

Bristol Fawcett annual report for 2011

Bristol Fawcett is an activist group for local members of the Fawcett Society. Our members are volunteers who are active in the vibrant local campaign for gender equality.

We support the aims of the Fawcett Society and we work at a local level to:

- Raise awareness of Fawcett and the work that Fawcett does
- Campaign and lobby to improve policy and services for women and girls
- Bring an informed gender equality perspective to local decision making bodies.

This is our fifth annual report, which is intended to be a reference point for current, new and prospective members and supporters, as well as a chance for us to celebrate all we have achieved. This report provides a short overview of our activities in the course of the last year since our last AGM, from January to December 2011.

Helen Mott
Co-ordinator
December 2011

Strategic Themes

The campaign for gender equality is an enormous task. Opportunities and imperatives for activism are endless. To keep the task manageable, and to provide clear focus, we select and concentrate on two or three strategic themes at a time. During the year we focussed particularly on these areas:

Disproportionate Impact on Women of Local & National Fiscal Measures

Cuts to benefits and public services represent the greatest threat to the progress of women's equality for a generation. Nationally and locally, it is clear that the choices that have been made to cut and reconfigure public services and benefits are overwhelmingly against the interests of equality – and specifically against women's progress towards economic independence and social equality. Bristol Fawcett members will continue to take every opportunity to highlight and actively oppose the gross unfairness of the choices being made at national and local level. Our members are working within a great diversity of local & national networks to publicise gender aware economic analysis and impact assessment, and to communicate our rejection of policy that prescribes cuts to services and benefits. We also work outside formal networks, and have taken an active part in many local and national demonstrations.

During the year we researched and wrote our detailed report, "**Cutting Women Out in Bristol**", on the gender equality and human rights impact of the public sector spending cuts upon women in Bristol. This report was based on work done in Coventry for the report, "Unravelling Equality", published by Coventry Women's Voices with the University of Warwick Centre for Human Rights in Practice. In November 2011, we launched our report on College Green outside the Bristol City Council House. The report has been covered by local newspapers, local TV and radio news, and has seen national news

coverage, too. It has been widely distributed among voluntary and campaigning groups in Bristol as well as among the city's public sector agencies. It has been hailed as a triumph by the Fawcett Society nationally, and there are plans for other local Fawcett groups to develop similar reports. The publication of the report and the analysis we undertook in order to write it has been valuable in assisting us to make representations in consultations such as that undertaken in December this year, by Bristol City Council on their proposed budget savings for 2012-13.

<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Economy.html>

<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Documents/Economy/BristolCuttingWomenOut.pdf>

Gender Equality in Education

In common with many other campaigners against inequality in society, Bristol Fawcett members are convinced that the key to positive change lies in education. We remain committed to ensuring that gender inequality, and violence against women and girls, are subjects that must be actively and skilfully addressed in Bristol's education settings from early years to colleges. Our main route for achieving this is through our ongoing membership of the city's strategic group for the prevention of violence and abuse of women and girls (VAAWG). This group includes representatives from the voluntary and community sector as well as the statutory sector including public health and education specialists. The group meets regularly and works to the city's strategy for addressing VAAWG which was developed during the course of the last year, and launched in November at the international conference on VAAWG held at Bristol's Council House. During the year we also wrote to Michael Gove MP and Secretary of State for Education concerning the role of schools in tackling VAAWG, and we responded to the Government's consultation on PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economics) Education. Our members were also instrumental in the development and publication by Bristol City Council this year of their updated guides, Bristol Schools Gender Equality Toolkit 2011 and Bristol Schools Guide: Sexual Harassment & Sexist Incidents 2011.

<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/GenderinEducation.html>

Sub groups

This year, following our discussion day in January where we examined our ways of working, we formed a number of sub-groups to enable members to choose to work in detail on specific campaigns - communicating and meeting with each other outside of the main meetings and outside of our general e-mail communication group. General terms of reference and strategy for each sub-group are agreed at main Bristol Fawcett meetings and sub-groups can then meet to work on detail. Sub-groups report back to the main meetings to agree sub-group policy and communications and to feed in about activities. The sub-groups which have been established cover: Cuts; Media and SEVs.

Anti-Cuts Sub Group

This group develops our policy in relation to the local and national cuts to public spending and co-ordinates the actions taken in relation to the cuts. Members of the group also share information from the range of local and national partners with whom we have links.

Media Sub Group

This group aims to oversee our proactive and reactive relationship with the media by:

- developing our communications framework document
- forward planning for media activity
- drafting press releases and statements in a style appropriate to the medium addressed.

Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEV) Sub Group

Bristol Fawcett has been active in campaigning against the proliferation of lap dancing clubs (SEVs) since 2002. Members of this group monitor applications made for SEVs in Bristol, publicise consultations by the Council's Licensing Committee, and have made a number of representations on behalf of Bristol Fawcett to hearings of the Licensing Committee relating to SEVs and SEV policy. Bristol's SEV policy came into force on 31 January 2011, although we are still awaiting publication of the Equality Impact Assessment of the policy. Members of the group collate research on SEVs and their relation to gender equality. Members attend and document the proceedings of SEV licensing hearings.

<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Lapdancing.html>

Other activities

Our members have spoken and given **presentations** at a number of local and national conferences and events throughout the year. These include:

- Equal Rights Equal Voices conference
- Fawcett Society AGM
- UK Feminista & Women for Women International workshop on Global Feminist Activism
- UK Feminista Summer School
- BICEP Equal Opportunities for Social Welfare education programme
- Bristol Speakers' Corner
- Say No to Legal Aid Cuts in the South West
- UWE international conference on Feminism in Action
- No Women No Peace vigil and campaign for women in Afghanistan
- Bristol Reclaim the Night
- UNISON South West Regional Women's Conference: Women Under Pressure
- Bristol's International Conference on Gendered Violence – see www.genderedviolence.com

Our members represent us in a number of **groups** and **committees** including:

- Fawcett Society Board of Directors
- Women's Income Network
- Bristol VAAWG Strategic Group
- Bristol VAAWG Prevention Strategy Subgroup
- Avon Fire and Rescue Equalities Consultation Group
- Bristol City Council Scrutiny Commission on Community Cohesion and Safety;
- Bristol Women's Voice Management Group – the new 'women's hub' for Bristol, to enable women across the city to find out how to access services, how to support one another, how to join local organisations and set up new ones, find and promote

events and services for women and share ideas. Bristol Women's Voice will also make sure that when key decisions are taken women's voices have been listened to and their ideas and concerns acted on

- Bristol Roundtable on Trafficking
- Bristol Partnership Equalities Action Group & Who Runs Bristol Taskgroup.

We have been represented at a number of **conferences** and responded to a number of **consultations** including:

- UK Feminista Fem 11 Conference
- Police safety advice to women in context of Joanna Yeates murder
- Government Legal Aid cuts consultation
- Women's Voice and Influence in Bristol consultation
- Where are the Women? event at The Watershed
- Bristol Violence and Abuse Against Women and Girls Strategy consultation
- International Women's Day
- 'How Fair is Britain?' event with Trevor Phillips
- Bristol Partnership on Hate Crime Street Sexual Harassment meeting
- National Day of Action against the cuts
- LSBU Conference, A Conducive Context: Misogyny, Inequality and Violence
- Parliamentary seminar on women & the cuts with Fawcett, Coventry Women's Voices and Warwick University Centre for Human Rights in Practice
- ESRC seminar series: Girls, Sexuality and Sexualisation
- Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp
- Rape Crisis AGM
- Meet the BBC event
- Bristol Slutwalk
- Equality Bristol conference with Richard Wilkinson
- Government Consultation on PSHE; And more...!

This year several members were involved in volunteering, contributing funding, speaking and writing articles for the **Sistershow Revisited** exhibition, book and panel discussion which focussed on feminism in Bristol in the 1970s and now – the panel session at the related Festival of Ideas event can be heard here:

<http://soundcloud.com/bristol-festival-of-ideas/sistershow-2011>

Communications

One of the most important features of Bristol Fawcett – and of our success in making a difference – is the strength of our **networks**. We communicate regularly with hundreds of local, regional and national organisations as well as local activists, via our mailing list, our website, Facebook and Twitter. This year we have worked with and campaigned alongside a great range of local and national organisations including, to name but a few, Bristol & District Anti-Cuts Alliance, Bristol City Council, Bristol Feminist Network, Bristol Women's Forum, the Counting Women In Coalition, the End Violence Against Women Coalition, Equality Bristol, Fawcett Society, Hollaback Bristol, the Universities of the West of England and Bristol. We updated our map of networks which is available at:

<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Documents/BFawcettNetworkMap2011.pdf>

By December 2011, the average monthly number of unique visits to **our website** stood at 2,945. This continues a year-on-year increase in traffic since we launched our website in 2008. Our busiest months for web traffic were August, when there were up to 300 visits a day from people seeking to find out more information about licensing applications for SEVs (lapdancing clubs), and November, when we launched our report into the impact of the public sector spending cuts on women in Bristol. On the day of the launch, we had more than 500 visits to our website and, in the first month of the launch, our report was downloaded 334 times from the site. 250 summaries were also downloaded. Our pages on the representation of women in the media continue to be very popular, although we have not added to the project this year. There were well over a thousand visits to our Events page, signposting women and men to events and activities in the local area.

We have continued to expand our use of social media this year, and now have 253 followers on **Twitter** (as of 11 Dec 2011), plus more than 100 members of our new **Facebook group**, and around 120 'friends' of our Facebook profile.

Our work and campaigns have also been highlighted in various **media** throughout the year, including interviews and articles in: Bristol Evening Post, Bristol Observer, Radio Bristol, Daily Mail, Daily Star, ITV West Country Tonight, The F Word, the Guardian cuts blog, the Guardian – Comment Is Free, UWE's student newspaper, BBC regional politics show, BADACA newsletter, and many internet blogs.

Website: www.bristolfawcett.org.uk

Facebook: Bristol Fawcett Society or www.facebook.com/groups/134736719941910/

Twitter: @BristolFawcett

Mailing list: contact database@bristolfawcett.org.uk (see our website for more details).

Membership

Bristol Fawcett is an activist group, established in 2001, whose members seek not primarily to talk about feminism but to 'do' feminism and make a difference however we can to awareness, policy and practice in the local area. Our core membership is a group of women who give their time, their ideas and their expertise on a regular basis to the projects and events that we undertake. There are also many local women and men who are members of Fawcett nationally, and who support Fawcett's work by contributing financially to the organisation. We have many local supporters who are members of our wider networks including our mailing list and Facebook group.

This year we have been delighted to welcome a number of committed and energetic activists to our ever-growing group. Our **core membership** of activists stands at 47, of whom roughly half have been able to attend meetings regularly this year.

Since February we have had a new officer post for membership. The Membership Officer manages our membership administration, helps to make new members feel included, and develops our understanding of our members, their views and wishes.

Membership Update

An average of 12 people attended each Bristol Fawcett meeting from January 2011 to November 2011, excluding August which does not have a meeting. The most popular

meeting was May with 19 attendees and the least popular were July, October, and November – each with 7 attendees. We also monitor the number of apologies we receive, thus enabling us to track the number of people who get in touch about attendance. In April, 25 people either attended or apologised. September had the lowest contact for a meeting with 15 people either attending or apologising for not doing so.

In the middle of April, we contacted 14 people who had previously attended a Bristol Fawcett meeting but had not been for the past six months. We invited these people to the May meeting which may explain why May was our most well attended meeting with 19 present. It is our intention to continue to follow up with people who have not attended for six months to invite them back or to gain feedback if they do not intend on coming again.

Since April we've been able to monitor the number of queries we've received about joining Bristol Fawcett. When we receive a query, we reply with details of Bristol Fawcett including the next meeting date, time, and location. We also send agendas before the meeting to these potential members. We stop sending agendas after three months if the person has not attended a meeting in this time. Between April and December 2011, Bristol Fawcett had 20 membership queries. Of these, 4 people have so far attended a meeting. However, 6 of these queries came in October and 8 more in November. Thus, 14 queries are still "live" as three months have not passed since the initial query. The high number of queries in November is likely linked to the media coverage of our Cutting Women Out in Bristol report which was launched on 3 November.

At the end of November we sent a short survey to the 30 women who had attended a meeting at some point during 2011 (and for whom we held email addresses). We had 10 responses. Of these, 70% said they would be returning to another Bristol Fawcett meeting. There were many positive comments about Bristol Fawcett, including:

"I like the action oriented approach and link to a national organisation through campaigns"

"The quality of the work done by the group far exceeds my expectations and hopes - what a privilege to be associated with such a vibrant, committed, thoughtful group of women."

"Bristol Fawcett meetings are the best vehicle for getting gender equality work done locally"

Areas for improvement identified by the survey include: fostering a more inclusive atmosphere, sharing the workload amongst all members, and ensuring personality differences don't come in the way of productive meetings. These will be areas for Bristol Fawcett to be mindful of as it continues in its good work throughout 2012 and beyond.

Nicola Garwood
Membership Officer

Finance

Bristol Fawcett – Summary of Accounts 2011

The opening balance for 2011 was £1,752.85.

Income:

Income received in year totalled £2,460. This was made up of:

- £2000 from Unison SW as a contribution towards the Cutting Women Out in Bristol report
- £460 from Avon Fire and Rescue Service for equalities meeting attendances

Expenditure:

Expenditure paid in year totalled £2165. £215 has been paid out in cash and £1950 has been accrued for spend relating to 2011.

The breakdown of spend is as follows:

SEV campaign	£76	Printing costs, textbook purchase, IT
Cuts campaign	£1950	Printing and design of the Cutting Women Out in Bristol report; membership donation for the Bristol & District Anti-Cuts Alliance
No Women, No Peace campaign	£40	Estimate accrued for materials for NW, NP vigil and campaign
General expenses	£98	Web hosting, venue hire
TOTAL	£2,165	

The closing balance at the end of 2011 is £2,048. Of this, £488 remains restricted to the Trafficking Campaign. This leaves £1,560 for the general fund for the Bristol Fawcett Society.

Stephanie Poyntz
Treasurer, Bristol Local Fawcett Group
11th December 2011

Full accounts are available on request.