

Young Bristol's Post COVID-19 **Build Back Better Document**

This document is intended to promote a collective discussion as Young Bristol works to fully re-open post the COVID-19 national lockdown.

“We believe every young person has the right to discover what they are capable of”



Young Bristol
Works for young people

Introduction

“While COVID-19 may have had less direct impact on children and young people, the indirect impacts have been deep and substantial. Out of necessity, as a society, we have largely parked our children and young people over the last few months but that can’t continue and we need to recognise the costs of this. Young Bristol adapted its services quickly with a strong online presence and has continued to be there, firefighting and supporting many of the children, young people and families we work with. We now need to make sure what limited resources, financial and otherwise, we have in the city dedicated to children and young people are protected, at a minimum maintained and are freely available and accessible to all.

Throughout COVID-19 Young Bristol regularly consulted with children and young people, the wider community and the staff and management committee members of its Community Youth Clubs, to ensure we were delivering services that were relevant and required. These conversations have helped develop Young Bristol’s five point action plan for moving forward. Young Bristol will not be able to address all the individual issues and concerns raised on its own, so we now look forward to working with existing and new Partners to help make this plan happen.”

Lee Williams, Chief Executive Young Bristol.

Young Bristol Top Ten Achievements during COVID-19

COVID-19 resulted in Young Bristol’s Programmes closing in April 2020 in line with Government guidance as the Country came to terms with the devastating impact of this pandemic. The Young Bristol Team adapted quickly to having a strong online presence and identifying those children, young people and families we currently work with who were likely to require additional support. Our top ten achievements during this period of closure include:-

1. Created 68 Boredom Buster videos viewed by 19,233 individuals.
2. Created, funded and delivered 82 Sport and Creative packs to children, young people and families encouraging activities away from the screen.
3. Supported 34 families without internet access to get online.
4. Through our Mobile Youth Club on Wheels supported school delivery.
5. Delivered 56 virtual youth club sessions which covered a range of topics to help children and young people with their mental and physical health, as well as their general well-being.
6. Continued to engage with an identified group of young people who were at risk of causing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
7. Saw a 42% increase in engagement through our various social media channels.
8. Secured unbudgeted Income to fund COVID specific activities as well as funding for our Programmes, including our Community Youth Clubs to help with sustainability post COVID. This includes forming new Partnerships as well!
9. Young Bristol staff, working in Partnership with Police and Bristol City Council was part of a Citywide Youth Service response to support young people.
10. During all this adversity and uncertainty, there was some good news for Young Bristol. We received the Queens Award for Voluntary Service – the equivalent of an MBE for Charities!

Findings & Research

During COVID-19 Young Bristol regularly consulted directly and via our social media channels with existing users of our Programmes, the wider public along with members of our Community Youth Club staff and management committees. We have also been active in numerous discussions with colleagues working in the youth sector in Bristol as well as up and down the country.

This Build Back Better document not only reflects the findings of our own conversations and consultations, but are in line with the findings and recommendations contained within a number of publications from a wide range of organisations; including Quartet Community Foundation, Bristol City Council, Young Minds, National Youth Agency, The Children’s Society, National Lottery, Sport England.

During the numerous conversations we have had as part of this process, individuals discussed the key themes in terms of their own experience, concerns and ideas. These have been collated, and form the basis of this report. Notes from the discussions are under each of the key headings.

The ideas, concerns and requests have been drawn together into five key action points and form the start of Young Bristol’s Post COVID 19 - Building Back Better journey.

Young Bristol Build Back Better

Five Point Action Plan

Action Point 1: Help children and young people recover

1. Assess and address the impact of the crisis on children and young people, including:
 - 1.1. Address increased mental wellbeing support needs of young people and provide details of support Agencies.
 - 1.2. Review the scale of increases in cases of domestic violence and the support needs of young people across Bristol; better understand what services are available and promote the routes to accessing these for young people at all our venues.
 - 1.3. Better understand the impact this crisis will have on the families of those children and young people we work with especially in the areas of food, family finances, and housing (eviction) for young people over the next 12 months and how, together this can be addressed.
 - 1.4. Through a partnership approach help address employment/training issues facing school leavers through providing clear and supportive pathways to employment, apprenticeships and/or further education opportunities ensuring equality for all.
 - 1.5. Ensure equality of opportunity for all children and young people we work with.

Action Point 2: Delivering the day job

2. In line with Government and National Youth Agency approved guidance commence a phased, safe re-opening of Young Bristol Programmes and support our Partner Community Youth Clubs to do likewise including:
 - 2.1. Prepare and provide support and guidance to ensure Young Bristol and Partner Community Youth Clubs undertake a safe and COVID compliant return to work, e.g. risk assessments, standard operating procedures, access to relevant PPE and continually monitor and update guidance accordingly.
 - 2.2. Provide guidance about adapting all delivery models – especially face to face in Community Youth Clubs and Young Bristol Outdoor Activity Centre at Pooles Wharf.
 - 2.3. Collective procurement of PPE supplies.
 - 2.4. Young Bristol to be actively involved in ensuring better collective and multi-agency working across Bristol thus ensuring collectively we maximise new opportunities and deliver quality services for children and young people from first class facilities.
 - 2.5. Following Young Bristol being awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service, prepare a “call to action” for more volunteers to support our existing and future Programmes for children and young people.

Action Point 3: Learning & Resilience review

3. Review which of our services worked well during COVID-19 and where we can improve these for children and young people should another outbreak occur – what can we do to improve resilience planning, in particular:
 - 3.1. Find ways to address digital exclusion for the children and young people we work with.
 - 3.2. Undertake an audit of current available digital access at all Young Bristol venues and prepare an action plan.
 - 3.3. Embrace the use of technology to ensure we maximise the lessons learnt during COVID -19.

Action Point 4: Use all forms of media to promote positive stories of young people and role of youth workers

4. **Promote good news**, including:
 - 4.1. Positive stories of children and young people showing that young people care and are responsible.
 - 4.2. Gather case studies on children and young people’s experiences of COVID-19.
 - 4.3. Promoting the value of youth work and youth workers as part of a COVID-19 community response.

Action Point 5: Influence policy to gain greater Youth Sector Investment

5. To use our collective voice to influence local policy and direction to ensure long term funding in children and young people’s services through:
 - 5.1. To play an active role in the formation of a Bristol Youth Sector consortium to help shape and influence local policy and services and ensure joined-up planning for the benefit of all young people across the city.
 - 5.2. Seek longer term funding commitment from Bristol City Council and other funders for early intervention services such as open access and mobile youth provision in local communities.
 - 5.3. Monitor the level of Young Bristol and Community Youth Clubs lost income and the impact this may have on sustainability and availability of service delivery for children and young people going forward.
 - 5.4. Ensure we are “capital investment ready” should funding become available at any stage by undertaking a review of some, if not all, existing Young Bristol building stock and have designs, including any planning permissions in place.

The following is a collation of the numerous thoughts, comments and observations from those individuals and organisations who have contributed to this document.

Practical steps for a safe return

Have you begun planning your return to face to face work? What are the major issues and concerns?

- Some but not all organisations have begun planning a return to face-to-face work
- Lack of availability and clarity in advice for children, young people and families
- Lack of PPE and the need for training of all users in its effective use, especially in the event of an accident
- Timing – conflicting worries over a lack of services reintroduced by the start of the school summer holidays and about the public health ramifications of returning to face-to-face too soon
- The need for robust risk assessments and better advice on these
- Implementation social distancing and enhanced cleaning measures
- Reduced capacity because of a need to socially distance – a shift from open access to targeted youth work
- Existing spaces inappropriate for delivery under social distancing e.g. lack of outside space, building occupied by multiple organisations with different policies/practices
- New difficulties working in schools since they don't want outside providers coming in
- Ensuring that children and young people are able to travel to face-to-face services in a socially distant way
- Backlash from making mistakes
- Lack of adequately rapid volunteer deployment
- Strategies for facilitating group work with young people with more complex needs in a socially distant way
- Possible reluctance of parents/carers to allow young people to begin attending sessions again
- Concerns that a detached youth work approach might encourage more young people to gather in groups
- Reconfiguring services to come with increased demands for mental health support
- Potential liability and damage to organisation's reputation in the event of a breakout
- COVID-19 transmission and the public health and human life consequences of a second peak

What does a good and safe return look like?

- Safety of all parties – staff, volunteers, young people, parents, carers, etc.
- Behavioural change from all stakeholders to a safety/social distancing first mind-set
- Creation of social distancing appropriate environments and increased use of outdoor space e.g. hard court areas
- Smaller group sizes where necessary to maintain distancing, alternative service provision for others
- Effective cleaning and hygiene systems - cleaning rotas, additional hand-washing stations, etc. Cost - who pays?
- Appropriate use and wearing of PPE for staff and young people in line with current guidance
- Continuing to build on the successful aspects of digital engagement
- Children and young people receiving high quality support although concerns over access to specialist referral services e.g. mental health support
- Greater visibility of services so those accessing them for the first time can find them easily

What is needed to build back better for a safe return?

- Guidance on risk assessments, workplace safety, PPE, lone working, safeguarding, liability in the case of an outbreak, pathways for referrals in light of recent disruptions etc.
- Clear communication and action from Bristol City Council in the event of localised COVID-19 outbreak
- Effective track and trace system
- Access to larger spaces for school summer holiday provision for Young Bristol Mobile Provision e.g. schools
- More funding and flexibility in funding terms
- More and better partnership working
- Recognition of youth workers' crucial work including a defined status from Local and Central Government

What issues has COVID-19 and the lockdown raised for the children and young people you work with?

What are the emerging issues and concerns?

- Digital exclusion – particularly amongst disabled and families on low income
- Mental health – anxiety, OCD, depression, sense of self-worth, sense of hopelessness about future prospects
- Loss/change in access to their existing support networks – friends, extended family, therapists, youth workers
- Practical concerns – food insecurity, financial worry, possibility of eviction
- Bereavement
- Social isolation – particularly its effects on already at risk groups
- Increased caring responsibilities for young people
- Impact of crisis on children and young people's long term education achievement
- Heightened rates of and intensified impact of domestic violence including child on parent violence
- Lack of access to outdoor space
- Boredom, isolation and loneliness
- Increase in unemployment and impact this will have on families' ability to cope
- Increased concerns over lack of contact from young people and parents/carers
- Increased pressures on parents/carers especially those with children with more complex needs

What changes can we make to respond to these issues and new needs?

- Develop clear transition plans addressing the above issues
- More and better collaborative partnerships to address young people's needs holistically including anti-poverty work
- Improve referral pathways and staff's understanding of them
- Increase parental engagement while avoiding paternalism e.g. online Boredom Busters have been popular with children and parents
- Ensure everyone has access to the internet and an internet enabled device
- Work collaboratively with schools to ensure those who've flourished under lockdown continue to do so beyond it
- Send out activity packs to families including arts, crafts, outdoor activity and self-care equipment/resources
- Address the knowledge gap of part-time/less qualified part time staff on issue based approaches
- Deliver more services via Zoom as appropriate and develop staff's digital facilitation skills

What do you need to build back better to meet these needs?

- Centralised mapping exercise and communications to avoid duplication of resources and improve referral pathways
- A cultural shift to viewing young people as part of the solution, starting with more young people positive communications
- Promotion of volunteering schemes and opportunities
- Free/cheap internet access at Young Bristol venues and internet connected devices to families and young people who need them
- More funding and greater flexibility around eligibility criteria age/demographic eligibility
- More and better partnership working
- Training for staff on issue based and trauma informed youth work practices
- Widely accessible resource toolkit for staff on how to respond to different issues and needs

How has lockdown impacted on your ability to sustain your work

What have been the impacts or concerns?

- Impaired organisational ability to fulfil existing contractual commitments
- Homeworking has been a challenge for some staff members
- Long-term financial security – non-COVID-19 emergency funding pots are scarce and writing long term bids is challenging with this much uncertainty
- Short-term funding – loss of income generation streams, funding being offered too many too small pots with tight deadlines at a time of already stretched capacity
- Loss of conversations that occur at physical events and can lead to new innovations and Partnerships
- Loss of Young Bristol non-grant income generation e.g. serendipity suppers, large fundraising event, commercial activities etc.
- Suspension of delivery – some can be moved online but other bits rely on face-to-face e.g. RESPECT & Mobile Provision Project in schools
- Loss of conventional volunteer recruitment strategy via contact with communities and corporates

What would a sustainable future look like for your organisation?

Can you build back better?

- More and broader multi-agency partnerships and collaboration –on bids, in working practices; through Young Bristol providing greater support to Community Youth Clubs with administration, policy, etc.
- Longer term funding commitment from Bristol City Council and other Funders
- Development of sustainable food based community projects
- Increase in trading and other non-grant income
- Creation of new Partnerships to help develop and deliver new services to existing and new communities
- Continuing to build on skills and capacity for digital delivery

What do you need to build back better?

- More commissioning rather than procurement and competition
- More and longer term funding and a re-opening of non-COVID-19 funding
- A relaxation of funding processes with more accessible systems, less scrutiny and a faster turnaround on decisions
- A broadened scope for COVID-19 funding – less focus on the emergency response and more about responding to the existing issues which the crisis has exacerbated
- A raising of the profile for youth work, young people's services and volunteering both locally and nationally
- Support for the sector in building and working in partnerships
- Bristol City Council City support with volunteer recruitment for the Sector – BCC to promote volunteering opportunities to those who registered with them during COVID -19
- Clear, detailed City plan for response to a second wave of the crisis
- Investment in youth work staff and volunteer training across the sector

About Young Bristol

Founded in 1928 Young Bristol is one of Bristol's leading youth charities, providing critical out-of-school services for children and young people in communities across the city.

Today the charity is recognised as Bristol's leading provider of community-based youth services; through our community youth club network based in some of Bristol's most challenging communities, and as a valued provider of outdoor activities, creative arts, sports, mobile provision, together with employment and informal educational programmes for young people.

Last year, Young Bristol had 17,141 contacts with young people aged 8-25 years, providing them with positive activities and a safe place where they can build their confidence, skills, self-esteem; whilst having fun and improving their pathway to employment.

Young Bristol is a registered charity number 301681 and Company Limited by Guarantee. Company number 00363502.

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Thank you

Thank you to the following for their contribution to this document:-

Staff and Management Committee members of the following Young Bristol Partner Community Youth Clubs:-

Ashton Vale Club For Young People

Avon Youth Club

Broad Plain & Riverside Youth Project

Hartcliffe Club For Young People

Manor Farm Boys' Club

Pyramid Youth Club

Sea Mills Boys' & Girls Club

Stockwood (BS14) Youth Club

The Grove at Bedminster Down

The Young Bristol staff team and the numerous contributors to the consultations we have carried out over the past few months during the COVID-19 Pandemic.