

# This is me

## Elaine Flint, VCSE sector advocate on the Health and Wellbeing Board

Elaine is Chief Executive at Wellspring Healthy Living Centre, which is the health and wellbeing hub for inner-city and east Bristol. Elaine has deep roots in Bristol's voluntary and social enterprise sector having previously run Social Enterprise Works and the Southville Centre.



### What propelled you to become a VCSE sector advocate?

I think the opportunity for us as frontline VCSE sector organisations to bring our expertise, that we have learnt hands-on from our service users, to the table to influence strategic decision makers is something to be grasped.

### If you could wish one thing for the voluntary sector in Bristol, what would it be?

Actually the same thing that the statutory sector needs – stability and an end to this pernicious Government policy of cuts.

### What would make the biggest difference to improving equality in society?

Where do you begin! Improving the job opportunities to all young people so they can see a future for themselves; ensuring that there is a real living wage that enables people to have dignity in their lives. Still so far to go as evidenced by the Bristol Manifesto for Race Equality – in many areas such as representation at senior levels, Bristol is going backwards.

### What do you think is the secret to being influential?

I think the idea of being influential is a tricky one; it's not useful to see some people as 'influential' but not others: we are all influential. What counts the most is the weight and value of what we say – that comes with our honesty and integrity in our dealing with others, whoever they are.

### If you could pick one example of seeing, with your own eyes, lives changed by the voluntary sector in Bristol, what would it be?

I was tremendously moved recently by the passion with which a couple of my Trustees spoke about their role in setting up Wellspring Healthy Living Centre – the hard work and commitment, the weight of responsibility and their ongoing daily advocacy for the organisation. They also spoke about what it had meant for themselves – their confidence, feelings of being valued. This is the empowerment that we often speak about when we talk about the voluntary sector.

### What is your favourite spot in Bristol and why?

I really love the view out of my back door – I live in Bedminster Down, overlooking the Malago Valley, so I have a vista of trees, gardens, wide open spaces and over to the horses grazing on the slopes of Novers Hill. It could almost be the countryside.

### What was the best piece of advice you have ever been given?

Talk it over – taking someone else through your thinking process when you are mulling over any sort of decision is just so helpful. Anything to help to get clarity.

### Tell us one thing about you that people would never guess.

I loved Led Zeppelin when I was in my late teens/twenties. It's a passion shared with one of my sons who has their portrait tattooed over the whole of his back. And no – I don't do tattoos.

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