



# **A CALL FOR CHANGE: INVEST IN THE CARING ECONOMY**

**A manifesto for local and regional authorities**



# Caring is everybody's business

We all need care and we will all be a carer at some stage in our life and we need to value that more. Caring is everybody's business.

Caring cuts across all the pillars of society – education, employment, health, social development, and finance. Caring is fundamental to the infrastructure of our society and the foundation of our communities.

**If we continue to undervalue caring as the core of our societal well-being, we will continue to see the breakdown of society.**

*“Caring responsibilities have increased since the pandemic, and 38% of carers are providing more care because of local services reducing or closing.”*

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24, Bristol City Council



# Who cares?

We undervalue caring at a cost to carers, those who care for loved ones, those who can't afford to give up work to look after partners or family members when they need it most.

We undervalue caring at a cost to care workers, whose salaries, working terms and conditions don't encourage relationship building, job satisfaction or longer-term careers. The risk of suicide among carers and home carers was 70% higher than the national average.<sup>i</sup>

We undervalue caring at the cost of those who may be cared for; those whose personal allowances and care package limitations fail to provide time for dignified interactions and the support they need.

We undervalue caring at the cost of the planet: investment in the care sector could create 2.7 times as many jobs as the same investment in construction and produce 30% less greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>ii</sup>



*“Investment in a transformative package of care policies is central to build a better and more gender equal world of work”.*

International Labour Organisation (2022) ‘Care at work: Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work’

<sup>i</sup> Office for National Statistics (2016) Suicide by occupation, England: 2011 to 2015

<sup>ii</sup> Women's Budget Group (2022) Commission on a gender-equal economy: <https://wbg.org.uk/commission/>

# What is the Caring Economy?

A caring economy:

- Has the wellbeing of families, communities, and the planet at its centre.
- Values the care that nurtures us all.
- Can be part of the solution that ensures no one faces violence, or poverty.

Caring economics invests in maternity, nursery and childcare, education, health and social care.

Caring economics supports the work and well-being of all those delivering care through provision of transport, training and skills. It rewards those who work in the caring economy rather than so many having to rely on low wages and food banks.

*“In a caring economy, everyone gives and receives care on the basis of their capacities and needs.”*

Women’s Budget Group (2020) ‘Final Report Summary: Creating a Caring Economy: a call to action



# A manifesto for local and regional authorities

In the lead-up to the 2024 local and national elections, we will bring the voices of women, those caring, care workers and those cared for to the attention of politicians, employers and health and social care providers.

## We will ask:

- **What value have you placed on the caring economy?**
- **Where is care on your priority list for the future?**
- **What can you do to support a caring economy?**
- **How will you ensure this commitment becomes a reality?**

We call on employers, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), Bristol City Council and national government to adopt the caring economy as a strategic driver for investment across public services, training, skills, transport, environmental sustainability and for those disadvantaged by poverty and discrimination.

We are an of alliance of Bristol organisations representing its diverse communities: Bristol Black Carers, Bristol Women in Business, Bristol Women's Commission, Bristol Women's Voice, Carers Support Centre, Chinese Community Wellbeing Society, Co-Produce Care, March of the Mummies Bristol, West of England for Independent Living and Women's Budget Group.



# Invest in the Caring Economy for Carers

1. Ensure all West of England and Bristol City Council employment contracts include paid time allowances and flexible working conditions to recognise and support those with caring responsibilities and childcare needs.
2. Implement local policies to protect rights of carers to access childcare and carer support on training programmes.
3. Ensure childcare and social care is articulated as infrastructure in local and strategic plans.<sup>1</sup>
4. Lobby nationally for investment in free early education, childcare and social care as economic infrastructure reinforcing the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill.
5. Ensure all commissioned contracts ring-fence money to allow for enhanced maternity pay and a period of full pay sick pay/mental health days/menopause support/training.

<sup>1</sup> Including West of England Combined Authority's Industrial Strategy, major planning applications and all new employment, training, and regeneration developments.

# Invest in the Caring Economy for Care Workers

1. Actively support and lobby government to adopt the TUC Strategy for the Care Workforce as a Key Workforce including: decent pay and conditions developed with those in the workforce, secure contracts, a minimum of £15 per hour, sick pay, and pay for all hours worked; skills training and progression pathways across the health, social care, education and early years sectors; and protection for those most at risk coming to the UK on health and care visas.
2. Roll out Care Sector Skills Projects through the Adult Skills budgets e.g. a Recruitment and Retention Pilot of childcare workers established with education institutions to upskill individuals in the childcare sector in partnership with Colleges and Universities.
3. Care contract providers, including the local authority, ensure funding is available and set aside to backfill positions so that care work shifts are covered when staff attend training to avoid staff having to train out of hours or at home.
4. Sign up to the West of England Combined Authority's Good Employment Charter, UNISON's Ethical Care Charter and the Skills for Care [Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard](#). Ensure all Council or Combined Authority contractors or consultants are signatories and that mechanisms are in place for holding employers accountable for adhering to them. across the caring economy.

# Invest in the Caring Economy for Those Who May Be Cared For<sup>2</sup>

1. Across local authority and Integrated Care Board contracts care contracts ensure the minimum allowance for home care packages is at least an hour to reduce isolation and loneliness which are key contributors to ill health.
2. Across local authority and Integrated Care Board contracts ensure assessments clearly outline the full support that is required in the care plan, including that already provided by family members.
3. Ensure the standard of care delivered meets the needs of the service user. Base procurement on social value using UNISON's Ethical Care Charter.
4. Ensure protection of our maintained nurseries and identify the funding challenges and sites to be protected. Resource nurseries to work in partnership on immediate challenges over the next year.
5. Retain and increase the provision of Family Hubs in Bristol.

<sup>2</sup>Some of the support of that Disabled people need comes under the label of care; we recognize not all disabled people require care. Those who may need cared for also include some older people and young children.



# Get involved

Follow us on social media: [#valuecaringeconomy](#)

Contact us: [info@bristolwomensvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@bristolwomensvoice.org.uk)

Visit our website: [www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/caring-economy](http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/caring-economy)

