

Bristol Women's Voice Annual Report



2020-2021

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Message from the Chair: Penny Gane



Women the world over are facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the global pandemic and political events.

The pandemic has not affected everyone in society equally and we know that the economic consequences have fallen disproportionately on women.

The UN report 'The impact of Covid-19 on women' highlights that the limited gains made globally in the past decade are at risk of being rolled back. It states that "Women will be the hardest hit by this pandemic but they will also be the backbone of recovery in communities. Every policy response that recognises this will be the more impactful for it".

We launched our City Listening Report in November 2020 having completed extensive community research with women in the city whose voices are seldom heard.

[City Listening Project - Bristol Women's Voice \(bristolwomensvoice.org.uk\)](https://bristolwomensvoice.org.uk)

Our researchers heard from women about the sheer hard work of just keeping a roof over your head, of paying the bills, of taking on the caring role with family members, getting around the city, of how hard it can be to find and afford childcare, the grinding relentlessness of ongoing health issues, including poor mental health and the lack of mental health services that meet women's needs especially for those also coping with

domestic violence and abuse. Many of these issues are made more challenging by racism and discrimination.

But they also heard about the absolute joy to be found in volunteering and how being able to join women-only groups and activities can make such a huge difference.

It was great to have the Government Equalities Office attend our Report launch to hear about the issues those women in Bristol are facing and our concrete recommendations on how to solve them. In turn, the GEO have promised to take the outcomes of our work to every government department with robust recommendations. We will be keeping in touch with them to see how that work is progressing. We are also raising these issues locally and will focus future work on local solutions.

The murder of Sarah Everard at the hands of a Metropolitan Police Officer shocked the nation. Sadly, it is one of many femicides in the UK, underlining the vital importance of continuing work to combat and prevent violence against women.

The widespread and routine sexual abuse of girls and young women in education settings has been revealed by the Everyone Invited initiative -which included specific references to a number of schools in Bristol. There is a clear need for Bristol Women's Voice to continue and expand work in this area to follow up and build on the recommendations made by Ofsted in their report responding to this initiative.

This context and these developments underlie the three clear priorities for BWV which we have agreed:

- Violence against Women and Girls
- Women's Economic Disadvantage
- Health Inequalities.

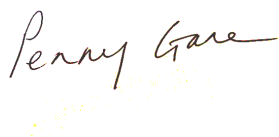
Despite the extraordinary circumstances we have all found ourselves in this year, Bristol Women's Voice has continued to innovate as this annual report shows, with a wider range of on-line workshops, an on-line International Women's WEEK and an imaginative health project with Bristol Bangladeshi Women's Group. As ever our volunteers and interns have played a hugely significant role in delivering our programme.

BWV has had a number of organisational changes during the year. We said goodbye to our previous Director, Barbara and welcomed Katy Taylor to the role. We also said goodbye to Charlotte Gage who led our inspiring Zero Tolerance Programme for four years.

At the time of writing, Trustees who have left or are leaving this year are Laura Gallagher, Vicky Morris, Alison Pallett, Diane Bunyan and myself. Each and every one of our volunteer trustees has contributed a huge amount to the charity. We now know BWV has won City Council funding for the next four years so we leave the charity in a position of strength. New trustees are waiting to be ratified by members. I am proud of the role that BWV has played over the past 10 years since its foundation and am confident that it will continue to fight for women's equality, women's safety and women's rights in Bristol.

Penny Gane,

Chair Bristol Women's Voice



Staff and trustees

Trustees 2020-2021

Penelope Gane - Chair

Diane Bunyan

Ifeoma Fox

Clare Meraz - Vice-chair from December 2020

Alison Pallett- Secretary to the Board

Nicki Norman

Laura Gallagher - Vice-chair resigned December 2020

Stephanie Poyntz- Treasurer

Vicki Morris

Sophie Shirt

Current Staff

Katy Taylor – Director, started 2021

Becky White – Operations Manager, started January 2021

Laila Garzon Deguer – Communications Coordinator, started January 2021

Lily Khandker – Community Facilitator, started October 2020

Khairun Miah – Community Facilitator, started October 2020

Other staff that worked for Bristol Women's Voice in 2020-21

Barbara Brown – Director, left October 2020

Charlotte Gage – Project Coordinator, left March 2021

Carolyn Magson – Project Coordinator, maternity cover, left November 2020

Marnie Woodmeade – Project Coordinator for the Bangladeshi Women's Health Project, temporary post, ended November 2020

What a year it's been – Covid and our response

As for everyone, 2019-20 was a year of change for Bristol Women's Voice. In November 2020, we said goodbye to our first Director, Barbara Brown and employed a new Director – Katy Taylor – and in January 2021, Becky White joined the team as an Operations Manager. Between them, Katy and Becky bring extensive experience of working in the independent specialist women's sector and criminal justice sector at operational and strategic levels.

As the year began in April, the country was in Covid-19-related lockdown. As events unfolded, BWV made the early decision to cancel/postpone all community-related activities and request that staff work from home. As the pandemic continued, we decided to relinquish our office space and support staff to work from home on a more ongoing basis. We hope that by the end of 2021-22 we will have a new physical hub once again for women where women can work, inspire and learn from each other and grow the organisation and its work again.

As a result of Covid-19, and we focussed our social media output on providing COVID-19 national updates; information about local organisations and their operational offer and finally hope and inspiration to women through quotations, relevant articles and information sharing.

We also developed a **"You Talk We Listen"** service to provide online/telephone befriending/listening and signposting service for women for two hours a day, four days per week.

Following an initial and very well received mental health and wellbeing workshop in the summer, we partnered with Rethink, CASS (Community Access Support Service) and Nilaari Agency to host a series of support sessions for women from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The sessions provided a safe space for women who felt they needed support or help during a time of additional covid-related stress and anxiety.

"Thank you ...It's easy to feel isolated and this has been a very supportive community"

"This has been a very good safe space for me. Thank you everyone for your time and all the information."

Throughout July and August, we ran an online survey to understand women's experiences of Covid 19 and their changing needs throughout the pandemic period, and we heard from more than 70 women. We learnt:

- Women's mental health deteriorated throughout lockdown, particularly due to the pressure of balancing child care responsibilities and home working. The lack of childcare and the lack of information about when and how childcare will resume was one of women's major concerns affecting both employment and their mental health.
- Access to green spaces was crucial for women, particularly for those without gardens, for mental and physical health. However, many women, particularly those shielding, felt unsafe in public parks and as if they were less visible.

- The government responses to the pandemic, both national and to a lesser extent local, were seen as a source of anxiety for women. They felt the lack of clarity in government messages was a source of stress, and the lack of information left them feeling unable to judge how to respond.
- Disabled women felt under-represented in government and found that government responses and language were out of touch with their lived experiences.
- Younger women and students were concerned about their employment prospects.

Unsurprisingly, many of these disadvantages were exacerbations of discriminations and disadvantages women experience in non-pandemic times, and which they told us about during the City Listening Project we reported on last year. In 2020-21, BWV have been using the recommendations from and women's voices within these reports to call for change where we can.

As the restrictions ease in 2021-22, we will be looking to develop women's action groups so we can work with women and empower them to do the same.

Workshops

In 2020-21 we provided 43 workshops, attended by 1,200 women, 76.72% of whom (that told us their postcodes) were living in deprived areas in the city, as defined by Bristol City Council. We worked in partnership with Changes, Sister Courage, the Bristol Law Centre and Bristol Menopause to facilitate workshops on mental health, menopause, maternity rights, boundary-setting, self-defence and assertiveness.

"I think there is a real need for future sessions. I look forward to seeing what comes out of it."

"Thank you, everyone, this has been a very useful session. It's has helped to listen to everyone's experiences and input. Hopefully, this will be followed up for another event."

"it's a breath of fresh air to be recognised and be heard "



International women's day had to be an online event this year but we still engaged hundreds of women in a vibrant programme of activities which lasted a week, rather than being focussed on a single day. We were excited work with Ujima Radio, who curated a YouTube playlist showcasing the work of local women musicians, singers and producers as part of the online Bristol International Women's Day events, and with the Cube Cinema who showcased short films from female filmmakers.

Workshops and activities included sessions on female desire, Bellyfit yoga, biodanza, women in the legal profession, getting into work, disability and climate action, lullabies from around the world, poetry, mediation, radical women from history, women in nature and menopause, self-defence and more from a diverse range of women speakers.

Programme: Monday March 8th - Sunday March 14th

Bristol Women's Voice are excited to have worked with **Miranda Rae**, Broadcast Manager at **Ujima Radio**, who has curated a **YouTube playlist** showcasing the work of local women musicians, singers and producers as part of the online Bristol International Women's Day events.

During the week you can access the playlist on the Bristol Women's Voice YouTube channel to hear the amazing musical talent that Bristol has to offer and keep you moving.



Monday March 8th



10 - 11:30 am - Women Mean Biz

Victoria Matthews Business West
Ticketed event event £10.



12 - 1 pm - The Emerging Identity of Women in India

University of Bristol panel discussion.



12.30 - 1.30 pm - How can we recover from Covid-19 in a way that meaningfully supports greater inclusion, equality and community for all women and girls?

Keynote panel discussion with **Sado Jirde**, South West Black Network; **Amaal Ali**, Integrate UK; **Lucy Duggan**, the Human Nature Project; **Penny Evans**, Knowle West Media Centre: the Factory and **Katy Taylor**, Bristol Women's Voice



1 - 2 pm - Joint event between the Bristol Law Society and the Women Lawyers Division.

Alice Stephenson talks about the non-conforming lawyer.

Tuesday March 9th



12.30 - 1.30 pm - Bellyfit FLOW: Love How You Feel.

Exercise class with **Agni Grenckowska**



12.30 - 1 pm - Meet our Worker

Meet Next Link's 'Honour' Based Violence and forced Marriage Specialist and understand our work around this. Led by **Sajida** and supported by **Theia / Jayne Whittlestone**



12.30 - 1.30 pm - Acing Your Application

A practical workshop to finding your role, perfecting your CV, and acing the application and interview, with **Sally Ashby**.



6.30 - 7.30 pm - Poetry on Prescription

An invitation to listen to poetry read by **Subitha Baghirathan**

We had panel discussions from women in business on closing the gap and from women doing inspiring work across different communities in Bristol reflecting on how we can create a more inclusive post-covid world, and sessions for women to meet specialist violence against women and girls workers at next Link.

We look forward to coming back bigger and better in City Hall again in March 2022.

In 2020-21 we had less volunteer than usual due to the Covid-19 restrictions and the fact we were not holding an in-person International Women's Day event. However, three volunteers still provided invaluable IT and online assistance throughout our International Women's Week in March 2021.

We also benefitted from ongoing volunteer support with administration, three volunteers shared these tasks across the week for four months to check and respond to our info@inbox and to be a first point of contact for women getting in touch, providing a total of 320 hours voluntary hours.

We continued to provide intern placements to students who supported us with media and online events.



Julia Bravo – student intern with Bristol Women's Voice November 2020

In my personal and working life, I have seen the disproportionate impact that socioeconomic inequality had on women.

Since my early career, I have worked with women with mental health needs, diagnosed and undiagnosed, who were sleeping rough or in temporary accommodation.

I have seen very often the tragic consequences of complex trauma and gender-based violence and inequality. The consequences of living with mental health distress. As a practitioner, I have always known I have played a part in stabilising and preventing more serious mental health problems by offering access to emotional and psychological support, but I also believe that people are not just a list of symptoms and needs and ultimately the only power to change lies within themselves in partnership with the communities they live in. Community engagement is a powerful force for change and so I decided to volunteer with Bristol Women's Voice hoping to be able to add to their efforts to promote and publicise campaigns and events that advance the equality of women in the city I live and love.

BWV believe that women's lived experiences and narratives are the catalysts for change, that we have the solutions, that we are key innovators and have vision to lead. As a BWV volunteer this is very important for me, as a woman I know I am part of making this change possible and know that BWV will be taking all of our voices to the key decision-makers in the city and beyond to make the delivery of the solutions a reality.

The City Listening Project

We launched the City Listening Project report in November. This reported on work we did in 2019, funded by the Government Equalities Office, to carry out a large-scale listening exercise with marginalised and minoritised women across the city. We trained women across different communities as community researchers and, through them, we heard from 530 women on what holds them back from achieving their aspirations and what they'd like done about it.

Many of the women we spoke to aspired to secure employment, access to education, and professional development but instead were surviving in unfulfilling poorly paid employment, their ambitions thwarted by significant barriers.



We heard of multiple ways in which the lack of affordable good quality, secure housing affects women's safety, health, employment and ability to live fulfilling lives. "Even though I work, if I lost my job it would only take a month before I wouldn't be able to pay my rent."

Caring responsibilities emerged as a key theme: women faced critical challenges in accessing support for themselves and the people they care for.

Women across the city told us childcare was too expensive, located too far from home, and not available at the times they needed affecting employment, training and education

opportunities. “If you get a job you can’t travel far because you’ve got to be able to get the bus back in time to do the school run”

Women caring for SEND children highlighted many barriers that impacted on families, in particular interactions with schools, GP practices, and Bristol City Council services.

We learnt how racism prevented families moving to certain areas trapping families in poor quality housing and how Black and minoritised women and disabled women faced racism and prejudice on public transport.

A significant number of women from diverse ages, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds were survivors of domestic abuse with a long-lasting impact on many aspects of their lives including mental health.

Women called for greater understanding of issues relating to women, for women-only space and gender-specific services, for more childcare, and more services for women caring for disabled children. They wanted greater understanding from health professionals about chronic illnesses and mental health and called for a social security system that empowers rather than prevent women, particularly disabled women, from accessing volunteer and work opportunities.

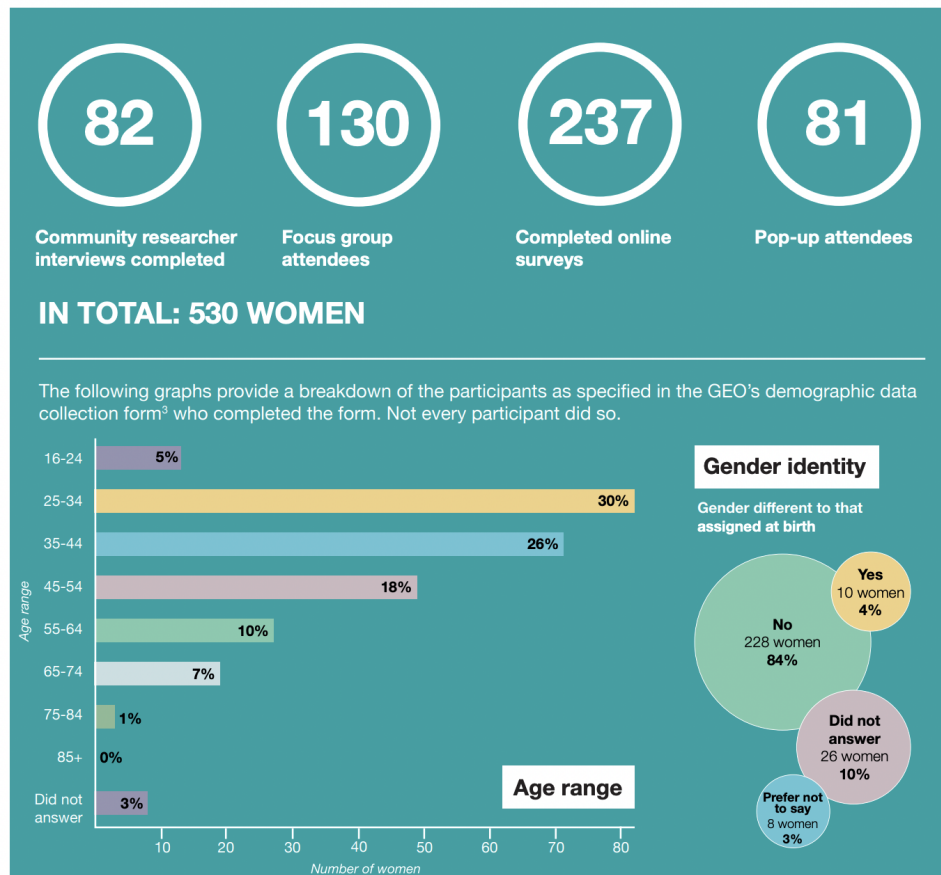
Women asked for investment in physical and social infrastructure including: a range of childcare provision, public transport, training courses and social care services – with particular attention on promoting accessibility for women.



These women’s voices, and beyond, and their recommendations for change will form the backbone of Bristol Women’s Voice’s strategic plan for the next three years – we will strive to work with women

to achieve the changes that would make the biggest difference to their lives.

Throughout the project we were also fortunate to deepen and, in some cases, develop relationship with organisations serving marginalised communities across Bristol, and without whom we could never have secured such in depth insight into women's needs. Partners included: Knowle West Health Park, Sadaga, The Haven - Red Tent, Barton Hill Settlement, Bristol Black Carers, Nilaari, Bangladeshi Women's Group, Parent Carers, Refugee Women of Bristol, Mothers for Mothers, Interculture, Talo, WECIL and Ambition.



Bangladeshi Women's Health Project

In response to a need identified through the City Listening Project, we established the Bangladeshi Women's Health Project. The project was developed to address the disproportionately poor health outcomes Bangladeshi women in Bristol experience; it aimed to improve women's knowledge and confidence to address a variety of health issues through establishing Bangladeshi women-led women's peer support groups. These were led by group facilitators who were able to share health information and resources, hold confidential conversations where women could seek information and provide access to workshops on specific areas of health.

We worked in collaboration with the Bristol Bangladeshi Women's Group and recruited and trained two community facilitators to run the project. They conducted an initial survey and interviews, which explored the extent of the problems that Bangladeshi women were facing and asked how they would like the project to run, and what issues to focus on.

The project developed three work strands:

- online workshops that specifically addressed the issues raised in the survey,
- a WhatsApp group to share health information and provide support for women facing health issues and,
- a gardening project that was supported by a donation drive across Bristol and a smaller WhatsApp group where women could share their experiences.

The combination of these elements combined to provide Bangladeshi women with opportunities to increase their knowledge of health issues such as menopause, breast

cancer awareness and mental health while also providing a space to ask questions and share messages of support. The women who partook in the project reported an increased knowledge of the health issues covered and spoke about the increased motivation they feel within their community to tackle these issues.

The community facilitators organised a total of 12 workshops and facilitated access to a further 7 with the Bangladeshi Mental Health Forum in Tower Hamlet. The workshops ran specifically for the project are as follows, those shaded in light blue ran two workshops:

Name of organisation	Focus of workshop	No. of Attendees
Bristol Menopause	Menopause	21
Sirona	Emotional Wellbeing	15
CoppaFeel	Breast Cancer Awareness	23
Brisdoc	111 Services	5
Brisdoc	Diabetes	7
Mothers4Mothers	Parenting	8
Rockabye	Post + Ante Natal Wellbeing	4
Khairun Miah	Parenting	16

The workshops were extremely well received and showed clear signs of improving women's knowledge of health issues as 100% of women who responded to the survey found the workshops useful. When asked why they found the workshops useful, women said that they had "learnt lots of new information" that they had not "previously been aware of". There was also often discussion in the WhatsApp chat after each workshop,

and women reflected on how the issues that came up impacted their own lives. Words to describe the workshops included “useful”, “informative” and “amazing”. In the evaluation form, two women also described how the workshops had given a sense of community as it was a (virtual) place to meet and support one another, demonstrating how the group has been used to build a network of women.

The workshops being online had some significant benefits: “Online was better, this group has been running for 34 years and when you tell people about an event, everyone would be interested then when the day comes it didn’t work, they wouldn’t show up. Online they could just turn up and not show their face. It would have been nice to have face to face but it would have been hard face-to-face.” (Project participant)

As a result of the information provided by the project 75% of women surveyed said they were more likely to seek medical help immediately for both physical and mental health issues. Women identified both the WhatsApp chat and the workshops as being key to their increased knowledge speaking about health issues: “Lots of new information I didn’t know before” (Workshops)

“It helps us learn so many things and they give information”

When asked to rank how healthy they were feeling between 1-10, only 6% ranked themselves under 5, compared to 20% at the beginning of the project.

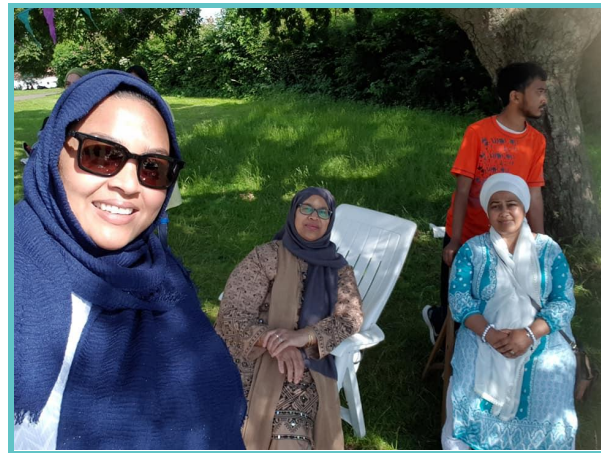
The project culminated in a picnic in Eastville Park at which there was a bloc printing session which women and their children could take part in. This event was well-attended and the feedback was unanimously positive:

“Thanks for arranging this event. It was so lovely day and great to see everyone. Specially enjoyed the block printing and chitchat.”

“After 1 and half year I walked longest yesterday. Bit in pain but my mind is so relaxed.”

“It was a lovely get together. Very relaxing. Thanks for arranging.”

“It was enjoyable experience specially for the children in this situation and in open space”



Media, members and communication

Since the last report, we increased our audience across all our social media channels. We have more followers, more views on each channel and we raised the engagement with our audience.

Throughout the year we focussed our communication efforts on:

- Developing a new website
- Developing our newsletter both in terms of regularity and content
- Providing up-to-date and accurate information about Covid-19, resources and Government information.
- Sharing information about local initiatives and Bristol's organisations supporting women. We also shared information and resources to mental health support and support services for survivors of violence against women and girls
- Providing information/resources interesting articles, inspirational and feminist quotes and highlighting relevant podcasts and inspirational videos.
- Sharing information on International Women's Day 2021 online coming up events and awareness Days (street harassment, mental health, etc)

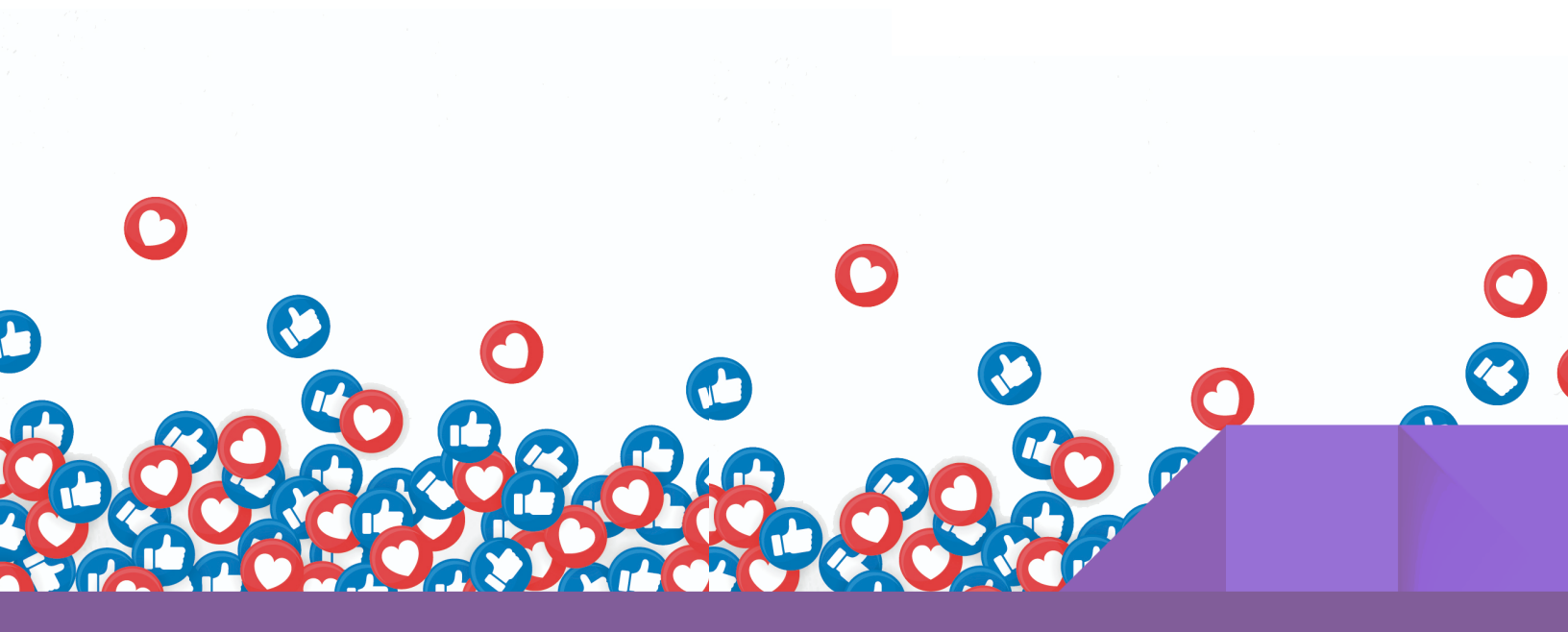
We worked together online with other organisations, cross-marketing workshops, recruitments, and resources.

We hosted different workshops on our social media platforms, in collaboration with other organisations, to improve wellbeing for women.

Our average newsletter open rate ranges between 28-60% in 2019-20, well above the cross-sector newsletter average of 23%. We use our newsletters to tell you about what we are doing to support greater equality in Bristol, to promote our workshops and opportunities and to bring you relevant news and information from across the sector and the city.

In 2020-21 we increase our membership to 5,078 and raised our social media followers on each platform:

- Facebook: 4,679 followers.
- Twitter: 4,745 followers.
- Instagram: 2,609 Followers



Financial review

2020/2021 marks the fourth full financial year that Bristol Women's Voice has operated as a CIO and it has been another successful yet challenging one for the organisation.

Where our money comes from:

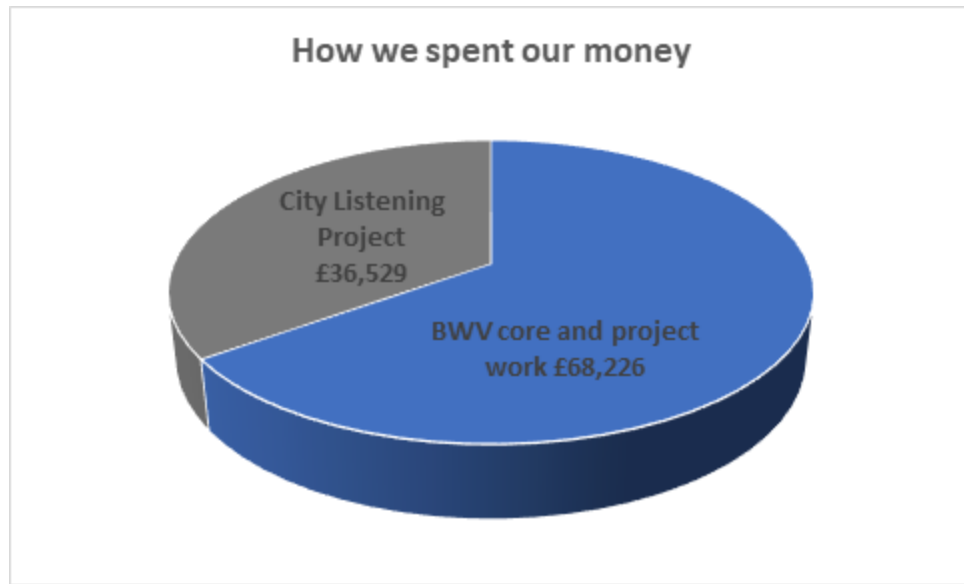
Our main source of income to support our core work is the grant funding received from Bristol City Council's Impact Fund. We also received two grants from Quartet – one to run the Bangladeshi Women's health Project and another to support BWV core operations throughout Covid, enabling us to refine our strategic direction and offer of support to the sector which, as above, we have started to do.

We would like to thank our members, regular donors, Bristol Soroptimists and all the other organisations and individuals who have generously supported us throughout the year through financial donations or donations of time and/or gardening equipment.

Our income

	2019-20	2020-21
Income from donations	£9,063	£197
Income from charitable activities:		
Bristol City Council Impact Fund	£39,701	£37,019
Bristol City Council City Listening Project	59,119	£35,726
Awards for All, National Lottery Fund	£0	£10,000
Quartet	£16,205	£8,000
Internships	£0	£2,299
Income from events	£1,252	£0
Other	£0	£213
Total income	£125,340	£93,257

Our expenditure



There was a deficit on unrestricted funds in the year of £15,345. This was offset against the funds brought forward from the previous financial year of £35,424 and £20,079 was therefore forward into 2020/21.

THANK YOU!

Many thanks to all of our volunteers, members, supporters, donors and funders. Our work would not be possible without your incredible contributions!

MANY THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS THIS YEAR





Contact us:

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