

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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