



Bristol Women's Commission  
Committed to achieving real equality for women in Bristol

## Bristol Women's Commission Easter Newsletter

Hello Everyone

I do hope you are all safe and well. I know everyone is working flat out at the moment dealing with the many impacts of covid-19. Outside the sun is shining and it's very peaceful which seems at odds with the Herculean battles taking place in our hospitals and in our homes.

Many thanks to those of you who have managed to get some feedback to me on how you are managing to run services and for sending important information for all of us and our organisations.

We are all very concerned about women in abusive relationships in lockdown with perpetrators. We know that 9 women have been killed in the UK since the lockdown started. Nicki Norman -CEO **Women's Aid**- tells us that China saw a threefold increase in domestic violence during the covid-19 outbreak and Brazil, Spain, Cyprus, Italy and Germany have also reported a rise in cases of domestic abuse. Demand for Women's Aid webchat service has tripled since lockdown was implemented. Women's Aid is calling for emergency funding of at least £48.2 million for domestic abuse services during Covid-19 crisis.

Police forces are reporting this rise:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/26/warning-over-rise-in-uk-domestic-abuse-cases-linked-to-coronavirus>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/28/lockdowns-world-rise-domestic-violence>

I spoke with Kyra Bond – CEO **Womankind**- yesterday who echoed Nicki's concerns. She tells us they have seen an increase in DV cases this week with greater levels of distress and much more heightened helpline calls. Many women feel powerless but don't want to involve the police or social services. This is made worse by financial hardship in many cases. Womankind's webchat facility has been widely used and Inevitably there have been safeguarding referrals to Social Services.

The staff running helplines are increasingly stressed themselves and it is wonderful to hear that former employees have volunteered to help with the increased demand. Women supporting women.

Cllr. Helen Godwin tells us this is uppermost in her activity at the moment and that she is working with the Mayor to find some solutions.

Anna Smith-CEO One25 and Safety Task Group lead- tells us:

*'Our van has continued to go out every night and support women. We are even out on the bank holidays coming up. Women are still engaged in Street Sex Work. Our drop in has been giving out food parcels which we are delivering to the women and factsheets. The women are very isolated, ill-informed and scared. Staff have been amazing but it is hard and we are doing immaculate wipe downs every day. It is not safe out there and some people are behaving badly, ignoring advice, touching every piece of fruit in the box and driving like lunatics for example. It feels a bit lawless. Otherwise it's like Day of the Triffids.'*

The women at One25 are absolute heroes for carrying on this work in horrendously difficult circumstances.

Sarah Champion MP has written to the Home Secretary urging immediate action on this. See letter attached and please support.

Take Action -

<https://notbuyingit.org.uk/take-action-prostitution-2/>

Making communication easier for women during lockdown and enabling women to find services that meet their needs is critically important as well as trying to keep spirits up in very challenging times. We have been contacted by the Government Equalities Office to find out what the key issues are for women in Bristol.

Barbara Brown, Director of **BWV**, writes:

*'The role of Bristol Women's Voice has always been about ensuring that women's voices are heard. Our focus has been the empowerment of women, influencing decision makers to put women's needs at the centre of policy making and widening access to information for women in all areas of life. There has been no greater time for us to work for women to have what we need, than now.*

*We have had to change what we do to meet the challenge of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic. This is what we are doing based on the fact that women's lives, in particular, have changed dramatically. Decisions made by central government have already impacted women's lives, and have the potential to cause further detrimental impact.*

*So what are we doing?*

- *We are asking women how their lives have been impacted by the lock down and decisions made in response of COVID-19. The collated information will be developed into a paper that we can present to local and national decision makers regarding differential impact (gender inequality).*
- *We have changed our website to support current and relevant updated information on COVID-19 from central government, local organisations, and sister-organisations who deliver services specifically to women. We have volunteers working to try to keep us posted on the operating status of local organisations, so that the information on our website is current during this dynamic and reactive period that we are in.*

- *We have developed a social media campaign to highlight local support services for women. Our campaign will also hope to bring moments of hope and inspiration to women through quotations, relevant articles and information sharing.*
- *We are working with partner organisations to provide video casts, where real-time service offerings can be shared with women in areas such as mental health services, legal advice etc. We are also in talks to host women's experiences by video within our social media campaign.*
- *We are currently in the process of finalising a "You Talk We Listen" offer. This will be an online/telephone listening and signposting service that women can access.'*

Mental health problems often become much more intense during times of stress and uncertainty as we are seeing and Monira Chowdhury- co chair Women's health task group, **CASS**- has asked me to include the letter below and asks you to pass all this information on through your networks to those providing support whether in paid or voluntary capacity. Monira writes:

*Please find attached some resources that those supporting people in the community during COVID 19 may find useful, one booklet summarises information on stress, anxiety and depression (SAD) including self-help measures, the other is a flowchart of some key mental health services;*

*Upto date information on mental health and wellbeing services currently available to the community is listed in our Covid 19 directory which can be found through our website:*  
<http://www.cassbristol.org/covid19-directory/>

*Our website also has other resources available to support workers and volunteers and the new SAD booklet can also be downloaded directly*  
<http://www.cassbristol.org/download/stress-anxiety-and-depression-covid-19/>

Rav Bumbra from our Women in Business Task Group has come up with a great initiative to help women over the coming months. Rav writes:

*'Covid has turned our world upside down and brought us so many challenges. Overnight businesses have become work from home organisations, parents have become teachers, many have lost their jobs and face an uncertain future. Cajigo is a specialist in supporting women and their careers and right now we want to give back and support as many women as possible through this difficult time. Over the next few months we will be running a number of mentoring workshops with experts in the field of wellbeing, mental health, accelerating careers and growth so mentors can help to remove some of the anxiety and fear being felt and provide guidance in the right direction to help women survive and thrive in this new norm.*

*We will be running our first FREE 3 month mentoring programme on the 9th April. Details to register can be found here* <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/surviving-and-thriving-in-the-new-norm-virtual-mentoring-workshops-tickets-101890005750>

*We also offer free mentoring on the Cajigo App, which is available on the Appstore and GooglePlay. It's as easy as signing up, then selecting the Mentor you want to chat to.'*

Women are facing challenges in every area of their lives including travel especially as so many women work in front line services. Sue Arrowsmith, our representative on the Transport Board, has sent us this information from First West of England:

*First West of England introduced new timetables from Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April. The changes are in response to further significant reductions in bus use since the introduction of the current timetables, with less than ten per cent of normal customer numbers now being observed.*

*The new timetables ensure that the number of buses in operation is sufficient to meet the needs of those who still have to undertake essential travel, whilst ensuring that First's staff are not exposed to any unnecessary risk. Most services will continue to operate across weekday operating hours, with early morning and evening journeys to ensure key workers are able to get to and from work.*

**The new timetables will extend to cover the Easter period, with special service levels in place from Good Friday on 10<sup>th</sup> April to Easter Monday on 13<sup>th</sup> April.** *These timetables will reflect an emergency Sunday timetable across all four days but with earlier buses to ensure important connections, particularly with hospitals, are maintained at the necessary times.*

STOP PRESS! Our Women's Economy Group has sent us the Women's Budget Group report 'Crises Collide: Women and Covid-19.' It examines how crises and inequalities in health, care, work, VAWG and justice have become exacerbated during the covid-19 outbreak. It makes gender-informed recommendations for the Government's response to the crisis and outlines the challenges of different groups of women. Full report at:

<https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FINAL.pdf>

Executive Summary including recommendations attached.

And that is all for our Easter Newsletter except to tell you of some changes in our Task Groups. Jane Ginnever will be standing down from leading the Women in Business Task Group where she so ably completed the group's ambition of launching a Women's Charter for Business. Jane Ginnever and Sandra Gordon will now be Directors of the Women's Charter CIC. Zara Nanu of Gapsquare will be the new Task Group lead for Women in Business and will join the Women's Commission.

Helen Mott from our Women's Safety Task Group has been invited to join the Public Transport Safety & Equality Group which has been meeting since Feb 2018 with no gender representation.

Please keep sending me articles and information for this newsletter. Happy Easter in lockdown and of course stay safe and well in the coming weeks.

Penny

