



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

VOLUNTEERING

Bristol City Council

Cities of Service

What is Cities of Service?

The Cities of Service impact volunteering model builds on the work of former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who pioneered the approach, designating New York as a service city and creating opportunities for thousands of citizens to serve their community.

When Mr Bloomberg became Mayor in 2002, he said the following:

“When I became Mayor, I had a million volunteers in NYC doing a million different things. Imagine the difference they would make if they were directed to one or two things. Imagine the biggest problems you have in your city and what you could do about them if you had the numbers needed to make the difference.”

When he ceased his office as Mayor in 2013, he had developed the idea of Cities of Service, a programme that harnesses the power of volunteers to address strategic city issues. It is a clear call to action for a new relationship between Councils and communities where problems are tackled together - residents find their own solutions to a place's biggest issues but are surrounded by support from the local authority.

Many other cities have replicated the approach. Today in the United States and the UK, the Cities of Service coalition includes more than 300 cities, successfully mobilising thousands of volunteers to improve their communities one task at a time. Volunteers give their time on high impact initiatives in the service of others and their local areas, with cities sharing successful strategies to ensure the most effective initiatives are copied by others.

Bristol Reading in Schools Consortium

Bristol applied to broaden and scale its Volunteering in Primary Schools Initiative *Boosting Reading @Primary* (BRP). The aim was to scale a tested intervention to keep children 'up to speed' with reading by the end of Key Stage Two. The proposal identified that Bristol Reading in Schools Consortium (BRISC) would also expand the less formal volunteering opportunities through the Reading Buddies programme, which does not require intensive training. To support this, Bristol City Council launched the Social Action Plan, which includes

a Mayoral call to action and supports the project. The project aims to mobilise 300 volunteers (75% new volunteers) and reach 1,000 primary school children.

Nesta and the Cities of Service Leads commissioned an independent evaluation by Hannah Woods Consultancy in January 2020 towards the end of the two-year grant funding period. The evaluation found that progress had been made to bring together reading volunteer programmes across the city and improve the roll-out of the BRP training programme. To date, BRISC has supported 846 volunteers in providing reading support to 1,054 children across 87 schools in Bristol¹. BRISC has helped to increase the number of reading volunteers by 30 per cent (225 volunteers). The full evaluation report aims to help BRISC consider next steps for delivery and evaluation. It provides recommendations to help BRISC move forward with decision-making and planning for the future.

For further information contact:

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¹ Figures reported to Nesta in March 2020



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