

## **Bristol & European Year 2010: Working Together for Positive Change**

Bristol's participation in EY2010, European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, was a continuation from the city's programme in support of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008. Since that time Bristol identified and progressed three key policy areas. The first was to promote community cohesion between established communities and new migrants, reducing incidents of racial hate crime, preventing Islamic extremism and tackling Islamophobia. The second was to recognise the professional qualifications of new migrants, particularly graduates and skilled workers and to support progression into employment. The third was to make public services and participation in local democracy and citizenship accessible to all, particularly to people who have little or no English. To encourage conversations across communities, Bristol had established neighbourhood partnerships, which set local level priorities and delivery targets.

The city council's primary strategy was to enable grassroots organisations to take the lead in intercultural dialogue. The Pierian Centre, a social enterprise, took up this challenge and has led and partnered on a number of area-based and citywide initiatives to promote and foster community cohesion and civic activism. June Burrough, its director, is a UK Ambassador for EY2010.

Since 2008 there have been a number of initiatives that have in a sense created social movements and networks for building, bridging and bonding communities of area and interest. Themes have included:

- **Reconciliation** - engaging interfaith organisations, community groups and arts professionals and expressed through activity such as the Anne Frank & You exhibition and Bristol Reconciliation Reredos and the Bristol Celebrates festival in Inter Faith week.
- **Combating Human Trafficking** - a legacy of Bristol 's Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade programme in 2007 and realised through a new counter trafficking coalition of public sector organizations and voluntary groups and the annual Unchosen Film Festival

- **Safeguarding Migrants' Rights** - the University of the West of England and the Pierian Centre have established The Migrant Rights Centre - an information and advice service primarily for residents with refugee and asylum status building on the annual Refugee Week season and the City of Sanctuary initiative
- **Promoting Sustainability** - Bristol is the UK's pioneering Cycle City and was the only UK city to be short-listed for European Green Capital status in 2009. Bristol is also a Fairtrade City.
- **Celebrating Diversity** - Bristol's new cultural capital projects, such as the Colston Hall Foyer, and events and festivals taking place in libraries, arts venues, community centres and open spaces have been supported by a thriving community media sector. Volunteers representing the city's great pluralism of ethnicities, identities, languages and faiths support Bristol Community FM, Ujima Radio and Radio Salaam Shalom.

**“Working Together for Positive Change” has been the main theme for Bristol’s EY2010 programme.** Wider public interest in the year was gauged at an open forum event at the Watershed Media Centre in April 2009. Tricia Griffiths presented the DWP’s role in developing the UK’s national action plan for EY2010. The three key questions open for discussion were:

1. The programme of events - what is already happening in 2010 in Bristol? How can we work together on these projects?
2. Who is missing and who should be involved in 2010?
3. How do we take things from here? What do we want to achieve at the end of 2010 and what will we aim to take forward in the coming decades.

Topics raised included:

- Initiatives around prejudices in employment, offering realistic access and routes for socially excluded groups (e.g. homeless, mental illness)
- Offering progression routes for young people, bringing together young people from a wide range of areas so they can access provisions and

opportunities on offer

- Specific targets for helping people out of poverty
- Intergenerational activity and exchanges, and
- The provision of affordable housing

As a result of this event a steering group was established to coalesce Bristol's public, private and voluntary sector contributions to EY2010. A number of organisations across Bristol delivered services and activities using EY2010 themes, such as:

- **The Article27 Partnership** - agencies working with mental health clients towards progression in employment through arts activities
- **Aspire Bristol** – provision of employment, accredited training and work placements for long term unemployed, the homeless, ex offenders and recovering addicts
- **Clean Slate Training and Employment** set a target of 10,000 hours of paid work for people who would otherwise not gain employment and help 100 people to help themselves through paid work backed up with structured support and professional development.
- **Exchange Group** - helping low-skilled people with accredited training in maths, literacy, business skills and digital competency
- **Mencap Pathway** - providing adults with learning difficulties with training and support for finding employment
- **SPAN Study Centre** - childcare training and ESOL classes for single parents
- **Bristol City Council's economic regeneration directorate** - through its Ways to Work network, over 80 professionals took part in a work shop entitled, "*Worklessness in Bristol: How do we make the difference in challenging times?*"

**On March 16 2010 Bristol hosted the national UK launch of EY2010 at the Council House, with the theme, "*Poverty: it's everyone's business.*"**

Participants included Anna Neagle MP, Minister of State for Pensions and Ageing Society; Sarah Lambert, UK Head of Representation to the EU; Adam Sharples, Employment Group Director-General at DWP; Kate Wareing, Programme Director at Oxfam UK; Maeve McGoldrick, Campaigns Coordinator at Community Links UK and Sue Cohen, Director at Single Parent Action Network and June Burrough Founder Director of the Pierian Centre.

**Bristol Cathedral was the venue of the city's EY2010 programme launch on March 22 2010 with a public gathering of 350 people and stalls representing 45 local organisations.** The event included presentations from people experiencing poverty, poetry, music and food. The initiative was promoted to “establish a shared vision for prosperity and inclusion in Bristol, and to bring together people to identify best practice and where current provision is failing.”

The Pierian Centre fundraised for and led on a number of EY2010 showcase projects. These included:

- **Portents** (September 2010): A tent city on College Green with 50 artworks by 45 groups from across 13 postcodes of Bristol on the theme of ‘Home History and Hope’ which involved over 1000 citizens
- **Bristol Before, Now and Future** (November 2010): A ‘History Constellations’ project looking at how the city’s heritage had impacted on aspects of living and working in the present day.
- **A Better Bristol for All** (October 2010 to January 2011): Under the theme of “*Creating connections, Finding solutions*”, a series of 9 open space workshops was held with community representatives and residents in neighbourhood partnerships and also with groups involved in regeneration and employment skills training and development.

## **A World In Waiting and A World Beyond**

Bristol wrapped up its EY2010 season with a grand open space finale at Colston Hall on February 10 2011. Three events were organised:

- i. A policy briefing to affirm commitment to an EY2010 legacy by the city council and its strategic partners
- ii. A series of open space-styled conversations focussing on the aspirations of citizens and stakeholders, and
- iii. A cultural celebration with performances by many of the community arts groups working with socially excluded communities and individuals.

### **The day began with a business breakfast attended by leaders from the spheres of politics, business, culture, housing and community activism.**

Barbara Janke, Leader of Bristol City Council, welcomed participants with a presentation highlighting that Bristol had both the highest GDP per capita of any city outside London and the highest employment growth rate in the UK. Ms Janke commented that Bristol was both an activist city and a city of contrasts, measured through:

- Indices of deprivation
- Educational attainment
- Young people's motivations, lack of expectation and unemployment, and
- Poor health

Ms Janke observed that bringing people together could make a difference, such as the inclusion of public health into the council's structure and the delivery of integrated services. She believed that devolved budgets give confidence and enable communities to take hold of circumstances and take projects forward.

**Julien Van Geertsom, Director of the Public Planning Service for Social Integration, Federal Government of Belgium, provided the keynote**

**address.** He said that the EY2010 programme had demonstrated the importance of Europe for engaging on subjects such as human rights.

Mr Van Geerstrom felt that areas of growth must be SMART, sustainable and inclusive. He observed that, for the European year steering group, poverty was defined as an aggregate of:

- A 60 per cent of median incomes
- The number of jobless households, and
- Multiple deprivation

The European strategy towards 2020 had identified five targets, plus the social dimension, realized through innovation and social experiments and active inclusion in areas such as jobs, social enterprise, access to services and homelessness and housing. Europe's 2020 Strategy targets were:

1. 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed
2. 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D
3. The "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met
4. The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and (at least) 40% of the younger generation should have a degree or diploma, and
5. 20 million less people (at least) should be at risk of poverty.

October 17 is recognised by the U.N. as *World Day Against Poverty*. For this year's commemoration the European group evaluated policy, in particular the participation of poor people and stakeholders in programmes and projects.

Mr Van Geersrom outlined Belgium's three priorities:

1. Child Poverty - including monitoring and transparency
2. Minimum Income, and
3. An active inclusion strategy, incorporating life in dignity, participation in the labour market, access to services and homelessness

These priorities had been work-shopped using the medical consensus model. A participant had observed that whilst Belgium's anti-poverty policies and framework model might appear progressive, nevertheless, "*You cannot eat paper.*" Effective action was all-important.

The exclusion from public services and employment of Roma Gypsy people in some European countries provided an example of multi-level deprivation of communities based on race.

**In her presentation at the introduction to the open space workshops, Helen Ball, Director of the Bristol Partnership stated that the aim of the Partnership was that by 2020 Bristol was celebrated as a top 20 European city across a range of measures.** The city's 2020 strategy had four main outcomes:

1. Making prosperity sustainable - bridging gaps and overcoming barriers
2. Reducing health and wealth inequality
3. Strong and safe communities
4. Raising children's and young people's aspirations and achievements

Each outcome had four strategic actions. The Partnership was also championing a child poverty strategy.

Around 200 people took part in open space workshops throughout the day. Topics were varied, including:

- The relationship between poverty and childcare
- ESOL and access to childcare for women
- How to tackle long term unemployment
- What does prosperity mean? and
- How can we reduce income inequality in Bristol?

Feedback in the plenary session included the following comments:

*I feel marginalised, but today was inspiring with the opportunity to contribute*

*Poverty is not a lack of money, rather a lack of access – not having networks or friends. Get to know your neighbours.*

*I am impressed that people are challenging poverty. It is fantastic.*

*There's an importance of having conversations about things that matter through creating a cafe society. There is massive potential for grass roots activism. This needs seed funding.*

*Young people should be listened to, understood and represented. I'm grateful for the year and this event. One group I'm involved with wouldn't have been able to start without this programme.*

**The day ended with A World Beyond , a free cultural evening of staged and improvised performances by a kaleidoscope of talent and ages, including:**

- The young Sing Up singers of the Cosmos Choir
- The women's group from movement psychotherapists, Dance Voice
- Bristol Refugee Rights group with Bahman Salahshour
- Pax Nindi, radical master of Afrikan roots reggae from Zimbabwe, and
- Capoeira School Semente da Senzala from Haarlem, Holland. This group provides community classes for children and adults, including a recently developed programme for teenagers with autism.

### **EY2010 Legacy**

Participants from A World In Waiting and other open space events will be encouraged to choose their priorities from a list of around a dozen headlines produced by these open space discussions. These will be posted on the Pierian Centre's website for an online vote. The top five themes will be present to DWP as Bristol's five "Policy Asks" for the year.

Bristol's EY2010 steering group intends to work with the Bristol Partnership on agreed annual targets towards 2020. The group will also identify and spread best practice from the year, along with generating new ideas and leveraging sustainable investment to Bristol's grass roots organisations to help people out of poverty and exclusion.