

GMCVO

Supporting voluntary action in
Greater Manchester since 1975

GMCVO Strategic Plan 2016-18

GMCVO STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-18

1. INTRODUCTION

Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO) is the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector support and development organisation covering the Greater Manchester city region. We would describe ourselves as “*a socio-economic development agency, working with and through the VCSE sector*”. We support voluntary action and enterprise by local people, with a focus on encouraging the development of initiatives on sustainable and effective business models, which can bring added value, increase the diversity of voices heard, and operate in territories where the state and the market cannot or should not act. We work in partnership with other support providers and with the public, private, academic and faith sectors and aspire to provide co-ordination and leadership.

GMCVO's primary role in Greater Manchester is 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 aspire to be a conduit for information for and about the VCSE sector, and a large element of our work is in representing and advocating for the views and needs of people involved in local voluntary action. 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, and are widely known and trusted.

We are the lead body or host for a range of GM partnerships and networks including Talent Match, Ambition for Ageing, Volunteering GM, GM BME Network, GM Social Enterprise Network, GM Third Sector Research and Community Energy GM (green energy co-operative). We also act as an accountable body and sub-contract work to local groups. We are a member of GM Futures and of the national Voluntary Sector Core Cities group.

GMCVO has another important role in the practical testing of new ideas, and carries out many projects on the basis of “test, learn and share”. Over the years we have been an early adopter of consortia, fiscal shields, community-university partnerships, asset mapping, open source software, social media, impact methodologies etc. Over 2016-18 we are focused on testing various approaches based on multi-sector alliances involving local voluntary action, which may be able to address socio-economic inclusion, rising inequalities and poverty, and meet the ambitions of people involved in local voluntary action and enterprise in our city region in the context of devolution and public spending cuts.

Our practical services include information; accredited management and specialist training; research; project and partnership development and delivery; support for social and community enterprises; peer networks, conferences and events; co-ordination and brokerage of support and funding from national providers (grants, social investment, community shares); hosting projects enabling start-ups in deprived communities by “unlikely entrepreneurs”; specialist support for community hubs including asset transfer, green energy, building management; database and website development enabling marketing, impact measurement and CRM.

We also manage the St Thomas Centre, a fully equipped conference and training facility. This is used by the VCSE sector and its partners as a focus for debate, learning and networking; provides a showcase for the work of the local VCSE sector; attracts visitors from outside the city region, and hosts local community and worship groups. During 2016-18 we will undertake large scale building work to maximise use of the space and celebrate the heritage of the church and the surrounding area.

We have more than a thousand members. Every year we provide direct services to 3,000 organisations; 15,000 people visit St Thomas Centre; we receive 100,000 website unique visits.

1.1 DEVOLUTION

Over the years 2016-18 we expect that that the devolution of powers to Greater Manchester will continue. The speed and scale at which we are experiencing this is unique nationally. Coupled with continuing cuts to public money, devolution is forcing rapid changes to structures, personnel and ideas. Increasingly, we find that the operating environment is different in GM, making it harder to learn from what is done other areas, and requiring us to focus our policy and advocacy role more locally. We are also aware that the success or failure of GM, both in taking greater control of more of our decisions, and of involving residents and the local VCSE sector in making and implementing those decisions, will affect the futures of other cities and areas. This adds more pressure to a situation which is already challenging. Devolution therefore brings the risks associated with being pioneers; and the risks of operating in a “bubble” without comparators. These risks are additional to the pressures we already face of operating with inadequate resources whilst trying to support a local VCSE sector which is equally under pressure. Yet the positive factors probably outweigh the difficulties.

It is helpful to be able to operate over a footprint which corresponds with a functional city and coherent economy, in which it is possible to form personal working relationships with the key leaders and decision-makers. The nature of GM also means that should sufficient powers be devolved, to raise as well as to spend income, it has the potential to decide for itself what kind of city to be. There is broad consensus across all sectors on the vision articulated in the GM Strategy Stronger Together (2013), that *“by 2020, the Manchester city region will have pioneered a new model for sustainable economic growth based around a more connected, talented and greener city region, where all our residents are able to contribute to and benefit from sustained prosperity and a good quality of life.”* The Strategy will be revised during 2016-18, but the emphasis on inclusive, sustainable economic growth is sure to remain at the heart of it.

Increasingly it is being acknowledged that to achieve this, the city must be led and organised differently, and that the relationship between residents, the public sector, VCSE organisations and businesses needs to change radically. Some of that culture change has started. There is a sense of exploration and a willingness to consider new ideas and build wider alliances. This means GMCVO and the VCSE sector have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape what an “inclusive” city means in practice, and to participate actively in delivering it.

The GM VCSE sector is generally eager for greater involvement, but is also facing problems of its own. Our focus during 2016-18 will therefore be both on bringing GMCVO and VCSE knowledge and ideas to the development and delivery of strategy, and on enabling VCSE organisations to gain the knowledge, skills, relationships and resources to thrive and play a full part in the evolving city region.

Please also refer to Section 6, Objectives.

2. OUR HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

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.

Since 2000, GMCVO has developed a clear focus on strategic, co-ordination and advocacy work at a city region level.

GMCVO is a Registered Charity (504542) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (Registered in England No. 1223344). It includes three wholly-owned subsidiary companies, St Thomas Centre Ltd (no. 4185719), which manages the conference centre, GMCVO Databases Ltd (no. 8692084) which manages database services, and GMCVO Trading Ltd (no.9302547) which manages consultancy and research contracts.

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. The board focuses on strategic leadership and delegates appropriate authority to subsidiary boards, committees, partnership boards, steering groups, working groups and the staff team.

3. OUR STRATEGY

The GMCVO Board has developed our Strategy on a “tight-loose” model, whereby some elements are fixed whilst others are flexible so we can respond to changing circumstances.



4. OUR VALUES, VISION AND MISISON

VALUES	<i>Locality – Equality - Collaboration</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 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.
VISION	<i>A responsive, accountable and influential local VCSE sector in Greater Manchester, which:-</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improves the quality of life of local people• Enables the involvement and leadership of communities, both geographic and thematic, in addressing and resolving the issues that affect them, and advocating for the changes they want to see.• Provides support and connectivity to people and communities, especially those that are disadvantaged.
MISSION	<i>To support local voluntary action through Support, Knowledge, Voice, Infrastructure and Innovation</i>

4.1 OUR VALUES

- **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 cohesion; and the opportunity for local people to take the initiative to make a positive difference. Should a conflict of interests arise we make a distinction between this “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 regular consultation with our stakeholders.

- **Equality**

GMCVO believes that local 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, and actively challenging discrimination and prejudice. We seek to uphold these principles in all aspects of our work.

- **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 support 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.

4.2. OUR VISION

A responsive, accountable and influential local voluntary sector in Greater Manchester which:-

- Improves the quality of life of local people
- Enables the involvement and leadership of communities, both geographic and thematic, in addressing and resolving the issues that affect them, and advocating for the changes they want to see.
- Provides support and connectivity to people and communities, especially those that are disadvantaged.

We believe that a strong voluntary (VCSE) sector is of incalculable benefit to Greater Manchester and its people and communities, and that without its work the city region would be a poorer place. We believe its role is distinctive and complementary to those of the other sectors, and that the structure and culture of the sector give it some particular strengths. We believe that building on these strengths could make a real difference to the future of our city region.

4.3 OUR MISSION

- ***Support:***
Helping and developing local VCSE organisations – building the strength, capacity and diversity of organisations and their people, and focusing on providing specialist and new services best offered at Greater Manchester level
- ***Knowledge:***
Building intelligence and understanding of and for the VCSE sector – carrying out research, collecting and disseminating information and ideas and promoting the local VCSE sector and its contribution to Greater Manchester
- ***Voice:***
Enabling VCSE organisations to be heard and to influence - enabling the views and needs of local VCSE groups to be expressed and shared widely and to influence policy and practice. Advocating for the needs and views of local VCSE organisations.
- ***Infrastructure:***
Coordinating and developing support services and systems for VCSE organisations – working with existing support organisations and providers, and developing new kinds of infrastructure to respond to changing needs
- ***Innovation:***
Trying to look ahead and pick up or develop new ideas and explore new opportunities.

5. OUR ROLE AND OUR STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

- ROLE**
- Leadership – Brokerage - Selective Support and Development*
- We offer strategic and collaborative leadership and draw together individuals and organisations to achieve common goals
 - We enable relationships and ideas to be shared across boundaries of all kinds
 - We provide targeted support and development

GMCVO functions as a catalyst and enabler

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

1. We are led by Values not “sector”
2. We are ready to speak out and challenge
3. We take “positions” on issues only when these relate directly to our Vision and Mission
4. We acknowledge conflicts of interest and the difficulty of balancing competition with neutrality
5. We accept that in the current environment some good organisations may shrink or close and we must target our efforts on the future.
6. We relate to all ten GM districts, acknowledging their differences
7. Our charitable activity benefits Greater Manchester, but we sell products and services more widely
8. We are willing to invest and to make changes to GMCVO in order to respond to changing circumstances

OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

9. We offer membership and information free of charge
10. We are clear about the differences between our free offer, our selective initiatives and our trading
11. We target our selective initiatives at those likely to offer most to Greater Manchester people in the future
12. We may develop “infrastructure”
13. We will involve partners, service users and intended beneficiaries in design and delivery
14. In securing resources we will be pragmatic and opportunistic
15. Our trading activities will be Mission-related, and profit or surplus will be used to support our charitable purpose

5.1 OUR ROLE

- **Leadership:**

GMCVO offers ‘collaborative’ leadership, based on dialogue, respect, consensus and distributed power. This enables people to work together effectively to achieve shared goals, benefiting from a pool of skills, knowledge and resources and building trust through action.

- **Brokerage:**

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

- **Selective Support and Development:**

- GMCVO has a directive and selective support and development role in enabling voluntary action and supporting VCSE organisations to respond to the needs and aspirations of Greater Manchester people and communities. We target our resources to achieve our objectives and meet our priorities.

GMCVO is only one player alongside many others, with finite resources; therefore to have an effect we function as a catalyst and enabler. We see ourselves as a centre for voluntary organisation, functioning as a reference point for an interconnected web of contacts, networks, partnerships, and initiatives operating at every scale across the city region. GMCVO does not need to “do it all” – often we just need to make sure it gets done and that people know about it.

5.2 OUR STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Strategic principles

1. We are led by our Values rather than defined by our 'sector' – we develop relationships and collaborate with people and organisations from all sectors based on shared Values and an overlap of aims and objectives.
2. In support of our Vision, Values and Mission, and as an advocate for local voluntary action, we will develop a strong voice and a high profile and be prepared to speak out and challenge assumptions and ideas where the evidence supports a different view.
3. Any 'positions' on policy, social, economic or similar issues taken by GMCVO are ratified by the Board; we will only take a position if the issue relates directly to our Vision and Mission
4. We will openly declare any conflicts of interest when these arise. We will have to compete more for resources, and we acknowledge there is a difficult balance between this and neutrality (see Role 'directive and selective').
5. We cannot help everyone and accept that in the current climate some VCSE organisations may shrink or close, even if their work is in high demand. Our task therefore is 'gardening' (create the right conditions for those with potential to thrive) rather than 'engineering' (intervening in the fates of individual organisations), although some targeted institution-building is assumed.
6. We maintain wide relationships in every Greater Manchester district including with local government as well as with Greater Manchester level structures and leaders. We acknowledge that districts and neighbourhoods are all different, and accept that relationships and activities in the ten districts can't be identical – we will treat each on its merits.
7. Our focus is Greater Manchester (which matches our charitable objectives). We may review (widen) our beneficiary area if this is ever appropriate. We sell our products and services beyond Greater Manchester providing this is profitable, does not divert us from our core purpose, and does not put us into direct competition with our allies.
8. Our response to ongoing significant changes in the current environment is of ongoing development in GMCVO's functioning. The Board is willing to invest in expanding and diversifying (besides new work this may include mergers, formal partnerships, changes to constitutional form)

Operational principles

9. We will continue to provide a "universal offer" free of charge (membership and information)
10. We make a clear distinction (internal and in communications) between our universal 'offer', our selective initiatives (such as targeted projects), and our trading.
11. Selective initiatives will be targeted at those likely to offer most to Greater Manchester people in future. We support the development of new and existing sustainable, appropriate, effective organisations, networks, partnerships and initiatives that address the current needs and ambitions of

local people and communities, and which bring added value, increase the diversity of voices heard, reduce structural inequalities and operate in territories where the state and the market cannot or should not act.

12. Developing 'infrastructure' is something GMCVO may do, including both new Greater Manchester models, and responding to requests to provide 'infrastructure' support in local areas (this may be on a variety of models). We will respect other local providers and seek collaboration to maximise benefits to frontline organisations.
13. We will involve our partners, members and service users (and their service users) in the development, design and delivery of projects and initiatives as much as possible.
14. We try to ensure the range of projects and services we offer supports the kind of VCSE sector development / evolution we envisage. However it is acknowledged that all specific initiatives and projects depend on opportunity (e.g. funding (immediate or very likely); ability to attract and involve other stakeholders; our own competence and capability).
15. Our trading activity will be:-
 - Of genuine benefit to our charitable beneficiaries (local VCSE organisations) and therefore aligned with our Mission
 - In demand (not merely needed) and therefore potentially sustainable
 - Judged to have the potential to generate a profit or surplus which can be applied to our wider charitable purposes
16. We will prioritise fundraising and tendering for opportunities to undertake those practical activities which contribute to our current Objectives and Priorities.

6. OUR OBJECTIVES

- To catalyse resilience and re-growth in the Greater Manchester VCSE sector
- To assist the VCSE sector to be more sustainable and connected and to build on its strengths
- To enable the VCSE sector to continue to play a significant role in addressing both existing and emerging opportunities and challenges in Greater Manchester and for this contribution to be recognised and valued

The Board and Executive have developed our Objectives for 2016-18 to respond to the current operating environment and after consideration of a range of political, social, economic, environmental and technical factors, especially those relevant to the Greater Manchester city region, and the role of the local VCSE sector; and of the strengths of GMCVO.

We acknowledge particular challenges in devolution; public spending cuts; and rising inequality and poverty. Decades of public spending and inward investment of private money have had little impact on entrenched inequalities. We acknowledge that the VCSE sector itself is unfairly distributed, with less activity in more deprived areas and by more disadvantaged people, and that the balance between care and recovery versus prevention and positive action has been wrong.

We realise that voluntary action and enterprise and volunteering, although plentiful, is unlikely to be adequate to meet the future needs of people and communities, especially as the public sector reduces its activity, and that there will be a need to develop more. But this in itself will not be adequate to meet the needs and demands of local people and communities unless we can also change the behaviours of voluntary, public and private sectors and encourage a greater sense of solidarity between all residents. We consider that a larger proportion of available public money and private profits should be invested in enabling or undertaking local voluntary action and that all GM institutions will have to collaborate more closely around a shared Vision for the city region, each playing to their strengths. We therefore see an opportunity as well as a challenge in the current circumstances - the opportunity to address entrenched socio-economic inequalities through a changed culture and new multi-sectoral alliances. To support this we aspire to enable a stronger voluntary, community and social enterprise movement based on shared Values, and willing to work with other local institutions in alliances that enable all partners and individuals to what they do best in pursuit of common aims.

7. OUR PRIORITIES

- Provision of news, information, knowledge, training and events
- Voice, advocacy and influence based on a thorough understanding of the VCSE sector and Greater Manchester
- Support for strategic GM networks including BME, Social Enterprise, Volunteering and VCSE Assembly.
- Organisational development focused on the provision of specialist support to groups or sectors of organisations that we consider most likely to be sustainable and connected and to play a significant role in Greater Manchester (see Objectives)
- Enabling community resilience and increased social capital through understanding what works and doing our part to enable residents to take voluntary action that strengthens resilience and builds social capital.
- Enabling local VCSE organisations to access funding and resources at Greater Manchester level; influencing the distribution and use of resources at Greater Manchester level
- Mission-related trading and project delivery through our Business Units, and the development of new trading areas if appropriate.

1. We will continue to provide up-to-date high quality information for and about the GM/c VCSE sector (through a full range of media) focused on critical issues including:-
 - city region devolution
 - core city socio-economics
 - VCSE adaptations to enterprise and multi-sector partnership-working
 - new approaches to generic “wicked” (complex and intractable) issues related to inequalities (such as governance, youth unemployment, social and economic exclusion)
 - new ideas about the nature of voluntary action, enterprise and volunteering, and what differentiates it from public services and business transactions

We plan a full overhaul of our communications strategy and delivery during 2016-17.
2. We will maintain key relationships with significant individuals and organisations within and beyond Greater Manchester, and positions on strategic boards and forums, and try to raise awareness and promote the importance of the activities of the VCSE sector in the city region. We will try to influence policy development and resource allocation (especially in Greater Manchester) to be more inclusive, ensuring VCSE sector voices are listened to and investment decisions are made taking all stakeholders into account.
3. We will encourage our service-users to take membership of GMCVO and associated networks, and actively recruit to reflect the diversity of the VCSE sector.
4. We will encourage discussion and facilitate debate with and within the GM VCSE sector about critical issues, taking formal policy positions as appropriate. To do this we will make use of key relationships, GMCVO memberships and strategic networks, and partnerships hosted by GMCVO ‘Business Units’ (see below) or of which we are members.
5. We will support VCSE organisations to campaign and be heard within and beyond GM/c on issues relevant to their members or communities and on which they have specific knowledge.

6. We will take clear and consistent policy and lobbying positions and promote key messages about the VCSE sector, Greater Manchester and our own work.
7. We will focus our mission-related trading and project delivery on the following 'Business Unit' areas, where we consider GMCVO is best placed to have an impact. This may include acting as a prime contractor distributing sub-contracts or grants to other organisations, and leading, hosting or participating in partnerships of organisations.

7.1 BUSINESS UNITS: PRIORITIES

Ambition for Ageing

- Influence public policy based on our findings from testing an asset-based approach, targeted investment and collaborative leadership to address the challenges of social isolation and opportunities of an ageing population and encourage our learning to be applied in other contexts
- Strengthen relationships at senior level across the public sector (note this is our biggest interface with the public sector at present)
- Develop GMCVO capability in formal commissioning and contract management; develop our skills in data handling and analysis; develop our understanding of what encourages inclusive supportive communities; develop skills of frontline VCSE organisations to deliver within the project

Community Assets / Research

- Understand and promote the value of community assets – evidenced by research (Research BU) and the impact of (modest) investment (Ambition for Ageing)
- Strengthen relationships with academics and researchers interested in community resilience, social capital, sustainable development and the role of voluntary action in these.
- Build GMCVO's reputation for community/social research at national level by publishing and promoting informative and influential pieces of work
- Access research funding, particularly in partnership with academic institutions to inform views on voluntary action and community/social enterprise relevant to the GM city region.
- Provide a menu of support for community assets – consultancy, enterprise, mentoring, research, tools, training, volunteering
- Develop funding/resources for community assets – to stimulate community enterprise (Social Enterprise)
- Improve the sustainability of strategic community hubs across GM - to contribute to community resilience and to improve our reach into disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Databases

- Provide VCSE organisations with IT products that enhance their sustainability, capacity and quality; encourage behaviours such as collaboration, reflection, efficiency – including GMCVO
- Mission-related trading – make a profit to support GMCVO
- Develop GMCVO capability in marketing and market analysis, pricing, client relationship management and other business skills

Social Enterprise

- Strengthen and develop relationships with the social enterprise and community business sector
 - Continue to develop a the new social enterprise network for GM

- Work with other stakeholders (social enterprises, local networks, funders and supporters) to understand the GM economy and the areas of the economy into which social enterprise could move
- Work with relevant local and national partners to develop an “ecosystem “ of support within which social enterprise can thrive and grow (including networking and skills, access to funding, access to pro bono assistance)
- Understand how to encourage social enterprise business models and social entrepreneurs to contribute to bottom- up micro-economic growth, especially in deprived areas, and encourage the development of additional voluntary action
- Promote or provide a range of peer and professional support
- Strengthen relationships at senior level with the private sector especially larger ethical businesses

St Thomas Centre

- Provide a base for GMCVO and a high profile place for national partners and other sectors to interact with GM VCSE organisations
- Provide VCSE organisations with opportunities to meet and network
- Mission-related trading – make a profit for GMCVO
- Develop GMCVO capability in marketing and market analysis, pricing, client relationship management and other business skills
- Demonstrate best practice in community building management and fulfil a secondary role as a community hub and heritage centre

Talent Match

- Influence public policy based on our findings from testing an asset-based, multi-sector collaborative approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities of youth unemployment and encourage our learning to be applied in other contexts; in particular influence the design of skills and employment contracts away from “deficit” assumptions and over-emphasis on “training”
- Strengthen relationships at senior level with the private sector especially larger ethical businesses (note this is our biggest interface with the private sector at present)
- Develop GMCVO capability in commissioning and contract management; develop our skills in data handling and analysis; develop our understanding of what ensures a smooth passage from education to employment; develop skills of frontline VCSE organisations to deliver within the project

Training

- Understand the skills and employment needs of VCSE organisations and the factors that enable viable, sustainable business models
- Promote or provide a range of courses and learning experiences to meet these needs, developing new topics and delivery mediums as required
- Mission-related trading – make a profit or surplus for GMCVO
- Maintain strong relationships with strategic GM institutions (GM Futures members) and work with them to create a better “system” for skills and employment in GM
- Develop GMCVO capability in marketing and market analysis, pricing, client relationship management and other business skills
- Where possible obtain funding to subsidise training delivery

8. OUR ACTIVITIES, PROJECTS AND SERVICES

Please see the GMCVO website for full details of:-

- Our current projects, partnerships and networks
- Our services including news, events and training
- Our reports and publications
- Our current policy work
- A list of our Members
- A list of Trustees and subsidiary company Directors
- Contact details for each of our Staff
- Sub-contracting opportunities and job vacancies

For more details of our work:

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