



EASTSIDE COMMUNITY TRUST



Annual report 2025-26

Foreword from our chair, Paul Hassan

The end of another year marks a deeply meaningful chapter for Eastside Community Trust, and as the new Chair, I am proud to introduce this report.

Over the past year, Eastside has continued to deliver vibrant, high-quality activities alongside our community, reaching more local neighbours and strengthening the bedrock of our organisation.

But while we capture many important metrics in our work, outlined in this report are other moments that truly capture what community life means: the friendships formed, tested, and renewed; the quiet risks taken and boundaries pushed; the shared laughter, artwork created, impromptu football matches, water fights, and singalongs.

These joyful moments are what matter most, particularly for children growing up in a world where access to simple adventure and freedom can feel increasingly out of reach. Being an inclusive, welcoming, and supportive refuge in Easton and Lawrence Hill remains vital. As national economic and social pressures continue to weigh heavily on local families, the need for trusted spaces where people can connect, find support, and simply belong has never been greater.

We know local community anchors, like Eastside, play a unique role in weaving a stronger social fabric, lifting spirits, and creating places where people feel genuinely seen and valued. Without them, everything would be so much harder.

Amid ongoing challenges, residents overwhelmingly tell us that coming to Eastside helps them feel a true sense of belonging, sparks new connections with neighbours they didn't know before, and builds confidence to take an active role in local life.

Supporting health and wellbeing remains at the heart of everything we do, whether that means offering practical help to families during the summer holidays or providing welcoming rooms for local groups to gather.

None of this would be possible without the deep trust and warmth of our partners, residents, staff, and funders.

As we look ahead, we will keep listening to our community, nurturing meaningful partnerships, and ensuring our spaces reflect local priorities.

Together, we will continue working to deepen inclusion, celebrate our neighbourhood's diversity, and build a brighter, more connected future for everyone.

EASTSIDE COMMUNITY TRUST Easton and Lawrence Hill



This is community

Eastside provides people of all ages with places and ways to connect. We are passionate about our community and local people building a healthy and happy neighbourhood.

We believe that Easton and Lawrence Hill is a great place to live filled with creative, resilient and community-minded people. It is diverse and dynamic with many residents who care for one another and the neighbourhood.

As a place-based *Community Anchor Organisation* we work in partnership with all those who have a stake in our area of Bristol.

As we mark six years since our merger which led to the creation of *Eastside Community Trust*, this plan sets out our priorities and ambitions for the next chapter of our story. This plan is about Eastside, its people, its places and the positive impact we aim to have on the communities we are here to serve.

This plan has been shaped by the findings of our evaluation in 2024 with input from the staff and trustee board, partners and funders.



"I feel safe and get no hassle and no arguing between people... It's a weight off your shoulders as you can't spend all day wandering around...without this place I would have been really struggling and in a real mess."

Local resident

 **connecting
EASTSIDE**





Mission and vision

Our mission is to ensure that in our neighbourhood:

- * Children have the freedom to play, be healthy and be part of the local community.
- * Communities are informed, empowered and connected.
- * We run inclusive, welcoming spaces and projects which improve people's wellbeing.
- * Residents have access to a well-run, resilient community anchor organisation which is respected and trusted by the local community and partners.

Our vision is to create a place where communities thrive.



“Eastside Community Trust offers a hub to the community, provides opportunities for local residents to connect, do new things and meets their needs. It provides breathing space, space to play, explore and reduce social isolation.” Partner

activating
EASTSIDE





“It’s like a community living room where people come to relax.”

Local resident



Eastside values:

Positive

We believe you start with what is strong not what is wrong and build on the assets that each place and its people bring.

Collaborative

We are part of a diverse and rich neighbourhood and seek to work in partnership with other residents and local organisations to deliver our aims. We believe you achieve better solutions together.

Kind

Kindness and compassion are at the heart of how we work. We seek to treat everyone equally and with dignity and respect.

Honest

We do what we say we will do and are transparent in how we make decisions, sharing our policies and procedures openly. We have strong principles and carry out our work making the best ethical choice.

Inclusive

We believe in equity of opportunity and seek to ensure our spaces and projects are run with inclusion and equity in mind.

Playful

We want to have fun and bring joy into people’s lives so we aim to bring an element of play into what we do.



thriving
EASTSIDE



How do we do it?

We run Easton Community Centre, a busy centre open to the public six days a week and available for private hire seven days a week. The centre hosts a programme of regular and ad-hoc community activities. It has been a community centre since 1989 as a Community Asset Transfer from Bristol City Council – the council own the centre but we have a 30-year lease (2017-2047) to manage it.

We rent space to our tenants at Easton Community Centre and in the year 25/26, the tenants were Ababo Cuisine, BCfm, Raised in Bristol, Somali Kitchen, Bristol Youth Connect and Bristol Disability Equality Forum.

We run Felix Road Adventure Playground six days a week with private sessions out of those opening hours. The playground has been at the heart of the community since 1972, giving children freedom to play and be themselves. We run the playground on a 30 year asset transfer lease (2019-2049) from the council and have a bespoke built nursery on site run by Raised in Bristol.

The playground has a community kitchen which serves daily home-cooked meals as part of our Food at Felix programme.

We deliver a wide-ranging communications programme to share information, inspire and celebrate our community. This includes a fortnightly ebulletin, a website, social media, a quarterly printed magazine delivered to 14,000 households and 30 community notice boards.

We support community action through projects run by and with local people. These include family and wellbeing activities in our spaces, a community climate action programme, a place making project, nature and environmental projects, and food and cooking projects.

We are landlord to four retail units in Barton Hill, all small businesses run by families from different ethnic communities. These support the traded income generation for the charitable work.

We deliver an extensive programme of events for all the family throughout the year bringing the community together to connect, celebrate, share and play.

Eastside in numbers 2025–26

1672

children attended a session at Felix Road Adventure Playground

1670

adults attended a session at Easton Community Centre

12,901 Attendances

1065

sessions held across our sites

343

evaluation forms completed

88%

said they have pride in the area

75%

connected with someone they didn't already know

59%

rated their contact as 5 out of 5 for improving their wellbeing

92%

said their wellbeing had improved

93%

of people rated their experience 4 or 5 out of 5

54%

rated their sense of belonging as 5 out of 5

89%

said they feel informed about the neighbourhood

92%

said that attending events with Eastside made them more likely to participate in community life

62%

rated Eastside projects/places as 5 out of 5 for accessibility

65%

rated Eastside projects/places as 5 out of 5 for being inclusive

92%

said they felt a sense of belonging

48%

rated their pride in the area as 5 out of 5

58%

rated Eastside projects/places as 5 out of 5 for sustainability

982

booking enquiries

£102,835

in room hire income

1483

places for Free School Meal children delivered in summer 2025

A year at Eastside Community Trust

Spring

- Celebrated five years of Eastside Community Trust with a big street party outside the community centre with 200 residents
- Recruited a much-needed caretaker to look after our spaces
- Launched our energy saving mini-guides and young people's climate films
- Ran our Community Events Fund with 30 applications received
- Launched our Resilient Buildings Community Toolkit in partnership with Bristol Energy Network
- Hosted a Bollywood women's night
- Launched our Community Climate Action Prospectus for investors with Bristol Climate Nature Partnership
- Welcomed Bristol Disability Equality Forum to join us as tenants at Easton Community Centre
- Launched the findings from our after-school food research project with Feeding Bristol with a booklet and two brand new editions of the Freedom Kids Podcast

Summer

- Fun Palace at Easton Community Centre
- Eid parties at both our venues with 200 attendees
- Selected as a 'Locality Trailblazer' to do a research project on membership
- Hosted visit from Centre for Liveable Cities Singapore
- Girl's group sleepover at Felix
- Supported Somali community meeting about youth violence
- Became members of Bristol 24/7 Better Business network

- Began a recruitment campaign for a new Chair of Trustees and resident trustees
- Ran a busy and fun-packed summer at Felix with free meals, trips and activities
- Bristol screening of Postcodes followed by discussion of strategies to curtail knife crime

Autumn

- Relaunched Eastside film nights with a sold-out screening of Oscar winning film, Sinners, followed by monthly film screenings
- Held another Fun Palace full of resident-led workshops and taster sessions
- Hosted an Ethiopian night with food and music by Ababo Cuisine
- Ran a winter coat giveaway to local residents
- Celebrated 50 local champions with 200 attendees at our annual Thank You Awards

Winter

- Held a Christmas market full of local stall holders
- Launched our new community film about connection
- Became a judge for Bristol Legends community awards
- Appointed new trustees and a new chair
- Secured funding for toilet renovations
- Launched Greening Eastside nature programme
- Said farewell to our Community Climate Action programme and Emily and Vic

View from the CEO

Stacy Yelland, CEO of Eastside Community Trust shares her highlights of the year at Eastside

“Eastside Community Trust has been a real place of possibility over the past five years. I feel proud of how the team has come together to create a place where community thrives.”

Celebrating five years since formation of Eastside

In May 2025 we marked five years since three charities merged to become Eastside Community Trust. This represented an important milestone which we marked with a street party closing the road and inviting residents to join us. Since forming in 2020, Eastside has grown to an organisation with £1m income and 24 employees delivering an extensive programme of community projects.

A celebration of community film launched

In October we launched our heartfelt film about Eastside and our community. The film was made with a local filmmaker and our communications team and features highlights of our work. We received hugely positive feedback on the film and it really successfully conveyed the feeling of Eastside and the importance of what we do. *You can watch the film here.*

The arrival of new chair and trustees

In October 2025 we were really privileged to welcome an amazing new cohort of trustees to the organisation. Following the resignation of some of our long serving trustees who

had given a huge amount of time to Eastside we carried out a recruitment process. We appointed Paul Hassan as chair and welcomed six other trustees to the board. All of them bring a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience from diverse backgrounds and I am humbled by their interest in volunteering their time for Eastside.

Launch of Greening Eastside

In January 2025 we launched a brand-new two-year programme to focus on urban ecology using community organising. We were one of only three organisations chosen in the city to be awarded £100,000 over two years to increase biodiversity in our neighbourhood through citizen action and support the council to develop new processes for residents to take action in local green spaces.

Expansion of Thriving Eastside

After our successful pilot in 24/25, we expanded our programme of low-cost health and wellbeing activities delivered from Easton Community Centre. The programme had grown out of our Eastside Connect project funded by St Monica Trust and our consultation with residents about what they wanted to see at the centre. This led to us opening on Saturdays with a rolling programme of family sessions and an increase in our offer of women-only fitness and wellbeing classes. All sessions cost £2 which contributes to the cost of the trainers. In 25/26 we expanded this programme to include a wide range of drop-in advice sessions and new sessions for men and women.

View from the CEO (con...)

Launch of Upshot

In October 2025 we launched a new Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning tool to capture and record data about our impact. Initially we launched at the playground to ensure we had accurate records of children attending sessions. Following this we began using it at the community centre for our adult sessions. We plan to continue expanding our use of this in 26/27.

Milestone of Raised In financial contribution from both nurseries

In January 2026 we were please to received £40,000 donation from our partners, Raised In. Our partnership with the nursery provider dates back nearly ten years when the first nursery opened at Easton Community Centre followed by a second site at Felix Road Adventure Playground in 2021. Since then the team has been committed to this original vision and in 2026 donated a share of profits to support our ongoing sustainability.

Secured BIF3 and Lottery funding for an additional four years from April 26

In 25/26 we had two long term funding streams coming to an end – Community Climate Action Fund and Bristol Impact Fund 2. As part of the strategic plan we intend to keep our focus on community connection and cohesion and climate and environment and sought alternative funding to continue this work. We were pleased to secure three different fundings sources for this:

- Bristol Impact Fund 3 for Connecting Eastside
- Nature Together for Greening Eastside
- Lottery Reaching Communities to match fund both Connecting Eastside and Greening Eastside

Bristol Disability Equality Forum as tenants

Following the departure of a previous tenant, we were pleased to welcome BDEF to join us at Easton Community Centre. The organisation focuses on voice and influence and ensuring Disabled people's voices are heard in decision making. The organisation's aims and values align with Eastside and it is great having them in the building.

Ending of Community Climate Action – celebrating our achievements

After five years our community climate action work came to an end and we celebrated the occasion launching a number of resources around energy saving for residents and community buildings. We were saddened to say farewell to Emily Fifield who had been with Eastside for ten years, and Vic Wakefield-Jarrett. Both had worked incredibly hard on Eastside's community energy projects.

Our delivery in 2025 to 2026

Children, young people and families

Felix Road Adventure Playground

We run an open access 2.5-acre adventure playground with multiple opportunities for children to run, swing, climb, slide, cycle, build and garden. This is high energy outdoor adventure play with children burning lots of calories playing outdoors and away from any screens, playing on their own, in small or large groups. The site also has a stage, a wild natural area, lots of covered outdoor space, a tool shed for building and a bicycle repair container. The playground is open six days a week all year round.

Targeted youth and play sessions

The majority of our opening hours are open access, but we also host sessions for targeted groups which were identified in the council Youth and Play Strategy as priority groups.

- **Wavy Nights** – a late-night adventure play session for 12–16 year olds twice a week.
- **Felix Girls** – on Fridays the playground is a girl's only space.
- **Roma Group** – on Tuesday afternoons in partnership with City Academy secondary school we host a group for girls from the Roma community focused on food, play and music. Once every couple of months we organise trips for Roma boys and girls together such as go-karting or laser tag.
- **Chill Tuesdays** – a quieter session in school holidays aimed at SEN children and their families.

Trips and outings for children and families

With nearly 60% of local children living in poverty, families can find trips and holidays to be beyond their financial means. During term time and school holidays we run a programme of free trips and outings for regular playground children including family coach trips.

Stay and Play

One of our qualified playwork team runs a twice weekly stay and play session – one at each of our venues. These are relaxed and informal play sessions with toys, games and age-appropriate activities for parents and carers with pre-school age children.

Food at Felix

In 25/26 we served 14,427 free meals to children visiting the playground. We have been a founding member of Bristol's Food Equality Strategy Group and a key deliverer of the Holiday Activity Fund programme providing meals for children on Free School Meals. All meals are cooked from fresh ingredients, culturally appropriate and cooked with children's health in mind.

Connection and cohesion

Community Event Fund

Each year we receive a grant of approx. £12,000 from our endowment held with Quartet to improve the neighbourhoods of Easton and Lawrence Hill. In 25/26 we gave 22 local people/groups grants of up to £500 for community-led events.

Thank You Awards

As part of our Annual General Meeting, we celebrated over 50 local people who were nominated for a Thank You Award for their voluntary work in our local community. Over 200 people attend the awards evening and AGM in a celebratory event that is unique in its diversity.

Easton Community Centre – Connecting Eastside

The community centre is a public open space hosting a wide range of activities and events. The centre is a hub where people can meet, learn, socialise. Our front of house team are trusted sources of support, sign posting and care.

Eastside People and Places

This year marked the end of our four-year programme funded by Bristol City Council Impact Fund 2. Our partnership with Somali Kitchen and Trinity Centre focused on connection, cohesion and place making with a particular emphasis of women and girls. We were successful in applying for Bristol Impact Fund 3 with a change of focus to centre on our community hub.

Women's nights at Easton Community Centre

We built on our successful event programme from last year to support local women to organise their own nights out. We decided to create a new venue for women, particularly

Muslim women, who have few late-night venues where they can socialise and have fun. The annual programme includes Bollywood and Somali Burranbur and our events are open to all women who want a safe, inclusive night out.

Eastside events

We curate a programme of events over the year that aim to celebrate the diversity of our community, give families low-cost activities to attend and provide opportunities for connection between neighbours. Highlights include Eid parties, Christmas parties, Halloween, Vibes and Ventures, Fun Palaces, film nights, Diwali and community meals.

Community Connector

Our Community Connector, is always out and about engaging residents in various activities to improve the neighbourhood. Their role is to join the dots between people, groups and places and support residents to make their ideas a reality.

Greening Eastside

In January 2026 we recruited a project coordinator to the team to deliver a two-year programme to activate residents around nature in the neighbourhood. During the first few months the programme has inspired new groups and re-energised existing groups with over 20 small community groups taking action on nature.

Activating Eastside

Thanks to funding from Locality we have been working with our trustee board to discover how members of Eastside might want to be engaged in the work of the organisation. The project aimed to identify ways Eastside can support resident capacity building to get things done where they live.

Wellbeing and support

Advice drop-ins

Over the past 12 months our Centre Manager has focused on developing the offer of free drop-in advice sessions for local residents by developing partnerships with the city's advice agencies. There is high need for quality advice on housing, immigration, debt and welfare as many residents experience poverty and financial hardship from the rising cost of living. The centre hosts regular weekly sessions from St Paul's Advice Centre, Housing Matters, the Centre for Sustainable Energy, and Shelter and Citizens Advice Bureau.

IT support drop-in and public access computers

We have worked with local volunteers to provide informal drop-in support on IT skills for local people. This has been very popular and it's accompanied by computers available for free use for the public in our foyer space.

Eastside Repair Café

We support volunteers to run Eastside Repair Café where they repair much-loved household items on a monthly basis.

Thriving Eastside

We have curated a programme of health and wellbeing sessions aimed at tackling social isolation and health inequalities. The sessions have been developed in consultation with residents and some are delivered by local people. Eastside donates the space and residents contribute £2 per session to cover the cost of the trainers, although no one is excluded based on ability to pay.

In the past 12 months these sessions have included:

- **Mindful colouring group** - weekly peer-led colouring session popular for adults with learning disabilities who come together in a supportive and relaxed space
- **Get cycling – women-led cycling training**
- **Bollywood aerobics** – We work with our trustee and local resident, Azmina Mitha, to host a weekly Bollywood aerobic class
- **Book club**
- **Tai chi for over 50s**
- **Chair yoga**
- **Breathe relaxation sessions**

Family sessions on Saturdays

The community centre is open to the public every Saturday with a rotating programme of low-cost family activities. The idea is to provide a local accessible and inclusive space for families on low incomes to have somewhere to enjoy a range of different sessions. Currently on offer:

- **Everyone Make's IT (arts and crafts),**
- **Family yoga,**
- **Collage Club**
- **Lego Club.**

Our communications

Up Our Street magazine

Eastside sends out fortnightly news bulletins and a quarterly community magazine. The magazine celebrates our community and all the amazing community action and it informs people about important city issues. We print 14,000 copies and these are hand delivered through everyone's letterbox.

Up Our Street ebulletin, Facebook LinkedIn, Instagram

Eastside shares news and information on a weekly basis through our digital channels to over 2,000 subscribers and followers. Our communication aims to inform, inspire and motivate people to action.

Noticeboards

Thanks to a team of local volunteers, we keep 30 notice boards updated in the neighbourhood once a month.



Advocacy and strategy

Roots of Resilience

We have been a leading voice in a citywide strategic advocacy project to review and improve the council's approach to community assets and Community Asset Transfer. Working alongside Community Anchor Organisations from across the city, we developed a manifesto with a list of clear demands for how the council's approach to community assets could be improved. This aligns with national campaigns such as We're Right Here and Locality Power of Community Manifesto.

Upshot

In 25/26 we invested in new software to better capture data and impact. We selected the Upshot platform based on recommendations by peers and launched this in October 2025 initially at the playground to capture children's registration and sessions. After this pilot we expanded to include sessions at the community centre and adults accessing our activities. This is a long-term project to continue to improve the quality of our data collection and reporting.

Food Equality Strategy Group

We have been a founding member and ongoing partner in this group convened by Feeding Bristol to focus on reducing food poverty.

Bristol City Council Community Cohesion Working Group

Since the riots in August 2024, we have been a member of this citywide response group tackling the issues of division and polarisation in our communities. The group is working on a strategy and action plan to respond to findings in research about cohesion in Bristol and Eastside will be leading on commitments in the strategy.

VCSE Strategy Group

Eastside has been a member of this group which discusses how the council works in an equitable way with the voluntary community sector. Work has looked at procurement and commissioning and Community Asset Transfer.

Youth and Play Alliance

Eastside is a member of this citywide partnership advocating for play and youth work. We are also members of the East Central Youth and Play Partnership.

ACFA

We joined this citywide network of advice organisations and community hubs as part of our strategy to expand the amount of local advice sessions on offer.

Bristol 24/7 Better Business

We joined this network to link with socially minded businesses and reach new audiences to increase our traded income through venue hire.

Our tenants

BCfm

This volunteer-run community radio station is based at the community centre. This is an award-winning radio station that broadcasts a diverse range of programmes all run by local volunteers.

Ababo Cuisine

The café at Easton Community Centre has been run by this family business since November 2024. Meriam Ababo was initially supported through a migrant business start-up programme and Meriam was a 'sister' with our former café Houria CIC. Meriam has since been developing her own café and catering business based at the heart of the centre.

Somali Kitchen

We are in a long-term partnership with this small CIC which empower Somali women to become active in their community. We have provided free and low cost office space as well as capacity building support. With Eastside support, the leadership of this organisation has gone from strength to strength.

Raised in

Over the past 10 years our partnership with Raised In has gone from strength to strength. Their two nurseries based at Eastside Community Trust have been fully booked and the organisation has paid regular rent. Additionally, in 25/26 we had our first year of both nurseries fulfilling their financial commitment to donate £20,000 per site to the organisation. This is a significant milestone as it was always the intention of the original relationship that there would be a profit share contribution made from the nurseries to the community assets.

Bristol Disability Equality Forum

We welcomed BDEF as a new tenant to Easton Community Centre. BDEF supports Disabled people to engage in decision making and provides advocacy and campaigning around issues that impact on Disabled people.

Bristol Youth Connect

This organisations works with young people on a range of programmes.

Regular hirers

As well as long term tenants we have several ongoing arrangements with partner organisations who use our spaces on discounted hire terms. These include:

- Khaas running a monthly session for Disabled children from South Asian community
- Bristol Autism Project running a weekly youth club and a weekly school holiday session
- SEND Family Club resident-led group running a monthly play session
- Wing Chun running a weekly martial arts session

180-186 Avonvale Road

These retail units are let on a commercial basis to small business owners providing convenience shops and food outlets to residents.

Investing in our assets

We currently are responsible for a number of community and commercial assets:

- Easton Community Centre on a 30-year Community Asset Transfer lease from the council
- Landlord to Raised in Easton nursery within Easton Community Centre
- Landlord to Raised in Felix Road in our bespoke nursery building on the grounds of Felix Road Adventure Playground
- Felix Road Adventure Playground on a 30-year Community Assets Transfer lease from the council
- Four retail units (180-186 Avonvale Road) on a 999-year lease from Sovereign Housing Association

These assets require significant upkeep and investment and through the year we raised funds to maintain and improve them. Major investments in the year was our toilet redesign and tendering process at Easton Community Centre.

Thanks to grants from the Suez Community Fund, Bristol City Council Asset Management Grant and Community Infrastructure Levy, we commissioned an architect to re-design toilets on ground and first floor at Easton Community Centre. Following a procurement process we appointed Mobius to carry out a £125,000 refurbishment in 26/27.





We're here:

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