

Appendix 3- Report on Caring Economy event

REPORT ON THE CARING ECONOMY FOR BRISTOL EVENT Oct. 17TH 2022 ECONOMY TASK GROUP - BRISTOL WOMEN'S COMMISSION

The event brought together Childcare and social care providers paid and unpaid; City of Bristol College; city council policy makers; grassroots and women's groups; Parenting in the Pandemic community researchers; political representatives; organisers from March of the Mummies; receivers of care; university researchers - **Coming together in solidarity with one another for a Caring Economy for Bristol**

What do we mean by the Caring Economy?

The Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy led by the Women's Budget Group with input across the UK from gender budgeting experts, organisations working on poverty/discrimination, grassroots activists and local decision makers - developed an economic vision, with strategies, to further equality between women and men. The Commission's final report defines the vision as **"A Caring Economy"** which:

- Has the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the planet at its centre
- Values the care that nurtures us all - paid and unpaid
- Ensures that no one faces discrimination, violence, or poverty.

Bristol Women's Commission has picked up the mantle along with our sponsors – City Of Bristol College, Fair Play South West, Bristol Women's Voice, the University of Bristol, the Women's Equality Network. Together we believe that investing in care will further the delivery of an inclusive, fair and functioning economy that Bristol's One City Plan aspires to.

Bristol Women's Commission's Economy Task Group's Vision of a Caring Economy

- **Is a thriving economy with childcare and social care at its heart:** That boosts women's place within the economy and supports better access to training and skills, professional development, and continuity in employment
- **Invests in people of all ages. Invests in children's early years** – that they thrive in their social, physical and creative development giving children a better, more equal start in life
- **Invests in levelling up** – we know that in the most marginalised areas of the city where unemployment is highest and educational advancement and social mobility lowest that it is harder to get a childcare place especially one you can afford; it's harder to get to work because bus services can be so poor so if you are caring for a relative or your children you can't manage your day; it's harder to get out and about if you rely on care; it's harder for parents to get support for children with SEND needs
- **Economic policies are centred on growth at the moment – but where is the growth and who benefits? Caring economics invests in childcare, nursery care, social care that includes paid and unpaid carers, transport, well-being,**

- training and skills; rewards those who work in the caring economy rather than so many having to rely on low wages and food banks**
- **Caring economics creates more new jobs in the care sectors than a similar investment in physical infrastructure.** But these jobs need to be well paid. We need more workers in the care sectors. However many are on their knees. Wages and recognition of skills are so poor at the moment that the childcare and social care infrastructure is in serious decline
 - **Caring Economics furthers productivity enabling more women to take up and remain in employment across all sectors,** advance their professional development, and access training and skills – with the support of flexible working conditions that give time to care – this is what productivity is about
 - **Creates new employment opportunities** – if there is childcare and social care support, women will be more able to join in furthering the green economy, environmental sustainability, renewable energy
 - **Health and care services employ the highest number of workers in the city,** over and above retail, hospitality financial services and manufacturing and yet the health and care sectors get barely any recognition for their contribution to the local economy in spite of the contribution they make to holding the economy together as we saw in the pandemic; in spite of the contribution that those working in the caring economy make in the taxes they pay. Meanwhile the very rich, hedge funders who buy up care homes leach approx. 25% of the profits they make out of the country evading investment in growth. There is no trickle down there
 - **Caring economics invest in sharing care more equally in the family.** Invests in women and men who are carrying the burden of care – the invisible army. Enables those who are cared for to have greater choice in their lives
 - **Above all caring economics invests in well being and life chances, reducing poverty and improving health, increasing life expectancy**

Bristol Women’s Commission proposes that Bristol adopts the caring economy as a strategic driver for investment.

Bristol City Council and the West of England Authority have between them wide ranging responsibility for public services, training, skills, transport, environmental sustainability and for those disadvantaged by poverty and discrimination. The test is how are ambitions rolled out in practice by all decision makers including national government, how are we measuring improvements, addressing challenges? What we cannot change locally and regionally needs local and regional government to campaign for at a national level.

Top Demands from the Roundtables at the Caring Economy Event

Investing in the Caring Economy

- **Investing in the caring economy contributes to our communities.** Investing in poorer communities means that residents return that investment to their communities. Local investment can then feed into the environmentally sustainable circular economy
- **Resource local care providers so that money stays in local communities. Ensure procurement is grounded on social value implementing Unison's Ethical Care Charter. Ensure money invested in private care stays in Bristol** (Skills for Care estimates that investing in adult social care in England doubles in value - £25.6 billion expenditure brings a return to the economy of £50.3 billion taking multiplier and other indirect benefits into account.)
- **Time to Care - Support employers who allow employees time to care –** (NHS, AVIVA and Marks and Spencer support time to care with flexible working). Ensure that time to care forms part of WECA's Good Employment Charter
- **Value the ability of diverse communities to identify and meet their own needs. Unlock innovation in local communities as part of the WECA Industrial Strategy**
- **Person centred care.** Put the service user at the centre and listen to their expertise. (Rather than on-line surveys, support qualitative and peer research e.g. Bristol's City Listening Project led by Bristol Women's Voice.)

Pay and Conditions

- **Value care - a cultural change is needed.** Raise the profile of care workers so that all are valued (Especially if women are to further care for the planet and enter into male dominated sectors where billions are being invested in the Green Economy and in the Digital Economy)
- **Increase wages. Parity of pay between health and social care workers; parity of pay between nursery workers and primary school teachers**
- **Ring-fence funding for improving care workers pay and for ensuring contracts for care workers pay sick leave/maternity /carers' leave. No contracts to be granted to providers without these protections**

- **Political leaders should speak up on everyone benefiting from investment in care. They should raise concerns about lack of care. Political leaders should put pressure on central government to invest in the caring economy**

Childcare

- **Invest in early years. Free childcare from the end of maternity leave onwards enables women to give back into the economy and to keep their connection to the labour market**
- **Funding from government is a priority – include childcare as infrastructure in Industrial Strategies regionally and nationally**
- **Any new planning and regeneration developments should have childcare provision written into them**
- **Employers should contribute to childcare needs. For all parents – mothers and fathers**
- **Planning committees should support space for “affordable” leases for childcare provision including the takeover of community assets. More on-site childcare initiatives provided by schools and employers**

Carers

- **Invest in social care both paid and unpaid the need for which is ever growing**
- **Increase the Care Allowance and raise the earnings limit**
- **Absence of care is leading to time out of the labour market and time-poverty across all age groups. Carers across the generations need access to respite care. Include in WECA’s Good Employment Charter. Many older women must now combine paid employment with caregiving**
- **Establish the right to paid leave for carers using the NHS scheme as a model for employers and paid from a ‘Care Leave Fund’ to which all employers over a certain size would contribute to (A model used initially to develop a national maternity pay fund.)**
- **Identify and support navigators i.e. those with experience of care-giving and knowledge of local voluntary and formal services e.g. Bristol Black Carers; Carer’s Support Centre**
- **Establish young carers clubs in schools and colleges**
- **Enable teachers to recognise students needing support in combining the demands of studying with caring responsibilities at home.**

- **Enable line managers and employers to access training on flexible working conditions in support of carers**

Training and Skills

- **Raise the profile of care workers so that decision-makers recognise the importance of up-skilling.** To include continued support for BTEC qualifications as well as bite-sized courses
- **Role models from diverse communities** – voluntary organisations encouraging access to childcare and social care training for those they are working alongside
- **“Kite Mark” for employers to show that they allow time off to train, pay the living wage, support diversity and equality, support students in placements. All training and skills courses to support access to free childcare.** Ensure all included in WECA’s Good Employment Charter
- **Training and skills ambitions furthered through joined up working between communities, councils, training providers, and employers/voluntary organisations**
- **Be mindful of the targeted data that is collected. Citizens’ panels and qualitative research (Such as the City Listening Project) not long questionnaires and surveys!**

Notes:

- Bristol City Council’s One City Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy sets out admirable priorities that could invest in the caring economy if put into practice. These are to: 1. Reduce poverty and inequality. 2. Increase the city’s resilience and environmental sustainability. 3. Enhance economic and social wellbeing in every community.
- The UK economy is not predicated on investment in wellbeing care and the social infrastructure but rather on GDP growth and productivity. A group of independent economists advising the OECD and the European Commission however, are redefining the economy arguing that rather than growth as an end in itself, it should be defined as a means to achieving societal goals including environmental sustainability, reduced inequality, greater wellbeing and resilience measured by the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI). In Wales we have the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act legislating for this ambition.
- The Commission on a Gender Equal Economy <https://wbg.org.uk/commission/> - sets out an ambitious road map of eight steps for achieving a caring economy across the UK. Key issues are poverty amongst particular groups and inadequate public services. The Commission argues that the impact of poverty would be much reduced if central

government committed to providing essential services universally and free at the point of use – funded by progressive taxation