

This is me



Christine Townsend is the VCS Advocate on the Bristol Safeguarding Children Board. With a background in education, she has a strong interest in safeguarding and empowering young people. Christine is co-founder and trustee at Integrate Bristol, a charity working with young people on projects that promote equality and integration in our communities. Here is a flavour of what she does and who she is...

There are opportunities that young people don't even know exist – it's about making them understand that people aren't going to knock on your door and invite you, but you can apply like everyone else and they will snatch your hand off! I'm on a governing body for a local school. I say, "You're over 18 now, you can go and be a governor in a school." It wouldn't be something they'd ever considered.

When you're younger you perhaps feel that you haven't got anything to give or anything to say, but actually, it is a really valuable insight that young people can bring – we need young people to be more involved in local decision making.

Ultimately I would like to see them being the VCS Advocates. When they see someone they know and trust doing things, they are more likely to follow when those opportunities come up.

My favourite spot in Bristol is Brandon Hill. You only know about it if you're a Bristolian really. Tourists walking up Park Street wouldn't even know it's there. I love all the history around it - the uprisings of the working classes in the 1800s.

Words are cheap and easy to say; what's important is the way people act.

My relationships have got to add something to my life; they have to bring something that isn't already there and I haven't already got. They have to enrich and not drain.

I have been a fan of snooker from a young age. Anyone who remembers Pot Black will get the idea...I have been around the country to watch it live. It's a fiver and you get 4-5 hours of live sport – now that's value for money!

There are things that need to be changed in the world, particularly around injustice

and inequality. It is about standing up and speaking out – not everybody is able to.

As you get older you can get caught up in the systems, the bureaucracy – you can get battered down a bit; not speak up, not speak out. But young people don't have that, they have a real sense of justice, and it is really empowering to see them using that as a group of young people to make changes. The young people at Integrate have achieved great changes in a short amount of time and that drives me to do the work I do.

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