

‘Bristol – ambitious about fairness’

**A report from the Bristol Fairness Commission
June 2014**

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Foreword for the Mayor of Bristol



Last year I announced the establishment of a number of Mayoral Commissions in Bristol to look at key policy areas. Since this announcement we have set up a number of these Commissions, each one representing key priorities for the city, and specifically areas where we must do more to break down the barriers that risk holding us back from achieving our true potential. Addressing the issue of fairness is critically important, particularly in a city like Bristol that is prosperous on one hand, but at the same time masks but accentuates inequality in key parts of our City.

I asked Council officers to assemble a cast-list of some of the most knowledgeable and gifted individuals who could help advise us on each of these areas, and was delighted with the calibre of the people who were willing to give up their time and contribute so freely to the debate. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

I will now review the findings of the Commissions and consider them as part of the Council's policy making process. I have asked the appropriate Council officers to review the recommendations and advise on how we might implement them, giving due regard to financial, legal and other considerations. I will also ask the Council's Overview & Scrutiny function to advise my Cabinet and me on the recommendations. This draws in the perspectives of a wider cohort of Councillors representing all parts of the city – which is an opportunity to add further richness to the proposals coming forward.

Finally I would like to use this opportunity to thank each member of the Fairness Commission for their substantial contribution. I am confident this work will leave the city better prepared for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'George Ferguson'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'G'.

George Ferguson

Mayor of Bristol

Introduction from the Chair – Alison Garnham, Chief Executive of the Child Poverty Action Group



Bristol is a great city, one that is prosperous and with a rich heritage of creativity, dynamism and innovation, but it also hides a different reality for growing numbers of its citizens – the tale of two cities. Bristol's prosperity is not shared by all, and like many cities, high rates of poverty, deprivation and inequality scar the prospects of many residents. They do not get the chances in life they deserve and everyone in Bristol is the poorer for this fact.

Bristol is also a young city, there are more children under 16 living in Bristol than people aged over 65, and compared to projections for the country as a whole, Bristol's projected growth profile is markedly younger. Add to this that, in 2013, it was estimated that 26.1% of children in Bristol live in poverty.

These factors are what interested me when I was invited to chair the Bristol Fairness Commission, that and the commitment expressed by the Mayor and the Council to seek to fundamentally change the game on inequality in the City by asking '*What kind of City do we want to be?*' and make a commitment to:

'Be a City that works together to reduce inequalities through significant improvement in the life chances for its citizens.'

With that and a fantastic mix of expertise and knowledge represented by the other members of the Commission and the witnesses we met, we have put together a report that seeks to highlight some key areas for change based on the request for us to:

- Recommend significant practical steps that can be implemented quickly, alongside medium/longer term actions.
- Identify a series of fairness principles that can be applied across all council activity and be championed for greater adoption and support across the city.
- Make recommendations for Government where barriers exist to local implementation.

Our Commission, along with the others established here in Bristol have only had a limited time and resources to draw together our findings from a necessarily wide range of topics. This is just a first stage. Our recommendations would benefit from wide public consultation and public engagement. We will need Fairness Champions to ensure this agenda moves forward and that Fairness Principles are at the forefront when difficult spending decisions have to be made. With that in mind, we propose that alongside the delivery of the suggested recommendations, that a Fairness Alliance is established in the City to champion the report and support further information sharing and delivery.

We consciously tried not to overlap with the other commissions that were running concurrently, despite the fact that there are common concerns, for example, Young People's Education and Skills and Access to Affordable Homes are both relevant to the fairness agenda. Therefore, we have generally avoided commenting on those areas, although in the context of each of our key areas we have made some relevant points that we feel are important in the context of reducing inequality.

Bristol is taking an important step in recognising the benefits to all residents of giving people a fair chance in life and addressing the inequalities that persist in the UK today. Ultimately, national solutions are urgently needed to many of the issues we have raised and we have tried to make it clear where this is the case. But there are some things best addressed at the local level and Bristol has taken a brave first step in setting itself the fairness challenge. It is right to take this on, to be ambitious and to aim to be the fairest city in the UK. To succeed, this agenda will need buy-in and champions at all levels: in the council, in local organisations, in businesses and in communities – I look forward to continuing the dialogue about how this can be taken forward.

On behalf of the Commission I would like to thank everyone who gave time to share their knowledge and experiences with us, bringing the issues to life. We owe you, and we hope our suggestions will be able to help improve things. We are honoured to have had the chance to play our part in seeking to make a difference to the people of Bristol and we look forward to hearing their response.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Garnham', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Alison Garnham

Chair of Bristol Fairness Commission
Chief Executive of the Child Poverty Action Group.

Executive Summary

The Bristol Fairness Commission consisted of national and local experts that could offer some insight and expertise in the field of poverty, social exclusion, health and economic inequalities. The full membership is listed in appendix one. In addition, the Commission gathered evidence from local Officers, Councillors, and other experts in the field and local citizens who were directly affected by these issues of inequality, poverty and exclusion. They also told us their positive stories of useful support and the difference it had made, this is set out in appendix two.

The Commission would have liked to have done more, particularly in gathering local views and therefore see this report, not as the final stage in tackling very important issues, but one that will spark further debate and actions to address the issues raised. The issues of fairness and inequality cut across many areas, as other Fairness Commissions have found. We are conscious that continuing significant funding pressures upon the public sector and a still fragile economy make this a harder task still. This makes it even more critically important to optimise the funding and resources that do exist and focus them in areas that can have the biggest impact for the most vulnerable. We therefore call on the whole City of Bristol to gain a greater understanding of the pressures people are facing, think about the role each of you can play and how collectively you can work together to champion greater equality and demand a better and fairer future.

The Commission met six times between October 2013 and March 2014 and focused on three key areas: a young city, sharing prosperity and healthy communities. Here, we set out our ambitions for Bristol under five headings:

- The best place for children to grow up - a fair start in life
- Sharing prosperity - a fair place to live and work
- Fair Wages – a living wage for all
- Fairness for low-income families
- A happy, healthy city - fair and healthy communities

Our recommendations are listed below but you are encouraged to read the full context and learning points behind each one in the main report.

Key findings and recommendations – our ambition for Bristol

1. The best place for children to grow up - A fair start in life

Ambition one - Bristol is a young city and it should aim to be the best place for children to grow up. The Fairness Commission focused primarily on early years and childcare in Bristol to avoid overlap with the Young People's education and skills commission. What happens during pregnancy and during a child's first few years of life is crucial to a child's life chances. The Commission feels strongly that the City can't afford not to invest in children. **Bristol should brand itself as a young city with youthful ambition – with no child in Bristol left behind.**

Recommendations:

1. Community based early years services, including children's centres (targeted in key areas in particular) should continue to be a priority.
 - a. As part of this the Council should play a key role in ensuring that other services such as health services and Jobcentre plus provide added value in children's centres acting as community hubs
 - b. Effort is needed to encourage take-up of the children's centres and the free entitlement and further support and encouragement could be offered to parents to act as peer champions, particularly in areas where there is lower take-up of services.

2. Within three years, raise the percentage of children at a good level of development by age five to the level of the best in the country.
 - a. Review where Bristol stands on quality, making sure that children from the lowest income families gain access to the highest quality provision.
 - b. The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to provide sufficient childcare for all parents who wish to work – review Bristol’s performance in managing this duty and make improvements where necessary.
3. Focus also on older children, age 5-13 where there are often the biggest childcare gaps –e.g., around out of school and holiday childcare. Encourage schools to be seen as a local resource, getting maximum value out of facilities for the whole community, becoming truly extended schools. Engage the whole childcare sector in considering how this can be achieved, working with the PVI (private, voluntary and independent sector providers) where necessary.
 - a. As part of this priority and in recognition of the changing position brought about by the Children and Families Act, take the lead in exploring issues such as reading, meals classes for parents and volunteer and business sponsorship and support, particularly in schools in disadvantaged areas.
 - b. Break down barriers to schools being used as a community resource – including Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements.
 - c. Ensure childcare is available for parents seeking to train or gain qualifications, including through further education (FE).
4. Poverty proof the school day by working with schools to ensure no child misses meals, uniforms, educational opportunities or trips due to lack of money.
 - a. Working with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners and/or others ensure every school has a breakfast club.
 - b. Seek wider city support and funding to deliver Free School Meals (FSMs) in the school holidays, focussing first on the most disadvantaged communities.
5. Review learning from the London Challenge attainment gap project and new evidence about the important role of primary schools and apply to Bristol, from early years through to age 19. Engage academies and free schools in this task.
6. No NEETs - reduce the number and proportion of young people classified as NEET (Not in education, employment or training) to the level of best in the country, by engaging them individually in case work and providing mentors, apprenticeships, training and work experience or help them start a business of their own (as in Swansea).
7. Review services for children with special needs and strive to follow best practice demanding ambitious results from schools and special provision – aim to be the best.

Future landmark investments:

8. Increase the hours of the free entitlement to early years education for 2-4 year olds (following the example of London Borough of Camden)
9. Consider developing a local Educational Maintenance Allowance so more children from low-income families can contemplate staying on at school.
10. Extend free school meals to children over 7 and even to FE colleges. There are enormous benefits to be had from economies of scale, educational attainment and benefits to school culture when all sit down to eat the same meal.

Influencing national policy:

11. Lobby national government to provide more funding so that the Council can fully meet its responsibilities under the Childcare Act 2006, including providing sufficient childcare for

working parents; to be able to invest to ensure provision is all of high quality; and to fully roll out and meet the promise of fully extended schools.

12. Campaign for more money to expand early education and childcare; extended schools, free school meals and educational maintenance allowances.

2. Sharing prosperity - A fair place to live and work

Ambition two - Bristol is a wealthy city, with strong economic growth, vitality and enterprise. For those people and families who have suffered the most from the effects of recession and austerity, it is crucial now that they should be the first to share in the proceeds of growth, through the prioritisation of funds. For working families with children, life has become increasingly tough, and Bristol should aim to share their load to become the most family friendly city in the country. **A second ambition for Bristol, then, is around sharing prosperity – making Bristol the best place to live and work.**

Recommendations:

The Commission calls upon all employers in the City, including the Council and wider public sector to:

13. Review current policies and actions to consider where they miss opportunities to tackle disadvantage.
 - a. For the public sector use the development of a Social Value policy to ensure that the services that are commissioned and procured can improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area as part of the Public Services Social Value Act 2012.
 - b. For all employers include as part this; a review of access to work (transport), taking into account potential season ticket loans and other options such as expanding 'Wheels to Work' schemes, community/dedicated bus services and more other options such as flexible business hubs or home working.
14. Ensure that all those involved in the big city investments such as the arena, football stadium, enterprise zone and areas like South Bristol are playing a full part in addressing inequality in the City, from start (e.g. construction firms) to finish (e.g. access to employment).
 - a. In stimulating job creation, focus on getting employment for people in the poorest neighbourhoods either by bringing jobs to them, or taking them to jobs.
15. Work together to develop further understanding of and subsequently agree a Bristol Charter that could deliver part and full accreditation on:
 - a. Adopting a Living wage
 - b. Family friendly policy and practice
 - c. Avoidance of zero or low hour contracts wherever possible (precarious employment)
 - d. Adoption of the Workplace Health and Wellbeing charter.
16. Work together to enable an improved employment service/advice and guidance for adults, offering local control to enable greater matches in sustainable skills development and opportunities.
 - a. As part of this recognise first step routes into employment and skills development particularly for parents in long term disadvantaged communities, such as light touch, creative courses.
 - b. Make efforts to restore access to ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses for those furthest from the labour market.
17. Re-shape the draft City Employment and Enterprise Strategy – in particular, the gender, ethnic and disability implications need further acknowledgment, exploration and action planning – and

drive it forward. Include work around employment discrimination – on grounds of race, gender, disability, age and sexuality. Link into the work of the Trade Unions.

- a. Employers should through positive action, seek to increase the proportion of local people they employ from under-represented groups, such as: those from black and minority ethnic groups, women, disabled people and those from low-income parts of the city.
- b. Ensure all premises are DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant and that there are employment opportunities for disabled people.

Parental employment:

18. The Council to lead by example and work with other employers in the city to ensure that more decent part-time, job share and family-friendly employment is available locally, including through becoming a 'Timewise' Council and reviewing opportunities as part of procurement and commissioning.

- a. Consider tailored support for parents, as part of recommendation 18, above.

19. Include the drive for family-friendly jobs in the same way as for Living Wage jobs (perhaps initiating a 'making Bristol work for parents' coalition/campaign).

20. Initiate research and action on the gender pay gap in Bristol linking this to the work of the trades unions and Bristol Women's Commission, as above.

Future landmark investments:

21. Enable Bristol to test and develop an enhanced employment support service for adults in Bristol, building on good local examples, such as the Ready for Work scheme provided by Business in the Community (BITC).

- a. Continue to focus on transport access to work schemes as highlighted above and with particular acknowledgement to the difficulties faced by those in South Bristol.

Influencing national policy:

22. Argue for the devolution of funding for employment support down to local authority level.

3. Fair Wages – a living wage for all

Ambition three - The Commission supports the Council's commitment to become a living wage employer itself and firmly believes that it has to lead by example if it is to expect others to adopt it too. No-one in Bristol should do a hard day's work for less than they can afford to live on. **Bristol should aim to become a leading living wage city.**

Recommendations:

23. Bristol City Council should aim to become a fully accredited Living Wage Employer, first with staff and then working through procurement, contracting and best value policies to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of it with contracted services before implementing this requirement over time (at scheduled contract renewal points).

- a. Review the use of agency staff at the Council and use any savings made, through avoiding top-up charges, to help support the costs of a Living Wage.
- b. Work with and support Business West and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) as part of their joint declaration to promote the benefits of the Living Wage with other city employers and businesses (large and small), including the NHS, Universities, and the Voluntary and Community Sector Set up a Bristol Living Wage Joint-planning Board to deliver the above and for the City to provide an annual report on progress towards becoming a Fair Pay City.

- 24.** Request all major employers and all who tender for Council contracts publish pay differentials so they are open to scrutiny. The Council should aim for a ratio of no more than 10:1 within three years.

Social partnership:

- 25.** Prioritise sustainable economic growth that maximises opportunities and benefits all people, including the most disadvantaged and ensure better quality jobs are available to the most disadvantaged so all share in any growth, bringing increased spending into local communities.
- Invite Business West and other employer umbrella bodies in the City to help businesses better understand precarious employment and its impact on household income. This should include the rise in zero hours' contracts, particularly in the care sector, and the implications for staff and clients.
 - Consider ways to help boost earnings in the city through employment support, skills development and employee engagement. Welcome the positive role of trade unions.
 - Consider, with partners, how to help employers honour and government enforce the National Minimum Wage.

Influencing national policy:

- 26.** As a first step on the issue of sustainable employment, engage with government to improve the level of the National Minimum Wage, working as part of the National Social Inclusion network.
- 27.** Argue for any benefit savings made as a consequence of paying the living wage to be used to improve the level of child and working tax credits and, in future, universal credit to low income working families.

4. Fairness for low income families

Ambition four - The poorest people have taken the biggest hit as key in-work and out-of-work benefits have been cut, particularly women, disabled people and families with young children. The impact is visible in Bristol with, amongst other things, the growth of food banks. Bristol needs to take action to help them.

Recommendations:

- 28.** Continue to support and promote local help and advice agencies, encouraging outreach and promotional activity – particularly around money advice and welfare rights advice – which could help bring money into poorer areas and encourage take-up of unclaimed benefits and tax credits, including council discretionary payments.
- Maintain level of Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service (WRAMAS) free training for all support agencies, Bristol City Council (BCC) staff and partners and ensure customers get good benefits information, advice and assistance where this is part of the job role –e.g., social workers.
 - Approach the Health and Wellbeing Board to discuss the health impact of rising inequality and falling family incomes and the local experience of welfare reform.
 - Invite the local branch of NHS England in dialogue with GP Commissioners to seek to end the practice of charging for medical certificates and letters in connection with benefit claims. As a first step, seek to establish a standard agreement across Bristol as to what a supporting medical letter should cost.
- 29.** Prioritise and secure funding through for a local welfare assistance scheme, even after earmarked Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funding ends in 2015. Aim to be among the best in the country for paying cash grants and having a formal review process, as in Scotland.
- 30.** Work together across the city to recognise the value of the local credit unions and the support they can offer to disadvantaged communities:

- a. Develop a city campaign to get more staff across a range of organisations and other residents to support local credit unions (and therefore people on lower incomes) by having accounts with them and help pump prime their work.
 - b. Explore giving young people in contact with local services a first bank account with the credit union to promote understanding of good money management.
31. Continue to explore ways to discourage pay day lending and borrowing in Bristol, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas and maintain enforcement action against illegal activity by loan sharks who prey on vulnerable residents).
 32. Work together across the City to support the development of key facilities including pop up services within communities to encourage local employment, spend and access to services (free cashpoints, local supermarkets that meet local need and support healthy priorities, easy online access.) Equally use planning 'use' classes more creatively to discourage pay day loans and betting shops from stripping money out of deprived communities.
 33. End food deserts - support alternative or community supermarkets using local suppliers. And work to end the poverty premium paid by low-income residents who tend to pay more for food, fuel and other items by, for example, encouraging low cost food stores.
 34. Support research to identify the reasons why so many of Bristol's residents are using Food Banks and establish a model of best practice for all food bank providers. Use the findings to coordinate a local response to include work with relevant local agencies.
 35. Work with local DWP and Jobcentre plus representatives and engage on a strategic level through the national social exclusion network to address inappropriate and inflexible benefit sanctions that can send citizens spiralling into crisis.
 36. Work together across the City to end the digital divide. Provide local access and training on IT in libraries, advice centres and community centres, plus continue to help to access a computer through the re-use scheme so local people are not cut off from key services –e.g., claiming benefits, accessing financial services or applying for jobs.

Future landmark investments:

37. Continue to make up the 10% shortfall in Council Tax Reduction Schemes funding for non-pensioner households.

Influencing national policy:

38. Campaign for continued funding for local welfare assistance and discretionary housing schemes.
39. Campaign to make it a recognised part of GPs role to provide evidence in relation to benefit claims and make it unlawful in the NHS to charge for sick notes, letters and reports in connection with benefit claims.

5. Fair and healthy communities – a happy, healthy city

Ambition five – Continue to listen to and learn from Bristol's vibrant yet disadvantaged communities, so badly hit by austerity. Invest in them and their local infrastructure. Make Bristol a happy, healthy city.

Recommendations:

40. To support Bristol's Child Health in particular we need to:
 - a. To protect children, continue to promote and prioritise traffic calming, 20 mile an hour limits and green zones in the most disadvantaged areas.
 - b. Protect and maximise opportunities to access local green, safe and attractive spaces, including converting patches of scrubland space for community use.
 - c. Support food growing initiatives for health and recreational benefits including those such as community orchards.
 - d. Avoid fast food outlets near schools (by using planning laws effectively).

- e. The Commission supports the Sports Commission recommendations to seek opportunities and agreement with sports facilities owners and operators, including schools, to unlock facilities for extended use by clubs and communities.
 - f. Target awareness raising of child health and social isolation issues, especially in cluster areas.
 - g. Review community assets for those areas and identify opportunities for use such as community kitchens.
 - h. Support pro-active health measures including delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which contains 10 priorities for action;¹ and social prescribing activities through GPs.
- 41.** Poverty and fear of crime can lead to greater levels of social isolation in neighbourhoods, therefore work with key agencies to address this including through the active citizen agenda and forthcoming Cities of Service Volunteering programme.
- a. Invite neighbourhood police to work closely with older and disabled groups.
 - b. Encourage local good neighbour schemes to reduce social isolation and build community spirit.
 - c. Continue to act on domestic violence with agencies working together to ensure accessible services and a swift response. This should include a review of support services to Children and Young People affected by domestic violence in their homes and that these factors are considered as part of any re-commissioning process.
 - d. Research the local impact of stop and search on communities and work with them to find alternative methods of policing.
- 42.** Local grassroots organisations are essential to the success of Bristol, know the communities and their needs, and are approachable/accessible to local people. Seek support from across the City to help fund, encourage and enable local VCS groups to thrive and to deliver services to Bristol communities where they align to City priorities.
- a. Continue to engage with local communities in thinking about how to share community assets – sharing resources between the council, statutory and voluntary providers, to include: buildings, training, IT systems and support. Community assets could be made available first to local community organisations before they are considered for other uses or sold off commercially.
 - b. Explore potential quick wins through reinvesting effort from established Compact work into supporting Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations that focus on supporting people in disadvantaged communities with their fundraising and bid writing skills
 - c. Continue to work with the VCSE sector to make commissioning processes accessible and address barriers e.g. financial thresholds that small groups cannot comply with other models such as the possibility of competitive grants as a purchasing option.
 - d. Build social value issues into the commissioning process and have early dialogue with potential providers about these types of issues and their commitment to them e.g. living wage, employing local people, recruiting local volunteers
- 43.** Seek to increase the number of people seeking support for depression and anxiety, particularly in areas of high unemployment and child poverty through linking up health initiatives with advice and support services.
- 44.** On transport: Community transport provision needs to include access to health appointments – Work with the Health & Wellbeing board to address this.
- 45.** On housing: The Commission encourages landlords and house builders to work together on the implementation of the affordable housing strategy.

¹ These are: To create a high quality green and built environment; Achieve a healthier, more sustainable and resilient food system; To reduce all forms of domestic, gender and racially based violence and abuse; Reduce smoking prevalence and illicit tobacco availability and increase smoke free areas; Reduce the harm caused by alcohol misuse; To give children the best start in life; Improve mental wellbeing and reduce social isolation; To better meet the needs of people with dementia and provide dementia friendly environments; To improve the clinical quality of and satisfaction with maternity services; and Improve services and care through better integrated care and support.

Future landmark investments:

46. Continue the good work in reducing bus fares and, at some point, consider introducing free bus fares for children and young people under 25.
47. Leverage new money for affordable, social housing developments.

Influencing national policy:

48. Argue for more flexibility in raising local funds for social housing and transport developments.

Moving forward - adopting Fairness Principles

As Fairness is a cross cutting issue, both within the Council, its partners and across the city the Commission would like to recommend:

49. The establishment, within six months of the Mayor's formal response to this report, of a Fairness Alliance to continue to work together across the City

- a. This could include one or two key meetings a year to consider issues and agree joint-working, share good practice and seek to work together to resolve issues;
- b. Promotion and encouragement of corporate social responsibility, making local citizens and organisations aware that inequality damages us all, seeking to dispel myths about the causes of poverty and inviting local action through sponsorship, corporate responsibility and active volunteering;
- c. To develop and action plan with metrics to measure progress; and
- d. Both the Council and the Fairness Alliance to report back to Cabinet after 12 months.

50. Adopting these Fairness principles for the City of Bristol:

Harness the creativity, entrepreneurialism and ingenuity of the people of Bristol to the project of greater fairness – leverage Bristol's regional strengths and its cultural and business sectors.

Act on good data - measure, analyse and understand income inequality in Bristol and share the information widely so that the causes and possible solutions can be considered.

Engage in a Bristol-wide conversation about inequality, the damage it does and how to reduce it, engaging directly with disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities and making sure that better off Bristolians are aware that inequality affects them too.

Engage the community at every level – do things with people and not just for them.

Make reducing income inequality a core value in decision making.

Adopt a long term view and a preventative approach that acts now to prevent bigger problems in the future.

Strive for excellence in Bristol's services and organisations and the way they work together – strive for 'one-door' to give access to all services.

Lead by example by, for example, by being the best employer in Bristol and by paying the Living Wage to Council employees and spread new approaches using the Council's supply chain.

Welcome the positive role of trade unions, corporate social responsibility and other civil society and voluntary sector groups.

Pay particular attention to families with children, their earning power, their children's development and service needs to enable them to live free from poverty and improve the life chances of their young people.

Ensure the proceeds of growth are shared fairly, prioritising investments and services to reduce inequalities and improve life chances for the most disadvantaged people and in the most disadvantaged communities.

Don't assume poor incomes and inadequately rewarded work are somehow inevitable – they are an injustice that deserves redress.

Don't let lack of city funds mean opportunities for creativity and hope are missed.

Key findings and recommendations – our ambition for Bristol

1. A Fair Start in Life – the best place for children to grow up

Ambition one - Bristol is a young city and it should aim to be the best place for children to grow up. The Fairness Commission focused primarily on early years and childcare in Bristol to avoid overlap with the Young People's education and skills commission. What happens during pregnancy and during a child's first few years of life is crucial to a child's life chances. The Commission feels strongly that the City can't afford not to invest in children. Bristol should brand itself as a young city with youthful ambition – with no child in Bristol left behind.

The Commission is aware that the pressure on Bristol with a large and growing young population (27% increase in the number of children aged birth to four since 2006 and an increasingly diverse population) is challenging, particularly against a backdrop of intense resource pressures. However with a figure of 26.1% of children living in poverty the Council's role is critical, both directly and in bringing together all the relevant organisations and agencies to improve children's life chances.

The current statutory entitlement for 3 & 4 year olds (and most disadvantaged 2 year olds) is good and most do take it up but it varies across different parts of city. In north and south Bristol there is approximately 96% take-up, but in central and eastern parts this drops to approx. 87%. The Commission is aware that options to address this are being considered and seeks to encourage this, including through the use of peer champions to highlight the benefits to others and encourage wider support within the community.

High quality early childhood education and childcare can deliver improved child outcomes in later life and there is strong evidence to support this from many key studies including the Marmot report (2010) and DfES EPPE project report (2004).² The positive effects are the most long-lasting for the most disadvantaged children - but only if provision is of high quality and this tends to be worst in the most disadvantaged areas.³ This needs to be addressed. Also, the lack of high quality, affordable childcare is a serious barrier to parents being able to work and keep their families out of poverty.

The recent Children and Families Act 2014 seeks to reform the system of early education and childcare by opening it up and making it more flexible. Whilst greater flexibility and encouragement of a greater role for schools is welcomed, there is also concern from the Commission and early years staff about the deregulation of the sector and whether this will affect the quality of childcare. The best quality is often to be found in the maintained sector and in children's centres;⁴ therefore, provision based on this high quality, graduate-led model is needed if children are to achieve the best outcomes. The Commission would be keen for greater dialogue in the sector to ensure good practice is shared across the City. The Council and its partners need to take the issue of childcare quality extremely seriously and a coordinated effort is needed to ensure that particularly children from low-income families gain access to only the highest quality of provision.

² Marmot M (2010) *Fair Society, healthy Lives*, Strategic Review of health inequalities in England post- 2010, London: UCL; Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Baltchford, I. And Taggart, B (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Final report – a longitudinal study funded by the DfES 1997-2004*, Sure Start Research Report, SSU/FR/2004/01, Nottingham: DCSF.

³ Ofsted (2014) *The report of her majesty's chief inspector of education children's services and skills*; Manchester: OFSTED

Nuffield Foundation, Mathers S and Smees R (2014) 'Quality and Inequality - Do three and four-year-olds in deprived areas experience lower quality early years provision?'

⁴ Sylva K et al (2004) Op cit; Mathers, S., Sylva, K. and Joshi, H. (2007) *Quality of Childcare Settings in the Millennium Cohort Study*. Department for Education and Skills: London; Smith, T., Coxon, K., Sigala, M., Sylva, K., Mathers. S., La Valle, I., Smith, R., Purdon, S., Dearden, L., Shaw, J. and Sibieta, L. (2007) *National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative Integrated Report*, London: DfES.

Meeting with parents and early years professionals and those working in partnership with them (such as adult learning and skills) in local Children's Centres was inspiring and there was clear evidence of excellent practice. However it is clear that with limited resources they need help to go further. In particular, there needs to be a clear focus on getting a good level of development by age five for more children.

The Commission is aware of the review work that has been taking place around the 25 children's centres and is keen to support the principle of the centres, where based to have greatest impact, acting as vibrant community hubs for young families. By embedding them in communities with the added value of other services and resources being available, including follow on school support and before and after school childcare. This can offer more holistic, shared support to children and their parents. Bristol should aim for seamless integrated services that focus on improved outcomes as well as confidence building and support for parental employment. Local authorities already have duties under the Childcare Act 2006 to ensure there is sufficient childcare available for all parents wanting to take paid work and the Commission was anxious to find ways to help them operationalise this requirement.

Currently the Commission is aware that funding challenges include the reduction of support through the health service and employment support from Jobcentre plus. And some of the biggest gaps in childcare provision are for school-age children, disabled children and for parents working atypical hours. So, there is a strong case for making good use of existing resources. Schools, for example, are a local resource and the council could take a lead in coordinating local action, involving schools, public sector, voluntary sector and employers to increase the amount of affordable, high quality childcare available through fully integrated, extended schools provision. This way local people would get maximum value out of school facilities for the local community, including out of school art, study and evening classes for local parents. Bristol should engage the whole childcare sector and community in considering how this can be achieved.

Consideration should be given to finding ways to 'poverty proof' the school day. Children from low-income families often lack money to pay for school uniforms, school trips or even to choose the subjects they prefer because they cannot afford necessary equipment or books that may be a course requirement or expectation. Stigma surrounding free school meals, low take-up and children often arriving at school hungry are becoming more common. And there is no meals provision to cover school holidays. Some of these issues can be tackled at school level with local funds being set up to cover these costs – no child should be excluded from an enriching educational experience due to lack of money, or humiliated due to stigmatising school meals practice. Consideration needs to be given to providing free 'school' meals during holiday periods, with a focus first on schools based within the most disadvantaged areas.

Finally, in order to continue the good start initiated through early years work, Bristol should seek to be a leader in closing the educational attainment gap. The London Challenge has shown that it is possible to make dramatic improvements in the gap between the school achievements of low income children and their better-off peers. It is suggested Bristol schools take the learning from this and use it to support other work already underway. Also, by providing individual case work and mentoring (following the example of Swansea), the number and proportion of young people defined as NEET (Not in education, employment or training) could be reduced.

Recommendations:

1. Community based early years services, including children's centres (targeted in key areas in particular) should continue to be a priority.
 - a. As part of this the Council should play a key role in ensuring that other services such as health services and Jobcentre plus provide added value in children's centres acting as community hubs

- b. Effort is needed to encourage take-up of the children's centres and the free entitlement and further support and encouragement could be offered to parents to act as peer champions, particularly in areas where there is lower take-up of services.
2. Within three years, raise the percentage of children at a good level of development by age five to the level of the best in the country.
 - a. Review where Bristol stands on quality, making sure that children from the lowest income families gain access to the highest quality provision.
 - b. The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to provide sufficient childcare for all parents who wish to work – review Bristol's performance in managing this duty and make improvements where necessary.
3. Focus also on older children, age 5-13 where there are often the biggest childcare gaps – e.g., around out of school and holiday childcare. Encourage schools to be seen as a local resource, getting maximum value out of facilities for the whole community, becoming truly extended schools. Engage the whole childcare sector in considering how this can be achieved, working with the PVI (private, voluntary and independent sector providers) where necessary.
 - a. As part of this priority and in recognition of the changing position brought about by the Children and Families Act, take the lead in exploring issues such as reading, meals classes for parents and volunteer and business sponsorship and support, particularly in schools in disadvantaged areas.
 - b. Break down barriers to schools being used as a community resource – including Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements.
 - c. Ensure childcare is available for parents seeking to train or gain qualifications, including through further education (FE).
4. Poverty proof the school day by working with schools to ensure no child misses meals, uniforms, educational opportunities or trips due to lack of money.
 - a. Working with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners and/or others ensure every school has a breakfast club.
 - b. Seek wider city support and funding to deliver free school meals (FSMs) in the school holidays, focussing first on the most disadvantaged communities.
5. Review learning from the London Challenge attainment gap project and new evidence about the important role of primary schools and apply to Bristol, from early years through to age 19. Engage academies and free schools in this task.
6. No NEETs - reduce the number and proportion of young people classified as NEET (Not in education, employment or training) to the level of best in the country, by engaging them individually in case work and providing mentors, apprenticeships, training and work experience or help them start a business of their own (as in Swansea).
7. Review services for children with special needs and strive to follow best practice demanding ambitious results from schools and special provision – aim to be the best.

Future landmark investments:

8. Increase the hours of the free entitlement to early years education for 2-4 year olds (following the example of the London Borough of Camden)
9. Consider developing a local Educational Maintenance Allowance so more children from low-income families can contemplate staying on at school.
10. Extend free school meals to children over 7 and even to FE colleges. There are enormous benefits to be had from economies of scale, educational attainment and benefits to school culture when all sit down to eat the same meal.

Influencing national policy:

11. Lobby national government to provide more funding so that the Council can fully meet its responsibilities under the Childcare Act 2006, including providing sufficient childcare for working parents; to be able to invest to ensure provision is all of high quality; and to fully roll out and meet the promise of fully extended schools.

12. Campaign for more money to expand early education and childcare; extended schools, free school meals and educational maintenance allowances.

2. A Fair place to live and work – sharing prosperity

Ambition two - Bristol is a wealthy city, with strong economic growth, vitality and enterprise. For those people and families who have suffered the most from the effects of recession and austerity, it is crucial now that they should be the first to share in the proceeds of growth, through the prioritisation of funds. For working families with children, life has become increasingly tough, and Bristol should aim to share their load to become the most family-friendly city in the country. A second ambition for Bristol, then, is around sharing prosperity – making Bristol the best place to live and work.

As highlighted in the introduction from the Commission Chair, Bristol has been and continues to be strong on economic growth. Indeed the March Bristol Economic Briefing advises:

*'Reports from three different sources have suggested that the economy of Bristol is on the road to recovery. One indicates the commercial property market in Bristol will bounce back strongly in 2014. Another - the Cities Outlook 2014 indicated that Bristol is one of the strongest performing major English cities outside London. Another suggests that Bristol will undergo "significant" economic expansion over the next five years. The growth will be led, in tandem, by the city's relatively new information and communications technology (ICT) and well established professional, scientific and technical services sectors. In addition, the city's emerging creative and media industry will make a significant contribution.'*⁵

Currently Bristol outperforms in a number of key areas:

- Economic productivity (Gross Value Added) £28.70 per hour (UK av. £27.30)
- 7.2% unemployment rate (UK av. 7.9%)
- 82% feel in good health (81.2% in E&W)
- Average earnings £27,100 (UK av. £26,400)
- 42.2% qualified to degree level (UK av. 32.5%)

This means for parts of the City and neighbouring areas life is good, despite the recent economic pressures.

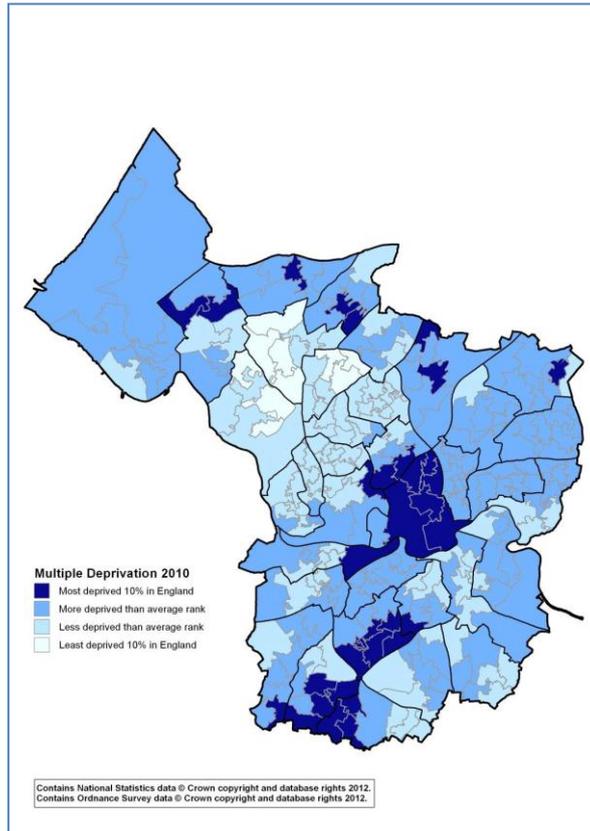
However, reports like the JRF's 'Cities, Growth and Poverty: Evidence review' (2014)⁶ points out that: *'Economic growth does not always reduce poverty... The benefits of growth in innovative, knowledge based sectors will not automatically trickle down to households in poverty.'*

This is borne out in Bristol with some areas facing persistent deprivation, with some of these areas being placed within the 10% most deprived in England. 14 of Bristol's Local Super Output Areas are in the most deprived 5% and one area – Hareclive in Whitchurch Park falls within the most deprived 1%. There are approximately 63,000 people living in deprived areas (15% of all Bristol residents). The main clusters tend to be in the inner city or on outer local authority estates.

⁵ Extract from Bristol City Council Economic briefing March 2014 <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/business/economic-information-and-analysis>

⁶ Lee N, Sissons P, Hughes C, Green A, Atfield G, Adam D, Rodriguez-Pose (2014) *Cities, Growth and poverty: a review of the evidence*, York:JRF.

This picture of Bristol highlights the areas with highest levels of multiple deprivation. (Darkest areas)



The Council is well-aware of this issue (and was one of the grounds for establishing the Commission) and is working hard at a local neighbourhood level and at a strategic level, with the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), with Government on developing City Deals (stage one already completed) and now Growth Deals as part of the Single Local Growth fund and through EU Structural and Investment funds.

Therefore the work of the Commission has sought to review the local and national evidence on this issue (within the time available) and provide independent comment and recommendations where it feels the greatest priorities and opportunities lie.

Supporting sustainable and wide-reaching economic growth

The Commission supports the view expressed in the previously referenced JRF report that: *'The impact of employment growth on poverty depends upon the sector of new employment, its quality, the characteristics of the population and local factors such as the quality of transport links.'*

Further: *'A balance and range of skills is particularly important in both ensuring urban economic growth and reducing poverty. Low and Intermediate-level skills and the quality of entry level jobs should be considered integral to developing a sustainable urban economy.'*

In the case of Bristol the strong and growing sectors of the economy will naturally attract employers seeking highly skilled individuals; this therefore tends to support the high level of graduates in the city and attract others from outside the immediate Bristol boundary (the wider functioning economic area).

Whilst this is recognised as good for the economic growth within the wider area, the commission feel there is scope to do more to develop the employability and skills of those within more deprived areas and engage further with employers to develop more entry level jobs (including traineeships and apprenticeships).

The Commission is aware that work on some sectors in particular has already started in this regard, such as the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone and its focus on supporting skills development in the Creative and Digital sectors and small business start-ups.

Professor Richard Wilkinson, in the book he co-authored with Kate Pickett *'The Spirit Level – Why Equality is better for everyone'*, makes the case that *'sustainability needs greater equality'*, citing evidence that where places are unequal (particularly in income) it leads to deteriorations in health, social relations and human capital. Also that where adults experience inequality, the effects are passed on to children. Therefore in terms of focusing on key groups, Bristol needs to look not only to geographical areas but also particularly to young parents and women in particular who are within low/no income groups. Increasingly it is working households that are suffering from 'in-work' poverty due to range of factors including reduced or low hours, changes to in-work benefit entitlements and rising cost of living.

Parental employment

Where family incomes have risen at all over the past 30 years, this has come mainly from second earners. Work is needed to ensure Bristol is somewhere that facilitates second earners' (usually mothers') employment in particular. To achieve this it requires more, decently paid, family-friendly jobs, decent childcare and flexible transport.

The impact of parental employment is clear from our national poverty figures. If both parents are in paid work, child poverty rates reduce quite dramatically:⁷

- Couple not working – 69%
- One or more parents working part time – 59%
- One parent working full time – 30%
- One working full-time and one working part time – 10%
- Both working full time – 5%

The returns from paid work are not quite so good for lone parents, reducing from 65% when not in paid work to only 31% in part-time work and 17% full-time. The self-employed still have a 29% child poverty rate in work. Bristol's existing Child Poverty Strategy (2012) highlights that an unusually high proportion of Bristol's children in poverty (75.5%) live in lone parent families, compared with 67.4% in core cities and 68.2% in England as a whole. (Lawrence Hill (1,750) and Filwood (1,270) have the greatest numbers). Of those the data shows that 92% of lone parents are women and that the recession and public sector cuts are disproportionately affecting women (as a large part of that workforce).

The 2011 report 'Single Mothers, Singled Out' (Fawcett/Institute of Fiscal studies) anticipates that lone mothers will experience an 8.5% drop in real income by 2015.

Over half of our children in poverty live in households where the youngest child is under the age of five. Again, Bristol has relatively more children in this category than any of its comparator areas.

The level of pay, the number of hours, or jobs to achieve a reasonable wage and job security are also key factors. A third of adult life is spent at work so good quality work is a major contributor to health and wellbeing. Conversely, insecure and poor quality work has a negative impact on both physical and mental health.

The recent Resolution Foundation report *'Careers and Carers'* found that nationally approx. 1 million women are 'missing' from the UK labour market. The biggest gap is mothers with children under 5. Full-time work is a big issue. In their research with 'Mumsnet', they discovered 1 in 5 working mothers wanted to work more. For non-working mothers 4 in 10 wanted to work more. Affordability was sighted as the biggest barrier for both groups. Many found that working part time meant they had to take a lower skilled job on lower pay. For those on low pay it can be harder to

⁷ DWP/ONS (2013) *Households Below Average Income, 1995/95 – 2011/12*, London: DWP

progress. The minimum wage has become a 'going rate' in some sectors rather than the minimum. Some move out of low pay, but other factors can cause them to fall back into it.

The Commission found a number of employers now commonly employ people on fewer than 16 hours (the threshold for working tax credit), such as 10 hours or zero hours contracts, often meaning that people need to look at trying to do more than one job and juggling the hours and commitments of each to get any help through tax credits, including help with childcare costs. The Resolution Foundation report found that 23 hours plus are more viable for many.

Increasingly, conditionality in claiming benefits is also causing difficulty. Examples include a lack of flexibility in the system to cope with varying hours of employment, which is common in seasonal work. People must also accept work within a 90 minute commute, but this can be difficult for parents on low incomes who often rely on public transport to get to work but need flexibility to support their children in school or childcare.

The UK prides itself on having a flexible labour market, but there is less flexibility for employees, particularly parents, who have little choice over their hours, including anti-social hours at evenings and weekends. So there is a need to work with employers to recognise the issues and support more employee-friendly and family-friendly work practices at a local and national level to realise more sustainable employment practice. In particular, the city should work with employers to promote well paid part time working opportunities.

Dialogue with parents from local children's centres highlighted the benefit of targeted learning support for them as individuals and the benefit this then had on their children too. Introductory lighter touch courses that get people used to learning environments are key as a gateway onto other more formalised learning. Parenting courses were also really helpful to grow confidence. By growing their confidence and self-esteem, they were also able to realise that they already had existing transferable skills.

Crèche facilities and peer to peer support was also highly valued, particularly where there is no other family support. Each of the parents the Commission spoke to were now actively promoting the benefits to others and aware that in many cases it offered general improved health and wellbeing and access to other social engagement activities.

Local and national policy levers

As highlighted at the beginning of this section the Commission recognise the significant efforts already being made by the Council to address inequality in the City.

The recent commitment by the Mayor to join the new national social inclusion network initiated by Birmingham and that brings together those authorities that have made a commitment to promoting Fairness and Social inclusion is to be welcomed (March 2014). It will enable Bristol to learn and share information about tools and strategies that are working to address the issues identified and bring together a strong and collective voice particularly where the issue is affected by national policy.

At a local level, the Commission considers that the Council should seek to lead by example, for example in HR and Procurement practice, but also make best use of its enabling local leadership role to encourage others to do the same across the City. The Council is also in the process of developing an Employment and Enterprise Strategy that will describe in detail many of the key activities to support economic growth and inclusion for local citizens, individually, through commissioned services or in partnership with others.

The Fairness Commission has therefore contributed to its development, alongside that of the Young People's Education and Skills Commission and welcomes the overall adoption of the strategy to bring together a focused effort to address this agenda.

The key messages were around the need to strengthen the sections that seek to tackle economic exclusion on grounds of gender, black and minority ethnic group and disability. In addition, consideration of parental employment and barriers to in-work progression needed to be addressed.

The Commission feels that the current local delivery of **employment advice** services could be strengthened. Jobcentre plus in particular is considered to focus on short term solutions rather than longer term sustainable employment directions. Opportunities for better careers advice and skills development for adults that matches the growing market would be helpful. Dedicated services for parents, along the lines of the 'Timewise' approach pioneered by Women Like Us in London could be adopted.

Case study: Camden Council has become the first local authority to achieve the Timewise Council status. It forms part of Camden's wider plan to help mothers balance work with childcare. The Timewise Foundation, which runs the scheme, champions flexible working and operates the UK's leading jobsite that offers high-quality part-time roles to the people who need and can fill them.

The Commission would like to see more local influence on work programmes, following good examples such the Business in the Community Ready for Work programme. Other potential areas for additional support for training and development are through the Trade unions and the Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector that often has embedded expertise within disadvantaged communities, although it is recognised that these organisations could benefit in some instances from additional support to enable delivery (e.g. support for bid writing to generate funds).

Transport

Transport policy is a major lever for economic growth and depending upon the approach can help or hinder disadvantaged communities. The Commission is keen to encourage employers and the wider community to explore options for and support physical access to employment through sustainable transport measures.

The Commission is aware of some measures, such as the special bus services, such as those to Aztec west business park, but understand they can be variable. Some areas have very limited access to public transport and employment opportunities, especially where early shift work is required e.g. Avonmouth docks and Lawrence Weston.

The Commission learnt about some of these frustrations first hand through one of the clients at the Matthew Tree Project:

Case study: 'John' (not his real name) relayed an issue he had had recently where he had taken part in a re-training project, following a long period of unemployment, that built upon his previous skills in engineering. He was really pleased with his new skills that were designed to match employment opportunities at Avonmouth docks. However, when he was offered a new role there, he was unable to take up the opportunity as he couldn't get across the city on public transport for a shift that started before the buses were running.

There is an opportunity to improve through the forthcoming rapid bus transport system and the new travel hub linking bus and train services at Temple Meads, but the Commission understands that these will not be in place for a few years.

Therefore it is felt that interim solutions in particular need to be found and supported, such as exploring community transport support (generally older and disabled people) and offering more support for projects like Wheels to Work – helping with bus tickets, loans to buy scooters, cycle loan schemes, particularly targeted at young people and the Bristol Bike project (helping people to earn a bike).

New Enterprise areas (e.g. South Bristol) and zone offer the opportunity to link up to more sustainable travel options and put in these in place before people start employment there to enable step change (such as Freiberg in Germany).

Recommendations:

The Commission calls upon all employers in the City, including the Council and wider public sector to:

- 13.** Review current policies and actions to consider where they miss opportunities to tackle disadvantage.
 - a. For the public sector use the development of a Social Value policy to ensure that the services that are commissioned and procured can improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area as part of the Public Services Social Value Act 2012.
 - b. For all employers include as part this; a review of access to work (transport), taking into account potential season ticket loans and other options such as expanding 'Wheels to Work' schemes, community/dedicated bus services and more other options such as flexible business hubs or home working.
- 14.** Ensure that all those involved in the big city investments such as the arena, football stadium, enterprise zone and areas like South Bristol are playing a full part in addressing inequality in the City, from start (e.g. construction firms) to finish (e.g. access to employment).
 - a. In stimulating job creation, focus on getting employment for people in the poorest neighbourhoods either by bringing jobs to them, or taking them to jobs.
- 15.** Work together to develop further understanding of and subsequently agree a Bristol Charter that could deliver part and full accreditation on:
 - a. Adopting a Living wage
 - b. Family friendly policy and practice
 - c. Avoidance of zero or low hour contracts wherever possible (precarious employment)
 - d. Adoption of the Workplace Health and Wellbeing charter.
- 16.** Work together to enable the development of an improved employment service, advice and guidance for adults, offering local control to enable greater matches in sustainable skills development and opportunities.
 - a. As part of this recognise first step routes into employment and skills development particularly for parents in long term disadvantaged communities, such as light touch, creative courses.
 - b. Make efforts to restore access to ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses for those furthest from the labour market.
- 17.** Re-shape the draft City Employment and Enterprise Strategy – in particular, the gender, ethnic and disability implications need further acknowledgment, exploration and action planning – and drive it forward. Include work around employment discrimination – on grounds of race, gender, disability, age and sexuality. Link into the work of the Trade Unions.
 - a. Employers should through positive action, seek to increase the proportion of local people they employ from under-represented groups, such as: those from black and minority ethnic groups, women, disabled people and those from low-income parts of the city.
 - b. Ensure all premises are DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant and that there are employment opportunities for disabled people.

Parental employment:

18. The Council to lead by example and work with other employers in the city to ensure that more decent part-time, jobshare and family-friendly employment is available locally, including through becoming a 'Timewise' Council and reviewing opportunities as part of procurement and commissioning.
 - a. Consider tailored support for parents, as part of recommendation 18, above.
19. Include the drive for family-friendly jobs in the same way as for Living Wage jobs (perhaps initiating a 'making Bristol work for parents' coalition/campaign).
20. Initiate research and action on the gender pay gap in Bristol linking this to the work of the trades unions and Bristol Women's Commission, as above.

Future landmark investments:

21. Enable Bristol to test and develop an enhanced employment support service for adults in Bristol, building on good local examples, such as the Ready for Work scheme provided by Business in the Community (BITC).
 - a. Continue to focus on transport access to work schemes as highlighted above and with particular acknowledgement to the difficulties faced by those in South Bristol.

Influencing national policy:

22. Argue for the devolution of funding for employment support down to local authority level.

3. Fair Wages – a living wage for all

Ambition three - The Commission supports the Council's commitment to becoming a living wage employer itself and firmly believes that it has to lead by example if it is to expect others to adopt it too. No-one in Bristol should do a hard day's work for less than they can afford to live on. Tackling income inequality is crucial to forging a fairer Bristol. Bristol should aim to become a leading living wage city.

As part of this work it reviewed the evidence already gathered by the Scrutiny Inquiry day including the general principle of a living wage, how it is established, the benefits for employees and the employer and the process for accreditation.

The living wage is currently at £7.65 an hour (outside London) and is calculated on the level of income considered by the public to be enough to have a minimum acceptable standard of living.⁸

The commission understands talks are still ongoing with the unions at the Council to agree an overall package of terms and conditions for employees that is supportive, but also sustainable, but in the interim a one off payment that equates to the living wage has been paid to staff that are on the lower incomes.

The Commission believes real step change can happen if the Council can encourage other large public sector employers in the City to also adopt the living wage or minimum income guarantees. As well as moving towards commissioned contractors, over time, being asked do the same (at scheduled contract renewal points).

The commission recognises that there may be concern from smaller employers or those working in competitive sectors such as Social Care. However if it becomes a requirement (after a build in time), particularly across the wider economic area for example, where care homes are likely to draw in a number of residents from different authorities so that all contractors are working to the same requirements, it levels the playing field.

There is evidence that employers will benefit from:⁹ increased productivity, lower staff turnover, reduced absenteeism, increased stability of the workforce and improved staff morale, motivation and commitment. Increased investment in training and higher service quality may also be seen. For young people it can improve their life chances and help invest in their futures.

Demonstrating this evidence to employers will be helpful to alleviate concerns. In this regard, the Commission welcomes the agreement signed between Business West and the TUC in November last year to work together to advise upon and promote the living wage to its members, particularly by those that have already made the move.

The Commission was hoping to engage with Business West on this issue, but was unable to do so in the time available. Therefore it would be helpful for the Council to continue the dialogue.

The Commission is also keen for the Council to continue to review its own position on pay inequality (pay ratios) and zero or low hour contracts as well as further promoting and supporting good employment practice through active procurement policy (including the further development and adoption of a Social Value Policy in recognition of the principles of the Social Value Act (2012)).

⁸ UK living wage rate (outside London) is calculated annually by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University with funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁹ GLA Economics (2009) *An independent study of the business benefits of implementing a Living Wage policy in London*, London: London Economics.

The Social Value Act requires all public bodies in England to consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

Bristol has a Workplace Wellbeing Charter to encourage safe and healthy work places – the Commission backs the initiative recently launched by the Mayor and supported through public health. Encouraging local employers to promote the health and wellbeing of their staff is positive for staff but also benefits employers.

A third of adult life is spent at work, so good quality work is a major contributor to health and wellbeing. Conversely, insecure and poor quality work has a negative impact on both physical and mental health. Sickness absence costs the Bristol economy £240m per year (10 million working hours lost) so there are strong business incentives to do this.

Recommendations:

- 23.** Bristol City Council should aim to become a fully accredited Living Wage Employer, first with staff and then working through procurement, contracting and best value policies to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of it with contracted services before implementing this requirement over time (at scheduled contract renewal points).
 - a. Review the use of agency staff at the Council and use any savings made, through avoiding top-up charges, to help support the costs of a Living Wage.
 - b. Work with and support Business West and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) as part of their joint declaration to promote the benefits of the Living Wage with other city employers and businesses (large and small), including the NHS, Universities, and the Voluntary and Community Sector Set up a Bristol Living Wage Joint-planning Board to deliver the above and for the City to provide an annual report on progress towards becoming a Fair Pay City.
- 24.** Request all major employers and all who tender for Council contracts publish pay differentials so they are open to scrutiny. The Council should aim for a ratio of no more than 10:1 within three years.

Social partnership:

- 25.** Prioritise sustainable economic growth that maximises opportunities and benefits all people, including the most disadvantaged and ensure better quality jobs are available to the most disadvantaged so all share in any growth, bringing increased spending into local communities.
 - a. Invite Business West and other employer umbrella bodies in the City to help businesses better understand precarious employment and its impact on household income. This should include the rise in zero hours' contracts, particularly in the care sector, and the implications for staff and clients.
 - b. Consider ways to help boost earnings in the city through employment support, skills development and employee engagement. Welcome the positive role of trade unions.
 - c. Consider, with partners, how to help employers honour and government enforce the National Minimum Wage.

Influencing national policy:

- 26.** As a first step on the issue of sustainable employment, engage with government to improve the level of the National Minimum Wage, working as part of the National Social Inclusion network.
- 27.** Argue for any benefit savings made as a consequence of paying the living wage to be used to improve the level of child and working tax credits and, in future, universal credit to low income working families.

4. Fairness for low income families

Ambition four - The poorest people have taken the biggest hit, particularly those with young children, women and disabled people. The impact is visible in Bristol with, amongst other things, the growth of food banks. Bristol needs to take action to help them.

Incomes and debt

Low-income families face £22 billion a year in cuts to benefits and tax credits. 70% of these cuts fall on families with children and 60% of the cuts at each budget and spending review have hit low-income working families. Treasury documents show, with the exception of the richest 10 per cent, 4 in 5 households in the richest half of the income distribution are now better-off since 2010, compared to 4 in 5 of the poorest half of households who are worse off.¹⁰ There is cross-party, shared UK objective to end child poverty by 2020. However, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, child poverty is now projected to rise by nearly one million by 2020.¹¹ Therefore, it looks like, instead eliminating it; we are facing a child poverty crisis.

Also, the poor pay more - low income families in the poorest fifth of the population have faced inflation rates 7% higher than the richest fifth.¹² There is also a 'poverty premium' on goods and services paid for by low income households, partly as a result of high VAT, but also due to the inability to benefit from shopping discounts and direct debit deals, for example, with fuel providers. The Council has a key role to play on these issues, through direct service provision and by engaging with Government on specific barriers (as part of the Social Inclusion Network), but it is also important here to get the support of the wider City.

Reducing the cost of living and creative use of policy can help to ease disadvantage. The Commission heard from the Council's own welfare, benefit and customer support services as well as local advice agencies, the local credit union and clients accessing one of Bristol's food banks run by The Matthew Tree Project. The continuing implications of welfare reform benefit delays and sanctions remain high on the agenda, particularly as we move towards the Government ending the funding for local welfare assistance schemes from 2015.

The Commission welcomed the pro-active work that the Council had undertaken with all the key agencies and within the Council to ensure people are being supported, for example, through discretionary housing payments, while they adjust to changing and uncertain benefit arrangements. This work has included pro-active notice of forthcoming changes to help people have time to prepare (particularly the 400 benefit cap cases) and working with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) seconded officers and sharing knowledge of the changes affecting people (especially cumulative impact). There has also been work to ensure people are aware of the benefits they are entitled to and establishing take-up. The Commission particularly welcomed the decision not to pass on the 10% funding cut in the council tax reduction scheme to low income claimants - for a second year running. And it has taken the decision not to penalise people who are in rent arrears due to the under occupancy charge (bedroom tax), by not allowing them to move. These are important protective steps.

The welfare advice agencies report that they are under major pressure with high demand for their services. Clients at the Food bank expressed frustration with restrictions on working where immigration issues are being reviewed and the often inflexible and inappropriate imposition of benefit sanctions. There was also a particular concern at the practice of some doctors who are charging for medical certificates and letters in connection with benefit claims. This is something the Commission felt should be taken up with the health service.

¹⁰ HM Treasury (2014) *Chart 2.D: Cumulative impact of modelled tax, tax credit and benefit changes on households in 2014-15 as a percentage of 2014-15 net income, by income distribution*, Impact of Households: distributional analysis to accompany Budget 2014, London: HM Treasury.

¹¹ Browne J, Hood A and Joyce R (2014) *Child and working-age poverty in Northern Ireland over the next decade: an update*, London: IFS.

¹² Adams A, Hood A and Levell P (2014) *The Squeeze on incomes*, The IFS Green Budget, London: IFS.

More positive actions included work in communities to encourage use of local credit unions, rather than pay day lenders and exploration of creative use of planning to reduce betting shops and junk food shops near schools. Although the Commission did not have time to specifically explore options to reduce fuel poverty, they are aware of the Bristol City Council's Energy Service work to support actions that reduce energy bills for local people on low incomes.

Recommendations:

- 28.** Continue to support and promote local help and advice agencies, encouraging outreach and promotional activity – particularly around money advice and welfare rights advice – which could help bring money into poorer areas and encourage take-up of unclaimed benefits and tax credits, including council discretionary payments.
 - a. Maintain level of Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service (WRAMAS) free training for all support agencies, Bristol City Council (BCC) staff and partners and ensure customers get good benefits information, advice and assistance where this is part of the job role –e.g., social workers.
 - b. Approach the Health and Wellbeing Board to discuss the health impact of rising inequality and falling family incomes and the local experience of welfare reform.
 - c. Invite the local branch of NHS England in dialogue with GP Commissioners to seek to end the practice of charging for medical certificates and letters in connection with benefit claims. As a first step, seek to establish a standard agreement across Bristol as to what a supporting medical letter should cost.
- 29.** Prioritise and secure funding for a local welfare assistance scheme, even after earmarked Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funding ends in 2015. Aim to be among the best in the country for paying cash grants and having a formal review process, as in Scotland.
- 30.** Work together across the city to recognise the value of the local credit unions and the support they can offer to disadvantaged communities:
 - a. Develop a city campaign to get more staff across a range of organisations and other residents to support local credit unions (and therefore people on lower incomes) by having accounts with them and help pump prime their work.
 - b. Explore giving young people in contact with local services a first bank account with the credit union to promote understanding of good money management.
- 31.** Continue to explore ways to discourage pay day lending and borrowing in Bristol, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas and maintain enforcement action against illegal activity by loan sharks who prey on vulnerable residents).
- 32.** Work together across the City to support the development of key facilities including pop up services within communities to encourage local employment, spend and access to services (free cashpoints, local supermarkets that meet local need and support healthy priorities, easy online access.) Equally use planning 'use' classes more creatively to discourage pay day loans and betting shops from stripping money out of deprived communities.
- 33.** End food 'deserts' - support alternative or community supermarkets using local suppliers. And work to end the poverty premium paid by low-income residents who tend to pay more for food, fuel and other items by, for example, encouraging low cost food stores.
- 34.** Support research to identify the reasons why so many of Bristol's residents are using Food Banks and establish a model of best practice for all food bank providers. Use the findings to coordinate a local response to include work with relevant local agencies.
- 35.** Work with local DWP and Jobcentre plus representatives and engage on a strategic level through the national social exclusion network to address inappropriate and inflexible benefit sanctions that can send citizens spiralling into crisis.
- 36.** Work together across the City to end the digital divide. Provide local access and training on IT in libraries, advice centres and community centres, plus continue to help to access a computer through the re-use scheme so local people are not cut off from key services – e.g., claiming benefits, accessing financial services or applying for jobs.

Future landmark investments:

37. Continue to make up the 10% shortfall in Council Tax Reduction Schemes funding for non-pensioner households.

Influencing national policy:

38. Campaign for continued funding for local welfare assistance and discretionary housing schemes.
39. Campaign to make it a recognised part of GPs role to provide evidence in relation to benefit claims and make it unlawful in the NHS to charge for sick notes, letters and reports in connection with benefit claims.

5. Fair and healthy communities – a happy, healthy city

Ambition five – Listen to and learn from Bristol’s vibrant inner-city communities, so badly hit by austerity. Invest in them and their local infrastructure. Make Bristol a happy, healthy city.

The Commission heard evidence from public health and transport on measures to help disadvantaged communities. And, the Commission supports the new policies that are seeking to (re)unite communities (e.g. 20mph zones, more cycling and walking, a greater public transport focus, as well as festivals and activities such as ‘Keep Sunday Special’.)

There was not time or the resources to engage on any scale with local communities on these issues, but the Commission used evidence from neighbourhood teams and public health neighbourhood data to draw together their recommendations.

The Commission didn’t directly discuss affordable housing in the city as it did not want to overlap with the Homes Commission, but it is recognised that housing affordability is a major issue in the City, as is overcrowding for some households, and quality within the private rented sector all of which touch on the Fairness agenda, therefore the Commission is keen to ensure that the Council seeks every opportunity to address these issues.

From a fairness perspective, mental wellbeing is particularly important. Mental ill health is a major consequence of unemployment, sickness absence and social isolation and a risk factor for poverty. It is a cause of discrimination, particularly in the field of employment, and still carries stigma. Addressing mental ill-health and promoting positive mental wellbeing would have major benefits across the life course.

Social isolation can have physically and emotionally damaging effects resulting in depression, poor nutrition, decreased immunity, anxiety, fatigue, and social stigma. Weak social connections carry a health risk that is more harmful than not exercising, twice as harmful as obesity, and is comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day or being an alcoholic.

Socially isolated older adults have longer stays in hospital, a greater number of GP visits and are more dependent on homecare services. This means there is an economic as well as a health related case to be made for tackling social isolation.

Recommendations:

40. To support Bristol’s Child Health in particular we need to:

- a. To protect children, continue to promote and prioritise traffic calming, 20 mile an hour limits and green zones in the most disadvantaged areas.
- b. Protect and maximise opportunities to access local green, safe and attractive spaces, including converting patches of scrubland space for community use.
- c. Support food growing initiatives for health and recreational benefits including those such as community orchards.
- d. Avoid fast food outlets near schools (by using planning laws effectively).
- e. The Commission supports the Sports Commission recommendations to seek opportunities and agreement with sports facilities owners and operators, including schools, to unlock facilities for extended use by clubs and communities.
- f. Target awareness raising of child health and social isolation issues, especially in cluster areas.
- g. Review community assets for those areas and identify opportunities for use such as community kitchens.

- h. Support pro-active health measures including delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which contains 10 priorities for action;¹³ and social prescribing activities through GPs.
41. Poverty and fear of crime can lead to greater levels of social isolation in neighbourhoods, therefore work with key agencies to address this including through the active citizen agenda and forthcoming Cities of Service Volunteering programme.
- a. Invite neighbourhood police to work closely with older and disabled groups.
 - b. Encourage local good neighbour schemes to reduce social isolation and build community spirit.
 - c. Continue to act on domestic violence with agencies working together to ensure accessible services and a swift response. This should include a review of support services to Children and Young People affected by domestic violence in their homes and that these factors are considered as part of any re-commissioning process.
 - d. Research the local impact of stop and search on communities and work with them to find alternative methods of policing.
42. Local grassroots organisations are essential to the success of Bristol, know the communities and their needs, and are approachable/accessible to local people. Seek support from across the City to help fund, encourage and enable local VCS groups to thrive and to deliver services to Bristol communities where they align to City priorities.
- a. Continue to engage with local communities in thinking about how to share community assets – sharing resources between the council, statutory and voluntary providers, to include: buildings, training, IT systems and support. Community assets could be made available first to local community organisations before they are considered for other uses or sold off commercially.
 - b. Explore potential quick wins through reinvesting effort from established Compact work into supporting VCSE organisations that focus on supporting people in disadvantaged communities with their fundraising and bid writing skills.
 - c. Continue to work with the VCSE sector to make commissioning processes accessible and address barriers e.g. financial thresholds that small groups cannot comply with other models such as the possibility of competitive grants as a purchasing option.
 - d. Build social value issues into the commissioning process and have early dialogue with potential providers about these types of issues and their commitment to them e.g. living wage, employing local people, recruiting local volunteers
43. Seek to increase the number of people seeking support for depression and anxiety, particularly in areas of high unemployment and child poverty through linking up health initiatives with advice and support services.
44. On transport: Community transport provision needs to include access to health appointments –Work with the Health & Wellbeing board to address this.
45. On housing: The Commission encourages landlords and house builders to work together on the implementation of the affordable housing strategy.

Future landmark investments:

- 46. Continue the good work in reducing bus fares and, at some point, consider introducing free bus fares for children and young people under 25.
- 47. Leverage new money for affordable, social housing developments.

Influencing national policy:

- 48. Argue for more flexibility in raising local funds for social housing and transport developments.

¹³ These are: To create a high quality green and built environment; Achieve a healthier, more sustainable and resilient food system; To reduce all forms of domestic, gender and racially based violence and abuse; Reduce smoking prevalence and illicit tobacco availability and increase smoke free areas; Reduce the harm caused by alcohol misuse; To give children the best start in life; Improve mental wellbeing and reduce social isolation; To better meet the needs of people with dementia and provide dementia friendly environments; To improve the clinical quality of and satisfaction with maternity services; and Improve services and care through better integrated care and support.

Moving forward - adopting Fairness Principles

As Fairness is a cross cutting issue, both within the Council, its partners and across the city the Commission would like to recommend:

49. The establishment, within six months of the Mayor's formal response to this report, of a Fairness Alliance to continue to work together across the City

- a. This could include one or two key meetings a year to consider issues and agree joint-working, share good practice and seek to work together to resolve issues;
- b. Promotion and encouragement of corporate social responsibility, making local citizens and organisations aware that inequality damages us all, seeking to dispel myths about the causes of poverty and inviting local action through sponsorship, corporate responsibility and active volunteering;
- c. To develop and action plan with metrics to measure progress; and
- d. Both the Council and the Fairness Alliance to report back to Cabinet after 12 months.

50. Adopting these Fairness principles for the City of Bristol:

Harness the creativity, entrepreneurialism and ingenuity of the people of Bristol to the project of greater fairness – leverage Bristol's regional strengths, cultural and business sectors.

Act on good data - measure, analyse and understand income inequality in Bristol and share the information widely so that the causes and possible solutions can be considered.

Engage in a Bristol-wide conversation about inequality, the damage it does and how to reduce it, engaging directly with disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities and making sure that better off Bristolians are aware that inequality is bad for them too.

Engage the community at every level – do things with people and not just for them.

Make reducing income inequality a core value in decision making.

Adopt a long term view and a preventative approach that acts now to prevent bigger problems in the future.

Strive for excellence in Bristol's services and organisations and the way they work together – strive for 'one-door' to give access to all services.

Lead by example by, for example, by being the best employer in Bristol and by paying the Living Wage to Council employees and spread new approaches using the Council's supply chain.

Welcome the positive role of trade unions, corporate social responsibility and other civil society and voluntary sector groups.

Pay particular attention to families with children, their earning power, their children's development and service needs to enable them to live free from poverty and improve the life chances of their young people.

Ensure the proceeds of growth are shared fairly, prioritising investments and services to reduce inequalities and improve life chances for the most disadvantaged people and in the most disadvantaged communities.

Don't assume poor incomes and inadequately rewarded work are somehow inevitable – they are an injustice that deserves redress.

Don't let lack of city funds mean opportunities for creativity and hope are missed.

Appendices

Appendix one - Membership of the Fairness Commission



- Alison Garnham, Chief Executive, Child Poverty Action group –Commission Chair
- Claudia Wood – Chief Executive of Demos (*not pictured here*)
- Dr Michael Grady, Principal Adviser at the Institute of Health Equity, University College London
- Aliu Bello, Director, Prime Consultants UK (Bristol), former lead for projects in United Nations Children’s Fund, Unicef & Member of the African & Caribbean COC and Enterprise
- Nigel Costley, Regional Secretary, South West Trades Union Congress (TUC)
- Professor Don Webber (Applied Economics), University of the West of England. (Fairness, employment, welfare reform)
- Tracy Rees, Head of Community Impact, England West, Business-in-the-Community
- Mark Goodway, Founder and Director, The Matthew Tree Project, Bristol

The commission was supported in its work by a Council steering group, led by Deputy and Assistant Mayors Geoff Gollop and Gus Hoyt whose portfolio areas relate to this topic and a small number of Council Officers.

Appendix 2 - List of evidence received

Evidence was gathered from a range of sources; local and national statistical material, national reports and face to face evidence, including that from Commission Members themselves.

The Commission would like to thank everyone that took the time to meet with Commission members and give evidence to support its work and the invitation to join with other national work on this issue.

Expert Witnesses:

- Parents/carers and adult learners - recruited through Children's Centres onto Learning Communities Team courses
- Clients of The Matthew Tree Project, Bristol
- Professor Richard Wilkinson – co-author and founder of 'The Spirit Level – Why Equality is better for everyone' and the Equality Trust. Also Chair of York and Islington Fairness Commissions.
- Jennie Murphy - DWP Local Partnerships
- Kate Hanks – Bristol Credit union
- Paul Wheeler - Equality Bristol
- Conor Darcy - Resolution Foundation
- Mark Hubbard – Voscur, Bristol
- Andy Steward -Citizens Advice Bureau
- Helena Thompson – Bristol Debt Advice Centre
- Harry Tedstone – Advice Service Transition Fund Partnership
- Ben Sansum – Age UK Bristol
- Tove Samzelius - Single Parent Action Network, Bristol
- Council staff from Early years services, Learning Communities Team, Economy Enterprise and Inclusion, Welfare Rights and Money Advice, Benefits and Customer Services, Public Health, Transport, Neighbourhoods, Human Resources and Consultation and Research.
- George Ferguson - The Mayor of Bristol.

Attempts were made to meet with representatives from Business West, but the Commission were unable to secure these within the time available to the commission. Therefore secondary research was used in this instance with a recommendation that future dialogue is undertaken on the basis of these recommendations.

Other supporting evidence gathered including:

- Attendance at the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Poverty and the Webb Memorial Trust workshop at the Palace of Westminster
- National Social Inclusion Network arising from Birmingham Social Inclusion Symposium and Joint Declaration
- Bristol Scrutiny Enquiry day report and recommendations on the Living Wage
- Other Fairness Commission reports including York, Islington, Liverpool, Birmingham, Tower Hamlets.
- 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives' – Marmot review report
- 'Cities, Growth, Poverty' report – Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- 'Careers and Carers' report – Resolution Foundation
- 'Poverty in Perspective' report – Demos
- 'Local Authorities and Child Poverty' report – Child Poverty Action Group

- 'Personal Tax and Welfare measures' - Institute for Fiscal Studies
- The Social Value Act and Children and Families Act - LGIU briefings
- Bristol City Council information and reports including:
 - Quality of Life Survey 2013
 - Council budget consultation 2014 – 17 papers
 - Child Poverty Strategy
 - Bristol Economic Briefings, benefits newsletters, public health figures, relevant press releases