Bristol have also joined long standing members: BHP Bladder & Bowel HIT Chair, Next Link, Womankind, GP, local MP. The Commission strongly advised the Council to refresh the chapter on Women’s Health first published in 2017. Following the publication of the chapter on Women’s Health in the JSNA- research supported by the task group- and the publication of poor breast cancer statistics in the Bristol Cable (with interviews of Co Chairs) the group is focussing on Women’s

Health Hubs for the upcoming year in order to bring together partners covering a range of women’s health issues and ensuring the initiative is community focussed. The Commission session on Women’s Health Hubs brought together the leads from the Integrated Care Board and Public Health with women’s health charities, health sector representatives and commissioners to examine the notion of a BNSSG wide Health Hub and to contribute ideas on its development. Co Chair, Monira Chowdhury will be on the steering group for the Health Hub.

The Chapter on Women’s Health in the JSNA will be monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The group is now linked to Dame Lesley Regan’s National Women’s Health Round Tables and a representative of the group attended the first of these on Women with Dementia.

Women and Girls’ education

Membership- St Mary Redcliffe & Temple, Orchard, North Star Academy Trust, Cabot Learning Federation, St Brendans, Oasis Brightstowe, RedMaids High, Cotham School, Notton House Academy, St Bede’s, Badminton, Cajigo, University of Bristol, City of Bristol College, University of West of England, Bristol City Council

Chair Kaye Palmer Greene

The Education Task Group has decided that the focus for the group going forward will be violence against young girls and women in education. The group plans to proactively influence the Belonging Strategy city plan; the Education Task Group will focus on making decisions on what action can be taken to lobby this group with changes that can make a positive impact. In order to ascertain what is currently happening in the city the group will establish an evidence base of current levels of harassment in schools, further education and higher education in Bristol. We will then develop a scheme of work that can be shared between the schools, FE and HE establishments.

International Women’s Day

Bristol Women’s Commission organised and chaired two panel events at the IWD celebrations at City Hall in March: Women in Leadership and A Caring Economy for Bristol-Who Cares Wins.

Bristol Women’s Commission Comms

BWC now has its own dedicated website, which is kept up-to-date with membership changes etc. and has hosted some thought provoking blogs on the range of issues that BWC works on - from business and the economy to women's health and safety. We have more posts in the pipeline from national politicians.

BWC's social media followers continue to grow, with LinkedIn seeing a significant uplift and excellent engagement rates. Our full commission meetings are all live tweeted, securing high profile re-shares and engagement from other organisations and city leaders.

We've also featured in the local press with The Bristol Cable running an in-depth look into both the caring economy (need for affordable childcare for working mums) and women's health (exploration into how health hubs might help us tackle the high breast cancer rate in Bristol). We've also been mentioned by BBC, Bristol24-7 and Bristol Live. We will be taking part in 16 days of action with interviews and blogs.

BWC meetings

This year BWC has hosted the following speakers:

Date	speakers	subject	outcome
NOV 2022	Rachel Albless BHP	How BHP support women’s health	Rachel has joined BWC Health Group and has initiated direct contact with relevant BHP Health Implementation Teams
	Millie Collins (commissioned by Public Health)	New JSNA Chapter on Women’s Health	BWC lobbied for the production of this comprehensive report and supported the research. It will be published on council website and monitored through Health and Wellbeing Board.
	Hilary Land ETG	Integrated Social Care	To inform BWC on the matters discussed at an awayday on the new arrangements
	Sue Cohen ETG and Economy Board	Who Cares Wins	Economy Task Group produced a series of demands shared with WECA and other organisations
	Sandra Gordon WIB	Untapped Talent Pool	Businesses able to develop policies to address caring responsibilities, menopause etc and to gain perspective on the economic impact of women not achieving their potential
January 2023	Dan Norris, Mayor of the West of England	A Caring Economy for the West of England	Dan Norris took part in a panel discussion on the topic at IWD Economy Task Group met with WECA senior management team to discuss possible work on this issue
March 2023	Oona Goldsworthy, Co Chair Homes and Communities Board	What are HCB doing for women?	Link established with the Economy Task Group leading to Brunel Care being involved in a bid for funding to support more women into jobs in the care sector
	Cllr Geoff Gollop, Vice Chair- committee Model Working Group Plus members: Cllr Marley Bennet Cllr Nicola Beech Cllr Helen Holland	How will new arrangements affect Bristol Women’s Commission?	Wide ranging discussion of possible outcomes for commissions and new arrangements. Generally supportive and reassuring.

	Penny Gane, Chair BWC	Achievements of BWC over ten years	Councillors warmly appreciated overview of the commission’s work.
May 2023	Vicki Shaw- Wessex Water Yasmin Boudezba- Western Global Rosie Richards- Hargreaves Lansdown	How are individual WIB Charter signatories working to bring about women’s equality?	<p>The 3 charter signatories provided an update of activities and progress on gender equality being undertaken within their organisation, which include.</p> <p>Introducing Women of the West at Work which is a positive environment for sharing experiences. Most people are now working from home and mothers are benefitting from this change.</p> <p>Finance traditionally male dominated, worked hard to change this, ratio is now 40/60 women/men now and some directors are women and mothers.</p> <p>Reviewing the key stages of recruitment, getting to middle management level and keeping women motivated through life’s challenges. Making the application process wording gender neutral. Looking at where they can recruit differently using organisations like Women’s work lab, Stepping Up.</p> <p>Introducing menopause coaches and looking at women’s health all the way through life.</p> <p>Attracting more female talent through improved recruitment advertising, with a specific focus on returners.</p> <p>Develop female talent, through targeted support, mentoring and career development planning, promote the use of mixed interview panels.</p>

			The culture is the most important thing, it has helped that people know they can take time out if needed, for example for childcare issues.
July 2023	Claire Hiscott- Deputy PCC Chief Inspector Stephanie McKenna A&S police Sgt Patrick Bremmer	How are A&S Police tackling VAWG	Very full reports from A&S, Dep PCC, PH, VAWG steering group. Much progress. Task group keen not to replicate so will instead bring an annual report. Commissioners taking an active role in many VAWG groups including A&S steering group VAWG, and IAG.
	Sue Moss PH Sarah O’Leary, Next Link	VAWG Progress and Strategy	As above
September 2023	Alexandra Humphry, Clinical Effectiveness Mgr BNSSG ICB Dr. Joanna Copping, PH Consultant	Women’s Health Hubs	Meeting attended by health task group members and other guests with an interest in WHHs. One health hub to cover BSSNG area under NHS England funding. High expectations of increasing women’s engagement, though WHHs focus has been prescribed centrally. Co Chair of Health Task Group to be on steering group. Health task group to be closely involved. PH staff to attend HTG.
	Charlotte Back, Health watch	Your Menopause Experience. Research results.	Strong research to give evidence base in employment policies and to underpin issues dealt with in health hubs as relevant; Healthwatch now member of BWC Health Task Group

Conclusion

Conclusion

For a decade Bristol Women’s Commission has brought together partners across sectors and agencies to raise issues of women’s inequality with decision makers and key agencies in the city. This report outlines how the five task groups and commissioners have sought to highlight and address the wide range of issues affecting the lives of women in Bristol in 2022/3.

The report notes progress in the course of one year but significant inequalities persist in the lives of women and girls which call for continuing resolute action. Decision makers need to ensure policies for change are embedded at every level to tackle the issues laid out in this report.

Penny Gane, Chair Bristol Women’s Commission 24th October 2023

Appendices:

Appendix 1: A decade of achievements of Bristol Women’s Commission 2013-2023

Appendix 2: The Caring Economy Manifesto

Appendix 3: Report on Caring Economy multi agency event 17.10.22

Appendix 4: VAWG agreed statement- Safer Places for Women and Girls

Appendix 5: Annual Impact Report 2022-2023; Bristol Women in Business CIC