



September 2020

### **Bristol's Pledge to the European Pillar of Social Rights**

Bristol is an outward looking, diverse, international city. It is home to 460,000 people from more than 187 different countries, globally recognised industry clusters, and two leading universities.

The city has a growing international reputation for being sustainable, innovative and inclusive. It has 7 twin cities and strong links with global networks. It has a Brussels-based Office for Bristol and Bath, voted 62% to Remain in the EU, and was European Green Capital 2015.

However, Bristol's success does not reach everyone, and inequality is a key challenge for the city, affecting many children and young people and their opportunities early in life.

In 2019, Mayor Marvin Rees launched the [One City Plan](#), which sets out the city's major priorities and brings local partners together to make Bristol a fair, healthy and sustainable city by 2050 - a city of hope and aspiration, where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate and benefit.

Bristol is fully committed to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. We believe that a more cohesive Europe begins with strengthening social cohesion at the local level. We are committed to becoming a more inclusive city, a city of belonging, a city where all children can have a good start in life. We are determined to collaborate at local and European level to achieve this goal.

#### ***Principle 11: Childcare and support to children***

Bristol's child population grew by 14% from 2009-2019, compared to an 8.8% increase nationally. There are 94,000 children living in 55,000 families, and children under 16 make up 18.5% of the total population. 28% of under-18s are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

Educational attainment in Bristol is improving year on year. Many children do extremely well at school, however most do not go on to higher education. Exclusion and absenteeism are key challenges and factors in the rise of disaffection, substance misuse, gang affiliation and youth violence. In addition, only 9.4% of teachers are from Black and Asian backgrounds.

This sense of exclusion is wider than school settings. Children see Bristol as a series of 'villages' and do not leave their place. 24% of young people known to local services have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Wider income deprivation also negatively impacts children. 21% of children in Bristol live in poverty, mainly in areas where white working class and BAME families live.

We want more than this for all of our children, to reverse these trends and make it possible for all young people to have equal opportunities. Bristol is therefore developing and implementing initiatives in line with Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights to ensure children receive early childhood education, good quality care and protection from poverty.

#### ***Bristol's Children's Charter***

Launched in August 2018, Bristol's [Children's Charter](#) is a set of ten pledges made by organisations from across the city to set the rights and best interests of children as a priority for decision makers.



It applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the City Council led on the Charter but engaged a wide range of local partners and young people in its development, including the [Youth Council and Youth Mayors](#). Organisations large and small, as well as families, have since signed up to its pledges. These include making Bristol a city in which children have access to an education that develops their potential, which supports parents, carers and family members, and where children live in warm homes and no child is hungry. More broadly, the pledges aim to enable children to influence the decisions of city leaders and be a part of their global community.

The city-wide Charter was complemented by a commitment in the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2018–2023 to improve educational outcomes and reduce inequality, whilst ensuring there are enough school places to meet demand. A major local primary school programme is complete, but more secondary places are needed and are being delivered via an expansion scheme.

### ***One City Children's Board***

Principles from the Charter influenced the development of Bristol's One City Plan. It is built around 6 core themes, each of which has its own vision for 2050 and city-wide delivery board. The 'Learning and Skills' strand aims to build on Bristol's status as the first city in England to join UNESCO's network of [Learning Cities](#) in 2017 and to ensure that by 2050 that everyone in Bristol will have the best start in life, gaining the support and skills they need to thrive and prosper in adulthood.

In summer 2020, 300 One City partners gathered to explore Bristol's approach to Covid-19, and to revisit the priorities to support the city's recovery. These include the creation of a [One City Children's Board](#). It will seek to drive change using our city's collective resources, with a multi-agency group developing and implementing its action plan supported by Children's Ambassadors. Amongst other activities, the Board will build on the work undertaken to prevent and mitigate the impact of ACEs through the set-up of a unique Health Integration Team (supported by Bristol Health Partners), which unites the right people and best research, innovation, care and education across the region.

A key part of the Children's Board's role will also be to develop a new strategy, which will investigate what it means for our city's children to feel like they belong in Bristol, thereby contributing to our aim for all children to have equal opportunities and be protected from poverty.

### ***The Belonging Strategy***

Bristol's 'Belonging Strategy' is currently being developed, led by the voice of young people in the city. It is due to be launched in April 2021, will set targets taking us to 2050 and have 4 Pillars: belonging from birth, in families, in education and in community.

Its vision will be for our children:

- to be born into a city with a culture of nurture and care, with opportunities to grow with support from their community



- to have their needs recognised at the earliest point in a system that collaborates to help them thrive
- to have a home which sustains, nourishes and protects them in safe and healthy families
- to have a confident sense of self and identity in a cohesive and diverse city
- to access education that is inclusive and values diversity where they learn from each other and benefit from an understanding of their different experiences
- to own the whole city and experience and benefit from all that Bristol offers

In concrete terms, activities will include rebuilding early help, developing social capital in schools, integrating partner service delivery, remodelling school provision, strengthening families, improving access to education and training, and taking children into consideration in city design.

Meanwhile, the city is continuing its efforts to develop and deliver new child-focused initiatives, such as [#WeAreBristol Kids](#), an online resource to bring children together during the pandemic, and [Bristol School Streets](#), a pilot scheme to improve road safety and air quality outside schools. Recently, the City Council Cabinet also approved a proposal to invest over £28m in Bristol's special schools to provide more places for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

### ***Creating a City for ALL Children***

Bristol has come a long way in placing children at the heart of the city. From the Children's Charter to the Children's Board and the Belonging Strategy, we want our children to grow, develop and reach their potential in a city in which they feel instinctively they belong. However, there is more to do to develop a city that protects and provides for the most vulnerable young people and to reduce the inequalities that exist. Bristol is committed to working with local and European partners to deliver inclusive social policies. In this way, we pledge to continue to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights Principle 11 at the local level and to create a city for ALL children.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Godwin', with a horizontal line drawn across the middle of the signature.

**Councillor Helen Godwin**

*Cabinet Member for Women, Children and Young People, and Lead Member for Children's Services*