



Bristol Women in Business Charter

The Bristol Women in Business Charter is an effective long-term lever to support the move to greater gender equality within businesses in Bristol and the surrounding areas.

Following its launch by the Women in Business Task Group (part of the Bristol Women's Commission) in March 2019, the Charter's management and development was run on a purely voluntary basis. However with effect from 1 April 2020, and based on the positive responses that we received from Charter signatories, we have operated in the form of a Community Interest Company (the Bristol Women in Business CIC, company no. 12516760). This is a not-for-profit, community-serving business.

How the CIC supports the aims of the Charter

The Governance that the CIC structure creates holds those that manage the Charter to account to deliver on its aims. The Community Interest Statement that we made as part of the application for the formation of the Company makes clear that:

The company's activities will provide benefit to the women that work in Bristol and the surrounding areas, the businesses that employ them and the wider Bristol community.

We have established a small team to operate the Charter in service of the community and to be answerable to the Charter's stakeholders.

The first directors of the CIC are Jane Ginnever and Sandra Gordon, both current and former members of the Task Group that launched the Charter in March 2019. They have been joined on the team by Izobel Woolley, the Marketing and Admin Manager, who has been working her magic on the Charter's social media accounts since November 2019.

How the structure benefits Charter signatories

We are currently focussed on making sure that the Charter operations are working smoothly and improving our key services. That means we're aiming to communicate more with signatory companies, get better at our delivery of events, and providing more support for our points of contact within signatory companies to spread the word and use the Charter to effect change internally.

Those signatories who have attended our events have started to build a useful community of like-minded change agents, open to sharing what has worked for them. We plan to develop and enable that community, potentially utilising technology to aid communication.

We work openly (and that includes being open about the company's finances) and aim to provide what the business community in Bristol needs. We plan to establish a means by which all signatory companies and other key stakeholders are able to guide the work of the Charter to help ensure it fully meets its aims in the long-term.

Reporting progress on gender equality and new annual fees

From 1st April 2020, all new and renewing Charter signatories are required to pay a small fee to collectively fund the work of the Charter. Some of the first Charter signatories are now reaching the first anniversary of signing the Charter, so it's also time for them to report on the progress they have made and renew their commitment to the Charter.

The level of fee a company pays varies according to the number of employees a business has. We want to encourage all businesses that employ more than two people to sign up to the Charter and to make more progress on gender equality, so we have created a scale of fees that we hope will not deter smaller companies from signing the Charter.

The annual fee for the April 2020 to March 2021 is as follows:

No. of Full Time Equivalents (FTE)	Annual fee payable on renewal
3-19	£50
20-50	£75
51-100	£100
101-250	£150
251-500	£250
501-1000	£500
1001 and over	£750

When you apply or report your progress, we will ask you for information about the number of people you employ. This relates only to those employees based in Bristol and the surrounding area (if yours is a national or multinational company) and is the number of full time equivalents (FTE) rather than the headcount, so as not to penalise those companies employing more part-time workers.

We intend to collate the data that you provide to us and use it to help monitor the progress of the move to greater gender equality in Bristol, and to produce our annual report.

FAQs

What will happen to any profit the company makes?

All profit generated is reinvested in the aims of the Charter and we seek the views of the signatories about how to spend it. We aim to keep fees at a level which will not generate an excessive surplus.

Do the directors take a salary?

Once the CIC begins to generate sufficient revenue, the directors will be paid a nominal sum that will acknowledge (but is unlikely to reflect) the time and energy they contribute to the work of the Charter. We will also pay for specialist support to help the Charter achieve its aims most effectively. Details of expenditure will be shared with signatories.

Who owns the company?

The company is limited by guarantee and its assets are locked into the business to ensure that they are applied for its social purpose. It cannot be sold, dividends cannot be taken and if, for any reason the company is wound up, its assets will transfer to Bristol Women's Voice (Registered Charity No. 1170110). That's written into the Articles of Association for the CIC.

Why isn't the company called the Bristol Women in Business Charter CIC?

Using the word 'Charter' in a registered company name is restricted to those companies that have a Royal Charter, which we don't. So we had to go for something more generic.

Is there a plan to grow the company and spread the work of the Charter?

Yes, we want to reach more businesses in Bristol and the surrounding area, to help make Bristol one of the most gender equal cities in the UK. There are no plans to extend the reach of the Charter beyond that geographic area, but we are keen to encourage other cities to emulate the model we have created.

What if I decide I don't want to continue to be a signatory of the Charter after a year?

When we contact you to ask you to report your progress, you have the option to opt out and not renew. If you choose to do that, your company will no longer be named as a signatory of the Charter and will not be able to attend the invite-only events.

How can we find out more?

If you have any further questions about the Charter and how it operates, please email info@bristolwomeninbusinesscharter.org for more information in the first instance. If you'd like to contact either of the directors, you can do so at jane@bristolwomeninbusinesscharter.org (Jane Ginnever) and sandra@bristolwomeninbusinesscharter.org (Sandra Gordon). Our

[website](#) contains lots of useful information and is updated regularly.