

Annual review 2014 – 2015

Supporting
Developing
Representing





Welcome and introduction

Voscur is at the heart of a strong and vibrant civil society in Bristol, comprising over 1,600 registered charities and many more local voluntary and community groups and social enterprises. All of these organisations exist to meet a need that is not being met elsewhere. Most are currently experiencing an increased demand for services, as child poverty increases and the impact of welfare reform and reductions in public services is felt by communities that already experience severe hardship.

Our role is to help organisations to remain robust and resilient in order to cope with these external pressures. To give a flavour of our work – this year, the highest demand for Voscur’s support services has been from organisations working with: people with mental health difficulties, low-income families, lone parents, teenage parents, people experiencing domestic abuse, new communities, carers, unemployed people, ex-offenders and people with problematic drug and alcohol use. The range of support that we have provided includes advice on legal structures, fundraising, volunteering and good governance.

Whilst it’s important to provide tailored support to individual organisations in order to build resilience, it’s also vital to bring people together to strengthen relationships, and to share



Top: Tim Pemberton from BBC Bristol presents a ‘Voscur’ award to a local group at our 2014 AGM; **bottom:** a workshop with sector colleagues at our 2014 VCS Assembly

learning. Voscur has provided many networking and learning opportunities this year and done much to encourage joined-up working. Our own partnership with sister organisations across the West of England has led to a significant investment into the West of England through the Big Lottery's Building Better Opportunities Fund – set up to help local people to get into training or work.

We continue to champion the sector's role in public service delivery, now more important than ever, as state provision shrinks and the charitable and social enterprise sector steps in. It is crucial that the role of small, local, independent organisations is valued and that these organisations are not only strong enough to bid for contracts, but that commissioning opportunities are accessible and open to them. To ensure that this happens we have been involved in developing a Social Value policy for Bristol so that the value our sector brings can be factored into commissioning and procurement cycles.

Looking to the future, we broke new ground this year by holding the first public event in Bristol on the theme of city devolution, bringing together a panel of community activists from across the West of England who discussed

devolution with Bristol's elected mayor. We aim to build on this work in the coming months, to ensure that local communities have a voice in the city-region conversation.

We are pleased to champion the Bristol Manifesto for Race Equality – a cross-sector approach to tackling inequality – and look forward to developing this work.

Voscur began the year with the news that, having exceeded our targets over the previous three years, our contract with Bristol City Council to deliver voluntary and community sector support services had been extended to March 2016. Our successes are your successes, and we would not have been able to work in the way that we do without the help and support of so many organisations and individuals.

Working closely with organisations that are innovating and changing so that they can operate with fewer resources and respond to increased demand means that we see at first hand the dedication and commitment of staff, volunteers and management committees. Voscur is proud to be part of Bristol's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector.



Wendy Stephenson
Chief Executive



Richard Pendlebury MBE DL
Chair of Trustees

Supporting the sector

Voscur's Support Hub provides organisational development support, information and training for Bristol's voluntary and community sector groups and organisations.

Stonozka

Stonozka is a new community group set up in Bristol to help Czech and Slovak families adjust to a different culture and bilingualism. They provide a parents' support group, organise community events, and offer advice to individuals.

Stonozka contacted Voscur for support with setting up a new organisation, including helping them to identify the best legal structure for their group. Following an initial advice session with a member of our team, they were enrolled onto Voscur's Kick Start Your Organisation course, which gave them a firm grasp of the essentials for start-ups. This included clarifying their purpose, choosing the best structure, identifying funding opportunities and exploring finance and marketing.

After the Kick Start course, Voscur staff met with Stonozka to action plan. Their plan included further work on their business plan, improving and developing their management committee, and volunteer management.

"The course gave us a good sounding board for our work and to reassess our approach," they said. "The information was easy to understand with clear explanations and helpful people."

"The Kick Start course is inspiring; we can now see things from a new perspective."

Stonozka,
Bristol

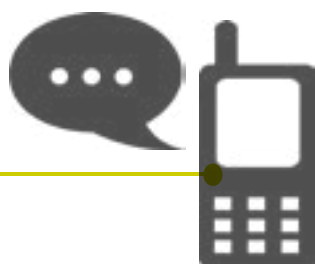


Children having fun at Stonozka's parent support group



236

Support enquiries
(39 from BME-led
organisations)



Common Themes

Legal structures
Start-up
Fundraising
Governance
Strategy



206

 Support sessions

Examples

Acorn Bristol - developing a legal structure
Stonozka - organisational start-up
Re:Work - safeguarding policy update
Southmead Community Association -
merger/collaboration

"Voscur has demystified things in a way that did not make me feel stupid. I feel listened to - you have comprehended the issues and have given us a way forward."

54



Specialist
support
sessions

Examples

HR: redundancies; policies;
grievances.
Property: asset transfers;
disputes with landlords.
Volunteering: finance; website.

"I think it is absolutely vital that VCS organisations have this service as there is nowhere else to go. You have given me clarity about next steps, which is essential."

22



Intensive
support

Examples

Malcolm X
Nilaari Agency
Community in Partnership
Knowle West

Training

Skills, knowledge and relationships are often the missing link between setting goals and being able to achieve them. In response to emerging needs and specific demands, Voscur offers a range of training courses and development events to help your staff and volunteers become the catalyst for stronger organisations.

480 attended from
143 community organisations



Improvements as a result of training

418



Improved skills

429



Improved confidence

437



Improved knowledge

"I enjoyed the course and valued the opportunity to reflect on supervision."

"You have really raised my confidence in writing a funding bid!"

56 courses offered, including:

Writing Small Fundraising Bids

Being a Good Trustee

Leadership Skills for Managers & Supervisors

Good Practice in Social Media

Business Planning

89% rated Voscur's training as good or excellent

90% said they'd attend another Voscur training course

Intentions after training

402 } Share info with others

262 } Change things in my organisation

189 } Speak to people I met today

360 } Improve my practice

Information

Communication underpins all of Voscur's work and we share information with the local voluntary and community sector to empower organisations to take action and influence.

109,224
people visited
our website



1,817,337
page views!

↑ 15%
2,879



Ebulletin
subscribers

↑ 33%
2,464



Twitter
followers



1,095 people attended
26 events

Voscur events Feedback from attendees

57% of attendees completed
our evaluation forms. Of these:

81% rated Voscur's events
"good" or "excellent".

93% said they would attend
another Voscur event
in the future.

Thank you
@voscur We're
really pleased to
have such an
engaged CVS in
Bristol to support
us!

Very proud to now
be a member of
@voscur as well
as appearing in
their 'Thrive!'
magazine



Monthly radio shows

Reaching audiences of around 50,000.
Regular shows supplemented with
specialist programming and one-off
outside broadcasts.

3,400 copies of
Thrive! magazine were
printed and distributed to
VCS, public and private
sector subscribers...

Voice and influence

The voice and influence team has provided a strong voice, achieved significant change and championed new opportunities for the sector this year.

We have influenced policy and decision makers not only in Bristol but across the wider city region, bringing people together through our three key networks*, at events, round-table discussions and one-to-one meetings. We also support 14 elected VCS Advocates on key strategic boards in Bristol.

Our voice is established across the city and we communicate through a range of channels including email, print, community radio and social media. Below are some examples of the work we have undertaken this year.

Networking and advocacy

We have brought organisations together across different policy themes and supported our elected VCS advocates to participate in cross-sector decision-making bodies. This important work means that emergent policy themes are consulted on, informed and shaped by expertise from grass-roots organisations.

We are speaking up for the sector in a range of health and social care developments including Better Care Bristol Social Prescribing, Diabetes Transformation and Community Health Services.

We successfully changed Bristol City Council's Home Care Commissioning process, so that small organisations could work together in different ways to win contracts. Our advocate on the provider forum has promoted the inclusion

"I want to do as much as we can to include and listen to Voscur"

George Ferguson,
Elected Mayor of Bristol

* Our three networks:
Health and Social Care;
Children and Young People;
and Neighbourhoods and Communities.



of small, local organisations as delivery partners throughout the commissioning process.

In the arena of children and young people's work, we have played a key role in contributing to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, particularly focusing on the impact of the rising child population. We have had a central role in Children's Community Health Service recommissioning and the development of a Bristol Youth Strategy.

A key success has been the Mayor's agreement to an early-intervention budget of £100,000, as proposed by VCS advocates and community activists. Our recently elected advocates to the Bristol Children and Families Board have been involved in setting early-intervention priorities.

We have worked closely with the neighbourhoods team at Bristol City Council, regularly highlighting their work in our 'Thrive!' magazine. A community perspective informed our pioneering event on the opportunities and potential that city-region devolution offers to Bristol.

New opportunities

We ensured the foundations were laid for a new multi-million-pound social inclusion fund through the Big Lottery and the European Social Fund by partnering with sister organisations across the West of England, to influence the Local Enterprise Partnership and lead a number of consultation events.

The team has promoted the opportunities available through new social investment funds by organising a panel discussion with key fund holders and policy experts and has continued this work in partnership with fund holders and Big Society Capital.

Community groups working in sustainability in the most deprived parts of the city were introduced to the European Green Capital team through our Painting the Town Green event, and are now actively part of Bristol Green Capital.



"Excellent ideas sharing, making links just to improve referrals and efficient services. Really good 'questions' sessions."

Attendee, Health and Social Care Network



Our members

Voscur is a member-led organisation made up of more than 700 voluntary/community groups and social enterprises.

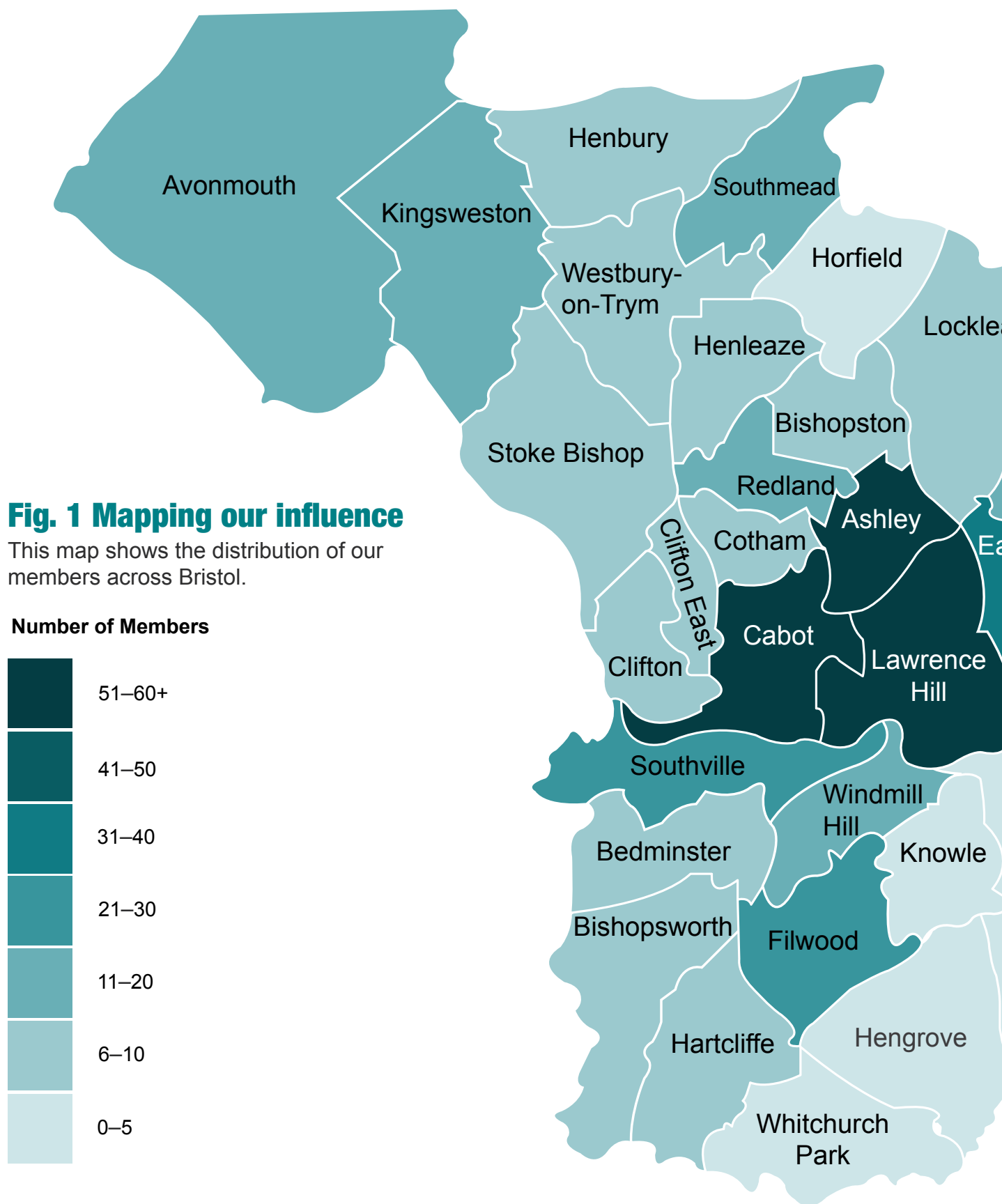
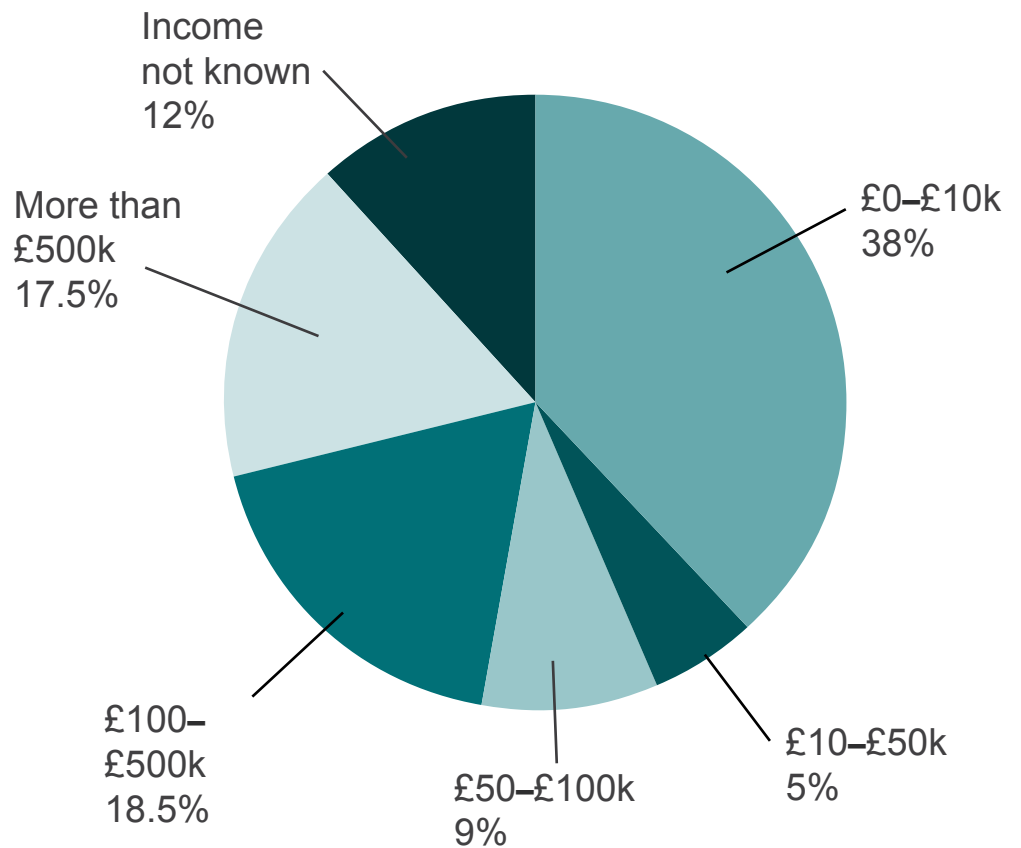


Fig. 2 Income/size

Members range in size from small volunteer-run community groups to large national charities. This chart shows the size of our member organisations in terms of annual income.



For more information on becoming a member of Voscur and the range of member benefits, visit: www.voscur.org/about/joiningonline or call us on 0117 909 9949.



Bristol BME Voice

“I am very grateful for the group’s feedback and will take it into account as I develop my work and policies and monitor the work of Avon and Somerset Police in these areas.”

Sue Mountstevens,
Avon and Somerset Police
and Crime Commissioner

Bristol BME Voice

Bristol BME Voice is the driving force behind the development of Batook’s Blueprint – Bristol’s Manifesto for Race Equality. The Manifesto seeks to transform race equality in Bristol through seven key principles including fair representation, addressing the impact of multiple discrimination, and ensuring that there are adequate resources to make change happen.

The Manifesto was launched at the 2015 BME Fair, which was organised in partnership with Support Against Racism and Inequality (SARI) and Bristol City Council. We also worked with Babbasa and Avon and Somerset Black Police Association to promote and deliver Bristol BME Young People’s Awards at the event, which saw over 60 young people recognised for their achievements.

Our Knowledge and Share programme brought together people from BME VCS groups for learning opportunities and discussion with city leaders. This was effective in fostering relationships and encouraging future joint-working.

All of this successful work would not have been achieved without the help of our fantastic partners. We would especially like to thank Mohamed Abdi, Amjid Ali, Monira Chowdhury, Bev Douglas, Anjali Gohil, Roger Griffith, Sumita Hutchison, Sado Jirde, Simon Nelson, Norman Pascal, Alex Raikes, Marvin Rees, Zaheer Shabir, Kermal Singh, and Jean Smith from the BME steering group for giving so much time and energy this year. Thanks also to James Evans (SARI) and Ian Muir of Bray Leino.





Bristol Compact

Commissioning and Social Value

Voscur and Bristol Compact have been championing the role of the VCS in public service delivery for several years and 2014–15 saw us continuing our work to improve sector engagement with commissioning processes.

A great deal of our work has centred on keeping commissioning and social value on the agenda in Bristol. We held a conference in February 2015, the third of its kind, that brought together public sector partners and VCS organisations. Attendees were

interested to hear from Bristol Mayor, George Ferguson, and one of the city's top four Strategic Directors, Alison Comley.

There was also a panel discussion and time for crucial networking.

We can see our approach paying off with some positive changes. In Compact Week 2014, Voscur's Compact Liaison Officer won a national award for leadership, which recognises our joint work.

In 2015, we look forward to a Social Value Inquiry Day at which our VCS Advocates will give evidence to inform the new Social Value Policy for the city.



"I applaud Voscur for fighting to keep commissioning on Bristol's agenda and holding key organisations to account. It's a drip-drip effect but I think that the message that things need to change is slowly, slowly getting through."

VCS participant in the 'Commissioning and the VCS – Two Years On' event



A selection of images from our 'Commissioning and the Voluntary Sector – Two Years On' event in March 2015

Our events



What is Social Investment? 2 April 2014

- ▶ Introducing new forms of investment to Bristol's voluntary and community sector.

"Volunteers – lifting Bristol higher!"

A message on the
giant V30 card

#V30 1–7 June 2014

- ▶ Celebrating 30 years of Volunteers' Week.



Painting the Town Green, 12 June 2014

- ▶ Linking community groups to Bristol Green Capital.

"I liked structured seminars which encouraged discussion and involvement."

Attendee,
VCS Assembly

VCS Assembly 16 July 2014

- ▶ Sharing challenges and finding solutions.





The VCS and the Local Enterprise Partnership 7 October 2014



Bringing investment into the West of England.

Voscur Annual Conference and Social Impact Awards 22 October 2014



Reflecting on the year and celebrating our achievements.

“A great opportunity to network, meet sector colleagues, gain support and motivation and feel proud to be VCS!”

Attendee, Fund It



Fund It 11 February 2015



Learning from experts and sharing knowledge.



City Devolution and Communities 12 March 2015



Looking ahead from a community perspective.



Volunteering

Volunteer Bristol @Voscur matches people to volunteer opportunities through an online and drop-in service. Our Sustain project offers tailored support for people who need specialist help to get back into work or training. Boost! matches volunteers with organisations who are in need of a skills boost.

Bristol Ageing Better

Our Boost! programme matches community organisations with skilled volunteers to do a short-term piece of work that builds long-term organisational capacity.

Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) is a partnership of 140+ organisations in Bristol set up to reduce isolation amongst older people. At the point where BAB contacted Boost!, they had 'big ambitions and limited resources'. They were creating their vision and strategy and one of the challenges they faced was how to ensure a good flow of information across the partnership, as well as to older people and their funders. Having a website was going to prove key to achieving this.

Boost! matched them with a volunteer to assist in the set-up, design and implementation of the website, and to train staff to use and manage it. The website needed to be accessible to the older people who would be using it.

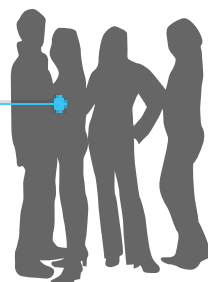
When the placement ended Ruth Richardson (Bristol Ageing Better Programme Manager) commented: "We hope that the website will help us secure a significant amount of funding from the Big Lottery Fund." Sure enough, late last year BAB was awarded £5.9 million from the Big Lottery Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better fund, and was commended for having information available through the website about the partnership and for having a site that was accessible to older users.

"The Boost! volunteer has been really helpful, is always quick to respond by phone or email and has significantly helped the BAB work."

Bristol Ageing Better

Over-55s participating in an activity run by LinkAge Bristol, a charity that works to enrich lives, reduce isolation and loneliness and promote active participation. LinkAge is a strategic partner of the BAB Partnership.

464 people
received face-to-face
advice about volunteering



"I think it was very
interesting and gave
me the confidence to
get back into
volunteering."

Sustain volunteer

106



Attended our eight
specialist 'Introduction to
volunteering' sessions for
established groups

42,558

people looked for
volunteering
opportunities on
our website,
resulting in

192,009
page views!

32

groups were matched
with Boost! volunteers
to increase their capacity with:

Marketing

Finance

Graphic/web design

Community building
management &
development

Filming/promotion



*Volunteering Hearts
were the Happy Hearts
make every one Happy* 😊

Hundreds signed
our giant birthday
card for 30 years
of Volunteers'
Week

*Volunteers - lifting
Bristol higher!*

*WELL DONE
VOLUNTEERS
KEEP IT UP* 😊

We worked with **133** individuals
through our Sustain project, which
promotes and enables volunteering
opportunities for people with a history of
drug and/or alcohol problems.

Thank you

Our members

– who have shown great willingness this year to engage with Voscur's work and get involved in a range of initiatives, despite growing time pressures. We have valued your support, input and enthusiasm and continue to be inspired by the work you do for Bristol communities.

Our board members

– who are elected from our membership – for their support, direction and guidance.

Nura Aabe (Autism Independence) – resigned 09/14
Jon Crutchlow (Individual Member)
Marissa Ellis (Individual Member) – Vice Chair
Abdullahi Farah (Somali Resource Centre)
Frances Fox (The Bridge Foundation)
Rita Gupta (Artivists) – resigned 09/14
Joanna Holmes (Barton Hill Settlement)
Sandy Hore-Ruthven (Creative Youth Network)
– appointed 11/14
Steph Mustoe (Individual Member) – Treasurer
Poku Osei (Babbasa Youth Empowerment Projects)
Phil Parry (Bristol Citizens' Advice Bureau)
Richard Pendlebury (Emmaus Bristol) – Chair
Heather Pugh (Life Cycle UK)
Steve Sayers (Windmill Hill City Farm) – Vice Chair
Anna Smith (Survive) – Vice Chair, resigned 07/14
Stacy Yelland (Up Our Street) – appointed 11/14
Mike Zeidler (Happy City Initiative).

Our staff team

Asma Ahmad, Fran Bainbridge, Sue Brazendale, Yaz Brien, Paula Cannings, Lucy Fletcher, Elizabeth Gorman, Paul Hassan, Ellie Hooper, Mark Hubbard, Kate Hygate, Sean Kenny, Jessica Langton, Charlene Lawrence, Jessica Lewin, Rebecca McDougall, Ruth Pitter, Wendy Stephenson, Steve Watters, David Whittaker.

And thanks to the members of our team who contributed to the year under review but who have

moved on to pastures new: Subitha Baghirathan, Emily Bonney, Catherine Bowen, Elena D'Orso, Grace Deathridge, Nikki Smith and Sian Bunn.

Our volunteers

– who have given their time, energy and expertise to support the work we do.

Jon Boulton, Barbara Chamberlain, Vicky Cowell, Nick Earle, Damian Fernie, Abigail Haidemenos, Sharon Hughes, Evelyn Hutchon, Liam Gast, Shadene Keeling, Chrystal Chinchon, Jane Harrington, Yasmin Jennings, Jack Munia, Darren Park, Meri Rizk, Leva Sondore, Phil Timmins, Julia Vallejo, Carol Walker, Hannah Weaver, Louise Wender, Jess Wheeler, Tricia Worthington, Christopher Wickham, Kurda Yar Ahmad.

VCS Advocates

Fiona Castle
Bristol Children and Families Board

Alistair Dale
Raising the Participation Strategy Group
(interim cover)

Judith Davis
CYP North Area Partnership Executive
Board

Graham England
Reducing Re-offending Board

Frances Fox
Children and Young People's Learning in
Education Group

Vicky James
Compact Partners / VCS Advocate

Pete Levy
Restorative Bristol Board

Right, from top to bottom: a local community activist on her stall at our 'Painting the Town Green' event; an attendee's T-shirt at this same event; Voscur staff members in discussion at a local conference; local volunteers launching the V30 campaign; Lord Mayor of Bristol, Faruk Choudhury, at our 2014 'Feeling Bristolian?' BME Conference; a selection of our VCS Advocates doing video updates for the sector

Fuad Mahamed
Community Learning Partnership
Board

Toria Moore
Bristol Children and Families Board

Vicki Morris
Provider Forum

Gillian Nowland
Bristol Safeguarding Children Board

Christine Townsend
Bristol Safeguarding Children Board

Alex Raikes
Safer Bristol Partnership

Gill Roberts and Tim Lloyd-Yeates
Older People's Partnership Board

Peter Walker
Bristol Health and Wellbeing Board

Dom Wood
Bristol Children and Families Board

We thank the following organisations for supporting their staff to champion the wider sector: 1625 Independent People, Addiction Recovery Agency, Alive!, Ashley Community Housing, Bridge Foundation, Creative Youth Network, Easton Families Project, Imayla, Integrate Bristol, Knightstone Housing, Knowle West Health Park, One25, SARI, The Restore Trust and Youth Moves.

RIP Tim Lloyd-Yeates – an inspirational innovator and community activist. You will be greatly missed.

Our funders

Bristol City Council, Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group, Bristol Drugs Project, Green Capital 2015.

Our sponsors

Brewin Dolphin Limited, Creative Youth Network, Nudge Group, Unison.

Our donors

Avon & Somerset Police Authority, Bristol City Council's Economy, Enterprise and Inclusion team, Festival of Ideas, JJ Gayle, John Pontin Trust, Knightstone Housing, S A Summers, SWIG Services Limited, West of England Rural Network.

...and last but by no means least...

We want to say a huge "thank you" to all of the individuals and organisations that supported us and the sector in achieving everything in this report and much more.

There are too many to name here, but suffice to say that we could not exist and do the work that we do without your support.

Whether it be providing meeting space, sharing your skills and expertise, promoting our work to your networks, delivering training, running seminars, sponsoring work, giving guidance, or partnering on projects, we want you to know how much your support is appreciated.

For a full list of those we work with, visit:

www.voscur.org/making_connections



Voscur
Royal Oak House
Royal Oak Avenue
Bristol
BS1 4GB
www.voscur.org
t: 0117 909 9949

