Baseline Standards

for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations

(updated April 2018)

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Introduction

The purpose of the baseline standards are to: safeguard the City Council's investment in the voluntary and community sector (VCS); ensure that all Bristol City Council funded organisations are well managed; and provide good quality services.

One of the ways this is done is through evaluation of potential provider organisations' ability to meet the Baseline Standards. These standards form part of grant application and tendering processes, but are not the sole determinants of approval, as each process will include a range of needs and requirements.

Evidence to demonstrate these standards will usually be requested prior to funding being agreed, and subsequently during the duration of the contract. Funding may be awarded to organisations without all baseline standards being met. However, this will be on the basis of clear milestones for the provision of evidence that these areas of practice have been developed.

It is important that Baseline Standards are seen as central to a healthy and sustainable organisation. Organisations will need to be able to demonstrate that policies and procedures, as requested here are an 'active' part of the governance and running of the organisation, and are reviewed regularly. This document attempts to explain the importance of each standard and identifies the evidence that must be supplied to Bristol City Council to demonstrate that the appropriate level for each standard has been met.

Baseline Standard 1: Governance

- An appropriate structure is in place clearly outlining the aims and rules governing the organisation.
- Each financial year a properly organised and quorate Annual General Meeting is held and the Link Officer/Contract Manager is invited to attend this meeting.
- Trustees, or members of the management committee, are aware of and are capable of carrying out their legal responsibilities. Stringent efforts should be made to ensure that the make up of trustees reflects all sections of the community being served, and specifically involves where possible representation from service users.
- The organisation will have a policy covering declaration of interest in respect of employees, volunteers and trustees. This should cover the acceptance of gratuities or gifts, or benefiting from wills and the declaration of any relationships between employees, volunteers and trustees.
- The organisation will not seek to promote or oppose a political party.

Example evidence:

- Copy of constitution or memorandum and articles of association
- Proof of registration as a charity or company
- Copy of the most recent annual report including a report on the AGM
- Full list of Trustees/ management committee members and their roles

Baseline Standard 2: Financial Management

- The organisation will have appropriately examined or audited annual accounts depending on the level of income of the organisation. This requirement is in line with Charity Commission Reporting and Accounting Guidance (March 2015) which offers a proportionate and good practice approach.
- Organisations with a gross annual income of less than £25,000 must prepare their accounts either on the receipts and payments or on the accruals basis. There is no requirement to have the accounts independently verified unless the organisation's governing document stipulates it.
- Organisations with a gross annual income of between £25,000 and £1 million and with assets valued at less than £3.26 million must provide independently examined accounts, unless the organisation's governing document stipulates that these must be audited.
- Organisations with a gross annual income of over £1 million and/or with assets of over £3.26 million must provide accounts that have been audited by a registered auditor.
- The organisation will regularly prepare a budget for the whole organisation and any associated projects. Procedures will be in place which enable the trustees to undertake their legal obligation to monitor and report income and expenditure regularly and, as a minimum, on a quarterly basis

Example evidence:

- Most recent annual financial report showing income, expenditure, assets and liabilities
- Projected budget for the organisation's income and expenditure in current/next financial year
- Budget for the service to be funded (application form)
- The three (3) most recent bank statements showing the organisation's current financial position

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Baseline Standard 3: Equalities

The organisation operates and monitors an equalities policy and programme in relation to its employees, service users, volunteers and trustees consistent with current equalities law and the City Council's Equalities Policy. Training on the policy is provided to employees, service users, volunteers and trustees. The policy covers all 'protected characteristics' as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Example evidence:

- Copy of the organisation's Equalities policy
- Statement on actions to be taken to implement the policy in the coming financial year
- Demonstrable signs of the results of equalities monitoring feeding into service development

Baseline Standard 4: Employment

The organisation must comply with all employment law, and ensure that:

- Suitable policies and procedures for personnel matters are in place.
- Employees are permitted access to Trade Union membership.
- Recognised rates of pay apply where relevant.
- Appropriate disciplinary and grievance procedures are in place, which cover both paid staff and volunteers.
- All staff are given a contract of employment, stating the duration of the contract (if this is governed by time limited funding) and a job description.
- All volunteers have agreements in place covering their volunteering arrangements and roles.
- The length of the period of funding is made clear in advertisements and contracts where this affects the advertised post.

Example evidence:

- Job descriptions; employee specifications; generic contracts; volunteer Agreements; code of conduct; disciplinary procedure; grievance procedure; induction policy; and training and development policy.

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Baseline Standard 5: Insurance

The organisation must have adequate insurance certification which includes:

- Employers liability (minimum £5 million)
- Public liability (minimum £5 million)
- Specific, e.g. professional indemnity where required
- Premises insurance for an amount equal to the full reinstatement value of the premises, including architects, surveyors and other professional fees
- Comprehensive insurance for any vehicles used in the delivery of the service, covering damage to the vehicles together with third party claims
- Where public events are to be held, the appropriate licences and insurance should be obtained

Example evidence:

- Insurance policies/certificates for the current year's premium

Baseline Standard 6: Service User Involvement and Participation

- The organisation is able to demonstrate a real commitment to the participation of service users in service design, development, delivery and evaluation.
- All user involvement must be inclusive and accessible.

Example evidence:

- Participation strategy, or similar document, demonstrating commitment to service user participation
- Statement on actions to be taken to implement the strategy over the next financial year together with evidence of changes made to the service as a result of the participation of service users
- List of roles of the trustees/management committee members, highlighting any representation from service users

Baseline Standard 7: Complaints

- The organisation has a clear, publicised and accessible procedure for dealing with users' complaints. The procedure will include a written record of all complaints and any action taken.

Example evidence:

- Copy of the organisation's complaints procedure, to include specific measures for allegations of discrimination or harassment
- Written record of complaints and follow up action(s)

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Baseline Standard 8: Information Sharing

- The organisation is required to comply with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and any other relevant data protection legislation. This will include taking appropriate technical and organisational security measures to ensure compliance and co-operating with the ICO.

- Should it be necessary for the Council to pass any personal data on to the organisation, it will asked to sign a Data Processing Agreement in order to ensure that both parties comply with their responsibilities under the GDPR/any other data protection legislation.

- The organisation is aware of and able to comply with the South West Child Protection Procedure on the sharing of information – where the service relates to children and young people, available at: http://www.swcpp.org.uk

Example evidence:

- Copy of the organisation's information sharing and confidentiality policy and process which includes reference to compliance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Proof of up to date registration with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) i.e. registration number and date of registration expiry (or statement of exemption where applicable)

Baseline Standard 9: Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Organisations are required to meet the legal requirements under current Health and Safety regulations. In particular, statutory obligations covering employees, volunteers and members of the public and buildings will be met, for example:

- Carrying out risk assessments
- Lone worker and home working policies (as required)
- Health and safety policies covering the use of transport (as required)

Example evidence:

- Copy of the organisation's health and safety and wellbeing policy
- Example risk assessments
- Cycling to work schemes

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Baseline Standard 10: Safeguarding

- Organisations that provide services, which involve access to, or having contact with, children up to the age of 18 years, or their parents or carers, must meet the statutory requirements for the safeguarding of children.
- Organisations must cooperate with the Bristol Safeguarding Children Board to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. Policies and procedures should be in line with the South West Child Protection Procedures, available at: http://www.swcpp.org.uk
- Organisations should have procedures and processes in place for the management of allegations against staff and volunteers. These should be clearly outlined within the organisation's safeguarding policy and be compliant with the Bristol Safeguarding Children Board guidance, available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/children-and-young-people/bscb-protocols-multi-agency-action
- Organisations should ensure that all staff and volunteers (including members of the Management Board) delivering or managing services for children and young people are vetted appropriately through the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS).
- The organisation should be aware of their responsibilities towards vulnerable adults within their service provision and have a policy and guidance consistent with the Safeguarding Adults Board policy and guidance, available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/health_and_adult_care/Bristol%20Safeguarding%20Adults%20Policy2015.pdf

Example evidence:

- Copy of the organisation's Safeguarding policy and procedures (to include reference to managing allegations)
- Copy of the organisation's staff training log
- Copies of DBS checks
- Copy of the organisation's vulnerable adults policy

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Baseline Standard 11: Monitoring and Evaluation

- Organisations will collate appropriate qualitative and quantitative information for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the organisation's performance, including equalities impact assessments.
- The organisation will collect and provide monitoring information appropriate to the requirements of service and commissioners, as set out in the relevant funding agreement.

Example evidence:

- As demonstrated in compliance with the Monitoring and Evaluation Schedule
- Action plans of service delivery that are outcome focused and include equalities considerations

Baseline Standard 12: Environmental management and sustainability

The council has a policy commitment to continually improve its environmental performance, and has implemented an Environmental Management System (registered to the Eco Management and Audit Scheme) across the majority of its services. Included within this commitment is a responsibility to ensure organisations the council funds have identified significant environmental aspects associated with their activities, and are mitigating impacts that may arise.

Example evidence:

- Membership of and/or active involvement with Bristol Green Capital or a similar pledge or initiative
- In relation to the funding sought, actions planned or being undertaken with regard to environmental management
(For example if a group were funded to clear a derelict piece of land, the council would not wish to fund the clearance through the use of harmful chemicals).
- Where a negative environmental impact is likely as a result of an aspect of the actions funded, that alternatives be considered.
(For example an organisation collects surplus food from the retail and catering industry, including supermarkets, and redistributes the food to people who are in need or vulnerable. This has an environmental benefit in reducing waste, but a cost because they use vans to collect and distribute the food. However the organisation is using electric bicycles and bike trailers to replace a van on shorter journeys)