

NEWS embargoed until 22/11/2018

Bristol City Council commits to invest £460k in vulnerable women

The innovative Pause programme, which works to break cycles of repeated removal of children from their mothers and is hosted by local charity One25, will be funded for a further 18-months following the success of a pilot. Pause works to support women who have had multiple children removed from their care; it is estimated that the programme has already saved Bristol over £1,060,000 in costs.

Of the 23 women Pause Bristol is currently working with, 100% had experienced domestic abuse, 65% struggle with substance misuse and 91% have mental health needs. But in the last 18 months: three have got jobs; five are in education, training or searching for jobs; five are no longer street homeless. Children's lives are also improved: four women were supported to start writing to their children and ten to attend supervised contact with their children. These are huge changes for otherwise vulnerable and extremely isolated women.

Councillor Helen Godwin, Cabinet Member for Women, Children and Families, said:

"The Mayor and I have seen first-hand the positive impact Pause has had on the lives of these women in a short period of time. The outcomes we have seen for those women show a real transformation that offers them greater opportunity to lead healthy and happy lives.

"There is also a wider benefit with a decreased need for health and social care service interventions. This funding will sustain the project until May 2020 and will also provide the programme with opportunities to seek alternative funding from more sustainable sources and continue the excellent work they are doing in Bristol."

Anna Smith, CEO of local charity One25 which hosts the Pause programme, says:

"Bristol needs Pause. The city, sadly, has a high number of women who have had children permanently removed. Often these women face significant disadvantages which make motherhood especially challenging for them.

"What I have seen with the Pause pilot is women beginning to feel valued, building confidence and self-esteem so that they can start taking control of their lives and engage in the services they need. We look forward to the next 18 month phase."

Removing children into care is not only very costly; it can have a devastating impact on children and can traumatise mothers who often go on to further pregnancies which they are not ready or equipped to cope with. It's estimated so far that Pause has helped to prevent 14 pregnancies. This translates to a saving of £1,060,000 in terms of the costs of placing those children into care.

Notes for editors

More detail on cost savings

Pause's analysis indicates that the average annual birth rate for this cohort of women is 0.31 per year. We can therefore estimate that the 20 women would go on to have 6 children annually without targeted intervention. To extrapolate further, having long acting reversible contraception in place over the 18 month programme provides at least 27 birth free months, as opposed to bringing 14 children into the world who would otherwise have been born over that period.

Based on Pause's bespoke cost benefit model and occurrence and unit costs supplied by Bristol City Council, the cost of placing 14 children in care is almost £1,060,000 - £630,000 of which are immediately cashable savings. When forecast to 5 years, total costs climb to £1,530,000.

Delivering a Bristol Pause Practice for a cohort of 20 - 24 women over 18 months costs approximately £486,000 (or £324,000 per year).

Stats on Bristol's need and women's disadvantages

Pause Bristol's most recent internal report found that, between 2012 and 2017, there were 127 women in Bristol who had had a combined total of 414 children removed from their care. Pause Bristol had 127 initial referrals – there could be seven Pauses programmes in Bristol and there would still be a waiting list.

Of the women 23 women Pause Bristol is working with, 100% had experienced domestic abuse, 65% struggle with substance misuse and 91% have mental health needs.

One25

One25 reaches out to women trapped in, or vulnerable to, street sex work, supporting them to break free and build new lives away from violence, poverty and addiction. We are a Bristol based charity, founded in 1995, as the only organisation specifically supporting street sex-working women.

One25 was chosen to host the Pause Bristol pilot programme because of its existing expertise; the issues affecting street sex-working women are identifiable with most of those women identified in Bristol as having had multiple children removed from their care.

The Pause model

Pause aims to break the cycle of repeat removal by intervening at a point when the women have no children in their care and offers them a chance to take a pause from the usual periods of chaos, anger and reaction to care proceedings. Pause is different in that it does not define the women in relation to any one issue e.g. substance misuse or criminal justice issues, or to others, but instead helps them to focus on themselves with the purpose of supporting them to take control of their lives and to develop new skills and responses.

Pause programmes nationally

Over 5 years Pause has grown from 1 to 18 practices. National Pause is now expanding and by the end of next year will hope to have 34 Pause Practices covering at least 40 areas. The need for Pause is being recognised countrywide. In all but one case funding was found to continue Pause practices past the pilot programme (and the one that did not continue has now been restarted).

Further contact

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Interviews

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Helen Godwin, Cabinet Member for Women, Children and Families

Please liaise with Amy Sutcliffe (see details above)