

Voluntary organisations, Community groups and Social Enterprises (VCSE) in Greater Manchester – the next 10 years

A Greater Manchester VCSE Policy Position Paper

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR CONSULTATION

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<https://www.vsnw.org.uk/our-work/devolution/gm-vcse-devolution-reference-group>

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1.0 The Purpose of this Paper

As VCSE leaders, the GM VCSE Devolution Reference Group¹ welcomes our part in the delivery of the Greater Manchester Model for Unified Public Services, and the description of the potential that we might play in an inclusive economy described in the Local Industrial Strategy. This policy position paper will describe the role and potential contribution of voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises (VCSE) as a force for positive benefit and part of the 'system' which will strive for change and improvement in the future of Greater Manchester.

We will set out a long-term aspiration for our role in making Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old, setting out the 'offer' that we can bring. However, it is important that as VCSE leaders, we also describe our own ambitions for transformation over the next 10 years; including our own willingness to step forward and develop in order to achieve our potential, and enjoy a sustainable, productive future.

As part of this transformation, we will set out our own Greater Manchester VCSE Ecosystem Model to align with the arrangements of the Unified Public Services and to create a co-ordinated approach based on people, place and prevention. Furthermore, we will describe the potential contribution of voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises in an inclusive, local, and productive social economy.

VCSE organisations have been an integral part of the communities of Greater Manchester for over 200 years. In 2019, it is important that we articulate the vital role played by these organisations, both now and in the future, towards addressing inequalities in wellbeing, wealth and living standards, and describe the continuing need to support and grow the reach, scale and spread of the sector. We want to work together and with our partners to make this happen. VCSE services and activities are co-dependent with 'public services' and should therefore be an integral part of the planning and resourcing of statutory and state-run services. This Paper will set out a blueprint for achieving the integrated planning into which VCSE organisations can bring 'hope, then help'.

¹ <https://www.vsnw.org.uk/our-work/devolution/gm-vcse-devolution-reference-group/>

2.0 Vision

Our Ambition for the VCSE sector in Greater Manchester is that:

Greater Manchester will have the most productive and modernised VCSE ecosystem in England, with consistently high-quality social, environmental and economic values, standards and delivery, supported by sustainable infrastructure and strong leadership, able to respond to the aspirations and demands of Greater Manchester citizens and communities. We want to eradicate poverty in a generation.

Greater Manchester will value the role that our local citizens and communities play in leading, shaping and fully engaging in this ecosystem. It will also support and recognise the vital role that everyone has in sustaining this through maintaining their own health, supporting neighbours and friends, caring for their environment and contributing to the local economy.

Across the city region, partners will come together from the public, private, academic, voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors to create a fully integrated offer including local accountability and engagement infrastructures. This will align to, support and enhance asset based community development, the reform of services for the public and be central to sustaining a productive social economy.

3.0 Baseline – what is the VCSE sector and why is it important?

Greater Manchester is home to nearly 16,000 voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises working to improve the lives of citizens. The VCSE sector is active across every aspect of the local economy and reform including crime and disorder; sport, culture and leisure; skills, employment and enterprise; health and social care; housing and transport; environment and carbon reduction; poverty reduction; and inclusive economy; and is supported by a range of infrastructure organisations. Social, environmental and economic inequality is the backdrop to everything that we do as a sector.

Scratching beneath the surface uncovers a complex system of organisations and groups that are both formal and informally constituted, some of which trade and some of which are purely voluntary, some are 'social enterprises' operating in the business economy, whereas others form part of 'civil society'.

Our complexity is our strength, and as a sector, we include organisations which range dramatically in size, scale and function. It is this complexity which allows us to respond to new challenges, and to reach different communities; providing services, enabling social action, improving the environment, informing, influencing, connecting and developing voluntary and community activity and bringing funds and resources into Greater Manchester. It is our values that hold us together. Anchored in 'place', VCSE organisations exist to support and enhance the lives of people and the environment. We are mission-driven and focused on 'social value'.

However, as VCSE leaders, we can see increasing pressure on the community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises that exist in Greater Manchester, who are increasingly being driven to deal with emergencies and deficit issues (e.g. food banks and homelessness, being extreme examples). As a sector, we are not always fulfilling our potential

for delivering positive wellbeing, early identification and resolution of problems, and taking part in constructive activity to enhance quality of life.

VCSE organisations work closely together and in synergy with, but independent from, the statutory and business sectors. VCSE work will be social at heart, driven by action in communities and take a ‘citizen lens’ to people, place and prosperity in order to make Greater Manchester a better place. VCSE organisations are involved in a huge range of activities in communities from fixing cars to gardening, from social care to money advice, and from tackling homelessness to singing for dementia, for example. They are enablers of enlightenment, solace and belonging, and the sector as a whole is a key player in the social economy.

4.0 The ‘offer’ that VCSE organisations will bring

We have described the contribution that VCSE organisations could play in 10 years’ time for the positive benefit of Greater Manchester and its communities building from the objectives set out by the Greater Manchester Devolution VCSE Reference Group:

4.1 We are many. The army of staff, volunteers and supporters across the sector are a catalyst for change and a connector of people.

In 10 years....

- As our communities become more diverse, and our population increases, the VCSE sector in Greater Manchester will grow in parallel. In 10 years’ time, we will be many more, perhaps over 1,000 more.
- Our role as part of **good social infrastructure** will enable and encourage people to live healthy, productive lives with a reduced need for state support.
- **Working in collaboration with all sectors**, we can support good planning and design, making the connections that facilitate community cohesion.
- In 10 years’ time, we will be collaborating with each other and with public and private partners to tackle some of the ‘wicked’ problems in society, environment and the local economy.

4.2 Our role is critical for the economic success of devolution in Greater Manchester but also for the equally important cultural and social devolution that will help build a truly equal region

In 10 years....

- VCSE organisations will be a critical part of the inclusive economy which has been built in Greater Manchester; taking the role of **providing stable, good quality and ethical jobs near to people’s homes**.
- VCSE organisations will provide work experience, volunteering opportunities, apprenticeships and employment **for many people who might find it hard to find work, including those with autism, learning difficulties and mental health problems**.
- The VCSE sector will **lever non-public funding into services, projects and activities** for the benefit of Greater Manchester. The sector will have a key role in increasing local productivity by drawing private investment funds into our activities.
- **Community ownership of capital / physical assets will have expanded** to enable communities to have a stake in the running of housing schemes, community centres, social needs transport, and parks and open spaces, for example.
- The VCSE sector will **play a key role in protecting and enhancing our planet**, the GM green and blue space, and the environment around us. This will take place through direct interventions and through responsible activity and management. VCSE

organisations will be at the **forefront of green technologies and innovation**, as well as in areas of market difficulty, such as social care and low level mental health issues.

4.3 We can devise, develop and deliver solutions to some of the most challenging problems faced by Greater Manchester, breaking down barriers and building community confidence and cohesion, and ensure we move from crisis resolution to anticipation and prevention

In 10 years....

- VCSE organisations will be at the heart of early intervention and primary prevention activities. VCSE services will create a **flexible and responsive form of support to people in crisis** – both ‘wrapping around’ and adding value to statutory forms of support and leading delivery of public services.
- We will have maximised the use of **innovative forms of co-operative governance** to collaborate effectively to deliver services and activities.
- **New forms of infrastructure will enable more money, volunteers and other resources to flow** into the VCSE ‘ecosystem’, reaching the most diverse and difficult to engage activities in our communities.
- The VCSE sector will have a **functional ecosystem that enables strong connections and communication** to be made. This will include defined roles for both community ‘anchor’ organisations and people who act as the ‘connector’ between people and services and activities in their local communities.
- VCSE organisations will be seen as full and equal partners in a ‘system’ (not a ‘sector’) that includes all traditional sectors and is focussed on people and place. VCSE organisations will **facilitate co-production, and co-design**, achieving shared outcomes designed with people.

4.4 We understand our communities. We can help drive people-powered change, catalysing social action and bridging the gap that can exist between public services and the people they serve

In 10 years....

- VCSE organisations will **facilitate ‘collaboration spaces’** which are vital to a resilient, inclusive community. These are places and spaces within a community which are neither private, commercial nor workplaces, where a real cross-section of citizens will congregate and where informal interaction can create new networks and bridging social capital.
- The number, density and connectivity of VCSE groups and facilities within a place is a factor in the cohesiveness and resilience of a community. Critical mass is much less likely to be achieved in more deprived communities, but can be fostered and maintained through **good quality VCSE infrastructure organisations and networking community anchors**.
- Communities of identity and experience will thrive as the primary community for many people from minority groups and an important secondary one for others. We will help the public sector to **actively seek out individuals and groups who are visible or hidden minorities** in a place, understand the specific barriers they face and act accordingly.

5.0 VCSE transformation

However, in order to realise our 10-year aim, we also know that the VCSE itself needs to develop and transform. We have recognised that there are a series of ‘enablers’ which will help the VCSE sector thrive and achieve its potential.

In order to achieve the transformation that we are hoping for, we have set out a number of drivers for change; reasons why we need to work differently together in the future.

- There is a collective desire to step up to the mark as an equal partner with business and public sector as part of an inclusive and flourishing economy in Greater Manchester
- A desire to align with, shape, and where appropriate, lead implementation of the priorities set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy, and by the Greater Manchester Mayor.
- The anticipated further impacts of a slowing economy and public-sector budget reductions.
- The recent dramatic reduction in the free reserves available to VCSE organisations.
- Innovation in ways of working (for example in digital technologies) which are leaving parts of the sector behind.
- The need for additional VCSE sector capacity to respond to changes in need, complexity and demand for services and activities.
- An increased focus on 'prevention' and 'managing demand' for public sector services
- The need for consistency of approach in partnerships and relationships between the public and VCSE sectors.

We know that we must build from the bottom up – from strong relationships around the VCSE sector in Greater Manchester, learning from what has worked (and what hasn't) and celebrating our successes. We want to join together and be seen as leaders in Greater Manchester for taking forward effective collaboration, co-design and co-production and for adopting the most inclusive approach towards building a sustainable VCSE sector.

As part of this work, we are building from the shared commitments with our partners through the Accord and Health and Social Care MOU, recognising that as a sector, we also need to work smarter to achieve these goals;

- **Sharing information and intelligence** – about relevant and available VCSE activity; about population, local statistics, business development, commissioning and budget proposals, etc, in a timely and accessible manner.
- **Sharing connections and ability to influence** – providing VCSE representatives into joint discussions and leadership collaboration, but also working together operationally across sectors.
- **Collaboration and involvement in strategic discussions**, project development, co-production, co-design and equal partnership.
- **Keeping and sharing records** of performance, impact, social value, in a way that is proportionate and flexible.

We will focus on 'people, place and partnerships' – and use the structure of the GM Reform Model White Paper to give a framework to our transformation in order to create a thriving functional ecosystem.

We have recognised that there are six '**enablers**' which will help the VCSE sector to grow, thrive and achieve its potential. They are:

1. Geographical alignment, strengthening our internal networks, infrastructure and communications.
2. Development of our leadership, to reflect the diversity of our sector and enable us to be more accountable to each other.

3. Development of our paid and volunteer workforce, and of its relationships with colleagues in other sectors.
4. Adequate resources through a VCSE Investment Strategy, including money, capital assets and support.
5. Early involvement in the development of GM strategies and policies
6. Changes in national government VCSE policy and resourcing.

5.1 Geographical alignment

Our ask of our public sector and business partners:

- Include VCSE organisations as part of the ‘system’ of services for the public.
- Achieve a shared understanding of the relationship that the VCSE sector has with its key stakeholders, including beneficiaries / service users and clients (current and future), funders and donors, commissioners, delivery partners, and the wider public and business sectors.
- Recognise and engage with, the most relevant parts of the VCSE ecosystem across different geographies; be it Greater Manchester, local authority area, neighbourhood or community.
- Make direct linkages through geographic VCSE infrastructure and thematic anchor organisations.

In this Paper, we are proposing that the VCSE sector be thought of as an ‘ecosystem’ with a complex web of relationships and interdependencies built around a network of ‘*anchor organisations*’, and having distributive leadership. Our ecosystem is like a loofah; capable of expanding and contracting, whilst maintaining strength and purpose. It is also like a garden – growing, changing, adapting, living, breathing, and fragile, containing organisms whose lives depend on each other and the environment around them.

We want to give recognition to a ‘*web*’ of VCSE *anchor organisations* at a GM, locality, neighbourhood and community level. Each anchor will be a multi-purpose, independent community-led organisation, with a recognised brief to lead on either a geographic focus for service design and delivery; or having a specialist area of expertise; or on a particular community of identity.

- **Locality Anchors** will be VCSE infrastructure organisations or services, which support other VCSE organisations to influence, connect and develop in a local authority area.
- **Neighbourhood Anchors** will be rooted in their local community and provide services, help bring money and opportunities into a neighbourhood, act as a catalyst for change in a local area, support other community-led organisations and strengthen community participation. They can act in the connecting role that allows social prescribing to happen.
- **Specialist and Thematic Anchors** can either focus on a particular community of identity; tackle a particular issue; or perform a function that is best co-ordinated centrally (such as campaigning, lobbying, policy and research).

The VCSE ecosystem does not just contain the providers of ‘services’ in communities, it also contains organisations able to champion and advocate on behalf of others, giving voice to people and communities; and also local infrastructure organisations, whose role is to support other VCSEs to operate effectively and enable to ecosystem to function.

We need to articulate clear lines of communication and pathways around the VCSE ecosystem for our partners, methodologies for collaboration, and clarity around areas of mutual support. The way that VCSE organisations ‘organise’ may be different and organic, but it works!

Assembling this ecosystem will need time, skill and resources. It will also need support to grow and thrive, but the benefits will be huge.

What needs to change to realise our potential?

- Agreement of and investment in the development of a clear arrangement of Greater Manchester, locality and neighbourhood 'infrastructure'.
- Recognition of specific 'anchor organisations' in our localities and communities.
- Joined up commissioning of VCSE services and 'infrastructure' both within and between localities.
- Agreed Greater Manchester standards for VCSE infrastructure and support.
- Development of operational communications links to ensure alignment with the Greater Manchester Reform Model / neighbourhood working arrangements.
- Creation of a connector role between public sector neighbourhood working arrangements and VCSE anchors across each locality, which supports and enables the VCSE involvement in neighbourhood working. Ideally this role should be hosted by the VCSE locality VCSE anchor (infrastructure) organisation.

5.2 Leadership and accountability

Our ask of our public sector and business partners:

- Create clear roles and leadership positions for the VCSE sector in strategic partnerships across people and place, as well as involvement in relevant public sector-led programmes and governance at all levels.
- Put in place effective representation in decision-making bodies across Greater Manchester.
- Help us to build strong and effective VCSE leadership, work with our leaders as equals, and ensure that their voices are heard in decision-making, policy and strategy across Greater Manchester.
- Support us to develop the structures and programmes which will enable more effective leadership and accountability.
- Help us to give greater commitment to the diverse communities in Greater Manchester, and enabling of an understanding of the changes that are occurring in our communities. Together we can raise awareness around inclusion, equalities and diversity, including celebrating difference, community cohesion and making a stand against hate crime.

We believe that investment of time and resources is required for leadership in the VCSE sector in Greater Manchester. We need to increase our capability and capacity to act strategically, to influence our partners and stakeholders, and to put in place tactics that will benefit the sector as a whole. For the VCSE sector, 'leadership' should be embedded throughout the ecosystem and be about enabling, catalysing and supporting others to act, rather than any top-down control.

Our ambition is also to be leaders in accountability: individually and severally. Each VCSE organisation has a requirement for accountability to its members, service users, beneficiaries, communities and wider stakeholders through its 'not for profit' governance arrangements. However, we also believe that we should be accountable for the social, environmental and economic impacts that we create.

We also aspire to build capacity to take a greater leadership role around Greater Manchester's diverse communities including recognition and capacity building to build up strength and recognition for leaders in certain communities of identity... faith, BME, gender....

What needs to change to realise our potential?

- Agreement of minimum standards of involvement for leaders from VCSE organisations in partnerships and delivery governance across each of the 10 local authority areas.
- A clear role and recognition for the GM Devolution VCSE Reference Group in relation to Greater Manchester decision-making, and parallel local authority level roles and recognition linked and led by the locality VCSE ecosystems.
- Recognition of the VCSE ecosystem arrangements and leaders in each of the 10 local authority areas.
- Greater participation in all workforce programmes across partners, particularly responding to GMCA and GMHSCP leadership and flagship work such as the Leaders in GM programme.
- A programme of Enhanced leadership for those at the forefront of networks of VCSE organisations who represent particular Communities of Identity.
- A bespoke community leadership programme to empower the next generation of community level leaders.
- Enhanced state of the sector survey to allow better market intelligence to inform leadership and decision-making, including publishing a VCSE 'Social Impact Report' for our sector informed by our State of the Sector Survey.

5.3 Workforce

Our ask of our public sector and business partners:

- The VCSE 'workforce' needs to be able to connect and collaborate, so requires consistency of practice and high standards in the conduct of the relationships between the VCSE sector and our key public sector partners.
- Inclusion of VCSE staff, volunteers and carers in the definition of 'one workforce functioning together'.
- Inclusion of VCSE workforce in public sector 'organisational development' programmes. Brokerage of support and in kind mentoring by the business sector.
- Increase in the use of secondment, work experience opportunities, 'back to the floor', etc, to enable to holistic workforce approach and understanding.
- Help us to ensure that volunteering is properly valued and resourced.
- Help us to build opportunities and relationships between public employees and volunteers and employees in VCSE at all levels to create positive outcomes for local people

Our VCSE sector needs investment of time and resources in workforce development, career progression and good employment practice. We have the potential to be leaders in good employment, and hold a collective aspiration that all VCSE employers should be able to achieve Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter standards. However, a number of barriers exist around human resources capability and capacity, lack of 'core funding' and the financial 'terms and conditions' of grants and contracts. Our own market forces are driving down wages and restricting good practice. This is something that we need to address and change. We will use our evolving ecosystem model to ease additional investment into our sector to create the space for development, sharing good practice, testing innovating working practice and raising overall standards.

In order to enable better links to be made both between organisations within the VCSE sector and between the sector and its public and private partners, we believe that the creation of 'connector' roles will be vital. These might sit in both public and VCSE sector organisations, but their roles will be to ensure effective communications, involvement and partnership working.

We will put in place arrangements to implement the vision of the draft Volunteering in Greater Manchester Strategy: *People who live, work and study in Greater Manchester will be encouraged and enabled to contribute to the life of Greater Manchester through volunteering, and in return will gain a positive, meaningful and rewarding experience.*

What needs to change to realise our potential?

- A ramped up training and support provision for the VCSE workforce, including volunteers and carers
- Development of a collaborative approach to back office support services, including HR, legal services, etc
- Implementation of the GM Volunteering Strategy
- All Greater Manchester Local Authorities and public sector organisations to put in place Employer Supported Volunteering arrangements in conjunction with their local VCSE infrastructure, to enable the sharing of expertise and knowledge between sectors

5.4 Financial Resource

Our ask of our public sector and business partners:

- Resources that are appropriate, accessible, and sustainable and a consistent approach to strategic and operational thinking.
- Take a strategic and joined up approach to funding and commissioning of VCSE activities.
- Enable a shift in resources which allows the shift in demand needed away from public services and into the VCSE sector.
- Help us to create a resilient social economy where social enterprises, co-operatives, community businesses, charities and micro-social business thrive.
- Help us to lever additional finance and investment into the infrastructure needed for the VCSE ecosystem to support, enable and nurture its development.
- Ensure that there is appropriate investment in community involvement and development, the needs of the diverse communities of Greater Manchester and funding of what works, not just innovation.
- Enable the funding of core costs – allowing full cost recovery.

Our intelligence shows that creating a sustainable and productive VCSE sector will need collaboration, and investment of effort and funding. This will be especially true in places where 'social infrastructure' is thin on the ground, and in areas where an expansion of the sector will be needed for VCSEs to reach their potential in delivering the Greater Manchester Strategy.

Achieving the potential benefit from VCSE action whilst remaining values-driven will need a co-ordinated approach to funding and resources, including an increased focus on covering the 'real cost' of VCSE delivery; giving financial sustainability and reliability. We are working with our funders, local businesses and investors to explore greater collaboration and co-ordination to maximise new financial opportunities. There are actions that VCSE can take in communities that are difficult for others, and we will work with partners to secure the resources required to do these things.

We want to create a city region where the work of the VCSE sector is resourced in an appropriate manner, to maximise their collective impact in the short, medium and long term. To do this, we will work with a range of partners to develop and put in place a high-level VCSE Investment Strategy with our partners across Greater Manchester. This will be driven by the shared outcomes for Greater Manchester and its people articulated in the Greater Manchester Strategy; consider the types and sources of investment available, and build a framework for investment. It will not talk about individual organisations or places, but instead act as a guide

or blueprint for funders. We recognise that in some cases there may be a need for dis-investment and for VCSE activity to change.

What needs to change to realise our potential?

- Develop and put in place a GM VCSE Investment Strategy, which explores models for investment brokerage, asset transfer and spatial planning for the VCSE sector.
- Work through this towards 'balancing the books' of the VCSE sector....
- Grow infrastructure capacity in each of the 10 districts of Greater Manchester to enable VCSE organisations to act as funding anchors, channelling public money and raising investment for communities.
- Work alongside key partners to set up a Greater Manchester Funders Forum, based in the London Funders model
- Create a Greater Manchester Community Foundation to maximise the benefit from and better co-ordinate social investment and philanthropy – making sure that it reaches the places and people that need it most
- Regular dialogue and networking between commissioners of services from the VCSE sector, to reduce the 'postcode lottery' which exists across Greater Manchester for VCSE organisations
- Put in place 'core funding' pilot projects to understand how this will enable improved outcomes, more effective VCSE services and enhanced sustainability for the sector

5.5 Programmes, policy and delivery

Our ask of our public sector and business partners:

- Recognition and agreement about how the sector supports and benefits local people, delivers services, and influences policy and strategy.
- Engagement and involvement of VCSE in public sector and partnership activity and utilisation of the 'reach' of the VCSE sector to support the development of policy and strategy across the city region.
- Enabling the VCSE sector to provide the lived experiences of people into public sector programmes and decision-making.
- Help us to bring VCSE organisations together to develop strategic priorities and collaborative working.
- Put in place effective evaluation and monitoring of equalities characteristics to ensure that beneficiaries are having their needs met.
- Join up intelligence – giving VCSE organisations better access to data and 'market intelligence' and the VCSE sector feeding into public sector intelligence functions.
- Support with the enablers of transformation – particularly around physical infrastructure – digital and buildings.
- Use of social value and a positive procurement strategy to maximise the effectiveness of commissioning and procurement in relation to the VCSE and reduce the burden of contract monitoring, making it proportionate and relevant to the work in hand.

We will work with our partners to build on existing good practice and establish arrangements for co-production with residents of Greater Manchester. We will support and enable citizen involvement in how services for people are designed, delivered, and evaluated. This particularly holds true for co-production involving those who have experienced severe and multiple disadvantage. We will use the emergent public / VCSE community of practice, Jam & Justice work, citizen-led movements focused on devolution, for example, to better embed citizen-led activity and create 'services for people' rather than 'public service'. Our ecosystem arrangements will enable this to happen and to flourish and grow.

The VCSE sector has a number of areas that are key enablers of our delivery, growth and development affecting our ability to take an active part in programmes, policy and delivery. Focussed effort is needed to improve capacity around:

- Digital technology and infrastructure
- Information governance
- Physical assets – buildings and places
- Data, intelligence and evaluation capacity
- Innovation

What needs to change to realise our potential?

- Renewed impetus for programmes of support and learning around use of digital technologies, as well as investment in physical infrastructure to enable VCSEs to have effective use of digital technology.
- A focus of local authority asset management strategies to enable transfers of ownership and management to maximise community benefit.
- Increased data, research and intelligence capacity for the VCSE sector at locality and Greater Manchester levels.
- Involvement of VCSE sector organisations in the creation of hubs of social innovation, particularly around public service reform, but also relevant parts of business innovation models.
- Creation of a 'Buy Social' virtual hub of support, capacity building and trading.

5.6 Tackling the barriers and delivering on devolution

Our ask of our public sector and business partners:

- A VCSE sector that is able to enter into a 3-way dialogue, and is able to collaborate in partnership with, the public sector and national government for the benefit of the people of Greater Manchester.

Through the Greater Manchester Model White Paper, we propose to work with GM partners and government to put in place the conditions for an effectively resourced, highly skilled and empowered VCSE ecosystem in all localities. We can harness the expertise and influence of national VCSE representative bodies and work with them to address the barriers to VCSE productivity created by legislation and regulation.

We will work with our public sector partners and government, to explore opportunities in the following areas:

- *Recognition* at a national level that VCSE organisations are part of the 'system' in which services are delivered for the citizens of GM.
- *Review of guidance, regulation and legislation*, which may limit or hinder the effectiveness of VCSE organisations or provides an opportunity for the VCSE sector.
- *Join up policy and strategy across government departments* to enable effective civil society involvement in local and economic policy.
- *Prioritise the enactment of policies* which enable civil society and community-led action, such as community-owned housing, land ownership.
- *Devolve relevant budgets, or powers to release funds*, to GM as part of a programme to provide appropriate and sustainable core funding to the VCSE sector in GM.

- *Translate the policy and intent* described for the VCSE sector in key documents such as the Civil Society Strategy and NHS Long Term Plan into regulation, investment plans, and services.

6.0 How will we know whether this Policy Paper has changed anything?

We need to know whether we have made a difference with this Policy Paper and will be looking for a way to capture outcomes, transformation and sustainability. We will jointly develop a set of process and impact outcome measures for the implementation of the work described in this Paper, using a 'Theory of Change' model to monitor, manage and improve the difference that is happening.

Use of a social value approach to commissioning, procurement and system activities will be an enabler to maximising the benefit from the work of VCSE organisations. Social value allows local voluntary, community and social enterprise providers to compete more effectively in a tender situation, and these providers will lever in additional funding from charitable and other sources outside of the local authority.

7.0 Next steps

This Policy Paper has been written by the GM Devolution VCSE Reference Group, whose members represent a cross section of VCSE activity in Greater Manchester. It is an articulation of the high-level policy aspirations of those VCSE leaders and we recognise that much more engagement is needed to co-produce the ways that this policy will be enacted. We will put in place a high level 'Implementation Plan' to deliver this Policy Paper, which has buy-in from all sectors and is underpinned by an Investment Strategy for the VCSE sector for the next 10 years. The Reference Group in its current form and level of resourcing does not have the capacity to manage a huge programme of transformation work and we will explore alternative and collaborative models of governance to drive forward this work.

To deliver this Policy Paper will take collaboration and partnership within our sector across different geographies, including national VCSE bodies where their support can be of value. We need to build better relationships and partnerships with the public and private sectors for mutual benefit. The risks of not starting the actions proposed in this paper are great. We know the strong interdependencies that VCSE organisations have with the public sector in Greater Manchester, and we know how public budgets has been devastated in the last nine years. We can see the impacts of public sector budget reductions, of climate change, of pollution and poor prosperity all around us. Resources, which should be going into preventing poverty, inequality and ill health, are instead going into helping people to cope with crisis.

VCSE organisations are rooted in the place and communities of Greater Manchester. They have the reach, scale and spread to really make a difference, but are stretched to (and beyond) capacity. The only solution is to work together building on our shared strengths and breaking down barriers between us, and focus on making Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world.

Glossary

In this paper, when we talk about the '**VCSE sector**' in Greater Manchester, we mean voluntary organisations, community groups, the community work of faith groups, and those social enterprises where there is a wider accountability to the public via a board of trustees or a membership and all profits are reinvested in their social purpose.

What holds us together are shared values, and a common purpose to address inequality, achieve positive good for Greater Manchester and its people, and support those people to be agents of change themselves.

For us, an '**ecosystem**' is a community of organisations and groups, interacting both with each other and with their physical environment. These organisations and groups are mutually interdependent, know no sectoral boundaries, and are linked through resource cycles and communication flows.

VCSE '**infrastructure**' consists of local sector support and development organisations that work with local VCSE organisations, helping them to thrive. The infrastructure organisations influence, connect and develop other VCSE activity, and do not provide services directly to individual members of the public.

Note that we have not described '**governance**' in terms of one part of our sector having control over another, but instead as clear arrangements for communication, engagement, representation and participation.

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