

V!TAL SIGNS

VITAL SIGNS

The place for philanthropy

This is the first Vital Signs report for the West of England, designed to help inform philanthropic giving and, for the first time, present a concise analysis of social need in our region, together with the views of our community. We hope it will stimulate a discussion around how best we can collaborate with individuals and organisations to offer a strategic response to the complex challenges we face.

The West of England can be a great place to live and work but the evidence in this Vital Signs report shows that not everyone here is sharing the benefits of the vibrant, thriving economy and environment of Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Our thirty years' experience supporting our local communities tells us that early intervention and prevention work with vulnerable people works and saves money in the long term, but we see public sector funding ever more focussed on crisis and find ourselves in an increasingly lonely place supporting preventative work in the community.

Without proactive strategies, the gap will continue to grow between those for whom society works and those people who are already at a disadvantage, for multiple reasons that include a lack of investment in skills and opportunities for young people, barriers to obtaining decent housing or gainful employment, and ill health or old age linked to increasing social isolation.

NEXT STEPS

Our findings lead us to make the following commitments to people living in the West of England:

- We will invite philanthropists to work with us and act to identify and support key preventative services to stop problems from further escalating.
- Together we will seek ways to prioritise funding for essential early intervention work, empowering the most vulnerable people in our communities.
- We will continue to strengthen our strategic partnerships with public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders to build the skills, capacity and confidence of our communities and strengthen the safety net for those in need.

We know that relatively small investments can have a big impact. Throughout our Vital Signs report are inspiring examples of the difference that thoughtful and responsive grant funding has made to some of the most disadvantaged people in the West of England.

You will also find people's views from our community survey – which formed a key component of this report – peppered throughout the ten themes. The answers they gave helped to shape our research, and were invaluable to the creation of Vital Signs.

The issues we have identified are not simple, cheap or easily within our control

to solve. They require responses on many different levels by many different institutions at local and national levels.

This is just the start of the conversation. Quartet Community Foundation is for and of the community and as such we warmly invite your feedback on this report. See the back cover for ways you can get in touch with us.

WHAT'S IN THIS REPORT?

Each theme has a nationally set core indicator, against which we have measured each of our four local authority areas: Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. **We have taken an average to give an overall sense of how the West of England is doing in relation to the rest of the country.**

GRADE
A

EVERYTHING IS GREAT!

Your area performs **better than 80%** of comparable areas

GRADE
D

THINGS AREN'T GOING VERY WELL

Your area performs **better than 20%** of comparable areas

GRADE
B

THINGS ARE GOING WELL

Your area performs **better than 60%** of comparable areas

GRADE
E

THINGS ARE GOING VERY BADLY

Your area performs **worse than 80%** of comparable areas

GRADE
C

THE SITUATION IS OKAY

Your area performs **better than 40%** of comparable areas

It is important to note that these are all relative measures – if the rest of the country improves our score will automatically go down, even if nothing has changed where we live.

Included in this Vital Signs report are key facts and figures that demonstrate what it's like for people living in the West of England, inspiring examples of where our grant-making is already making a difference and strategic areas where more funding would make the most profound impact within local communities. Voices from our community survey helped to shape our research and are peppered throughout each theme.

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Thanks to the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership for sponsoring the creation of this report.

Fairness

While the West of England is a great place to live and work, its opportunities and benefits are not open to everyone.

The West of England contains very high levels of inequality and all four unitary authorities contain areas in the most deprived 20% nationally. Statistics at district level mask high levels of deprivation in smaller areas, requiring in-depth knowledge to see and respond to pressing local need. In the context of the UK as one of the most unequal developed countries in the world, more must be done to improve fairness across our area.

Things are going well but much deprivation is hidden



VITAL STATISTICS



EQUALITY

Bristol and North Somerset rank among the bottom 10% nationally for inequality. There is up to 9.6 years' shorter life expectancy for people in the most deprived areas.



SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility is low in Bath, South Gloucestershire and in South Bristol. South Bristol ranks second worst in the country for its young people going on to higher education.



POVERTY

The number of children living in poverty in the UK has risen since 2010 to 3.9 million. Weston-super-Mare South, Lawrence Hill and Filwood wards all measure particularly poorly for child income deprivation, with Weston-super-Mare South the worst ward in the South West. One in five children in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) live in low income households, after housing costs. For the first time, young people are now more likely to be in poverty than the over 65s.

VITAL INITIATIVES

STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO LOCAL NEEDS

Tackling inequality within communities requires a joined-up approach, supporting a number of different initiatives at the same time.

In Lockleaze, we support two related initiatives that address some of the most pressing inequalities affecting residents there. One of these projects is Buzz Lockleaze, a community hub that we awarded over £13,000 towards capital items needed for their affordable healthy food shop, an employability project and to run healthy eating workshops for local residents.

The other is the North Bristol Advice Centre, which, as well as their vital work supporting people in poverty to address their financial difficulties, has also set up 'Community Support at Home', a project that supports local isolated older people with debt advice, benefit checks, help to reduce household bills and introducing clients to new social activities.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Focus on strategic, joined-up early intervention work, particularly with so many key services being withdrawn by local councils.
- Identify and support initiatives in smaller areas where deprivation may be missed.
- Take a longer-term focus, rather than quick-fix interventions.
- Support projects that make services available to disadvantaged people, especially programmes that transform lives or learning opportunities.
- Focus on projects that give disadvantaged people the opportunity to make real choices and be heard.
- Give young people living in disadvantaged communities the aspirations, confidence, skills and opportunities to achieve their potential.

“The gap between the rich and poor is extremely large.”

“The numbers needing help aren't reducing and the problems are still as complex.”

Safety

Overall crime rates across the West of England are variable, with crime often most prevalent in the most disadvantaged areas.

Bristol has a crime rate which places it among the worst 20% in the country. There are significant fears for young people becoming involved in crime across our area; the number of early intervention facilities such as youth clubs that would have offered diversionary activities has reduced significantly. There is a clear role for the third sector in helping to develop safe, resilient communities and in offering local people facing disadvantage the opportunity to transform their lives. Early intervention or preventative work is especially important. The social and economic value of preventative work is hard to measure, but is something we will need to pay increasing attention to in a funding climate in which priority is given to crisis-level services.

The situation is okay but there are worrying problems

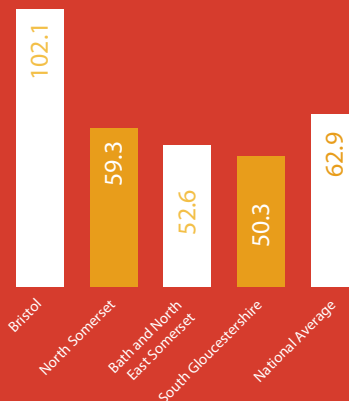


VITAL STATISTICS



CRIME RATE STATISTICS

The total number of recorded offences per 1,000 of the population gives Bristol a crime rate among the worst in the country.



YOUNG PEOPLE OFFENDING

Bristol has twice the national average of first time young offenders entering the justice system each year, 809 per 100,000 young people aged 10-14, compared with 409 for England. South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and B&NES also have rates above the average for England and the South West. While re-offending rates among young people are rising, the overall number of young people offending seems to be reducing. This implies that smaller numbers of young people are getting caught in an entrenched cycle of offending. Support to break this cycle is critical for the wellbeing of our young people.



93 cases

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Approximately 28% of women and 15% of men have experienced domestic abuse at some point during their adult (age 16+) lives. In North Somerset police attended more than 3,000 incidents of domestic abuse in 2014-15, a 20% increase on the previous year. In B&NES, nearly 6,000 women were victims of domestic violence in 2015-16, with around 93 cases reported to police each month – a 25% increase on the previous year. Women with disabilities or mental health problems are much more likely to experience domestic abuse than other women. The biggest challenge reported by domestic abuse services is insecure funding.

VITAL INITIATIVES

CRIME PREVENTION IN BRISTOL

Strategic, small-scale funding for diversionary activities can prevent young people becoming involved in crime. Last year Bristol Youth & Community Action (BYCA) awarded £55,398 in small grants to support holiday activities for children and young people in disadvantaged areas of Bristol. Running for 20 years, BYCA is funded each year by donations to The High Sheriff's Fund, and takes a long term approach to its work with young people. Activities offer young people opportunities and positive experiences and reduce their risk of involvement in anti-social behaviour. BYCA ensures that activities are co-ordinated to be available across the city, throughout the school holidays.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Improve general provision for young people, particularly those at risk – including meaningful positive activities and one-to-one mentoring.
- Invest in projects where residents in disadvantaged communities are able to be heard and where they have real input – 'grassroots' community development.
- Focus on community building – groups that work to establish trust between different community stakeholders.
- Support outreach and inclusive services for those who may be at risk of criminal or unsafe behaviour, as well as working inside prisons to support vulnerable young people and aim to reduce re-offending.
- Look for wrap-around projects and organisations, which provide continuity and support for people at risk of offending and to increase the chance of successful release into the community.

“Young people in my area can be intimidating, particularly for older people, but it is only because they are bored and have nothing better to do so hang out in groups in parks and near shops.”

Housing and homelessness

Housing is a huge issue in the West of England, with high house prices, rental prices, lack of social housing and homelessness all posing barriers for local people.

This is the main area where respondents of our survey identified that things aren't going very well. Young people are disproportionately affected, with many unable to afford to buy or rent property where they live and with restrictions placed on the types of housing and support they are entitled to. Hidden homelessness among this group is high. Increasingly, young people at risk rely on prevention and support services that are non-statutory, and there is a clear role here for third sector organisations.

Things aren't going very well



VITAL STATISTICS



YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

There are an estimated 35,000 young people in homeless accommodation at any one time across the UK. However, looking at levels of hidden homelessness, the figures are a lot higher. One study indicates that close to 300,000 young people aged 16-24 are sleeping rough or in an unsafe place on any given night.



RENTING YOUR HOME

Rented homes are increasingly in the private sector, which has grown from 11% to 19% of the rental market in the last ten years. Rents with private landlords can quickly escalate in desirable areas. Housing in this sector is the most likely to fail the Decent Homes Standard (29% are 'non-decent' compared with 19% of owner occupied homes and 14% of socially rented homes). They are also the most likely to have issues with damp, which can have consequences for residents' health and energy costs. Loss of a private rented tenancy is now the leading cause of homelessness.



AFFORDABILITY

House prices in B&NES are among the 20% most unaffordable in the country for local people.



UNMET NEED

Recent research into homelessness in Bristol indicates that for initial support offered by homeless hostels, less than 20% of the current need is being met. Around a quarter (26%) of rough sleepers in Bristol have no recourse to public funds, meaning that they are not entitled to support from the government. There is a clear role here for the charity sector to step in and help those with no other means of support not only to find short term accommodation and support but also to provide pathways out of the cycle of homelessness.



HOUSING COSTS

Households in the South West are spending on average £198.80 per week per household on housing – the highest housing costs in the UK outside of London.

VITAL INITIATIVES

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Well-timed interventions can help people deal with the range of complex issues that may result in homelessness.

CHAS Bristol runs a free housing advice service for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. They offer valuable legal advice, sign-posting and practical support to people in need. Their preventative work is especially valuable in the context of welfare reform, rising house prices and an increasing reliance on private rented sector housing where many homes are of a poor standard. CHAS has seen a huge rise in people needing advice over the last 4 years. To give them additional staff capacity we awarded a grant of £45,000 over 3 years on behalf of the Henry Smith Charity towards staff costs. There is a tendency among grant funders to shy away from supporting core costs, however at Quartet Community Foundation and Henry Smith Charity we both recognise the value of supporting established services doing great work.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Focus on prevention services and support services for those who fall through the gaps of mainstream provision.
- Prioritise the provision of support, mentoring and programmes which build social networks.
- Support programmes which build employment skills, helping people into work after a period of homelessness. This is increasingly important in breaking cycles of homelessness among young people.
- Prioritise mental health support - up to 80% of homeless people have mental health problems.
- Focus on joined up, holistic approaches to interconnected problems.

“The private rented sector is impossible to penetrate for low income families.”

“The situation has noticeably worsened in the last five years.”

Health

The West of England seems to be doing well on several key indicators for health, but on other measures there are worrying trends.

This is especially true of mental health and is all the more worrying when we know that key services are being cut or scaled back. There can be long waits for people to get the support they need and services tend to be short-term and focused on those in crisis. With both mental and physical health, there is a role for the third sector not just in high-level support but in early intervention, in the development of lower-level community support and cultural shifts in how we manage physical and mental health.

Things are going well but there are worrying trends



VITAL STATISTICS



MENTAL ILLNESS

North Somerset has the second highest recorded rate of adult depression in the South West, well above the national average. It also has levels of people with a mental illness in residential care or a nursing home that are nearly double the national average (59.5 per 100,000 compared with 31.9 for England and 27.9 for the South West).



OBESITY

The cost to the NHS of obesity is estimated to reach £50bn by 2050. Bristol shows a worrying level of obesity among children aged 10-11 years, above the national average, which could signal a growing trend. In England, children living in more deprived areas are nearly twice as likely to become obese than those in less deprived areas. In South Gloucestershire, rates of childhood obesity are 40% higher in the most deprived areas than in the least deprived areas.



25% ↑

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

Bristol has the highest rate of deaths where alcohol is known to be the cause in the West of England, the second highest in the South West. Opiate and cocaine use is also highest in Bristol, with rates more than twice the national average. B&NES also has high levels of use of these drugs, more than 25% above the national average.

VITAL INITIATIVES

EARLY INTERVENTION

Early intervention work has seen huge funding cuts even though preventing problems from developing in the first place is both better for society and more cost-effective in the long run.

We awarded £10,000 to Bristol Drugs Project to support their Hidden Harm Mentoring Project for 5-16 year olds whose parent or carer's alcohol or drug use is problematic. This is a very lonely place for a young person to be, with increased risk of isolation, substance misuse and reduced life chances for young people. The project reduces the impact of their parent or carer's problem through 12 months' support from a volunteer trusted adult while their parent or carer is in treatment. Young people develop confidence, resilience and capacity to build strong and healthy relationships.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Focus on early intervention or preventative measures following huge cuts in this area, especially in services for children and young people.
- Prioritise support for elderly people, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and sexual/gender minority groups (LGBT+) people, those with mental health problems and others facing barriers to accessing services.
- Raise awareness, education and skills around healthy eating, cooking and exercise.
- Support accessible, free or low cost projects that encourage more people to undertake physical activity.

“Need more support for young people with mental ill health; there needs to be more active intervention/outreach to get them to the support they need.”

“It is very difficult, if not impossible, to be old and unwell in one of our rural communities.”

Strong communities

A strong community is hard to define. It relates to how far residents can participate in society, influence decisions, feel a sense of belonging and build strong relationships with one another.

It relates to the concept of social capital, which sees relationships as a valuable asset and seeks to build trust within communities. The third sector plays a crucial role in building strong, resilient, inclusive communities, especially at a time when many authorities can no longer afford to finance community development work.

The situation is okay but lots of groups face exclusion



VITAL STATISTICS



52,528

HATE CRIME

In 2014-15, the police recorded 52,528 hate crimes across England and Wales. This represents an increase of 18% on the previous year.

In Bristol, 33% of Muslims report that fear of crime affects their daily lives, compared with 12% of the population generally.



SENSE OF COMMUNITY

In South Gloucestershire 64% agreed that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (only 8% disagreed).

In Bristol 25% agreed that they could influence decisions. Lowest results came from Hengrove & Whitchurch Park (11%) while highest by some way was Westbury-on-Trym (40%). Across Bristol 63% felt that people from different backgrounds get on well together.



SOCIAL ISOLATION

Loneliness can increase the risk of premature death by up to a quarter. Nationally, 10% of people aged 65 and over say they always or often feel lonely, rising to 13% among the over 75s. In Bristol, areas deemed 'high risk' for social isolation in older people tend also to be the most deprived areas. Social isolation does not only affect older people; a range of groups are particularly vulnerable. These include carers, people with English as a second language, members of the LGBT+ community, BME communities, people experiencing domestic abuse, the long-term unemployed and people with a disability, among others. More needs to be done to support cohesion across all groups. This will involve thoughtful community development initiatives led by beneficiary groups themselves.

VITAL INITIATIVES

PROVIDING LOCAL COMMUNITIES WITH A VOICE AND VISION

Working closely with philanthropists, we work hard to develop the confidence, capacity and skills of local people. Volunteering opportunities make a huge contribution to this, help develop more responsive local services and bring huge additional capacity to community-based organisations.

Critical to successful volunteering are the organisations providing local people with support. We made a grant of £8,625 to enable Voluntary Action North Somerset to develop a bespoke, searchable database of volunteering opportunities in North Somerset, giving local people the opportunity to improve both their skills and their local area. We also provided grants for IT and other equipment to both the Volunteer Centre in B&NES and Thornbury Volunteer Centre in South Gloucestershire, improving their ability to support local people into valuable volunteering roles.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Prioritise initiatives that raise awareness of marginalised groups' needs and aspirations or that are led by marginalised groups, especially those focused on advocacy and autonomy.
- Support activities that increase access for those at risk of exclusion such as older people, people with a disability, LGBT+ people or people for whom English is not their first language.
- Support groups to communicate effectively about activities they run, both within the community and between organisations.
- It takes a long time to build strong communities. Longer-term funding can give organisations the time and security they need to build trust and get the results we are hoping for.
- Support community cohesion initiatives and projects that enhance aspirations and skills among minority groups.
- Gain nuanced understandings of the needs and issues affecting different groups. Try to avoid 'one size fits all' approaches, which don't take cultural differences into account.
- Support community-building projects in new or isolated housing developments, where feasible.

“More effort is needed to support community oriented projects which encourage inclusivity.”

Work and local economy

The West of England has a strong and diverse economy and good levels of employment, but there are many barriers to overcome.

Our economy is worth an estimated £30.8bn, and our Local Enterprise Partnership is working to attract future growth and investment over the coming years. There are concerns, though, that our area might become unaffordable for workers as house prices increase, that commuter routes are overstretched and unsustainable and that the skills of local residents may not match those needed by our leading industries. More needs to be done to support those facing barriers to employment, especially those 'furthest from work'. The third sector has a huge role to play in raising the skills, confidence and aspirations of local people who might otherwise be excluded.

Things are going well but many are at risk of exclusion



VITAL STATISTICS



47.9%

LONE PARENTS NOT IN EMPLOYMENT

Bristol has a higher than average proportion of lone parents who are not in employment (47.9% compared with the England average of 40.5% or South West average of 35.7%). A lone parent's out-of-work benefits only cover just over half (56%) of what the public has deemed to be an acceptable standard of living, or the 'Minimum Income Standard'.



WORKING POOR

The number of people in low income families where someone is working reached 6.7m in 2013-14, an increase of 1.5m on a decade earlier. Just over half of people in poverty are now in families where someone is working. 'Low income' was given as the second highest reason for referrals to Trussell Trust foodbanks nationally in 2015-16. Median weekly full-time earnings are £24.60 below the England average in Bristol and £10.30 below average in B&NES.



THOSE 'FURTHEST FROM WORK'

In June 2016 there were an estimated 843,000 young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Those most likely to become NEET include children eligible for free school meals, people who were excluded or suspended while at school and people with a disability. A vastly disproportionate number of care leavers are NEET; in B&NES at age 16-18, 28% of care leavers are NEET compared with 3.8% of their peers.

The employment rate among non-white residents is also consistently lower than for the general population, nationally and in all areas of the West of England except North Somerset. This appears to signal a combination of factors linked to employment opportunities such as educational attainment, exclusion, health, poverty and discrimination, that combine to reduce rates of employment among BME residents.

VITAL INITIATIVES

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TO BUILD CONFIDENCE AND EMPLOYABILITY

Some young people miss out on formal educational opportunities but have great talent, energy and ideas. They need to be given the support and confidence to nurture these, allowing them to gain employment and make a positive contribution to the local economy.

Groundwork South Trust in North Somerset helps NEET young people to build skills in conservation and horticulture in preparation for employment. Working with them and Team North Somerset, we have provided support for the scheme as well as small grants to care leavers to help set them up in the world of work.

Similarly PAPER Artistic Development CIC is a young social enterprise providing opportunities for talented young people to succeed in creative careers. We supported PAPER to set up a mentoring club for ten NEET young people with a grant of £3,000 from Comic Relief's Local Communities programme.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Support projects which enhance education, training, life skills, language skills, aspiration and confidence building - especially for young people but also for other disadvantaged groups.
- Strengthen awareness and make it easier to access alternative educational pathways, focused on disadvantaged groups and areas.
- Seek out mentoring programmes – linking young people with members of the business community or trusted adults.
- Support social enterprises – small businesses improving our communities. Priority should be given to those in rural areas or in areas with little other provision.
- Offer funding to organisations doing community development work or building local confidence and resources.

“The working poor is a big issue in this area.”

“There are barriers for women, the disabled, ethnic minorities, those with poor education.”

Learning and education

Education is an area in which we see huge divides across the West of England.

Some of our wards do brilliantly while others show levels of attainment among the very worst in the country. There are groups who are much less likely to achieve than their peers and more should be done to make sure everyone in our area has the best possible chance in life. There is a role for the third sector in creating a better start for our young people; small interventions can have a big impact on educational outcomes. Improvements can only be made with dedication and time, and by taking a long-term approach.

The situation is okay but there are huge disparities between the most and least deprived communities



VITAL STATISTICS



GCSE ATTAINMENT

While the number of young people in England achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* - C is improving, the gap in attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils has stayed the same – with achievement especially poor in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.



EARLY YEARS

Research suggests that the disparity begins early, with only 54% of children eligible for free school meals being 'school-ready' at 4-5 years old, compared with 71% of their peers.



NO QUALIFICATIONS

Each of our four local authority areas contains at least one ward in the bottom 20% nationally for the proportion of residents with no qualifications. South Bristol is particularly struggling, with three wards in the bottom 5% nationally.



SOMALI CHILDREN

Educational outcomes for Somali children are consistently worse than the Bristol average. In 2013, 26.8% of Somali young people achieved 5 or more GCSEs compared with 52.3% across Bristol generally.



YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

It is estimated that 8% of young people leaving care go on to higher education, which is around five times less than their peers. Disrupted schooling, lack of career guidance and pressure to become independent through earning rather than pursuing education, are all strong factors.

VITAL INITIATIVES

RAISING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUTH BRISTOL

South Bristol has one of the lowest proportions of young people going on to higher education in the country, requiring a strategic, long-term approach.

South Bristol Consortium for Young People, also known as South Bristol Youth, is a consortium of six local schools and two organisations in South Bristol, along with the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England and several partner organisations. The group runs a diverse and engaging range of activities, all targeted at widening aspirations and opportunities for young people. South Bristol Youth works with schools, parents and young people themselves to bring about real change in educational outcomes in South Bristol. Working with our dedicated donors, we have supported South Bristol Youth with set-up and follow-on grants worth £131,100 since 2012.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Support long-term interventions working with marginalised people.
- Support alternative pathways to learning for those for whom mainstream routes are not a good fit.
- Prioritise early intervention with young people in disadvantaged areas.
- Support creative or cultural activities like music, sport and dance which have been shown to have a positive impact on educational achievement.
- Prioritise providing stability (for example, mentoring) for young people needing extra support to secure an education.
- Focus on raising aspirations, connecting different members of the community and community cohesion.
- Support adult learning and confidence building.

“We need to realise the entrenched situation for some people and the time it takes to move from low aspiration, low qualifications to getting a job.”

Arts, culture and heritage

Participating in cultural and creative activities has clear links to well-being and should be available to everyone.

There are many community arts organisations locally and schemes that help make the rich cultural landscape of the West of England accessible to local residents. Smaller arts groups can face huge funding uncertainties though, and there are stark imbalances in participation and availability across the West of England. Rural areas often have limited activities available and of those that exist, many are not low cost. Residents of deprived areas are much less likely to take part in cultural activities than people from more affluent areas. Participation in these kinds of activities is also extremely low among disabled people, signalling a vital role for funders to ensure that everyone can access the arts locally.

**Things are going well
but many are excluded**



VITAL STATISTICS



20%

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Levels of employment in creative industries give a good indicator of the vibrancy of the arts, culture and heritage sector locally. B&NES and Bristol's strong creative sectors place them in the top 20% of districts in England, Scotland and Wales. Levels in South Gloucestershire, though, are by far the lowest and fall below the national average, indicating a lack of provision locally.



20%

DISABLED PEOPLE BEING EXCLUDED

During a 3-year study, 20% of respondents with a disability or long-term illness reported not having visited any heritage site in that time, compared to 10% of respondents without a disability or long-term illness.



DISPARITY BETWEEN WARDS

Arts participation varies significantly between areas. When asked who had taken part in an arts activity in the past year, Bristol responses ranged from 68% in Clifton to only 17% in Stockwood (a four-fold difference).

VITAL INITIATIVES

MAKING THE ARTS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Philanthropy has a vital and growing role to play in supporting engagement with the arts for people and communities who, for a range of reasons, don't normally have much opportunity to participate.

Photographers with Disabilities in South Gloucestershire runs a fully-accessible studio space, enabling people with disabilities to practise photography. The only facility of its kind in the area, we supported them with £2,500 towards their rental costs.

In Bristol, Travelling Light Theatre Company received a grant of £1,924 from us for their Louder Than Words therapeutic drama group for young people with learning and other disabilities aged 7 and over. These free sessions give young people with additional needs a safe space to express themselves, engage with the arts, build relationships and grow in confidence.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Focus on outreach work and support for accessible and inclusive activities for people least likely to participate in arts activities.
- Recognise the value of these kinds of experiences for wellbeing.
- Prioritise keeping community buildings in use, especially in more rural or under-served areas.
- Support arts activities across the West of England, but especially in South Gloucestershire or in more deprived areas where there may be additional barriers to participation.
- Support projects that promote local and national partnerships between service providers, in line with the Department for Culture, Media & Sport's White Paper (2016).

“There is some good local provision but it is increasingly seen as less important as the economic situation worsens.”

“People with learning disabilities and autism don't have enough help to participate in inclusive social and arts activities.”

Rural issues

Rural areas have different needs to their urban counterparts and issues are often 'hidden' in small areas that get overlooked.

A lack of services, transport options and facilities can cause great isolation for vulnerable groups such as older people, carers or people with disabilities. High housing costs and a lack of employment or educational opportunities are pushing young people away from rural areas. Consequently, populations in rural areas are disproportionately older and this will have a huge impact in the near future. Meeting these needs will require a tailored approach and a deliberate focus on rural populations. There is wide scope for private philanthropy to support rural communities, where often a relatively small investment will go a long way.

The situation is okay but hidden areas of deprivation exist across our area



VITAL STATISTICS



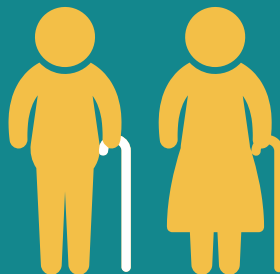
COST OF LIVING

After housing costs, around 15% of rural households in England are living in relative poverty. The cost of living is generally higher in rural areas, stretching tight budgets. Research has shown that rural households are very vulnerable to fuel price increases; one study estimates that a 20% rise in energy prices could lead to a 66% increased chance that a rural resident could be trapped in fuel poverty for five or more years.



ACCESS TO SERVICES

People in more rural areas face a higher risk of being excluded from services, which can have multiple effects on people's health, wellbeing and opportunities. Rural services have been retracting over the last decade as statutory funding has reduced and organisations find running rural services to be not cost-effective.



AGEING POPULATION

In line with national trends, our more rural areas have greater proportions of older residents. North Somerset has much higher proportions of residents aged 65+ and 85+ than the national average. The number of people aged 85+ puts North Somerset in the top 20% nationally.



TRANSPORT COSTS

The highest proportion of families' average weekly spend in the South West goes on transport costs. In the South West households spend on average £76.80 per week, or 14% of their total budget, on transport. Rural households on average spend £24.50 more on transport than urban households and have a higher than average weekly spend of £567.80.

VITAL INITIATIVES

REACHING THOSE IN NEED

Small, flexible grants have the potential to be hugely effective, and can be a timely and targeted way to reach people who otherwise risk being 'missed'.

We awarded a £3,000 grant to the West of England Rural Network (WERN) based in B&NES, to provide 140 free memberships to their Community Oil Buying Scheme for people over 70. The oil buying scheme was launched in 2012 to help reduce heating costs for local rural people dependent on oil who were unable to access the advantages of buying oil via the internet. The cost of heating a home using oil fluctuates greatly over time so vulnerable older people reliant on this fuel can struggle. Through buying collectively in bulk, members save on average around £120 a year, helping to mitigate rural fuel poverty locally.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Prioritise support for groups providing a community service in areas with no or little other provision or community spaces.
- Be aware of the needs of rural areas and 'pockets' of deprivation that may be under the radar. Understand that initiatives in rural areas will often be small scale. It is even more important in this context to work strategically, to collaborate with others and to share information.
- Support community involvement in local planning and community development processes by supporting skill enhancement, grassroots initiatives and community cohesion initiatives.
- Support community transport initiatives and community-based social enterprises, which help make services accessible to rural residents.
- Support intergenerational projects or those focused on the needs of older people.

“...people in rural communities can easily become isolated.”

“There are very real pressures on small communities trying to maintain viable schools, pubs and shops that are at the heart of a vibrant community.”

Environment

More than half of our survey respondents said that the countryside or local green space was one of the best things about living in the West of England.

There is a diverse range of environmental projects in our area doing fantastic work around raising awareness, changing behaviours and working to protect and share the beauty of our region. Low carbon industries are a growth area here. Despite this, there are environmental challenges facing our region and many people who are not accessing natural spaces. Given the known link between time in nature and wellbeing, more should be done to make sure that the benefits of the environment around us are available to everyone.

**Things are going well
but we can do more**



VITAL STATISTICS



VISITING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

An estimated 1.3 million children do not visit the natural environment at all during the average year. That's approximately 12% of all the children in England. Significantly less likely to visit the natural environment are children from BME households and children from poorer backgrounds.



GREEN SPACE

In Bristol, only 34% of residents in Hartcliffe and Withywood access green space each week, less than half the rate of Clifton residents (73%).



LITTER

Littering is a problem in many areas, with nearly three quarters of Bristol's residents feeling that litter is a problem in their neighbourhood, with fly-tipping a huge problem across the region. There were 13,941 incidents of fly-tipping in 2014-15 at a total cost of over £700,000.



ENVIRONMENT AND HABITAT

More than one species in ten is at risk of disappearing. Half of South Gloucestershire's 'Biodiversity Action Plan' key species are in decline.



AIR POLLUTION

A key concern from our community survey was levels of air pollution and traffic. A 2016 Royal College of Physicians report estimates that the long-term effects of outdoor air pollution are responsible for around 40,000 deaths in the UK each year.

VITAL INITIATIVES

IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE LOCAL PEOPLE LIVE

In 2015 Bristol was European Green Capital.

We managed the Bristol 2015 small grants programme, supporting local groups to tackle the environmental issues that matter to them. Community projects included wellbeing walks to green spaces for people with mental health issues, helping children in St Pauls to understand the negative impact of litter and fly-tipping and programmes serving surplus food to people at risk of food poverty. Funding helped local people to explore our local environment and our relationship to it.

Through Bristol 2015 we have helped local people to make changes, reducing waste and increasing engagement, which will benefit our area for years to come.

VITAL STEPS

WHERE CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Improve access to green space – especially for those facing barriers to access.
- Raise awareness and understanding of environmental issues.
- Support initiatives that help people to reduce waste, litter and energy use.
- Prioritise sustainable projects where the benefits will last beyond the funding period.
- Protect and restore wildlife habitats or corridors and encourage people to do small things in their area or gardens to appreciate and conserve wildlife.
- Encourage partnership and strategic working.
- Support projects aimed at use of public transport, cycling or walking.
- Support projects with a long-term focus.

“The local community massively benefits from the park spaces.”

“We need lots of support for community energy initiatives.”

Your voice

Community insights

Your voices form a key component of Vital Signs. We asked hundreds of people across the West of England what issues most concerned them and what aspirations they have for their communities.

The answers they gave helped to focus our research and are peppered throughout the ten themes addressed in this report. Here are some of their stand-out messages, received from a wide cross-section of our communities – funders, groups on the frontline, strategic partners and ordinary residents who live and work in our communities.

“We need more skills and more job opportunities, especially for young people.”

“Families can be isolated due to lack of transport.”

“The working poor is a big issue in this area.”

“Youth housing is limited, and resources to specialist advisory services are being reduced.”

“Young people in my area can be intimidating, particularly for older people, but it is only because they are bored and have nothing better to do so hang out in groups in parks and near shops.”

“People with learning disabilities and autism don't have enough help to participate in inclusive social and arts activities.”

“Climate change is a major issue and current initiatives are piecemeal. Need lots of support for community energy initiatives.”

“The divided nature of our city is played out through education and schools.”

“Young people are increasingly alienated and there are fears for them and about them.”

“We need services not initiatives, delivered by local people for local people, working *with* not *for*.”

“Rents are becoming unaffordable in social housing and the private rented market is very poor quality and expensive. There is a relatively high degree of hidden homelessness.”

“There is enormous potential for improvement.”

“I feel there are good numbers of groups to advocate etc for different cultures, circumstances and abilities. However, I feel the impact and participation within these groups is not as good as it could be.”

“Encourage venues to support cross cultural activities.”

“Gentrification and commercialisation are driving people out of the centre.”

“Poverty is an issue in Bath. It remains the ‘unspoken’ issue in a city which is thought of as prosperous. It needs to be dealt with more openly.”

“More effort is needed to support community oriented projects which encourage inclusivity.”

“Need more support for young people with mental ill health; there needs to be more active intervention/outreach to get them the support they need to start to rebuild lives.”

scope

“The level of full time employment remains a problem and the rate of pay for lower skilled jobs is too low.”

“We need to work more closely as the West of England. Only on that scale are we going to be able to address the issues of growth and economic prosperity.”

“Childcare is a barrier to people gaining employment. There’s a lack of free or subsidised help for people of lower incomes.”

“Lots of nice open spaces - too many cars and poor public transport.”

“Priorities should be to work together, to realise the entrenched situation for some people and the time it takes to move from low aspiration, low qualifications to getting a job.”

“There is a serious risk to the long term future of our rural communities.”

“Social media (particularly Facebook) is increasingly becoming the medium which people use to find out how to engage and to comment which has its positives and its drawbacks.”



Thanks to the West of England LEP for sponsoring the creation of this report.

Report author: Lucy Gilbert, 2016.

All facts and statistics verified by the West of England LEP.

WE'D REALLY VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK ON VITAL SIGNS

Get in touch with us at vitalsigns@quartetcf.org.uk to let us know:

- If you are inspired to make a donation or set up a fund to help local disadvantaged people;
- How useful you found the report, including anything you found surprising or things you think we missed;
- Whether the format was helpful;
- Your other comments or ways that you would like to get involved.

We hope Vital Signs will be a starting point for discussion and further action across the West of England. To get in touch with us about this or our other work please contact us.

VITAL SIGNS

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