



Playful Bristol and Youth Work Alliance Strategy

2023 – 2025

“Bristol City Youth Council values the importance of play and youth work across the city. With our lived experience we understand the power of the sector. Effective play and youth work helps bring children and young people together from a variety of different communities, which is vital given the mental health crisis facing young people following the pandemic. The strategy is forward thinking and continues to develop alongside the city and its young people. We can’t wait to see the change it brings to play and youth work across the city to allow all children and young people to flourish.”

Quote from Bristol City Youth Council 2023

This strategy has been produced by voluntary and community sector Play and Youth work organisations who want to ensure a strong and sustainable Play and Youth sector in the coming years. This partnership builds on the strengths of individual organisations developing shared goals and recognising the different approaches needed across the city.

This strategy has been written alongside a variety of Play Work and Youth Work literature which can be found:

<https://www.childrenandyoungpeoplebristol.co.uk/resources>

The Youth Work Alliance and Playful Bristol are a consortium of leading organisations in Bristol that deliver Youth and Play Work in Bristol. The organisations came together to discuss possible ways forward for Youth and Play work in the light of local and national contexts and decisions.

Purpose of Youth Work Alliance and Playful Bristol:

- Develop and promote Bristol’s reputation as a leading city for youth work and play.
- Ensure a thriving sector to deliver what children and young people need, and to enable collaboration between organisations to deliver the strategic priorities identified in Bristol’s youth work and play strategy.

- Ensure youth and play organisations are sustainable for Bristol’s children and young people, with a strong co-ordinated voice.
- Strategic approach to identifying and securing resource (including how we work as part of the cities Area Partnerships)
- Ensure the play and youth workforce is trained, fit for purpose and sustainable.
- Ensure the play and youth sector are delivering quality provision that is appropriate and in line with what Children and Young People need.

Bristol Context:

Bristol is a young, diverse, and growing city. The city has a younger age profile than England and Wales with almost 1 in 5 people aged under 16. Diversity in Bristol is reflected in the 45 religions and 187 countries of birth represented and 91 main languages spoken.

Bristol is one of the fastest-growing cities in the UK. The city has a reputation for the high-tech industry, innovations, creativity and entrepreneurship. It is the economic powerhouse of the West of England region and has consistently reported higher than average economic growth over the last 15 years.

However, not all its citizens share in this success. Systemic inequality in education employment and health continue to exist for example 60% of the city’s minority ethnic populations live in areas of economic disadvantage the city is also marked on the South and worst of 348 districts in England and Wales for black and minority ethnic communities to live and thrive with equality gaps failing to improve since 2001 the Bristol joint strategic needs assessment provides A detailed analysis of challenges and opportunities in the city.

Over the last few years the city’s awareness and interest in inclusive economic growth and social justice have been noticeable with the instruction of structures such as the one city office and the one city plan the launch of the longest strategy focuses on the four key from the beginning families belong in education and belonging in the community is also space significant development in the city’s approach to children young people and families with important synergies for the play and youth sector.

Child poverty remains a significant issue in the city that affects the life chances of children and young people from low-income households for more than a generation a significant impact on health disparities between communities the psychological and post code divide amongst young people structural barriers of transport connectivity across wards remains challenges which need to be addressed.

The Play and Youth sector in the city has much to celebrate and has continued to offer children and young people with valuable and much needed services throughout austerity and the pandemic continued investment and fundraiser has ensured Bristol's play and youth sector has fared better than many other parts of the country over the last decade challenges remain and the play and youth sector remains committed to respond to challenges but needs collaboration incentives financial investment and capacity building support to continue to make the significant impact needed.

Definition of Play Work and Youth Work:

We define Play Work as:

“Playwork is the specific act of affecting the whole environment with the deliberate intention of improving opportunities for play”.

(Dr Fraser Brown, Professor of Playwork) and is guided by a set of eight principles (https://www.playscotland.org/resources/print/The-Playwork-Principles-an-overview.pdf?plsctl_id=19402)

We define Youth Work as:

“Youth work is complex series of professional principles, practices and methods which we often describe as the science of enabling young people to believe in themselves and build positive futures”.

(National Youth Agency, 10 Year Strategy 2020)

Our Vision for Play Work in Bristol:

Playful Bristol uses Play England’s definition of play: “Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons”.

Bristol’s play sector provides a crucial service to children in many areas of the city, especially where there are few opportunities and barriers to play are high. The organisations comprising Playful Bristol all advocate for children and young people’s play and create play opportunities for the city’s children and young people, through providing services or supporting families. We have been working collaboratively for many years, coming together to organise the city’s annual and much-loved Play Day, sharing ideas and best practice, and acting as a combined voice for children and play in the city.

Three key pre-requisites for children's play to thrive are:

Space to play perhaps the most important factor when looking at play in the context of the city. Well-designed and managed formal play spaces are important, but we need to also ensure that public spaces in the city are child-friendly, safe and playable.

Understanding the importance and value of play underpins everything and ensures that children's play is a priority for policy-makers, educators and parents alike. Parents and teachers in particular should understand that play is at least as important formal education and organised activities for children's healthy development

Time once the other pre-requisites are in place, children must have sufficient time to play These provide a useful lens through which to assess how well a city enables children's play and what needs to change.

Our vision for Youth Work in Bristol:

To ensure high quality youth provision is available across the city for all Young People.

Youth work impacts positively on young people's lives. Contributing to health and well-being, personal safety, employment and training, future aspirations and much more. Young people spend 80 to 85% of their time outside of school and yet youth work is not a statutory service. Youth Work is a profession in its own right but is often the poor relation of services when compared to education, social care, and health.

Fantastic Youth Work takes place across Bristol; delivered by small grassroots organisations, larger regional and national organisations, and everything in between. The provision is broad, including open access opportunities through to highly targeted specialist provision.

Youth Work Values and Principles

Youth work relationships are underpinned by youth work values and principles. These provide an ethical foundation that inform the way youth workers make decisions about their work.

The following principles are taken from the [NYA National curriculum for youth work](#).

- Good youth work is delivered by developing a voluntary and trusting relationship between the young person and the youth worker.
- Good youth work is underpinned by contextual safeguarding approaches, where the welfare of young people is paramount.

- It is a rights-based informal educational process and an asset-based empowerment approach. It complements, extends and supports formal education by encouraging and providing other opportunities for young people to achieve and fulfil their potential.
- It does not seek to position young people as a 'problem'; it develops a positive narrative around young people.
- Good youth work embraces the value that young people bring to society and works with them to develop solutions to challenges experienced individually, collectively and societally.
- Youth work equips young people with knowledge and skills for life across a range of dimensions, including socially, economically and politically

Playful Bristol and Youth Work Alliance collaboration Principles:

Be Accountable:

- To young people
- To parents, carers, and families
- To each other

Be Aspirational

- It's ok to be positive think big and go for what we believe.... with a foot in the realism door

Be Prepared to Change

- Be prepared to have less so others can have more if there is a distinct benefit for young people.

Be Solution Focused

- Be clear what we are doing and why.

Playful Bristol and Youth Work Alliance Inclusion Principles:

We understand that diversity enriches and strengthens all communities.

All Children and Young people (CYP) should be able to be treated as equals in their communities to feel like they belong.

All CYP need friendship and support from people their own age. As a sector we must prioritise creating welcoming spaces for all CYP in the city.

The following principles lay out the expectations of organisations within Playful Bristol and Youth Work Alliance:

- 1) Organisations should make everyone feel welcome and comfortable in a space/place or environment with a wide range of opportunities and experiences that are accessible and appropriate for all children and young people.
- 2) Organisations should ensure all children and young people are enabled to fulfil their potential by taking into account individual requirements and needs.
- 3) Organisations should respect a child or young person as an expert in their own needs.
- 4) Organisations should ensure a supportive environment to assist children and young people to develop knowledge, respect, and tolerance of others.
- 5) Organisations should make any proportionate and reasonable adjustments appropriate for any child or young person to access their provision.
- 6) Organisations should commit to continual improvement in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion understanding and practice, including Reflection and Training as a baseline. Which should include sourcing appropriate training and support for any emerging needs of children and young people.
- 7) Organisations should commit to creating a culture of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion within their practice. Through effective policies, procedures, and leadership.

Not all provision is going to be appropriate for every child or young person, but organisations should be as inclusive and accessible as possible. Targeted Provision must demonstrate best practice of inclusive expertise in their community of interest and be willing to share their knowledge and support the wider sector.

Priority	Actions
<p align="center">We define amazing provision as every child and young people having access to a range of activities on offer available to them 7 days a week within a mile of where they live.</p>	
<p>Amazing Provision (Play)</p> <p>Ensure there is a range of opportunities for all Children and Young People including specific communities of interest.</p>	<p>Maintain the 5 key Adventure Playgrounds for the city focusing on ensuring they are stable and secure to provide the opportunity for all Children and Young People to play.</p> <p>A consistent outreach offer across the city with a key focus on areas of need which is able to be proactive and responsive to emerging needs.</p> <p>Develop and enhance existing structures to ensure the Play sector continues to be a consistent arm of support for Children and families across the city.</p>
<p>Amazing Provision (Youth)</p> <p>Ensure a suitable mix of; Open Access, Detached, Outreach, Online, Universal, Targeted across the city.</p> <p>Promote and ensure sufficient citywide youth work provision, particularly in areas of deprivation to help mitigate the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify base level of Open Access Youth Services supported by; detached, targeted and online Youth Services mapped against the National Youth agency 10-year strategy 2020 and the Bristol audit of Youth sector provision 2021/23. <p>Capture the gaps and develop time action plan to address resulting in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Access offer that is available and accessible to young people within key geographic communities within an agreed minimum distance and open as often as possible and including specialist provision for communities of interest • A consistent detached youth work offer across the city with a focus on areas of greatest need (not one that fluctuates based on funding) able to be both proactive and responsive and has access to a specialist support when needed e.g. substance misuse, sexual health, mental well-being etc.

exasperated inequality in a post code world.

Ensure sufficient and appropriate buildings/physical space for Children and Young People.

- A balance of universal and targeted services so that young people can access, 1-1 /targeted offers when they need them but also have the safety net of Open Access to stop things from escalating if they cannot get into more specialist support immediately or quickly.
- A focused, more nuanced and empathetic youth work offer that takes into consideration the cultural sensitivities of different communities.

Build further support at key transition points e.g.:

- primary to secondary school
- secondary to college or further education support - especially for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities where transition support in young adult services is often poor/non-existent.
- Support when an education placement breaks down
- Supporting Young People to access appropriate Education, Employment and Training post 16

Buildings and Spaces:

Build on the work of the Bristol audit of Play and Youth sector provision 2021/2023 map physical spaces and buildings for available for youth workplace

Priority	Actions
<p>Evidence the impact of Play and Youth Work</p> <p>Showcase the value and impact of the work of the Play and Youth Work Sector.</p> <p>Create a long-term city initiative that celebrates Play and Youth work and its impact.</p>	<p>Enable Play and Youth organisations to demonstrate the contribution that Play and Youth work makes to the lives of children and young people in this city by reporting on the impact of their work to strategic partners and funders.</p> <p>Promote the use of the National Youth agency quality mark and associated youth work curriculum and Hear By Right Standard.</p> <p>Promote the use of Quality in Play, Bristol Standard and the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).</p> <p>Champion the tools developed by the centre for youth impact through the YIF to help evaluate youth work provision and embed them within organisations delivering in Bristol to help build the national evidence base for the Youth work sector.</p> <p>Share national best practise in evaluating Play and Youth work across the organisations delivering Play and Youth Work in Bristol,</p> <p>Identify, Plan and Deliver celebratory events in local areas and across the city such as Playday and National Youth Work week.</p>

Priority	Actions
<p>Staff Training and Development</p> <p>Ensure youth sector workforce of qualified and trained staff, with opportunities for development and progression.</p> <p>Provide greater access to training and development for Youth Workers.</p>	<p>Identify a base-level of well trained, supported staff with continuous professional development, accredited training structures and strong practice-based learning approaches across all organisations working with children and young people. Mapped against the National Youth Agency 10 Year Strategy 2020 and the Bristol audit of youth sector provision 2021.</p> <p>Create Play Work and Youth Work qualification opportunities (for all levels of qualification) working with the city’s FE and HE organisations and relevant youth sector providers, to enrich and make accessible youth work qualification opportunities.</p> <p>Create pathways for local young people and residents to go into Play and Youth work as a career, by developing routes to qualifications, apprenticeships, and training.</p> <p>Create shared training and professional development opportunities which span the Play and Youth Sector (focusing on a balance of direct delivery and policy and infrastructure course) such as; safeguarding, mental health first aid, mental wellbeing, equalities and inclusion, cross-cultural communication, and intersectionality to upskill staff, delivered by the sector where possible. Training on engaging with young people in online space is needed.</p> <p>Increase the number of Play and Youth work apprentices within our organisations to help ‘grow our own’ staff of the future and offers routes into the youth work sector for local young people.</p> <p>Develop a support/training offer to the wider Children and Young Peoples Network, Families, Parents and Carers and other support groups around the benefits of Play Work to become more playful.</p>

	Promote key forums and supportive groups for staff such as the Playworker Forum.
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Priority	Actions
<p>Influence and campaign for longer term funding</p> <p>Sharing the evidence that the Play and Youth sector delivers outcomes for; health or social care, community safety and education to make the case that the Youth Sector funding need to come from all of these areas.</p> <p>Campaign for grant funding and commissioning processes that support collaborative working and long-time initiatives to address systemic issues (3+ years)</p>	<p>Use Local Authority funding as a catalyst for more collaboration and long-term systemic change, resulting in a stronger more sustainable sector and a more secure offer for young people to:</p> <p>Establish and maintain a proactive play and youth sector partnership, responding to emerging themes, shaping where resources may come from.</p> <p>Create and agree a framework for organisations with similar goals collaborate and share resources rather than compete due to funding processes/</p> <p>Build an approach to supporting Play and Youth sector organisations to make successful applications, simplified procurement processes, enabling the youth sector organisations to make successful applications, simplified procurement processes, enabling the youth sector to spend more time fundraising for additional resource into the city.</p> <p>Better retention of staff through more secure funding.</p> <p>Equity and proportionality in the distribution of time and resources across different communities/words in line with the covert recovery needs by ensuring smaller organisations can get access to resources fairly.</p>

	Advocate for the importance of Play Work in the city and how this integrates with Youth Work.
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Priority	Actions
<p>Opportunities to network, share information, policy and practice within sector and cross-sector.</p> <p>Networking opportunities where people can share their knowledge, skills, good practice and understand the unique contributions each organisation makes, resourced to enable more people to access the opportunities.</p>	<p>Identify and strengthen existing networking opportunities, build capacity of children young people's network for staff at all levels and identify the resources required to do this effectively.</p> <p>Develop action learning sets and reflective practise opportunities for all staff.</p> <p>Clarify the key groups making decisions affecting children and young people ensure representation on key groups making decisions affecting young people in the city map any gaps and identify ways to fill them.</p> <p>Strategically joining up programmes across the city to enable networking – e.g. HAF, Family Hubs, YSSF, TYS, BYCA, LA, parks and green spaces</p>