

GMCVO

Supporting voluntary action in  
Greater Manchester since 1975

# GMCVO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2019 - 2021

**Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation**

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## 1. Who we are

Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO) is the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector support and development organisation ('infrastructure') covering the Greater Manchester (GM) city region. GMCVO is unique in carrying out this function across the city region footprint and in relating both to Greater Manchester and to its districts and neighbourhoods. We are rooted in the local VCSE sector but very well-connected within and beyond GM.

### 1.1 City region

GMCVO is an established and mature organisation that was originally founded as Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Service (GMCVS) for the Greater Manchester county in 1975. We have developed alongside the GM city region and devolution, with a clear focus on the strategic role of the VCSE sector, the co-ordination and development of its diverse leadership, multi-sectoral partnership and qualitative research.

GMCVO is a co-owner of the GM Strategy 'Our People, Our Place' (Oct 2017) and of two strategic agreements with the GM VCSE sector: the Accord (with the GMCA and GM Mayor, Nov 2017) and the Memorandum of Understanding (with the GM Health and Social Care Partnership, May 2017).

### 1.2 Legal status

GMCVO is a Registered Charity (504542) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (Registered in England No.1223344). It includes four wholly-owned subsidiary companies, St Thomas Centre Ltd (No. 4185719), which manages the conference centre; GMCVO Databases Ltd (No. 8692084) which manages database services; GMCVO Trading Ltd (No. 9302547) which manages consultancy and research contracts; and Access to Growth GM Ltd (No.10816583) which manages a social investment fund.

### 1.3 Governance

GMCVO is a membership organisation led by a board of voluntary trustees. Members elect the majority of the board at an Annual General Meeting, and others are co-opted by the board or nominated by significant partners.

## 2. Our purpose

### 2.1 Vision

A responsive, connected and influential local VCSE sector in Greater Manchester, which:-

- improves the quality of life of local people;
- enables the involvement and leadership of people and communities in addressing and resolving the issues that affect them, and advocating for the changes they want to see; and
- provides opportunities, support and connectivity to people and communities, especially those who are disadvantaged.

### 2.2 Values

Our core values are Locality, Equality and Collaboration:-

- Our primary loyalty is to the people of Greater Manchester
- We promote social, economic and political inclusion for all
- We believe in working with others in a spirit of trust.

#### a) *Locality*

GMCVO has a primary loyalty to Greater Manchester. We believe that voluntary action by local people through voluntary and community organisations, enterprises and networks is a vital component in the economic, social and cultural welfare of the people of Greater Manchester and that it brings unique added value including benefits to the local economy and the skills of local people; improved social and political inclusion and community resilience and cohesion; and the opportunity for citizens to take the initiative to make a positive difference. Should a conflict of interest arise we make a distinction between this 'citizen-led local VCSE sector' and other elements of the wider 'third sector', 'non-profit sector' or 'civil society'. We make ourselves accountable to Greater Manchester people through our membership and through consultation with our stakeholders.

#### b) *Equality*

GMCVO believes that voluntary action is an important factor in increasing the inclusion of all Greater Manchester people, and that increased inclusion and reduced inequalities are beneficial to everyone. We believe all people are entitled to equal treatment and are of equal worth. We acknowledge diversity and difference, and understand that equality and inclusion require accommodating the aspirations, needs and preferences of individuals, creating a culture of understanding and respect, addressing structural disadvantage and actively challenging discrimination and prejudice. We seek to uphold these principles in all aspects of our work.

#### c) *Collaboration*

GMCVO believes in the value of partnerships, alliances and networks within and beyond our own sector and geography, and in working together in a spirit of trust. We support organisations and individuals who are willing to work together, and we work in formal partnerships with those who share our Values and Vision and whose Aims align with our own. We will remain communicative and courteous with all. We support VCSE sector 'infrastructure' organisations that are owned by and accountable to their members and service users; we will admit to membership of GMCVO only local VCSE organisations that can demonstrate their accountability to Greater Manchester people. We support relationships that enhance the reach, strength and diversity of our sector and enable excluded groups to be listened to.

## 2.3 Strategic Aim

GMCVO's strategic aim is to improve the quality of life for Greater Manchester people, and contribute to reducing inequalities between people and places, by working through and with a responsive, connected and influential local VCSE sector.

We do this by:

- acting at a city-region level, supporting others to act more locally;
- involving and listening to our members (citizen-led GM-based voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations); and working in collaboration with people and organisations who share our aim;
- undertaking evidence-based learning into what is most likely to achieve positive change; and
- targeting our energies and resources at encouraging the development and sustainability of the kinds of partnerships, investments, activities, projects, networks and institutions that seem most likely to be effective.

### 3. Our core work

GMCVO has a significant role in Greater Manchester as a broker (a collector, distributor, creator and interpreter) of relationships and ideas across boundaries of all kinds (including organisational, geographic, sectoral and cultural).

We are the lead body or host for a range of partnerships and networks including Ambition for Ageing, Volunteering GM, GM BME Network and BME Leaders Group, GM Social Enterprise Network, GM Social Investment, GM VCSE Assembly and GM Third Sector Research. We are members of the VCSE Devolution Reference Group, GM Poverty Action, GM Social Value Forum, GM Futures and the national Voluntary Sector Core Cities group. We have a memorandum of understanding with 10GM (provides local infrastructure in six districts) and support local infrastructure organisations in the other four.

We offer collaborative leadership in partnership with others, connecting the VCSE sector across districts and with other sectors to act on a GM footprint, and promoting a leadership model based on relationships and distributed responsibility. We support and connect individuals who act as representatives for our sector at GM boards and forums.

We maintain a contacts database with around 4,500 active relationships and subscribers and 30 live mailing lists. We have a membership of about 1,400 organisations and individuals, and provide direct support to about 450 organisations each year.

Our practical services include:-

- provision of news, information, knowledge, training and events;
- responses to GM strategy and policy proposals; position statements on issues that affect our VCSE sector;
- published research and evidenced position statements based on our projects, contributing to GM's understanding of the role of VCSE activity and how to develop the wider social economy;
- voice, advocacy and influence based on a thorough understanding of the VCSE sector and GM; we take policy positions on issues that affect our VCSE sector;
- lead and accountable body role (with capacity to manage complex funding including payment by results, European funds and social investment and to distribute it to local VCSE organisations as grants, EJEU-compliant contracts, and loans);
- partnership brokerage; and
- mission-related trading and project delivery through our subsidiary companies (St Thomas Centre, open-source contacts databases, social investment, consultancy), and the development of new trading areas if appropriate.

## 4. Strategic priorities 2019 – 2021

### 4.1 Context

Greater Manchester continues to drive and to experience large and rapid changes. This brings opportunities to take new positive action and to address enduring challenges.

#### a) *Economy*

The Independent Prosperity Review (Feb 2019) is explicit in finding that improving productivity, living standards and economic inclusion in GM requires further devolution of powers. The role of VCSE organisations is recognised.

#### b) *Demographics*

Our population is 2.8m and growing; the region is ageing but with towns ageing much faster than the metropolitan centre. Overall we earn less, are less skilled, live shorter lives and are more unwell than the national average. However, we also note rich diversity of culture and innovation.

#### c) *Inequalities and poverty*

have continued to rise over the last ten years. VCSE energy and resources, already under pressure, are being expended helping people out of preventable crises. Inequality of provision, with a decline in shared spaces, leads to people having fewer opportunities to meet people not like them and create bridges across communities. There is a correlation between being disadvantaged and being BME, disabled or female.

#### d) *Changes in the VCSE sector*

Unprecedented churn was recorded in the VCSE sector between 2013 and 2017. We note a growth in enterprise and trading; a wider diversity of infrastructure; increasingly blurred lines between public, business and 'social' sectors; and developing strong leadership. The VCSE sector is more accepted as an equal partner.

#### e) *Changing attitudes, relationships and ideas*

Austerity and devolution, and a long-established culture of collaboration, are driving genuine cultural change in GM more than elsewhere in England. 'Our People, Our Place' is focused on benefit to people. Ideas like place, co-production, social enterprise and inclusive growth have become mainstream, and some thinking more sophisticated. The future is already here — it's just not very evenly distributed.

#### f) *Devolution*

GM has already enjoyed a number of devolution deals, which have been largely beneficial. But with government distracted and more inclined to centralise, it may be harder to secure more. Closer alignment of health and social care; and greater control of welfare, skills and employment policy are clear goals.

#### g) *GM Governance*

The ongoing creative tension between GM and component districts is familiar. We note a large turnover of local government leaders and chief executives within the last year; the advent of the 'metro mayors' as a national political force; and the increased solidarity of the north around shared goals and values.

#### h) *Brexit*

The economic, social and political impacts of any kind of Brexit on Greater Manchester will be severe. Whilst it is too early to understand details or predict outcomes, we should also expect repositioning and change within the VCSE sector comparable to that triggered by recession and austerity ten years ago.

Our core work will continue (see above). In addition we will focus specifically on:-

- Further developing our role as a strategic connector
- Resourcing the social economy
- Testing, learning and sharing

### *a) Further developing our role as a strategic connector*

As the city-region continues to evolve we will:-

- continue to develop and maintain strong collaborative relationships with city-region leadership across all sectors;
- support the collective leadership of the VCSE sector and build its links with other sectors;
- develop our membership, partnerships and governance to strengthen our own mandate and accountability; and
- support and mobilise communities of identity and experience

Identified key relationships include:-

- VCSE Reference Group, VCSE leaders, 10GM and other local infrastructure, GMBME leaders, GMSSEN leaders; emergent city-region VCSE organisations and networks;
- the Greater Manchester Mayor, GMCA leaders and executive, relevant GMCA Portfolio holders; locality leadership; Health and Social Care Partnership;
- businesses especially those who have already worked with us; Chamber of Commerce; and
- universities especially Manchester University, and relevant individual academic units and academics.

### *b) Resourcing the social economy*

We will source and mobilise the resources to co-ordinate and develop the enablers of a stronger social economy and, especially for places and people who are least likely to be socially and economically included.

We will:-

- enable more VCSE organisations and social entrepreneurs to trade successfully;
- support social enterprises and the social enterprise movement;
- test different approaches to enabling more people and communities to participate in economic activity;
- evidence the value of social infrastructure in place-based working;
- encourage increased investment of devolved funding streams (including health and care; work and skills) into appropriate non-profit and social organisations; and
- develop opportunities for the public sector and commercial businesses of all sizes to create social value and act as enablers of the social economy.

### *c) Testing, learning and sharing*

We will develop our role as an organisation that 'tests, learns and shares' our insights into the social economy, places and communities. We will build models of place based public service reform and test models of partnership that could address big GM policy issues. We will publish and publicise our learning in order to:-

- inform the work of ourselves and others;
- learn further from others exploring similar issues;
- address big socio-economic issues and shape related policy decisions taken at Greater Manchester and national levels; and
- influence investment decisions.