

Social needs of younger people in the West of England

Quartet Community Foundation (QCF) works across the West of England. This is an area made up of four unitary authority areas with a total population of 1,084,040.



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET (B&NES) is geographically the second smallest of the four West of England authorities. It has the city of Bath at its centre, accounting for about half of the population of the area, with a largely rural hinterland beyond. There are pockets of deprivation in an otherwise well off area. The age profile is one of an ageing population, with an unusually low proportion of children.

BRISTOL has the largest population, and is the major city in the South West region, and the seventh largest city in England. Geographically, it is the smallest of the four West of England authorities. The age profile of the population is younger than its neighbours, although the number of residents aged 85+ is increasing.

In all four areas, there are distinct areas of poverty and affluence. This is particularly acute in **Bristol**, which is a city of extremes of wealth and deprivation. In 2010, 14 of the 5% most deprived areas in England were in Bristol. Young people in Ashley, Lawrence Hill, Filwood and parts of Hartcliffe, for example, are particularly income deprived. In **North Somerset**, there are greater extremes: North Somerset has the 7th largest range of inequality of all the 326 authorities in England and the North Somerset Local Economic Assessment reports that “for the first time we have areas within both the most deprived 1% nationally, and the least deprived 1% nationally”. All of the most deprived wards are within Weston-super-Mare, in the Central and

NORTH SOMERSET is largely affluent and rural, with Weston-super-Mare the main population centre. It is a growing area, and the age profile of North Somerset is one of an ageing population, with fewer younger dependents.

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE is the second largest, geographically, of the four West of England authorities, and is one of the fastest growing areas in the south west. It is a mainly rural area, although two-thirds of its population live in urban fringe areas. There is an ageing population, but also an increase in the population aged 16-24 and in young adults, attracted to the area by the increase in housing and jobs.

South Wards. The least deprived wards include parts of Nailsea, Portishead, Clevedon, Backwell, Easton-in-Gordano, Wrington, and part of Weston-super-Mare North. **B&NES** is also a largely affluent area, but again, with pockets of deprivation. These are mainly in parts of the south of Bath, especially Twerton, and in some of the rural towns, most notably Radstock. In general, there is a low level of deprivation across South Gloucestershire, but a higher percentage of people live ‘by moderate means’ than nationally. They are concentrated in areas that **South Gloucestershire** designates its “Priority Neighbourhoods”: Cadbury Heath, Filton, Patchway, Kingswood, Staple Hill and Yate/Dodington.

Rural Deprivation:

In all of the rural areas in the three rural authorities (B&NES, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire), there are pockets of deprivation which tend to be hidden. Income and opportunity is reduced; there can be higher levels of fuel poverty; and the lack of public transport coupled with distances to population centres and places of employment means a need for people to have their own cars. Access to local services is more difficult, because populations are smaller. This is a challenge for both providers and users of services. In most of the rural areas, there is deprivation caused by a lack of access to services. 14 small areas in B&NES are in the highest 20%, which means they have the least access to Access

to Housing and Services. These areas include parts of Bathavon, Mendip and Chew Valley.

There is a body of evidence reference number here (e.g. Marmot 2010; NAO 2010) that shows the connection between poverty and deprivation and increased health needs. Services working with children and young people report that their service users have increasing needs for support with social and emotional health. Many of the young people seeking support have more complex economic needs, and more complex family backgrounds, often as a consequence of worsening family economic circumstances, and greater deprivation

Social Needs of Young People: a statistical overview

The statistics below give a snapshot of children's and younger people's needs in the West of England. This survey focuses on the needs of those aged 11 – 25. However, the statistical overview covers a broader age range, based on the age bandings within the data. The

data highlights some of the specific issues that influence both the strategic and practical responses of both statutory authorities and voluntary sector organisations, as well as how QCF supports this work.

How many young people are there in the West of England?

BRISTOL

The 2011 census shows that there were:

- 81,800 people aged 0-15 living in Bristol (18.7% of the population), and
- 67,400 people aged 16-24 (15.4% of the population).

A steady increase in Bristol's birth rate, and in families migrating to the city means that the child population is now at its highest rate for 30 years. Population growth is greatest in central Bristol.

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE:

The 2011 census shows that there were:

- 46,400 people aged 0-15 living in South Gloucestershire (17.5% of the population), and
- 33,000 people aged 16-24 (12.5% of the population).

Since 2011, there was a decrease in the population under 14, and 24% increase in young people aged 15 – 24.

NORTH SOMERSET

North Somerset: Local data shows that there are:

- 37,385 people aged 0-15 living in North Somerset (18.1% of the population), and
- 21,066 people aged 16-24 (10.4% of the population).

There is a notable increase in the birth rate in North Somerset, and an increase in the number of families moving into the area due to new housing developments.

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET (B&NES)

Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES): The 2011 Census shows that there were:

- 29,577 people aged 0-15 living in B&NES (16% of the population), and
- 27,206 people aged 16-24 (15% of the population).

There is a higher than average expected increase in the number of people aged 4-11, but the proportion of children and young people is low, and likely to remain so.

Ethnicity

There is a large and increasingly diverse BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) population in Bristol. By contrast, the three other areas are predominantly 'White British'. Numbers of BME young people are increasing in Bristol, and in some other parts of the West of England area.

BRISTOL

is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the UK outside London. 2014 data records the 'white British' population at 80% in 2014, with 6% from 'other white groups'. There are at least 50 countries represented in Bristol, with Poland and then Somalia the most frequent countries of birth (outside the UK) recorded in the 2011 Census. BME communities are mainly resident in East Central Bristol. 55% of the population of Lawrence Hill ward belongs to a BME group.

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE:

95% of the population is white (British and Other White Groups, including Eastern European). There has been a steady, if small, increase in the BME population. 16.6% of BME residents are in higher managerial professions compared to 11.6% of all other ethnic categories. There is an increase in the number of BME young people in South Glos.

NORTH SOMERSET

97% of the population at the 2011 Census was recorded as white (White British or Other White Ethnic Groups).

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET (B&NES)

94% of the population at the 2011 Census was recorded as white (White British or Other White Ethnic Groups).

3% of the population is from the EU. The number of BME residents almost doubled between 2001 and 2011.

Children living in poverty

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) defines poverty as living in a condition where resources, especially material resources, are insufficient to meet minimum needs. Poverty can affect every area of a child's development - social, educational, personal, emotional and physical.

BRISTOL

Over a quarter of children (20,100) grow up in poverty in Bristol. Almost half of the children in Inner City Bristol live in families receiving means tested benefits. The three wards with the highest % of children (Lawrence Hill, Filwood, Ashley) are also the three most deprived.

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE:

Between 2006 and 2010 the percentage of dependent children living in poverty in South Gloucestershire rose from 10.5% to 11.5% which represents 6,685 dependent children living in poverty. Two thirds of them live in areas outside the priority neighbourhoods.

NORTH SOMERSET

14% of children (5,197 individuals) in North Somerset live in poverty. They tend to be concentrated in the more urban areas, but there is hidden deprivation in the rural parts of the authority area as well.

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET (B&NES)

Although only 4.3% of people live in deprived areas, 13% of children in those areas live in poverty. (approx. 4000 children). The greatest number live in Twerton, Southdown and Radstock.

Younger people's health needs in the West of England

Health service delivery is a statutory responsibility and not, in general, something that can be addressed by QCF. However, many services that address young people's wellbeing and emotional health are delivered by voluntary sector organisations, and supported by QCF.

BRISTOL

- 18.5% Year 6 children (age 10 – 11) are classified as obese.
- Levels of teenage pregnancy are above the national average, although there is a gradual decline.
- There appears to be a strong link between the rate of injury-related hospital admissions and levels of deprivation.
- Counselling services report that as many as 25% of their service users talk about feeling suicidal, and one in three actively self-harm.

NORTH SOMERSET

- 32% of Year 6 children are overweight or obese.
- North Somerset's JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, see Glossary) comments on a lack of data about the health needs of young people in the area.

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE:

- 29.2% of Year 6 children are overweight or obese.
- 10% of school age children smoke daily and 14% use alcohol weekly.
- 1 in 5 families live in "non-decent" housing. This is a particular concern about single parents in private rented housing, and about their children.

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET (B&NES)

- 31% of Year 6 pupils are overweight or obese.
- An estimated 8% of the population aged 11-15 (800 young people) get drunk every week.
- Alcohol consumption among young women is a growing problem.
- Rates of mental health-related outpatient appointments for children and adolescents are above the national average.
- 50% of the homelessness applications in B&NES are from people aged under 25.

Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

The figures below are estimates.

BRISTOL

- 7.3% of young people were NEET (820 individuals) at the end of 2013.
- For 10.4% of 16-18 year olds, their economic activity was not known.

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE:

- 4.6% of young people were NEET (340 individuals) in December 2013.
- For 41.2% of 16-18 year olds, their economic activity was not known.

NORTH SOMERSET

- 3.2% of young people were NEET (220 individuals) in December 2013.
- For 1.7% of 16-18 year olds, their economic activity was not known

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET (B&NES)

- 4.5% (197) young people in B&NES were NEET in December 2013.
- For 3.0% of 16-18 year olds, their economic activity was not known.
- 64% of teenage mothers were NEET in December 2012.

Responding to young people's needs in the community the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the West of England:

Traditionally, local authorities have been the main agency running a network of local youth clubs in local communities. However, this was not a statutory responsibility, and so became a casualty of austerity. Since 2011, there have been significant reductions in local authority funding for youth services in all the West of England authorities, with major changes to the ways in which youth services are delivered. The major impact has been the loss of a large (but unquantifiable) number of youth clubs, and considerably less financial security for most of the funded youth clubs that remain. With the closure of local authority youth clubs, some funding has moved to the VCS. Some services have been commissioned over three years; much of the funding is shorter term and insecure.

This situation is further complicated by "Community Asset Transfer", a mechanism used by local authorities to transfer the ownership and management of community buildings to local VCS organisations. In Bristol in 2015, for example, 6 community or youth organisations are negotiating for the management of local youth centres

in their areas. However, Community Asset Transfer is placing ever greater demands on local providers to run local services, but with decreasing funds and, in some cases, a lack of expertise.

A further challenge is that local authority funding for voluntary sector services is increasingly directed at "targeted services" – specialist services for specific groups of young people or those with identified needs such as family problems, behaviour or school attendance problems, offending behaviour etc. In the statutory sector, the specialist services (such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) have raised their thresholds, so a child's needs must be greater to access these services. VCS organisations find themselves responding to ever growing numbers of young people with ever greater needs.

"Cuts have particularly hit parts of the sector working with vulnerable people, often in disadvantaged areas, and smaller organisations have lost proportionately more [state] funding than larger organisations."

(Whose Society? The Final Big Society Audit)

Service providers report the need for “unglamorous but essential” universal services, which typically are the first point at which young people’s needs can be identified. These are, for example, youth groups which cater for all children and young people regardless of any specific needs or local, neighbourhood-based youth clubs.

VCS services for children and young people:

- In **B&NES**, there are an estimated 728 VCS organisations. About 40% work mainly within their own neighbourhoods, and 25% of all VCS organisations work with children and young people.

B&NES youth services budget reduced by 27% in 2010, but has not been reduced since. The Council is working with a small number of specialist providers and continues to make small grants, particularly with an emphasis on anti-social behaviour. It also provides a small number of “youth hubs”.

- In **Bristol**, there are an estimated 1,428 VCS organisations employing 12,000 people. Compared to the neighbouring authorities, there is a greater number of larger and regional/national organisations in Bristol, and more that serve not only their local communities but also residents who live in the neighbouring authorities and travel to Bristol to access services. Local organisations report that services for young people have been severely impacted by cuts to public funding.

Bristol City Council cut its youth services budget in 2012 by 40%, and commissioned external providers to run their core/universal services for young people under an “umbrella brand” called Bristol Youth Links. Most grants to VCS- organisations providing youth services came to an end in January 2013.

- In **North Somerset**, Cabinet Office research found 556 VCS organisations in 2010; however, VANS (the infrastructure organisation for the North Somerset VCS) estimates the number to be closer to 1000. 54% of VCS organisations in North Somerset are very small, with incomes of under £25,000 pa in 2010. 20% work with young people as their primary beneficiary group.

North Somerset decided in 2012 to cut its youth services budget by 71% over three years, and no longer employs youth work staff directly. Some youth centres continue to receive funding from town or parish councils, but this is a short-term arrangement. Young people’s funding was also removed from VANS. An innovation fund was established to enable youth services to be re-shaped.

- In **South Gloucestershire**, there are an estimated 624 VCS organisations, about 16% of which deliver “youth work” services. 36% have an income of less than £5,000. The majority of services for children and young people are located in Bristol, and young people from many locations in the surrounding areas come into Bristol to access services.

South Gloucestershire cut its youth services budget by 23% in 2012, and undertook a review. This led to services being concentrated in its six priority neighbourhoods: Cadbury Heath, Filton, Kingswood, Patchway, Staple Hill and Yate/Dodington. Some small grants are available primarily in the priority areas, and some town and parish councils which are not in the Priority Neighbourhoods support youth services.

QCF’s response: outcomes-based solutions

With greater social needs coupled with less VCS funding, QCF and its fund holders have adopted a flexible role in supporting the complex patchwork of organisations providing services and projects for young people across the region. In this section, we consider some of the key issues for young people. We have grouped these issues into a number of beneficiary outcomes and give examples to highlight the work of VCS organisations in the West of England. Examples are drawn from QCF’s funding.

In 2013-14, 29% of QCF’s grants were to organisations whose primary beneficiaries are young people (Annual Review 2014).

- 29% of QCF grants to organisations in B&NES addressed the needs of children, young people and families.
- 27% of QCF grants to Bristol organisations addressed the needs of children, young people and families.
- 36% of QCF grants to North Somerset organisations addressed the needs of children, young people and families.
- 39% of QCF grants to South Gloucestershire organisations addressed the needs of children, young people and families.

1. Reducing inequality, exclusion and disadvantage

The National Children's Bureau reports that "a child from a disadvantaged poor background is still far less likely to achieve a level of development at age 4, to achieve well at school age 11 and to do well in their GCSEs at 16 compared to a child from the most well off backgrounds" (NCB, 2013). South Gloucestershire Council's Partnership Strategy for Children and Young People reports that "there is a gap of 26% in attainment at the early years foundation stage [children from birth to age 5] between those taking free school meals and those not taking them up. This gap is 19% at Key Stage 2 [children aged 7-11]." Research carried out by the University of the West of England found that across Bristol South only 1 out of 10 young people goes on to higher education.

VCS organisations work in deprived communities, offering a wide variety of projects and resources for young people. All report an increase in the numbers of young people with needs, and with increasingly complex needs, which place growing pressures on organisations to carry on delivering and innovating, in spite of adverse financial circumstances.

The imbalance between rising needs and falling resources is driving many VCS organisations to become ever more creative with the services they offer. There is a growing emphasis on early intervention (EI) work: work with young people before there is a significant crisis, to increase their social and emotional skills, manage their behaviour, address mental and physical health issues, and look at a range of opportunities that will help to ease the transition into adulthood. Statutory agencies recognise the value of EI, but struggle to fund it because it typically supports young people whose needs may not (yet) reach the thresholds for statutory services. Early intervention work is best delivered by skilled staff, because it involves using a range of skills and being able to draw on a network of services. It is relatively inexpensive and can be delivered effectively by small, local organisations, saving costs and complexity in the long term.

- **Empire Amateur Boxing Club** were awarded a grant of £500 from the Express Programme towards after school coaching sessions for young people in a non-contact boxing programme. The classes have attracted young people from the heavily deprived area of St Pauls in Bristol. The club offers an activity that takes young people off the street and reduces the risk of offending. At the same time, participants enjoy a free exercise class that also improves self-esteem and self-confidence.

- **Our Way Our Say** received a grant of £1,800 from the Express Programme to develop its programme of activities for children and young people in Weston-super-Mare's South Ward (Bourneville Estate). This grant enabled "Our Way" to run regular weekly sessions. This consistency meant that they could get to know and build trust with some disengaged young people on the estate. The project was then able to link the young people with the local boxing club with an aim of controlling their anger issues. Several other young people were supported to make positive changes in their lives. For some, this involved changing the way they think and act about drugs; one young man was helped to move out of an unsafe living environment. Several new volunteers have signed up to help run the group. They have gained in self-esteem, and developed confidence that enabled them to look for paid employment. Some families were also involved with the project.

Young Carers

A carer is someone who regularly provides unpaid care for someone who is disabled, frail, ill, has mental health issues or substance misuse problems. A 2010 BBC national survey of 4000 secondary school pupils across the UK found that 1 in 12 pupils (8%) have moderate or high levels of personal caring responsibility, such as dressing or bathing family members. The average age of a young carer is 12 and they take on responsibilities normally only expected of an adult. Data is unreliable and recognised to underestimate the numbers of young carers in the West of England. However, young carers are recognised as being a group that is more vulnerable to developing mental health disorders. The Carers Trust believes that 22% of young carers suffer significant educational disadvantage, including bullying, attendance problems or inability to complete homework/coursework, and that young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers.

Local authority Children & Young People's Services Departments (social services) provide support for young carers; however there is anecdotal information suggesting that many young carers can be wary of seeking statutory support. The Carers Centre is the main VCS organisation providing services for young carers in Bristol and South Gloucestershire, along with Bristol Black Carers; Off the Record (Bath) delivers a young carers advice and support service in B&NES, and Crossroads Care is funded to deliver support to young carers in North Somerset. In addition, smaller or generic organisations run projects that offer time out and activities for young carers. Some of these are supported by QCF.

- **The Carers Support Centre** received a grant of £2,500 from the Churngold Environment Fund towards renovating two rooms and an outside area for use as a Young Carers Zone. The need for this resource had been expressed by members of the centre's young carers groups. Through this network of provision, the Carers Support Centre supports 170 of the 1,384 unpaid young carers in the Bristol and South Gloucestershire areas. They are aware that young carers are in particular need of support and respite activities, in a place where they can be with their peers, and away from the adult responsibilities that they have in other parts of their lives.
- **Bristol Black Carers Project received** a grant of £1,000 from the Express Programme to continue their drop in sessions for young carers, and to run a series of dance classes. These sessions improve young people's confidence, team work and communication skills. They also give young carers the experience of being listened to, and through this, an increased sense of self-worth. Bristol Black Carers Project sees a growing number of young carers who have a vast amount of caring responsibilities, and who do not always realise that they are young carers.

2. Advancing people's physical and mental health, wellbeing and safety

There is a close relationship between physical and mental health, and young people's wellbeing. Mental health problems in children and young people can be long lasting: 50% of life-long mental health issues start before the age of 14, and 75% by the mid-20s. Some well-identified physical health problems are associated with mental health and vice versa. In a major report on health inequalities, Marmot argues that the benefits of reducing health inequalities are economic as well as

social. Additional NHS healthcare costs associated with inequality are well in excess of £5.5 billion per year. If no action is taken, the cost of treating the various illnesses that result from inequalities in the level of obesity alone will rise from £2 billion per year to nearly £5 billion by 2025 (Marmot et al, 2009).

The budgets for statutory services addressing the health and wellbeing of children and young people are increasingly constrained, leading statutory services to raise the thresholds for access to these services. In practice, young people have to be increasingly unwell before they are admitted to statutory services. The impact is that voluntary services are facing higher demands – both from more people, and people with greater needs. With QCF's support, VCS organisations provide an array of solutions from small grants to local sports clubs and activities, to peer learning to tackle homophobic bullying.

- **Bath Rugby Foundation** received £1,000 from the Sport Relief Community Cash programme to buy equipment for inclusive rugby sessions for children and young adults who have difficulty accessing traditional sports. 40 new participants joined the project. Many of them were not able to access sport through other routes, often because of special needs or disabilities. Children and young people's services have referred to the sessions. The project also engaged volunteers as mentors. One of the young people with learning disabilities who started with the project as a participant is now a group leader and is being supported by Bath Rugby to become a sports coach. Several of the mentors continue to volunteer in the community. Many of the young people have started to take a more active part in sports in schools because they have gained confidence through this project.
- **Educational Action Challenging Homophobia (EACH)** received a grant of £1,991 from the Express Programme. This enabled ten young people to participate in a residential training course that gave them the skills, confidence and support networks, as well as practical tools, to run surgeries across North Somerset aimed at raising awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying. The surgeries also enabled young people to signpost others to support services as needed. The participants were lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people and their friends. All of the young people who participated in the training said that they had gained in confidence and made new friends. They gained personal strength and lost a previous sense of isolation through being able to talk about their own experiences of

homophobic bullying with others who shared similar experiences. Following the residential weekend, four “surgeries” or events were run across the area, attended by 135 young people. One of the young people has continued to raise funding for further residential courses and surgeries.

3. Improving people’s life skills, education and employability

Although the West of England is characterised by high levels of graduate employment in some areas, the recession has led to the highest level of youth unemployment ever seen. The area as a whole has large service and retail sectors, and while there are job opportunities for young people, many are in poorly paid work with little security. There are some areas (e.g. South Bristol, parts of South Gloucestershire) where educational attainment is low, and with this comes low aspirations. A practitioner working with young people commented, for this review, “Young people need to be supported to dream better futures” – and they need to be connected to opportunities that will enable them to achieve this.

- **Bedminster Down School** received a grant of £1,200 from the Express Programme for a “Lads and Dads” activity. This gave a group of “more challenging” boys an opportunity to participate in Outward Bound activities with their fathers, and it gave the fathers the opportunity to play a more active role in their sons’ education. Through the activity, the boys worked together and developed their team work skills. They were able to bond with their dads through the shared experience of the activities – and camping together. Back at school after the activity, staff reported that the boys had increased their confidence and engagement with the curriculum and were working better in and out of the classroom. The school also had better engagement and communication with the dads, which proved helpful when some of the boys had “lapses of judgement” at school.

There is a cohort of young people that it is long way from the workplace. This group needs tailored support to gain work based skills, and become “work ready”.

- **Time Bank Plus in Bath** received £3,000 from Comic Relief to train young people to develop practical skills in DIY and decorating, and support them to develop the confidence to undertake on-the-job training. After a number of classroom sessions, the young people were supervised by an experienced handyperson to provide practical services to Time Bank members and vulnerable local residents in Twerton, Whiteway and Foxhill. Jobs included painting and decorating, putting up shelves and curtain track, refitting doors, hanging kitchen cupboards, and repairing and refurbishing a shed. Participants reported increased confidence and demonstrated improved practical problem-solving skills. All those who received practical help were very satisfied with the service provided. The majority of participants had mental health problems and low confidence levels. They included a group of 8 volunteers who worked well together and formed a close friendship group. Most of the participants said they felt more connected with their communities after the programme, and all gained skills that will be valuable in their lives.

An area of particular concern is young people leaving care, particularly in Bristol where Ofsted reported in October 2014 that of 461 care leavers, only 50% were in education, employment or training. In the other West of England authority areas, OFSTED reports that educational attainment of young people in care is “adequate” and care leaver services are generally “adequate” or “good”. However, looked after children are significantly more likely than their peers to leave school with few or no qualifications. These young people are at higher risk of becoming involved in offending, becoming a teenage parent and of not being in education, employment or training once they have left school. Increasingly, VCS organisations are responding to their needs.

4. Maximising people's ability to strengthen their communities

"Small voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations are the life-blood of civil society." (IPPR North, 2013). This report, appropriately titled *Taken for Granted* sets out the wide ranging benefits to communities and society of small VCS organisations, and looks at what can be done to support them. VCS organisations report that it is becoming ever more difficult to generate the more 'commercial' revenues, such as café income or income from room hire, which gives them less unrestricted income to support their core running costs. This presents a challenge for VCS providers which, like all organisations, need to fund their running costs (rent, insurance, administrative and management costs, etc.) as well as project costs. There is a need for funders to recognise and support the full costs of project delivery if smaller VCS organisations are to continue to run sustainable services.

Small VCS organisations provide "social glue" in communities. They help to build social capital by running holiday activities, maintaining community centres, arranging local "fun days" and fairs, and providing outreach services. At a time when the community asset transfer policy is leading to a loss of local facilities, these small, unglamorous services are ever more important. Young Bristol (a Bristol-wide local youth organisation) reports a 16% increase in the use of its core centre in 2013-14, demonstrating a reliance on services delivered in local communities.

- **Room 13 Hareclive** received a grant of £2,000 from the Express Programme to help develop the Friends of Room 13 group. The aim of the Friends is to develop a network of supporters to help the project to raise funds, gain publicity and to advise about its development and sustainability. Room 13 is an independent artists' studio, based within the grounds of Hareclive Primary School. It is run by a management committee made up of students aged 9 – 11, working equally with adults. The funding enabled the Friends of Room 13 network to come into being with a good structure and a range of resources including an on-line giving mechanism through Local Giving. The publicity generated by this activity has led to an increase in both profile and donations. Children and young people were involved in the process of developing the network, and through this, gained valuable experience and confidence. The Room 13 project has been shown to benefit all Hareclive children with their lives and their learning.

5. Providing opportunities to access local services

Statutory service provision is increasingly directed at young people with "critical and substantial" needs, and there is less funding flowing to smaller, more widely accessible services. This has left a growing gap in provision for young people who simply need a steady hand, and low level, community-based advice, guidance or support, or who would benefit from activities through which they can build peer groups, share experiences and grow as people.

- **South Bristol Consortium (SBC)** for Young People received a grant of £2,500 from Comic Relief to support the Consortium's development at the time that local authority youth service funding was cut. SBC's response was to set up a constituted partnership to secure ongoing services for the 80% of young people in South Bristol who do not receive targeted support from the local authority. This was a complex task, and the small grant from QCF enabled the Consortium to keep a manager in post while more secure funding was gained. The process of creating the organisation has resulted in a strong organisation. SBC involved young people in this development process and reported that they gained skills and confidence through this process. The community has benefited through having an organisation that is committed to delivering high quality services for young people in areas of high need in South Bristol.

Access to services in rural areas

Many rural areas of the West of England have been described as "service deserts". 84% of people live more than 2km from their secondary school in rural West of England areas, higher than across rural England as a whole. 26% of households live at least 8km away from a job centre and 33.4% of people live more than 40 minutes travel time from a town centre (ACRE: Access to Services, 2011). Poor public transport across the area places young people at a particular disadvantage, and creates greater dependence on parents or others. Independence for rural young people requires generic services to be accessible within their communities. For people with more specific needs, access to local services and activities is more necessary, and more difficult.

QCF has funded a number of projects that provide mobile services for young people in rural areas, where it is not viable to run youth clubs in every village. These include a community bus in the village of High Littleton, which received a grant of £1,000 from B&NES Health Lives, Healthy People Fund; a mobile youth bus run by Long Ashton Youth Club, funded with a grant of £2,000 from the Express Programme; and a double decker bus for outreach youth work in a very rural part of South Gloucestershire, run by Oldbury Deckers Youth Club, which received a grant of £1,575 from SGC Positive Activities Fund.

6. Connecting people with the arts, culture, heritage and the environment

There is considerable evidence about the value of arts, culture heritage and the environment, and their positive impacts on health and wellbeing, on learning, and on social participation. DEFRA, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, advocates the need to strengthen the connection between people and nature, and gives an explicit call for every child in England to be given the opportunity to experience and learn about the natural environment. Its 2011 white paper *Securing the Value of Nature* makes a set of connections between engaging with the environment and improved physical and mental health. DEFRA states that “if every household in England were provided with good access to quality green space, an estimated £2.1 billion in healthcare costs could be saved.” The value to the economy of participating in sports is estimated to be about £1,500 per person per year. An evidence base for the Arts Council (2014) shows that people who had attended a cultural space or event in the previous 12 months were almost 60% more likely to report good health and a sense of wellbeing than those who had not. There is also evidence that engagement in structured arts and culture improves the abilities of children and young people. Small VCS organisations need small grants to enable them to deliver projects that create access to arts, culture, heritage and the environment.

Some of the projects funded by QCF include: a grant of £1,000 from the Express Programme to Staple Hill Methodist Youth Project, towards the purchase of equipment to run video making sessions with young people in this disadvantaged area of Bristol; £950 from the Express Programme for What If Youth Theatre towards the cost of youth theatre activities in this area of South Gloucestershire that has poor youth services; £4,021 from The Funding Circle to Room 13 Hareclive towards providing more art studio sessions for primary school children £600 from the Catalyst Fund to Bristol Ensemble for their Preludes Project with young people in South Bristol; £1,125 from the Raj K Soni Legacy Fund to St Michael’s Church, Twerton, to fund the ‘Rock School’ project giving young people access to music activities; £2,000 from the Mayor’s Fund for Bristol to Circomedia for flying trapeze sessions for young people based in the St Paul’s area of Bristol; and £1500 from the North Somerset Council Children & Young People Programme to the Theatre Orchard Project for the second stage of the project, following workshops, to write and create a short film that explores anti-social behaviour and self-determination. Grants have also been given to projects such as the Friends of Kingsway Youth which received £1,500 from the Express Programme for equipment, resources and volunteer expenses for a community allotment project involving local young people.

- **ACTA Community Theatre** received a grant of £2,000 from the Mayor’s Fund for Bristol to work with 40 young carers each year to run a weekly, term-time youth theatre group. The young people in the group are supported by ACTA facilitators to devise and perform their own material. This funding was part of a larger grant from the Henry Smith Foundation. In particular QCF’s funding paid for transport so that the young people could access the group. The project gave young carers time out from their caring responsibilities. Through the medium of theatre, they developed self-confidence and improved self-value and gained skills which are transferable to education and employment. Participants also gained new friends, specifically with young people in similar situations, which broke through the isolation that many young carers feel.

The scale and range of these projects demonstrates the innovation and resourcefulness that exists within the VCS in the West of England.

Conclusion: Well targeted funding can make a difference

Small VCS organisations play an invaluable role in building communities and providing support to people in communities. The frequently under-recognised services run by VCS organisations are vital. Local funders can support their work with small grants to enable them to deliver projects that create access to arts, culture, heritage, sport and the environment, as well as social and emotional support and wellbeing. In addition, support targeted at smaller or generic organisations running projects for specific groups of vulnerable young people, such as young carers, can be very valuable.

There has been a significant loss of statutory funding for youth clubs, and considerably less financial security for most of the funded youth clubs that remain. This has left a growing gap in provision for young people who need a steady hand and low level, community-based advice, guidance and support, or who would benefit from activities through which they can build peer groups, share experiences and grow as people.

These are “unglamorous but essential” universal services, which typically are the first point at which young people’s needs can be identified and can therefore have a strong preventative impact. Local funders can make a big difference by supporting, for example, youth groups which cater for all children and young people regardless of any specific needs or local, neighbourhood-based youth clubs.

In practice, young people have to be increasingly unwell before they are picked up by statutory services. The impact is that voluntary services are facing higher demands, both from more people and people with greater needs. VCS organisations find themselves responding to ever growing numbers of young people with ever greater needs. Early intervention work such as this is relatively inexpensive and can be delivered effectively by small, local organisations, saving costs and complexity in the long term. Local funders can make a difference by supporting such early intervention and prevention projects: those that aim to work with young people before problems develop, or which aim to prevent problems from becoming more severe.

There are some geographical areas (e.g. South Bristol; parts of South Gloucestershire) and some groups of young people (such as care leavers) where educational attainment is low. These young people are at higher risk of becoming involved in offending, becoming a teenage parent and of not being in education, employment or training once they have left school. Local funders can identify areas and groups of young people where a relatively small amount of well-targeted funding can have an impact on the educational aspirations of young people.

A growing challenge for VCS organisations is that of raising funds for their running costs (rent, insurance, administrative and management costs, etc.) as well as project costs. There is a need for local funders to support the full costs of project delivery if smaller VCS organisations are to continue to run sustainable services. Where appropriate, funders also have an opportunity to support organisations to develop more ‘commercial’ revenues, such as café income or income from room hire, which gives them more unrestricted income to support their core running costs.

For further information

If you are interested in finding out more about anything raised in this report, or would like to discuss how you can make a difference by making a donation or setting up your own charitable fund please contact:

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Glossary:

BME: Black and Minority Ethnic

Community Asset Transfer: a mechanism used by local authorities to transfer the ownership and management of community buildings to local VCS organisations.

JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment): is "a systematic method for reviewing the health and wellbeing needs of a population, leading to agreed commissioning priorities that will improve the health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities" (Department of Health). In 2007, Section 116 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act introduced the statutory requirement for a JSNA to be produced by each local authority and primary care trust (PCT).

Looked After Children: children in care: in the care of, or looked after by, the local authority.

Targeted Services: specialist services for specific groups of young people or those with identified needs such as family problems, behaviour or school attendance problems, offending behaviour etc.

Thresholds: the criteria and level of need that determines access to a service.

VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector): most are front line service providers.

VCS Infrastructure organisations: organisations that exist to support and develop, represent and promote front-line VCS organisations, thereby enabling front-line organisations to concentrate on service delivery. The infrastructure organisations in the West of England are: VOSCUR in Bristol, VANS in North Somerset, CVS South Gloucestershire in South Gloucestershire. Most of the infrastructure services in B&NES are delivered through organisations in Wiltshire.