



## Children and Young Peoples Board

<b>Date/time</b>	Thursday 09 October, 2025; 1:30pm
<b>Location</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Co-chairs</b>	Councillor Christine Townsend, Children and Young People Policy Committee Chair Rachel Robinson, Bristol Play and Youth Alliance
<b>Meeting Attendees:</b>	
<b>Members</b>	Annabel McGregor, Raised in Bristol; Anne Wray, One Care; Beth Wilson, Wellbeing Settlement; Catherine Howett, City of Bristol College; Chris Duncan; Dom Wood; Emily Bailey, South Bristol Youth; Giles Haythornwaite, Bristol Royal Children's Hospital; Hannah Woodhouse, Bristol City Council; Mark Coates, Creative Youth Network; Nicole Briggs, We the Curious; Su King, Bristol Free School; Vik Verma, Bristol City Council.
<b>Observers</b>	
<b>Invitees</b>	
<b>Apologies</b>	Desmond Brown, Growing Futures; Fiona Tudge, Bristol City Council; Jamie Cameron, Burgess Salmon; John Simpson, Public Service At Heart; Ruth Pickersgill, Bristol Disability Equality Commission; Sally Melvin, Ablaze; Zaheer Shabir, Building the Bridge
<b>ITEM</b>	
<b>1) Welcomes from Co-chairs</b>	
The chairs welcomed in all board members.	
<b>2) Updates from Bristol City Council</b>	
<b><i>Hannah Woodhouse of Bristol City Council reported:</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bristol City Council have developed The Children and Education plan, with a vision and intention to eliminate child poverty and inequality in Bristol.</li><li>• This year marks a shift in priorities for the council, moving from defining actions to improve children's lives to embedding them and measuring the impact they make on children.</li><li>• The council anticipates four inspections, including a full inspection in January or February, as well as a SEND partnership inspection covering education, health, and social care, and a youth justice inspection.</li><li>• There is positive evidence of a happy workplace at Bristol City Council and strong alignment between politicians, the chief executive, and administration</li></ul>	

- The board noted that this administration has a clear budget focus on children's health and education.
- Board members noted that while the council team leads, delivery is ensured through partnerships.
- The SEND programme is intended to prevent children from entering care and support them whilst remain safely at home – our data shows that this is successful.
- There is a focus on post-16 provision as well as family help, youth work, and early years support, all expected to be delivered collaboratively.
- Services within the council are being restructured to unify children's education and social care under one body.
- Claire Greene leads the education partnership to improve primary schools, while Susan oversees attendance and support regarding children who aren't in mainstream school.
- HW advised that indicators suggest that there are fewer children entering care; there was a rise in the summer of children entering care, but this is not unusual.
- The city has 30 extra reception classes which affects secondary schools and funding.
- Data shows that development levels in schools are improving, but disadvantaged pupils are still facing gaps at KS2 - percentile rankings have risen from 90th to 80th.
- Bristol's KS4 results show an increase in grades 4 and 5, with schools serving disadvantaged communities outperforming others, suggesting the attainment gap may be closing.
- EHCP (Educational Health Care Plans) wait times are improving but still requires further reduction to be adequate.
- Upcoming changes by the Government include the Children and Families Bill and national social care reforms.
- HW advised that the youth strategy aims to prevent school absence and NEET exploitation, with the council shifting from a SEND white paper to a broader school white paper focused on pupil retention and teaching.
- Budget savings within the council are expected, though subject to proposals and changes.
- A virtual Bristol schools governing body has been reinstated.

- A Practice Review on Serious Youth Violence was published in September following four incidents in early 2024, investigating young persons' conflict and school engagement with at risk children.
- Monthly data reviews show a reduction in incidents and a lowering age profile in regard to serious youth violence.
- Three families contributed to the Serious Youth Violence review, which also prompted a second safeguarding review that remains unpublished due to an ongoing case.
- Board members placed an emphasis on including children in collaboration in regard to their safety.

### **3) Bristol Play and Youth Alliance**

#### ***Rachel Robinson, of the British Play and Youth Alliance, reported:***

- The Alliance has refreshed its youth strategy, retaining its three core pillars: places and spaces; evidencing impact; thriving workforce. RR thanked City of Bristol College for playing a key role in advancing this work, highlighting the importance of collaboration  
**ACTION – City Office to circulate the strategy with the minutes.**
- A motion regarding children's play was unanimously approved by the full council, linking youth development with Bristol's identity as a welcoming city - celebratory events are planned.
- RR advised that public papers on the golden motion are available for review.
- A programme originally aimed at knife crime prevention has shifted focus to early intervention and positive progression opportunities – this programme is supported by funding.
- A plan is due to be submitted to government before December.
- The vice chair of the Childrens and Young Peoples' committee is leading efforts to establish a cross-committee group that prioritises play and youth work across the council.
- The local plan is still under development, with other divisions needing to update their strategies.
- Members theorised that there may be overlap between the child poverty and youth strategies, and a new approach will be needed to align them effectively.

### **4) One City Plan - developing an action plan**

***Judith Langdon of One City reported:***

- A new business administration apprentice, Niotia, has joined the One City team.
- An engagement officer role has been advertised.
- A data analyst position has been advertised - the role is working half the time with the City Office and half at University of West of England.
- The soft launch event for the New One City Plan is on 22 October and is fully booked. Those still interested are encouraged to email.
- JL informed the board of a new One City webinar series that is scheduled to launch in November, initially running quarterly and open to non-members.
- A City Gathering event at We The Curious is scheduled for January, focusing on the mission that circumstances should not determine life outcomes in Bristol.
- The One City Plan is nearly final, pending minor tweaks, and aims to focus and encourage the work of individual boards within the broader One City movement.
- The plan is now mission-led, refreshing over a five year period instead of 2 years.
- All boards are asked to consider how they can contribute to these missions. They then must develop action plans to support mission delivery.
- JL acknowledged the intention to shift from previous iterations structured around individual boards, as One City is now aiming to rebrand as a social movement that doesn't require a specific role to drive it.

**ACTION - All boards must develop action plans to support mission delivery**

- Board members were asked how these sessions can be made more ideal for drafting plans, so One City is exploring how best to support boards. This may be through structured meetings, additional information, or inter-board workshops - the Civic University Agreement may be able to offer assistance with this.
- Concerns were raised by members about the risk of repeating efforts across boards, with members emphasising a need to explore new approaches and support mechanisms to achieve goals.
- There are multiple programmes in Bristol aimed at improving children's futures, but these often place the burden on education providers; the challenge is to streamline access and usability for schools and families.
- JL advised that impact will be tracked closely using selected measures, which are designed to reflect long-term shifts rather than immediate project outcomes.

- The missions approach is intended to span all boards, with each contributing clear actions to benefit the city, thereby strengthening collective action.
- An event to be organised to facilitate cross-board discussions.

#### 5) *Belonging and Thriving Strategy for endorsement*

##### ***Chris Duncan of Bristol City Council reported:***

- There is concern regarding the challenge of ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard across the various government departments responsible for their wellbeing.
- WECA advised that engagement with children and young people was a priority, but members had emphasised that it's not just on what is being done but how it is being done.
- While the council holds many statutory duties, it was acknowledged by the board that it cannot act alone when engaging with children and young people in the city.
- Slides were presented by CD, reinforcing the need to focus less on the content of the strategy document and more on how members contributions will address the issues.
- There was recognition by members that some aspects, such as how young people feel they belong and thrive, fall outside the strategy's direct control. It was discussed how to remedy this.
- The absence of any reference to asylum seeking children was noted, with a suggestion by members to include information regarding asylum seeking children in future drafts.
- Members were concerned about the deficit-focused tone of the paper, with a member suggesting balancing it with more positive framing language.
- Board members theorised around how progress will be measured, and whether it would be useful that the document could be made accessible to Year 6 pupils, which may also encourage parental engagement.
- Accessibility was a recurring critique in board discussions, with suggestions to adopt a single-author approach to improve clarity and make the strategy more relatable and easily actionable.
- The concept of relationship dynamics between adults and children, such as trust were explored - in the context of where young people may have been deprived of such experiences, members advised there needs to be a focus on the language of "how."
- CD advised that once the content is finalised, there is a need to discuss the "how" collectively.

- The document is on course to go to committee for approval, and any feedback should be sent to Chris as soon as possible.

#### **6) Pupil Pledge working group update**

##### ***Annabel McGregor of Bristol City Council reported:***

- The Pupil Pledge is a working group that aims to break the link between background and socio-economic attainment
- Bristol Futures is an organisation that focuses on breaking this link. They are looking at how to do this through the lens of the Bristol teacher, Bristol leader, Bristol school, and Bristol pupil.
- Members questioned how to positively shape young people's trajectories, along with whether young people are aware of how to access available opportunities.
- The first working group met a few weeks ago, with the second scheduled for Tuesday, involving the voluntary sector, youth sector, and headteachers.
- AG advised that initial discussions centred on the pledge being universal and how to engage partners across the city to support young people and the missions, especially in areas lacking transport links to schools.
- A set of ten slide pledges was presented, with plans to formally launch in January.
- There was consensus amongst members on keeping the pledge simple, recognising that some schools may need support in delivering them, and that external providers could play a role in helping schools overcome barriers; members also noted that many challenges schools face extend beyond financial constraints and require deeper acknowledgment.
- A suggestion was made to by the board include an additional cultural or creative pledge.
- The need for a conversation between the Youth and Play Alliance was also highlighted by members, acknowledging the importance of collaborative thinking in supporting young people across Bristol.

#### **7) Attendance update**

##### ***Christina Townsend of Bristol City Council reports:***

- Attendance has seen a 1% improvement compared to last year, though concerns remain around suspension rates, with permanent suspensions decreasing but overall exclusions in secondary schools still high.
- Persistent absence has improved, yet attendance among mixed Afro-Caribbean and White British pupils may reflect a sense of not belonging. This ties into the Council's new Belonging and Thriving strategy aimed at fostering inclusion in schools and communities.
- Tracking for attendance currently ends at Year 11, but it was noted that there needs to be emphasis on monitoring 16–17-year-olds.
- Secondary attendance is lower than last year, with evidence suggesting high attendance in Years 7 and 11, and lower attendance in Years 8, 9, and 10.
- Some schoolchildren are missing as school day every other fortnight.
- The board raised questions about whether enough is being done to understand what's happening in local partnership work and how Bristol can move forward.
- The board also noted that the use of percentages to communicate attendance data is seen as ineffective for parents, prompting a need to rethink how this information is shared.
- While schools must ensure pupils attend, broader community factors, particularly in South Bristol, also influence attendance.
- The board advised that schools serve as the most significant safeguarding tool available.

#### **8) AOB**

*No Other Business*