

Public Health and Communities Policy Committee

21 June 2024

Public Forum



Public forum statements have been received for this meeting, as follows, in relation to Agenda Item 9 – Extension of Bristol Impact Fund 2 (the full content of the statements are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. Dan Bourton, Bristol Disability Equality Forum
2. Paul Jayson, Lawrence Weston Community Farm
3. Stacy Yelland, Eastside Community Trust
4. Steve Sayers, Hartcliffe City Farm
5. Ameena Ahmed & Leilah King, Off The Record
6. Andrew McCarthy, Bristol Refugee Rights; Mijanou Blech, Bristol Hospitality Network; Layla Ismail, Refugee Women of Bristol; Clare Smith, Project Mama; Caitlin Plunkett, Borderlands
7. Alessandra Gava, Changes Bristol
8. Rebecca Mear, VOSCUR
9. Amy Kinnear, Southmead Development Trust
10. Alex Raikes, Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service

Please note: The views and information contained within these public statements are those of the individuals concerned and not of the Council.



STATEMENT 1 – Dan Bourton

My name is Dan Bourton and I work as the Community Development Worker for Bristol Disability Equality Forum.

My work involves running our peer support network so that Disabled people in Bristol can support one another. This involves online meetings twice a week, regular in person meetings, Drop in meetings and a walking group.

Our members have supported each other to access benefits, career and housing advice, attend medical appointments, socialize and become more confident and self-sufficient members of society. We have also been involved in supporting research and campaigning around subjects such as, better public transport, anti poverty programs, greater public accessibility, Adult social care and environmental sustainability.

I have also given Forum members one to one support to access Mental health support, employment support and help with drug addiction.

A major part of my job includes outreach work, in which I go out into the community and make contact with Disabled people who are isolated and bring them into the wider Disabled persons community in Bristol and sign post them to Organisations such as WECIL who may be able to provide support and advice that we may not be able to directly offer.

I particularly believe that Outreach work and Peer support are areas that Bristol Disability Equality Forum uniquely offer and specialize in and is an important complimentary service to other organisations in Bristol that would be greatly missed if we were not there to provide it.

The Bristol Impact Fund has allowed us to provide all of our services and support and has helped many local small and medium sized charities to support vulnerable people in Bristol. The Bristol Impact Fund and the wonderful staff who support this fund at Bristol City Council have been a major lifeline not just to charities such as Bristol Disability Equality Forum but also to the communities that we serve.

I strongly urge you to see the amazing value of this fund and to support its continuation.

Best wishes
Dan Bourton

STATEMENT 2 – Paul Jayson

Bristol Impact Fund 2 - Written Statement from Lawrence Weston Community Farm

BIF 2 funding has played a vital role in enabling Lawrence Weston Community Farm to continue to support hundreds of local people who experience multiply deprivation, isolation and inequality to make long lasting, positive changes to their lives thereby improving their life prospects and their ability to help shape, and benefit from, a more vibrant, connected and sustainable local community.

BIF 2 has also enabled the farm to secure significant additional grant funding, which it is unlikely we would have been able to attract were we not in receipt of Bif2 funding, in support other services we deliver that help to meet local need.

Feedback from BIF 2 beneficiaries at Lawrence Weston Community Farm include:
'Meeting others with small children helped me to cope at a time when everything seemed to be going wrong.' Local Parent.

'I'd forgotten what it was like to enjoy myself, this place is wonderful.' Volunteer.

'They asked me what I had been doing since I was made redundant. I told them about helping at the farm, they seemed impressed. I got the job.' Adult volunteer.

'My daughter was bullied at school because of her disability. She lost confidence around other children. Being at the Farm has helped. She has less worries about other children now. We all (rest of family) feel much happier.' Parent of young volunteer.

'After my husband died, he'd been ill for years and looking after him was about all I'd been doing, I felt completely lost. Coming here every week and getting to know the others has been such a relief. I can't tell you how much it has helped.' Local older person

Paul Jayson
Manager
For and on behalf of
Lawrence Weston Community Farm

STATEMENT 3 – Stacy Yelland

Dear committee

We are current recipients of the Bristol Impact Fund 2 so are writing to provide detail of the difference this funding makes to inform your decision making about the process of transitioning to Bristol Impact Fund 3.

At Eastside Community Trust this funding supports our community development and events programme in Easton and Lawrence Hill enabling us to deliver a programme of activity to empower citizens based around our community hub at Easton Community Centre.

We also use this funding to support a partnership with Trinity Centre and Somali Kitchen CIC, a small women-led enterprise that has benefitted enormously in its development through the long term stability that BIF 2 funding provided.

Investing in communities and place-based community work is integral to building strong, resilient neighbourhoods, where residents feel a sense of belonging and a connection to the area and one another. It supports the social fabric of a neighbourhood - a way for individuals to become part of a collective that care for where they live and get involved in their community.

We see the value of this when crisis strikes - whether it is the pandemic or cost of living crisis - it was the community sector, and place-based organisations that stepped up and became the hubs for the citizen-led response.

The BIF programme also represents value for money as the council invests in organisations that also draw in other resources and funding from elsewhere, maximising the impact of the council's investment. While I recognise that council budgets are stretched like never before, when all other services are facing further reductions, it is the community sector that people are turning to for support.

We would urge committee members to support future investment in a BIF programme and visit some of the amazing organisations using this funding to make a big difference in their communities.

Stacy Yelland
Chief Executive Officer
Eastside Community Trust

Extension of BIF2 programme

Statement for Chair

STATEMENT 4

I note that the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee will be discussing extension of the BIF2 programme at its meeting on 21 June 24.

Hartcliffe City Farm has benefited from an award under this scheme, which has been essential in enabling the organisation to re-establish a vital community facility in one of the most deprived areas of the city.

The grant has enabled direct employment for local people, delivery of services for the community and contributed to outcomes of greater wellbeing and resilience for the neighbourhood.

It has also been an essential lever for bringing in additional funding much of it from outside the city. The project has brought in over £1m of investment over last 2 years, which would not have been possible without the BIF2 investment.

Beyond the confines of the Hartcliffe City Farm, the BIF scheme as a whole is underpinning vital community infrastructure across the city. Investment in this infrastructure is building more resilient communities and contributing to the social welfare of its citizens. The returns on this investment go well beyond those that are immediately apparent and captured in monitoring reports.

I strongly urge you to support an extension of this fund (and to support a third incarnation of it). The life of the city is hugely improved by this investment made into the community sector.

Steve Sayers

Director Hartcliffe City Farm

Chief Executive Windmill Hill City Farm

STATEMENT 5 – Ameena Ahmed / Leilah King

We at Off The Record (OTR) are emailing in response to a communication that our Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service funding may experience a six month interruption between funding programmes from October 2024 onwards.

OTR's Freedom works in partnership with Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service's as their LGBTQ+, supporting victims of Hate Crime and Discrimination. We are one of six organisations working together to support all victims of hate crime across Bristol.

The BHCDS has been instrumental in safeguarding our local vulnerable young people from hate crime incidents and this has relied on our committed and specialist skilled staff. A break of 6 months resourcing sadly means that we won't be able to continue the service, which undermines all the work we've put in so far in terms of outreach and marketing, and also the relationships we've built and support we're currently offering. It will be a huge setback to the hate crime and discrimination support we offer and put our young people at risk.

We urge you to see the value to our work and to ensure that appropriate levels of funding are maintained.

Kind regards

Ameena Ahmed

Public Health and Communities Policy Committee:
Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seekers Partnership Community Hubs
Written statement on Bristol Impact Fund extension

STATEMENT 6

We are five local charities funded by the Bristol Impact Fund to provide accessible, one-stop hubs for asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol:

- Borderlands
- Bristol Hospitality Network
- Bristol Refugee Rights
- Project MAMA
- Refugee Women of Bristol

Between us we offer a complementary range of services across the week, which offer both general support and advice which is open to anyone affected by forced migration as well as specialised support aimed at specific groups.

In our Bristol Impact Fund work we focus on:

- Supporting asylum seekers and refugees for more economically included lives, through ESOL classes, training, tailored volunteering opportunities and careers support.
- Supporting asylum seekers and refugees to build connections and community.

This is vital for a group which is so marginalised by the asylum system. We supported hundreds of people through BIF funded work and provided case studies demonstrating:

- Single mothers seeking asylum who felt they had no other safe place to spend their time
- Refugees finding work thanks to ESOL and volunteering
- Asylum seekers gaining confidence and resilience through volunteering and community
- Extremely isolated people finding connections with members of their community and volunteers at drop-ins
- Asylum seekers accessing information, practical support and timely referrals to help navigate the system and find home in Bristol
- Service users from our organisations shaping the services we offer and engaging with decision makers

All of our organisations do much more than the work funded by BIF, we run advice services, a hosting network, support for refused asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute and homeless, accommodation for new refugees, birth companions for migrant mothers, community outreach, social enterprises, groups for young people, women, LGBTQ+ people, wellbeing projects, a social supermarket and more. BIF funding is part of a tapestry of funding which keeps all our services going. In an increasingly tight funding environment we cannot do without it.

We urge Bristol City Council to first extend this round of BIF and then agree to a new Impact Fund:

- As a city we cannot afford not to invest in support for those most in need
- Value for money from the VCS is unbeatable. So much added value comes from BIF funding

- In a time of great uncertainty and change in leadership in the city it is vital that those most in need are not forgotten

Yours,

Andrew McCarthy, Head of Services at Bristol Refugee Rights
Mijanou Blech, CEO at Bristol Hospitality Network
Layla Ismail, Development Manager at Refugee Women of Bristol
Clare Smith, CEO at Project Mama
Caitlin Plunkett, CEO at Borderlands

19/06/24

Statement 7

19th June 2024

Bristol Impact Fund 2

Importance of a grant extension:

Changes Bristol is one of the BIF2 grant beneficiaries and over the last 2.5 years we have supported more than 300 people experiencing mental health difficulties to improve their wellbeing and reconnect with their community.

For us a 6 month grant extension would support both Staff and volunteer retention which has a huge impact on our small charity and maintain continuity of support for people using our befriending service as well as for the organisations that refer to us. Each volunteer goes through a series of training sessions, is DBS checked and are supported during their time volunteering with us, between 6 months and 2 years by staff funded through this grant.

Over the last 2 years we have trained and supported well over 100 volunteers who have helped us to deliver our Befriending for mental health service. It would be enormously sad to lose such a precious community resource if there were to be an opportunity to continue in the future. It takes time, money and resources to recruit and train volunteers and offer the necessary supervision required in supporting people experiencing mental health difficulties.

We first started telephone befriending for mental health during the pandemic where it was critical that people were able to receive support when most services were closed, particularly for those without access to the internet. We found a huge need for this service which did not wane with the end of lockdowns and were successful in our grant application to BIF 2 to grow our service that aligns with the aim of BIF2 to grow the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequalities.

Of people using the service the majority told us they were experiencing anxiety and or depression as well as a range of other mental health challenges. This was holding them back in a number of ways, often feeling isolated, low self confidence and unused to talking about their mental health and feelings. Building confidence has been a common outcome which is key to making new connections, finding and asking for other support, acknowledging and recognising what they can do and what they do well rather than what they can't.

Services funded by the Bristol Impact Fund are more needed than ever to support our community. The challenge brought by the impact of the cost of living crisis is the additional burden of practical issues facing people experiencing mental health difficulties. People with mental illness are more likely to have higher rates of: poverty, homelessness, social isolation & unemployment. We have signposted a number of people using the service to foodbanks, support for housing and financial difficulties, several have faced threats of homelessness. A number of people using the service are dealing with harassment and or threats of violence from ex partners or neighbours so volunteers have been supporting them to manage anxiety around that and encouraging them to get police support.



Both members and volunteers alike have felt the benefits of peer support. 100% of volunteers surveyed have personally experienced mental health problems and a majority found volunteering helpful for their own mental wellbeing. Volunteers also reported improved self-confidence and feeling useful as a result of volunteering.

Recipients have noticed positive changes in their quality of life as a result of the weekly befriending calls. People using the service had a range of positive reflections on the service, such as stating that 'For me it's been a life saver. I went downhill and always suffered with mental health issues but losing my brother really messed me up knowing that I have this call gives me something to look forward to.' Another said that [the befriending call] "genuinely really cheers up my day, found as a result of the BF service i feel a lot less lonely since I reached out'. It is clear that for some people, this service has been crucial in improving their quality of life. Other befriendees reflected that the service is 'excellent' and 'amazing', they'd been matched really well, befrienders are 'caring' and 'respectful', and that their lived experience of mental health is helpful in empathising and giving suggestions.

'If your ready to talk then I think they will listen.'

'It's very nice to have support when you're not feeling mentally well.'

'I think people using the Befriending service could benefit from talking to someone if they are at that stage of their journey, if their friend is as caring and patient as mine was.'

When asked about their diagnoses, befriendees reported a range of physical health conditions such as fibromyalgia, Functional Neurological Disorder and migraines, as well as mental health conditions such as depression, PTSD and anxiety. These conditions are often stigmatised or misunderstood and so it can be beneficial to have a weekly conversation with someone about what they're going through.

Changes Bristol is a Peer Support for Mental Health Charity and our BIF2 funded Befriending Service offers people a one hour phone call every week for up to 6 months with one of our volunteers as well as 2 weekly walk and talk sessions that take place across the city. The service offering 1-1 support provides many people with support who are not ready or able to attend our peer support groups. We have found that people using the service have formed new connections, built up confidence to take part in peer support groups, our nature and wellbeing group, volunteering activities, employment or other wellbeing activities that they were not able to do before using the service.

Over the past 2.5 years BIF2 Grantees like ourselves have not only had the opportunity to develop and support communities experiencing the most inequality but also have met regularly, learned from each other and formed strong relationships with other community services working to reduce inequalities and we would welcome the opportunity for a grant extension.

Alessandra Gava

Director

Changes Bristol

STATEMENT 8 – Rebecca Mear

Below is Voscur's statement in support of the Extension of Bristol the Impact Fund 2 for the Public health and Communities Committee meeting on Friday.

Voscur supports the extension to the BiF2 to enable time to develop the approach for BiF3 and to ensure the strengths, needs and voice of the community, VCSE sector and key stakeholders are understood and heard. Any gap or reduction in funding would be highly detrimental to the VCSE sector at this time, particularly given the issues they face due to rising costs, rising demands (see our work on [Taking the Pulse of the VCSE sector](#) highlighting the risks to VCSE sector resilience due to the cost of living crisis).

Our collaboration with Bristol City Council to date has helped support some of the most marginalised community groups and organisations to receive vital capacity building support for their funded projects enabling them to become more resilient and sustainable long term and to raise their organisation's profile and connect with others across the city. Our longer-term aim is to work collaboratively with Bristol city council to ensure that this fund, which has played a vital role for the VCSE sector in Bristol to play an active role in community-driven social change and service delivery for the city, can continue to enable a thriving VCSE sector.

Rebecca Mear, CEO, Voscur

STATEMENT 9 – Amy Kinnear

Dear Public Health and Communities Policy Committee

Re: Bristol Impact Fund Committee Paper to seek approval to extend Bristol Impact Fund 2 (BIF2) medium and large grants to community and voluntary sector organisations for 6 months from 1st October 2025 to 31st March 2026. This extension will give time to work with the new administration on the approach to Bristol Impact Fund 3 (BIF3) with a view to a committee decision in January 2025.

Southmead Development Trust is one of the 30 organisations currently delivering the Bristol Impact Fund 2 to communities experiencing the greatest inequality in the city.

We recommend the committee considers the recommendations from the Adults and Communities Directorate to extend the Bristol Impact Fund 2 for Medium/Large grants.

This recommendation will enable Bristol City Council to continue its best practise approach of long-term sustainable funding and supporting the VCSE sector who serve communities experiencing the greatest inequality.

BIF2 funding has enabled the Trust to direct new resources to one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the city, facing social isolation and digital exclusion and is particularly focusing on older vulnerable people in our community. It has enabled us to secure additional funding to support more vulnerable adults with learning disabilities and creating a new partnership with Mencap as well as developing 13 community activities that take place across the week, every week, within our community corner.

We've supported over 100 vulnerable older people to overcome social isolation and gain digital skills by learning to be safe online, engage with online services, keep in touch with relatives and live independent lives. We have generated over £1million in social value (HACT methodology) during this project. Participants have also said:

"I really appreciate you helping me out with learning about technology. I've been able to use my laptop today when I went home sorting out my CV and I feel like better understand the information given to me so I can now use my laptop thank you very much."

"Great initiative, come get advice and you don't have to pay! It's really helpful, this centre has made my life."

Achieving community impact directly corresponds to long term and sustainable funding. Long-term funding avoids the pitfalls of short-term funding: letting go experienced staff, recruiting new staff and support needed through induction and probation, as well as the time required in community development work to rebuild trust, create connections between people to people, people to organisations and organisations to organisations. We have costed that re-starting a programme would be £12,749 before any outcomes or social impact were achieved again – the equivalent of empty calories. During this time vulnerable

people would also miss opportunities. Our experience has shown it's unlikely that we would successfully secure interim funding to continue.

The funding we would receive from the extension (£20,704) represents better value for money as this will enable continued support, outcomes, connections and social impact for the council to achieve its objectives of supporting communities experiencing the most inequality.

Here is some further context for our support of this request:

- Bristol Impact Fund has been a stalwart in providing community services and enabled us to secure other match funding such as Mencap and is one of the few funds that is a full cost recovery grant.
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) report [The True Cost of Delivering Public Services | NCVO](#) reveals that 87% of organisations are subsidising their grants and contracts and almost three-quarters of organisations (73%) cannot meet demand for the services they are funding to deliver with around seven in ten organisations (72%) have withdrawn from public service delivery altogether or are considering doing so.
- Underfunding is not a new problem, but the impact of continued high inflation has put charities delivering public service contracts at crisis point.
- Not only has this deepened need in communities and exacerbated inequalities, but it has forced public sector purses to tighten like never before.
- The Cost of Giving Crisis is, in part, caused by the knock-on effect of years of austerity and underfunded public services.
- As not-for-profit organisations that struggle to fit into payment by results and payment in arrears structures VCSE are limited to the 'risks' they can carry as organisations as we don't carry large reserves or profits.

I would be happy to discuss the matter further if this is of help to the committee.

Yours Sincerely

Amy Kinnear
CEO
Southmead Development Trust



Statement from Bristol Hate Crime and Discrimination Service (BHCDs) to Bristol City Council Public Health and Communities Committee, 21 June 2024, Agenda Item 9 – Extension of Bristol Impact Fund 2 STATEMENT 10

We ask the Committee to approve the extension of the Bristol Impact Fund 2, without which there would be a critical negative impact on our capacity to address hate crime and discrimination within the city, particularly affecting the equalities communities we support.

BHCDs is a partnership of six specialist charities coordinated by Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI) and including Brandon Trust, Bristol Mind, Off The Record, Bristol Law Centre, and Resolve West. (see <https://www.bhcds.org.uk/>). We provide a holistic signposting, support, advocacy, conflict resolution and reparation service to empower victims of all types of hate crime and discrimination to take action and to cope with its physical, emotional and psychological impact. We also work to identify risk of re-victimisation and prevent further harm using a bespoke, hate crime risk assessment process; run one-to-one and group training and empowerment sessions, workshops and peer support; provide specialist strategic policy advice, community tension monitoring, and coordinate a wide range of voice and influence networks.

In Bristol, SARI triages approx. 500 referrals of hate/ discrimination per year of which over 300 receive dedicated support via casework or restorative justice through sometimes lengthy criminal and civil justice, re-housing or other procedures from BHCDs partner agencies. Total beneficiaries last year were 778.

BIF2 currently provides the critical, core funding that enables BHCDs to survive. The current funding is tapered over the 2021-2025 period with partners already having to seek other sources of funding to maintain service levels and outcomes. Bristol City Council support has been vital to enable the service to achieve match-funding of at least £188k in the last year and almost 2000 volunteer hours. The combined impact of the cost-of-living crisis and increased pressures on public sector budgets has transferred significant demand to trusts and foundations, and while partners are making significant efforts to seek new sources of income, the future of the service beyond 2025 is insecure.

Partners could not carry the substantial financial burden of continuing services through an unfunded 6-month gap and need a level of certainty to plan future provision at the end of the current round. In reality, a gap followed by a BIF3 would mean that we would be proposing and bidding for a future service at the same time as planning to substantially reduce our current offer to communities, causing huge confusion, disruption and harm for our communities, clients and staff.

As a sector, we already face real challenges in recruiting and retaining staff. A 6-month funding gap significantly risks the loss of experienced, specialist employees who deliver legal advice, advocacy, emotional and psychological support across our different services. We run a risk of incurring unnecessary redundancy costs if a gap were to be followed by a BIF3 and would undoubtedly incur additional recruitment costs to restart which does not represent good value for the public purse.

Funding through BIF 1 and 2 have enabled us to deliver a reliable service for local citizens to access at a time of unprecedented need. Police-recorded hate crime has tripled in the last decade, now 145,000 offences nationally (Home Office, 2023) with real levels c.190,000 (CSEW, 2020). Community tensions have been heightened with Brexit, terror attacks, Black Lives Matter protests, the war in Ukraine and the Israel/ Gaz conflict with corresponding spikes in hate incidents. Anti-immigration and anti-trans rhetoric continues to foster hate-based abuse – in Avon & Somerset last year recorded incidents increased by 5% (3857 offences). Hate crime victims wait twice as long for an outcome than others and are more likely suffer emotional and psychological impact - 34% experiencing anxiety or panic attacks and 18% depression (HoC, 2024).

Disruption to continuity of service will isolate and exclude victims of hate crime and discrimination who will not be able to move beyond these experiences, hold perpetrators accountable, feel part of our city and access its opportunities. A wealth of evidence shows that victims would be less able to work and more likely to experience poor health without access to the support we provide.

Through early intervention and education - within schools, social housing, employment and communities - our services prevent escalation of problems that create additional demand on other public bodies, and we urge the committee to support continued investment in this positive, preventative, inclusive and cost-effective approach.