



# Bristol's Belonging Strategy for Children and Young People: Vision Statement 2021 – 2024



**BRISTOL**  
**ONE CITY**





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# Foreword

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**As a city we are committed to reducing inequality and building inclusion so that all our children and young people grow up in a city where they feel at home, where they feel they belong, and where they and their families can thrive.**

This mission is particularly urgent. We know that not all communities and age groups have been impacted equally by the pandemic. Covid has amplified the inequalities in our city, and if we are to mitigate its adverse impacts across our communities and build back better within a generation, we must put children and young people at the heart of our recovery. That means investing in them and their families.

We are therefore pleased to introduce Bristol's One City Belonging Strategy for Children and Young People. Created with partners, children, young people and their families, it sets out how we will begin that journey of recovery and what we aim to achieve.

It is critical that children and young people feel safe in their communities, that they have the support they need to achieve their potential and that their unique voice is heard, valued, and defines the future of our city.

We must build a city which celebrates and empowers those growing up in Bristol, by developing a rich offer that is co-constructed, relevant and easily accessible.

No single organisation can deliver this alone. We must work together, investing in our children and families to build a socially and economically inclusive city that works for all children. This strategy challenges us all to go further, and achieve more to ensure every child has the best start in life.



**Marvin Rees,  
Mayor of Bristol**



**Deputy Mayor with  
responsibility for  
Children's Services,  
Education and Equalities**







# Introduction

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**Bristol aspires to be a vibrant, inclusive and compassionate city. Bristol is a city full of art, cultural activity, energy and imagination. But do Bristol’s children and young people see themselves, their histories, cultures and identities reflected in their city? And, how does it feel, and what effect might it have if they don’t? What more can we all do to ensure every child feels visible in their city and has a sense of belonging?**

One City partners recognise the need to come together to improve inclusion and reduce inequality for all children in the city. This is crucial in all our roles to protect and promote the rights of Bristol children.

Partners have worked with children and young people in the city to develop this strategy and explore the notion of ‘belonging’; what it means to children and young people and how we can work together to create a positive, nurturing and affirming society that wraps around them and helps them to flourish in a city in which the benefits are shared equally by all members of the community.

The environmental and social conditions in which children are born, live and grow up will have an impact on their future. Community and social connectedness are essential to good health and wellbeing. To develop well, children and young people need to be loved, supported and cared for within a family, and by the communities around them. They need to have opportunities to learn, to play, be active and build loving relationships and to develop their personal and social skills. They need to see themselves in the world around them and feel able to express themselves.

The human need to belong and to connect, leads us to find this where we can. We need to create rich and thriving communities that recognise the differing ways that young people connect, and to support vulnerable young people within our communities. We need to be proactive in supporting all of our young people in feeling valued, seen and engaged. We need to be mindful of inadvertently excluding those who feel 'outside' of the community and who feel cut off or alienated. We need to be able to see the signs, listen to the anger, hear the silences, and respond.



The Black Lives Matter movement brings into focus the need for collective and assertive action for inclusion and social justice. Coronavirus has also exposed a deep vein of inequality and has posed huge challenges to society. As we collectively reflect and rebuild, we must be honest about the scale of these challenges. Not everyone in Bristol has an equal opportunity to thrive and resources in the city are not equitably distributed. Not all children are benefitting as they could do from the opportunities the city has to offer.

There is now an opportunity to ensure children and young people, their experiences and perspectives, are centre stage in all aspects of our recovery. This means bringing our collective resource together to be ambitious for every child, and to ensure we get it right for those who were already disadvantaged, to ensure the basic rights of a good childhood.

One City partners will be working together through the Children and Young People's One City Board to drive our work on inclusion, equality and social justice in Bristol. This partnership will challenge, require and energise the city to be ambitious, braver, and better in seeing and meeting our challenges for an inclusive city, where young people engage in a thriving civic life with a rich participatory culture.

This vision document sets out our shared intent and describes the approach we aim to embed. Our work on Belonging has been organised into four themes, and a strategy has been developed for each of these as follows:

- Belonging from the Beginning
- Belonging in Families
- Belonging in Education
- Belonging in the Community

These strategies support and will deliver on the intentions of the Bristol One City Plan, the Bristol Children's Charter and the Bristol Equalities Charter (see appendices). Within the **One City Plan 2050**, Bristol has made a commitment to delivering the UN's Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the targets set out in the **Sustainable Development Goals 2030**. The intention of these goals is to make sure that Bristol's economic growth is achieved in balance with social and environmental advancements. Creating an inclusive city where every child and young person can feel safe, participate and achieve their aspirations, will open up new opportunities for our children and young people and allow them to access everything the city has to offer.

# Children and Young People's Experiences and Insights

**The process for engaging young people from across the city in the development of our work on belonging was co-produced with a team of young people. The aim was to listen to what young people wanted to tell us about their experiences and their opinions on matters related to belonging and build our strategy and priorities on these perspectives.**

The team of young people (Youth Consultation Team) developed a short film and two surveys, one for children and young people and one for parents and carers of children up to the age of 5 years. These were designed to gain an insight into how children and young people and parents and carers experiencing their different environments, including school and where they live and to explore if they feel they and their young children belong, what works well and what could be improved. Findings were presented in two consultation reports:

**Belonging Strategy, Children and Young People Survey, Consultation Report, December 2020**

**Belonging Strategy, Parent and Carer Survey, Consultation Report, December 2020**

To gain a deeper insight of how children and young people as well as young parents are experiencing their different environments and to complement the surveys, seven focus groups exploring belonging further were conducted, identifying what works well and what could be improved.

Findings were presented in the **Belonging Strategy, Focus Groups with Young People, Consultation Report, December 2020.**

The engagement process was supported by Bristol City Council and Creative Youth Network. All of these reports are available here [www.bristoloncity.com/one-city-strategies/](http://www.bristoloncity.com/one-city-strategies/)

Some comments and insights from young people about the meaning of belonging are included on page 7. Full detail and survey analysis is available in the consultation reports and the belonging strategies individually respond to how young people think the city can build a better sense of belonging for all children.





# What is Belonging?

“ I feel comfortable enough to be myself, feel like having been accepted and feel like I don't have to be a certain way to be accepted. ”

“ I'd say with belonging it's like having something or like somewhere or someone where you feel safe - where you can be yourself without having to worry about rejection or denial. ”

“ It means feeling a sense of safety and value within a group. ”

“ I think for me belonging is just having a place where you don't have to change yourself or hide something about yourself to feel accepted or anything. Or you can just be a very genuine version of yourself and still feel that you're loved and you've still got a place in that space. ”

“ It's hard feeling like I belong somewhere after moving to 3 different secondary schools since year 7. ”

“ I feel there is a lack of role models of colour. ”

“ Belonging as a parent to me means being able to be the parent that I need to be and want to be as well and having the support to do so. ”

“ Well my school makes me feel like I am in a safe space and I always feel welcome when I enter the building . Whenever there is a problem I can always talk to the support team at my school. ”





## Belonging Strategy Vision

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- For our children and young people to have the best possible start in life, gaining the support and skills they need to prosper in adulthood
- For our children and young people to be welcomed into a city with a culture of nurture and care, with opportunities to grow with support from their community
- For our children and young people to have their needs recognised at the earliest point in a system that collaborates to help them thrive
- For our children and young people to have a home which sustains, nourishes and protects them in safe and healthy families
- For our children and young people to have a confident sense of self and identity in a cohesive and diverse city
- For our children and young people to access education that is inclusive and values diversity, where they learn from each other and benefit from an understanding of their different experiences
- For our children and young people to own the whole city and experience and benefit from all that Bristol offers.



# Our Approach

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**Our focus on belonging is underpinned by the recognition that positive relationships are crucial to ensuring that every child, young person and parent feels themselves to be an integral, valued and visible part of the city.**

This strategy supports our city-wide commitment to develop and implement a system-wide, **trauma-informed approach**. Becoming trauma-informed requires a fundamental change in the way services are delivered, prioritising the **relationships** between staff and service users, and within and between organisations. We recognise the potential impact of adversity and trauma at an individual, family, community, organisational and partnership level and will reflect this in policies, procedures and practice. The work delivered through the Belonging Strategy will seek to embed our shared 'Principles for **Trauma Informed Practice**'. Read more about these principles [here](#).

A trauma informed approach is aligned with our ongoing commitment to ensuring that we **Think Family**; that we ensure we consider the needs of children and adults in all our work.

We will also continue to focus on identifying risk and vulnerability at **the earliest opportunity**. Children's needs are usually best met by supporting their parents, and preventative and early help responses are critical to avoid issues from escalating. We will focus on **families' strengths** and seek to develop the family's capacity to look after their own needs; we will work to enable parents and carers to access universal and community services wherever possible, and appropriate.

This approach requires us to **listen**, understand and **work together** with children, young people and their families. Understanding and responding to individual's **views and experiences** is essential to this way of working.

We will continue to improve our **partnership** working. We will further develop joined up systems so that there is **no 'wrong door'** to services, but we will also endeavour to build **social capital** by ensuring our systems and interactions are based on shared values, understanding, and trust.

## Principles for Trauma Informed Practice

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Safety

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Choice & Clarity

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Collaboration

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Trustworthiness

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Empowerment

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Inclusivity

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# Governance

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**The One City Children and Young People’s Partnership Board will oversee the delivery of this strategy and will hold partners to account in delivering the agreed priorities. The Board ensures inclusivity and diversity is at the core of all its work so that all children and young people in the city have a sense of belonging that empowers and enables them to thrive.**

Where possible, we will make use of existing partnerships and governance arrangements to develop workplans that deliver priorities and actions outlined in the strategy.

This strategy has been informed by the local **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**. The JSNA is an on-going assessment of health and wellbeing needs across the area. It provides an up-to-date evidence base for understanding our population, and how we are improving outcomes and reducing inequalities and will be used in the development and monitoring of workplans.

Progress against priorities and outcomes for children will be evaluated on an annual basis and will inform an annual review of the strategy for its lifetime. This will also enable partners to continue to hold each other to account for delivering improved outcomes for our children and young people.

# Appendices

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1. Bristol Childrens Charter
2. Bristol Equalities Charter
3. Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Principles for Trauma Informed Practice
4. Belonging Strategy Consultation reports





I want a city with no  
judgemental people,

I want a city that supports you  
through life,

I want a city that is friendly and kind,

I want a city that boosts my  
confidence by appreciating me for me,

I want a city that isn't racist,

A city that is basic,

I want a city where you can dream big  
and follow your imagination,

I want to be a nurse,

I want to do operations,

I want to train in Bristol,

The city where I grew up,

I want a city that accepts other  
people's nationalities, culture,

Our city needs to be diverse,

I want a city that has enough courage  
to follow it's dreams and never  
give up!

**Rajwa Ali, 11 years**