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**Bristol Women's Voice  
Annual Report 2012-2013**

## Chair's introduction

I'm delighted to be introducing the first annual report of Bristol Women's Voice. In the course of the year we have seen BWV move from new beginnings to a confident organisation capable of bringing about significant change.



We started the year with bunting, songs and cake and we end the year with the signing of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in local life and the establishment of a Women's Commission for Bristol.

It's been a very short 'year' for us with the first few months taken up with setting up the organisation. In July we received our funding from Bristol City Council and appointed Louise Williams as our coordinator.

A highlight of the year was the Women's Question Time event in October when women packed the Broadmead Baptist Church to question and challenge the mayoral candidates on issues including street sex work, transport, childcare, jobs, sexual entertainment venues and lack of women in public life. Candidates had to respond to questions on complex issues for which some of them were ill prepared. Their answers were revealing. I am certain the strength of feeling from this audience and the issues they raised have influenced George Ferguson's decision to set up a Women's Commission for Bristol.

Other less obvious high spots have included the beginning of our rolling programme of meetings with women across the city, starting with inspirational teenage mothers in Hartcliffe where we heard about both their struggles and their extraordinary achievements. Following this meeting we conducted a survey of fifteen women's organisations in the city, all doing exceptional work in supporting, training and employing women. We took this report to our meeting with the Mayor to show how much can be achieved with resources in the right hands. We will be stepping up our efforts to meet with women across the city in the coming year so that we can effectively represent the diverse views of women in influencing decision makers and service planners through the Women's Commission.

Our Women's Health campaign on ovarian cancer, spearheaded by Gail Kitchin, is a great example of partnership working. Here we have joined forces with Public Health and the national charity Target Ovarian Cancer to work locally to encourage GPs to take up training opportunities to recognise the symptoms of ovarian cancer. Nationally just 16% of GPs have taken up the training. If symptoms were recognised earlier, earlier treatment could save women's lives. We will be campaigning more vocally on this issue later this year with information for women as well.

International Women's Day was celebrated widely in Bristol with a huge range of events and activities. Our team of reporters managed to attend a number of them and are writing them up for the BWV website. Our own contribution was the signing of the Charter for Equality by George Ferguson, Mayor of Bristol and the announcement of the setting up of a Women's Commission to draw up and implement a Women's Strategy. The event itself was colourful, warm and noisy with

women from Malcolm X bringing along their own charter from International Women's Day. Bristol Women's Voice has a clear role this coming year to help steer and inform the Commission and to extend BWV's reach across the city to make sure women's voices are heard loud and clear.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the management of BWV this year; Aroojmir Abid, Aroona Smith, Maria Banos Smith, Diane Bunyan, Lesley Welch, Moira Hutton, Cezara Nanu, Tove Samzelius and Christina Stokes. I warmly welcome new members to the new management team which will be announced in April. Thanks to Louise for bringing it all together and thanks to the amazing women of Bristol who constantly inspire us all.

Penny Gane  
Interim Chair, Bristol Women's Voice

*Penny Gane*



## Interim Management Team 2012- 2013

A small group of women have been working together since the launch in March 2012 to get Bristol Women's Voice going.



**Aroojmir Abid**

**Lesley Welch**



**Diane Bunyan**



**Maria Banos-Smith**



**Moira Hutton**



**Cezara Nanu**



**Aroona Smith**



**Penny Gane**  
Interim Chair

**Christina Stokes**  
Treasurer



**And not forgetting**  
**Tove Samzelius**



**Louise Williams**  
Coordinator



## What we've been up to

### Women's Health

#### Bristol Women's Voice Health Forum

The first meetings of the Health Forum sought to establish which aspects of women's health were of particular interest to members as well as what could reasonably be included in the term 'Women's Health' as so many factors influence our health. Our own interests are as broad and varied as the influencing factors. However one very clear issue has been getting to grips with new NHS structures and finding ways to influence decision makers and budget holders to take full account of women's health needs.



Sue Brazendale from Voscur presented a run through of changes to the NHS including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Healthwatch, Clinical Commissioning Groups and new national structures such as the NHS Commissioning Board. There was a lively debate during and following the presentation.

Following on from this session we have been involved in a number of Health and Wellbeing Stakeholder events and consultations although it's impossible to say at this stage whether we have been heard in any meaningful way. As part of the Joint Equalities Fora (now called BEING) we requested a joint equalities place on the Health and Wellbeing Board and an opportunity to make a case for a place. During the recent changes to the Board our request remains unanswered and we will resubmit a request. We do not feel at present that our health needs are adequately represented through the present voluntary sector representation on the Board.

Our recent joint workshop with WHEC on **Better Health for Women** was very successful. Zoe Palmer from WHEC (Women's Health and Equality Consortium) presented the new WHEC guidance on how to incorporate women's health needs into Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing strategies. This session was followed by Donna Sealey from Public Health presenting the initial findings from a Compendium of Women's Health in Bristol. For the first time all the available information on women's health in the city is being brought together in one place. This will be an invaluable tool for improved planning and delivery of services as well as giving us a clear picture of a wide range of health issues. We learnt for example that in 2010-11 more women under 25 yrs were admitted to hospital due to alcohol than men of a similar age, that 10.4 % of females' deaths are due to stroke compared with 6.8% for males, that (reported) domestic violence and abuse accounts for nearly a third of Bristol's violent crime, that women aged 45-54 are 3 times more likely to be suffering from post-traumatic disorder than men and that 20,000 more women than men are admitted to hospital each year.

Both these presentations are on our website.

We were able to secure two consultation events with NHS Bristol on Mental Health however with recommissioned mental health services. Women raised critical issues about the most vulnerable women at these events and put forward reports so we hope real learning has taken place as a result of the consultations and that women will receive more responsive and appropriate Mental Health Services in the future.

Bristol Women's Voice Health Forum has established a health strategy for our first year outlining some early priorities and actions. (See [www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/healthforum](http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/healthforum)). Many of them have been achieved and we need clear targets for 2012-13.

## Ovarian Cancer

The Health Forum included in its strategy the need to raise awareness of Ovarian Cancer amongst health professionals and women themselves in the Bristol area. This is because of the poor prognosis for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the UK, often due to delayed diagnosis and misunderstanding of symptoms. Nationally only around 16% of GPs have undertaken the training module on recognising symptoms of ovarian cancer. 7,000 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer every year in the UK and only 36% of these women will survive beyond 5 years. For Bristol, Avon & Somerset, this means 236 women will be diagnosed and only 84 will live beyond 5 years. Early and accurate diagnosis would change this statistic and mean women survive longer. If the UK matched the best in Europe about 30 more women in this area would survive beyond 2018.

To do this, members of the Health Forum have been involved in a number of activities. We brought together a partnership of the national charity Target Ovarian Cancer, who held an event in Bristol in November, together with the Director of Public Health and ourselves to progress an initiative in Bristol. In December 2012 representatives of the Forum met with the NHS Public Health Cancer Specialist to determine how we can take this strategy forward – into GP surgeries as well as the community. Over the coming months we hope to firm up our discussions into commitments.

International Women's Day has given us a shot in the arm with the Mayor, George Ferguson signing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life and announcing the setting up of a Women's Commission for Bristol. BWV were instrumental in bringing this about.

For women's health the charter has real implications including:

'The signatory recognises that in securing equal opportunities for women and men to enjoy good health, medical and health services must take account of their different needs. They further recognise that these needs arise not only from biological differences but also from differences in living and working conditions and from stereotypical attitudes and assumptions.

The signatory undertakes to carry out or promote:

- Incorporating a gender-based approach to the planning, resourcing and delivery of health and medical services

The charter also contains articles on gender-based violence, safety, social care, human trafficking and other issues affecting the health of women.

The challenge for Bristol Women's Voice Health Forum in 2012-13 will be to ensure that the Women's Commission takes on board women's health needs and develops an action plan to meet those needs at the same time ensuring that we truly represent the many and diverse voices of women across the city.

BWV Health Forum currently has 65 members.

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## **Women and the Economy**

The Women and the Economy Group met in July and identified the pay gap between women and men and the reasons for it including as a key issue. The concerns included; childcare; part time work which fits in with caring; older women being made redundant and having to work longer for pensions; difficulty in accessing training and so on.

These issues were included in BWV's response to the City Council's Draft Economy and Enterprise Strategy which did not reflect the issues and concerns of women in the city.

Prior to our meeting with the Mayor in December we consulted women's organisations on the key issues to raise with him. One issue which came up was how these organisations don't just provide the services they are funded for but also act as a way of supporting women into employment by providing volunteering opportunities, raising confidence and developing skills. In fact they are far more effective at doing this than the organisations funded by the government or many other economic regeneration activities.

We presented a report to the mayor on this with information from;

<http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/report-womens-organisations-and-employment/>

[diane@bristolwomensvoice.org.uk](mailto:diane@bristolwomensvoice.org.uk)

## Influence

We have participated in meetings with women councillors from Bristol City Council who want to set up an all party group to increase the number of women standing for and being elected to the council.

BWV will organise a meeting for women who might be interested in becoming councilors to discuss what is involved and how it is possible to fit the council role around employment and caring responsibilities. There may be opportunities to shadow existing councillors. We will continue to work with Bristol Fawcett on this and have contributed to their report on “The right man for the job”.

### Influencing the Police & Crime Commissioner

The new Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC), Sue Mountstevens, was elected with a commitment to work against violence against women and girls (VAWG) and she has confirmed this commitment, following her survey of residents across the Avon and Somerset police force area. So it is not only her own commitment, but also that of the voters that gives hope for the future. We met with her and her VAWG policy officer, having briefed her on the views of the women of Bristol on VAWG, and commented on how other areas of crime particularly affect women, such as robbery targeting old women living alone and anti-social behaviour targeting Black and minority ethnic women and lesbians and transgender women. We have also given her, at her request, further information on assaults against women in the vicinity of the SEVs, domestic violence and abuse against lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people and identifying male victims of domestic violence and abuse.

We are delighted to welcome PCC Sue Mountstevens to speak at our Annual General Meeting and look forward to a fruitful future relationship.



### Influencing the elected Mayor

Following his election in November 2012, BWV was very pleased to have a highly positive and productive meeting with George Ferguson, during which he agreed to sign the Charter for Equality for Women and Men in Local Life and to set up a Women’s Commission to draw up and implement a Women’s Strategy for Bristol

It is evident from this meeting, Charter and new Women’s Commission that the new Mayor understands the importance of women’s equality. He also told us of his intention to work on the prevention of violence against women and girls with the newly elected Police & Crime Commissioner, which we feel is a very positive move.



## **International Women's Day and Signing the Charter for Equality for Women and Men in Local Life**

On International Women's Day the Mayor signed the Charter – the first UK city to sign. By doing so the mayor has committed Bristol to working to promote women's equality. This will be put into action by a Women's Commission who will be responsible for developing a strategy and action plan for how this is going to be achieved.



The Charter was developed by women across 29 European countries discussing how the principles of equality for women could be put into practice by local and regional councils in all aspects of their work as politicians, community leaders, employers and providers and commissioners of services.

The Charter has been signed by over 1300 councils including many major cities such as Paris, Vienna, Stockholm and Barcelona and is monitored by a Europe wide Observatory who will report on progress on action plans.

BWV Management Group member Diane was the co-author of the Charter and was delighted that the Mayor has accepted the challenge of signing it and committing Bristol to the principle and practice of women's equality.



### **The Women's Commission for Bristol**

Following on from Women's Question Time it was agreed at our meeting with George Ferguson that a Women's Commission would be set up to implement the European Charter with a Women's Strategy to tackle issues raised by women at the event as well as all the other issues women are facing. Bristol Women's Voice are committed to playing a strong role on the commission and ensuring that women's voices across the city are heard and their concerns acted on.

## Women's Question Time, October 31<sup>st</sup> 2012

The mayoral candidates, seven men and one woman, faced a large audience almost entirely of women questioning and challenging them on a wide range of issues affecting women. Questions related to affordable childcare, sexual entertainment venues, employment of women over 50, street sex work and public transport. The informed views of the questioners often provided a somewhat stark contrast to some of the candidates' responses. The event will have made them think and we hear from people who attended other hustings that the Women's Question Time event revealed more about the candidates than other hustings did. It certainly put women's issues on the agenda. All the candidates were also given the opportunity to express their views on a range of women's issues which were published on our website. Now that the election is over Bristol Women's Voice have been working with George Ferguson, the Mayor, to set up a Women's Commission to tackle the issues raised at the event and other issues affecting women.



## Linking in with other Equalities Groups

### **BEING – Bristol Equalities Influence Networking Group**

We have met regularly with the other City Council funded equality fora. We have shared information on projects and events and worked together on the specification for the new tackling discrimination service to make sure that the service is available to all and that the data collected will help us to monitor and support this work. We look forward to developing the work together next year.

### **Our voice on the Council's performance on crime and disorder**

Bristol Women's Voice has a place (co-opted) since September 2012 on the City Council's Scrutiny Commission for Community Cohesion and Safety, which has the role of examining how the various Council services and partnerships with other agencies are working, in relation to crime and disorder, and making recommendations to the decision-makers. BWV's representative is paid an allowance of £512 per year for this role. We do not have voting rights in this, but have used our voice to push for:

- better reporting on its results in tackling all forms of domestic & sexual violence and violence against women and girls;
- transparency of police data on violence against women in the areas around the lap-dancing clubs (sexual entertainment venues – SEVs). The outgoing 2012-13 Scrutiny Commission will now recommend that the new 2013-14 scrutiny committee that they hold an inquiry day into the impact on community cohesion and safety of SEVs;
- to understand the importance of giving data on crime including hate crime, not only by single category – such as gender, ethnicity, or disability – but also where these categories cross over, for example, if a hate crime is committed against a Black person, was this a woman or a man, which gives a better understanding of why crime takes place and therefore what the Council and its partners need to do to combat it.

The Scrutiny Commission holds inquiry days, most recently on Female Genital Mutilation which included impressive presentations from young people in affected communities as well as from professionals. Most Scrutiny Commission meetings are open to the public and agendas and minutes are published on the Council website - [https://www.bristol.gov.uk/CommitteeMeetingFinder?year=2013&cmcode=SC029&ask=list\\_name#openitem](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/CommitteeMeetingFinder?year=2013&cmcode=SC029&ask=list_name#openitem)

The Scrutiny Commission system is itself now under scrutiny, with the advent of the elected Mayor and evolving style of policy-making, and we will know what the system will be after April 2013. The council believes that Scrutiny Commissions have considerable impact. So if the Council decides to discontinue Scrutiny Commissions, BWV will need to ensure that their replacement holds equal influence. For further information please contact [lesleyw@bristolwomensvoice.org.uk](mailto:lesleyw@bristolwomensvoice.org.uk).



### **BWV Celebrates LGBT Month**

A group of 19 lesbians and bisexual women and 9 of their children and grandchildren – from age 2 to 12 – met up to follow a Treasure Trail around Bristol Harbourside. The day – Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> February – was freezing cold but dry. We struggled around 20 clues following a fantasy story of a pirate who had buried treasure on an island that had a number of place names remarkably like parts of Bristol! It's amazing how much you can find out about your own city this way – I had no idea there were so many statues and plaques and so around this small area. We were somewhat stymied when the statue that was only our 2<sup>nd</sup> clue turned out to have been removed for repair – panic, panic, but the 12-year old sorted us out and we were able to work it out finally. The 'treasure' turned out to be homemade cakes, tea and children's stories and singing in M-Shed.

A great, fun and relaxed day – celebrating diversity and equal rights for Bristol's women by having a good time. What's not to like?





## BWV Out and About

BWV met up with the young mothers from the Teenage Parents project to find out what the main issues were affecting them and to see where they believed the obstacles were for young mothers today. Through this visit BWV managed to gather important information from the young women affected most by issues around child care, health during and after pregnancy and employment. At BWV we have taken these ideas and suggestions to our forums and meetings to push the issues of better services for young women.

At BWV we want to continue our outreach to local services working with women to ensure that women's voices are being heard all around Bristol and including everyone.

You can see the full report on BWV's visit to Hartcliffe and Withywood Parents Project by following the link below;

<http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/2012/12/04/the-problems-facing-young-mothers-today/>

BWV would like to thank The Teenage Parents Project and its service users for their great feedback and suggestions.







## **Social Media**

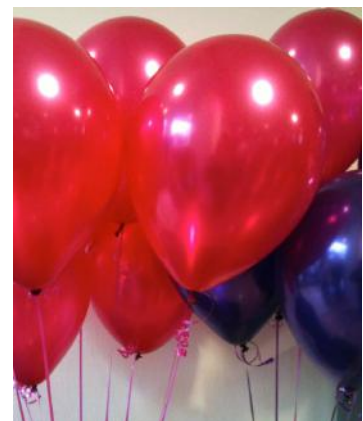
BWV has found social media to be a great way of getting important news and events out to the world. Through facebook and twitter we have managed to share local and world news, coordinate events and keep women informed of what is happening in and around Bristol for women.

Through social media BWV was able to report directly on other organisations' events that we attended such the Bristol Rape Crisis AGM, The White Ribbon Campaign and One Billion Rising. It also meant that we could keep everyone who followed up to date with the Mayoral hustings that we held at the end of October.

BWV currently has 106 likes on facebook and 134 followers on twitter. We want to double this by next year. Please like our facebook and follow us on twitter and keep up to date with what is happening at BWV.

The website has currently had 7,470 views with the best day having 742 views. It is updated regularly with news, events, jobs and photos of what is happening around Bristol.

BWV has attended many other great events and had meetings with other organisations over the year. We would like to thank One25, Womankind, BDP, Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group, Refugee Women of Bristol, Mothers for Mothers, Integrate, Bristol Rape Crisis, Survive, Bristol Fawcett, Bristol Feminist Network, Safer Bristol, Laura Welti (Disability forum), Sarah-Louise Minter (LGBT Forum).



## A note from BWV's Treasurer

Bristol Women's Voice currently has one funder. We have a 3 year agreement with Bristol City Council which gives us £29,501 per year to be spent against a budget agreed with them.

74% of our total expenditure is spent on the salary of our part-time co-ordinator. Our other major spending areas are promotion costs, events/meetings, training, IT and office costs.

Our total predicted spend for this year is £24601 giving us a predicted surplus to carry into 2013/14 of approximately £5000

This has been a reasonable year for BWV in relation to finance. As we did not appoint a Co-ordinator until July we had 3 months salary cost available for other purposes. With agreement from our funders (Bristol City Council) we were able to vire this money into a budget to improve accessibility of all aspects of the organisation as well as to improve our website.

Several other budgets have been underspent due to the 3 months with no staff and this has allowed us a surplus to carry forward.

Next year is likely to put a greater strain on all areas of the budget as there will be no leeway.



### Acknowledgements

Bristol Women's Voice would like to thank our reporters Zosia Crosse, Sue Lloyd, Laura Sterry, Samantha Holman and Nicola Bridger. Special thanks also to Gail Kitchin, Sarah Laughton, Helen Mott, Bristol Fawcett, Sue Mountstevens, George Ferguson, Jane Houban, Gillian Douglas, The Teenage Parents Project, Woman Kind, One25, BDP, Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group, Pakistani Welfare Organisation, Missing Link, Next Link, Single Parents Action Network, Bristol Rape Crisis, Mothers for Mothers, Platform 51 and finally our UWE students and Nameless.