

GMCVO

Voice

# Engagement Guide: How to get involved with GMCVO and influence policy



Greater Manchester Centre  
for Voluntary Organisation

## Background

Voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations have a great reach into the diverse communities that make up Greater Manchester and often can bring to bear significant levels of expertise on some of the major challenges they face. Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO) works to ensure that when public sector bodies across Greater Manchester make important decisions they are informed by voices from within the VCS.

This guide shows how VCS groups can get involved in this process and build a louder, more influential voice for the sector.

At present the 10 local authorities within Greater Manchester are embarking on a pilot scheme to build a more co-ordinated city-region. GMCVO is working with this process and seeking to build up sector representation as systems and processes develop. At this early stage you have the opportunity to not only be part of this attempt to influence our public sector partners but to have a role in shaping how it will continue to engage with the sector.

In many areas of policy and debate we are developing new structures for engagement and hope that future versions of this guide will reflect a growing and maturing relationship with the Greater Manchester authorities as they reshape public services. We hope you'll join us for the journey.

Alex Whinnom  
Director, GMCVO

## About GMCVO

*GMCVO's aim is to strengthen the voluntary sector, build bridges with other sectors, and influence local and national policy.*

As an infrastructure support organisation for the Greater Manchester sub-region we:

- Represent, promote and develop VCS organisations
- Work in partnership with other relevant local, regional and national support organisations
- Represent the sector within a number of key partnerships including the Greater Manchester Forum
- Are widely consulted on policy and other issues by local statutory organisations, government agencies and organisations from the private and academic sector with an interest in the voluntary sector.

Furthermore, GMCVO provides a range of specialist services and resource units, including:

- Project development
- Third sector research
- Support for the voluntary sector and local groups around transport issues, including the Community Transport sector
- Strengthening the VCS through the development of 'hubs'
- Addressing health inequalities across the Greater Manchester region
- Policy and representation function to influence public authorities
- Accredited management training
- IT and network support

## General Engagement and Information

As well as working strategically to represent and position the sector, GMCVO is a social and economic partner of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and a partner in delivery of the Multi Area Agreement (MAA), working with the Commission for the New Economy to develop economic activity in the city-region.

GMCVO has also had a key involvement with the work of the Health Commission through working with the Health Leadership Group that supports the Commission. This has enabled us to ensure that the sector is engaged with the Commission's priorities whilst also supporting statutory partners in their engagement with the VCS.

### **Become A Member**

We would like to encourage all voluntary and community organisations working in Greater Manchester to become members; we also welcome public sector bodies and academic establishments based in the sub-region as associate members. The benefits of becoming a GMCVO member are:

#### ✓ **Support us to support you**

By sharing our vision and joining GMCVO as a member, you can give us the support we need to work together and make the vision a reality.

#### ✓ **Have your say**

By lobbying and negotiating on your behalf, we seek to influence decision-making at Greater Manchester, regional and national level that affects your organisation and your members. As part of this process, you will be invited to contribute your views through consultation events and meetings, and to develop direct relationships with policy-making forums.

#### ✓ **Keep informed**

As a member you'll have access to our general and specialist newsletters and up-to-date policy journals focusing on the issues of the day and their impact on the Greater Manchester voluntary sector.

### ✓ **Build new contacts**

As a member of GMCVO you'll gain many opportunities to connect with other local voluntary groups/organisations across greater Manchester that do similar work or work in similar context.

### ✓ **Receive discounts**

All GMCVO full members receive discounts on our services including conferences and events, training and room hire in the St Thomas Centre.

For further details of membership and application form, please visit <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/membership-page> or contact Sue Barrett, [sue.barrett@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:sue.barrett@gmcvo.org.uk) , Tel: 0161 277 1001

### **Be Consulted**

We have contact details of over 10,000 individuals/organisations from across the sub-region, of which over 1,400 subscribe to our Digest newsletter, and we maintain active dialogue with over 1,000 subscribers to our range of policy networks.

GMCVO recognises that there are clear and significant benefits to engaging in consultation with its stakeholders. Consultation is key to ensuring that services are user-focused and that stakeholders are informed on issues relevant to them.

Effective consultation can deliver a range of benefits, including helping to:

- Plan, prioritise, and deliver better services to give stakeholders what they want and make the best use of limited resources.
- Campaign and lobby to contribute to decision-making.
- Demonstrate commitment to transparent and accountable decision-making, and to putting services first.

GMCVO will use surveys, interviews, focus groups and other appropriate consultation methods to collect in-depth information to influence decision-making and for representation purposes.

To get registered on the GMCVO database and to receive information on local, regional, and national policy consultations, training, events, and conferences please contact Sue Barrett.

**For more information:**

**Sue Barrett, [sue.barrett@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:sue.barrett@gmcvo.org.uk) , Tel: 0161 277 1001**

## **Subscribe to Newsletters**

GMCVO produces and circulates regular newsletters to engage and inform the VCS on the latest policy issues, training, events and consultations. In addition to this, the newsletters and sharing of information allows GMCVO to represent the voice of the third sector and to influence sub-regional, regional and national policy.

## **Digest**

GMCVO's *Digest* newsletter is a round-up of news and information of interest to VCS organisations in Greater Manchester. Produced and circulated to 1,400 subscribers on a monthly basis, the *Digest* includes news of local, regional and national policy developments, information on key areas of management, good practice, details of funding sources, consultations and events.

## **Issues**

*Issues* is GMCVO's bi-monthly publication on specific areas of policy, practice and the operating environment affecting the voluntary and community sector in Greater Manchester.

Subscribing to and downloading both the *Digest* and *Issues* can be done through the GMCVO website ([www.gmcvo.org.uk](http://www.gmcvo.org.uk)). In addition to this, GMCVO members can also receive printed copies of both publications on request.

## **Website**

We regularly update our website ([www.gmcvo.org.uk](http://www.gmcvo.org.uk)) with information on local, regional, and national consultations, training, and development

opportunities for the local third sector and upto date information on local events/conferences. All our publications and general news about the Greater Manchester voluntary sector can also be accessed via our website.

For more information on GMCVO newsletters please visit <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/newsletters-and-membership> or contact David Sutcliffe, [david.sutcliffe@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:david.sutcliffe@gmcvo.org.uk) , Tel: 0161 277 1011

## Specialist Work

GMCVO hosts/manages a number of specialist projects designed to influence sub-regional policy and decision-making, and these are explained below.

### Health Partnership Project

The Health Partnership Project (HPP) works to enable better funding arrangements for VCS organisations providing health services in Greater Manchester. The Health Partnership Project at GMCVO is a project that provides a link between the VCS, health providers and the Association of Greater Manchester Primary Care Trusts (AGMPCTs).

The AGMPCTs is the collective voice of the National Health Service in Greater Manchester. The Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) work together, pooling ideas, expertise and resources to improve the health and well-being of everyone living in Greater Manchester.

Commissioners and other stakeholders, including AGMPCTs, are made aware of the current situation regarding third sector service provision as well as the scope for further delivery. In addition to this, local infrastructure providers are supported in their work around commissioning and procurement for third sector providers; and commissioners in their engagement with the third sector.

The HPP is currently in contact with over 400 members from the VCS who are kept up-to-date through monthly bulletins containing information on:

- Commissioning and procurement in health, social care and associated good practice
- Changes in legislation and policy
- Training

- Events

### Case Study

*In November 2009 the Health Partnership Project Officer met with the Greater Manchester Programme Manager for Hepatitis C to discuss the feasibility of work around self care and prevention for people with Hep C being put to tender with the third sector as a potential delivery agent. The programme Manager made the decision to put the work out to tender and invited the Health Partnership Project into the procurement process.*

*As a result of this:*

- *The Health Partnership Officer was invited to the panel to assess the bids*
- *The commissioning process was supported by providing a third sector perspective for the service design and configuration*
- *A local voluntary organisation was successful in winning the bid*

**For more information about the Health Partnership project please visit <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/health> or contact**

**Neil Walbran, [neil.walbran@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:neil.walbran@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1036**

**Beth Sharratt, [beth.sharratt@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:beth.sharratt@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1029**

### **Transport Resource Unit (TRU)**

The VCS has an important role to play in local transport, whether as users of transport, representatives of community organisations or in providing community and public transport schemes. The Transport Resource Unit (TRU) at GMCVO provides a direct link between the VCS and the Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority (GMITA). Accordingly, the GMITA is able to make decisions informed by views from voluntary and community sector organisations.

TRU aims to:

- Provide information, advice, support and skills to groups and organisations concerned with transport and transportation issues
- Facilitate VCS involvement with transport related consultations



- Provide a networking facility to help VCS organisations contribute to the local transport debate, and engage with transport authorities about the issues that affect them
- Build an evidence base through research about specific transport issues in GM to help inform local policy and decision making
- Build and communicate the VCS contribution to tackling transport issues, especially for deprived, disadvantaged and seldom heard communities and groups
- Support the GM Community Transport Operators Forum to nurture a thriving, accountable local community transport sector
- Develop and deliver innovative, collaborative, integrated solutions to transport problems, working alongside a range of partners
- Produce a six-weekly email bulletin that provides up-to-date information, tailored to its readership including:
  - Updates about the Unit and its partners' current work and recent achievements, including the GM Community Transport Operators Forum
  - New developments in transport policy and provision
  - Upcoming and current transport related consultations and events, and ways to influence local transport policy and provision
  - Training and learning opportunities
  - Research and funding opportunities

## **Case Study**

*Many residents in Greater Manchester do not have access to a car; across GM it is one third, in Manchester it is half, often significantly less in deprived and disadvantaged communities. Many residents of those communities depend upon local transport services to provide them with access to jobs, education, public services, social networks and sources of support and fresh food.*

*Local not-for-profit Community Transport operators are helping to maintain access for these communities across Greater Manchester. As well as providing individual and group transport services to their own members, which often include vulnerable and seldom heard groups, they also deliver 'Demand Responsive Transport' (DRT) services for the Transport Executive, where low passenger numbers and loss of commercial viability has seen reductions to, or withdrawal of local bus services.*

*The tough economic conditions and cuts in public finance and subsidy are placing increasing pressures on scheduled bus services in some areas, and the need to consider locally-based, flexible, demand responsive alternatives is growing. To ensure the community transport sector is fit for purpose for an enhanced and growing role, the Transport Resource Unit is working with the sector's umbrella body on delivering greater quality and accountability to passengers through the implementation of the **Quality Framework**.*

*The Greater Manchester Community Transport Forum (GMCTF) exists to represent and support its members, promote high standards and work with partners to ensure Community Transport helps deliver GM-wide transport objectives on the ground.*

*The framework enables the auditable measurement of standards of administration, governance, transport operations, vehicle management and service delivery. The Framework's standards reflect the Charity Commission's guidance on operating an effective charity, and the approach is supported by the Transport Authority and Executive.*

*In 2010, TRU conducted assessments of all Forum members' level of compliance with the Framework. TRU, the Forum Board and our partners will now provide practical hands-on support to help Forum members reach the standards. From April 2012, members will be required to demonstrate their compliance to retain membership of the Forum.*

**For more information on the Transport Resource Unit please visit <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/?q=transport> or contact David Campbell, [david.campbell@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:david.campbell@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1013**

## **The Greater Manchester Equalities and Human Rights Parliament (EHRP)**

The Greater Manchester Equalities and Human Rights Parliament (EHRP) has the specific remit of focusing on equalities and human rights issues as experienced by the VCS. The EHRP aims to:

- Promote and champion equalities and human rights by informing and influencing public sector policy makers, third sector funders and other third sector organisations
- Facilitate discussion and debate between single-equality experts and encourage collaboration with a pan-equalities (cross-cutting) approach to equality issues in the Greater Manchester sub-region
- Develop and use the pan-equalities approach to inform statutory bodies and third sector organisations around the needs of disadvantaged communities and/or groups
- Inform, consult, involve and collaborate to influence policy and working practices at local, sub-regional, and regional level
- Promote and raise awareness of human rights and their relationship to the equalities legislation and encourage participation and partnership working to strengthen the involvement of the third sector in local decision making.

### **Case Study**

*To date the EHRP has produced four position statements covering the Equality Bill; Community Cohesion and Engagement; Commissioning from the Third Sector; and 'Big Society' and Localism.*

*The statements clearly stipulate the Greater Manchester voluntary sector position on these issues which are then sent to the relevant public bodies; for example the Big Society and Localism position statement helped inform the government consultation on the Localism Bill.*

*The EHRP also worked in partnership and helped inform the AGMA (Association of Greater Manchester Authorities) Equality and Human Rights*

*Charter and policy which recommend an expected minimum standard of treatment for anyone living and working in the Greater Manchester city region. The Charter has since been signed by the leaders of the ten local authorities as well as other statutory partners and GMCVO.*

**For more information on the EHRF please visit**

**<http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/ehrf> or contact**

**Chris Heard, [chris.heard@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:chris.heard@gmcvo.org.uk) , Tel: 0161 277 1030**

## **Community Hubs**

GMCVO's Community Hubs team specialises in community places and spaces. It supports voluntary, community and other not-for-profit groups that are working to improve their physical environment. A hub is a place of community activity – it may be a community or social centre, park, hall, leisure facility or anywhere people gather to make things happen for their neighbourhood.

COMBINE is the Greater Manchester Community Buildings Information Network. Combine meetings always have a practical focus and the agenda is set according to members' needs.

The network offers volunteers and staff involved in running hubs a chance to:

- Access training and support services
- Share information and resources
- Discuss key issues and working together to solve common problems
- Develop good practice and practical tools.

The Combine network produces and circulates a quarterly email newsletter *The Combine Harvester*. The newsletter is sent out to over 350 members from across the sub-region covering the latest information of relevance to managers and volunteers who run community facilities.

## Case Study

*The Affetside Millennium Green Trust has an on-going commitment and responsibility to maintain and develop the village green as a focal point for community activity. In need of refreshing GMCVOs Community Hubs team supported them to access funding and draw together a range of people. In particular they ensured there was a high level of involvement from young people and children. The project was structured to offer several ways for people to get involved from organising roles to hands on landscape works under direction to supporting social events.*

*Community Hubs involvement in this project resulted in the following outcomes/outputs:*

- The improved quality and visual impact of the village green which benefited the villagers, their friends and visitors to the village*
- Re-connected the village green with children of school age to encourage social activity e.g. through participation in community/planting days*
- The image of Affetside and Bury has been enhanced through this work, evidenced by articles in the local press*
- More people actively involved, including working days for maintenance tasks and planting, quiet enjoyment and social gatherings*
- As a result of this success, the group subsequently attracted more funding to secure a piece of land adjacent to the green on which they plan to build an eco-community venue*

**For more information on Community Hubs please visit**  
**<http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/support?q=node/667> or contact**  
**Morag Rose, [morag.rose@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:morag.rose@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1039**

## **Volunteering Greater Manchester**

Volunteering Greater Manchester is an exciting new project, hosted by GMCVO, which aims to bring about a radical change in the way people think about and support volunteering in Greater Manchester. It involves a partnership of volunteering service providers, including Volunteer Centres, local volunteering infrastructure organisations and local diversity organisations.

The Volunteering project seeks to:

- Champion volunteering and volunteering infrastructure and raise its profile, leading to greater resourcing and sustainability
- Provide strategic support for existing volunteering services and infrastructure
- Create better access routes into volunteering for residents of Greater Manchester
- Support volunteering by non-traditional groups
- Co-ordinate work across local authority boundaries and enable greater collaboration and partnership work
- Disseminate best practice in working with volunteers through information, training, mentoring, and a variety of events

### **Case Study**

*Volunteering Greater Manchester has been working in partnership with Greater Sports to address the issue of a general shortage of volunteers reported by sports clubs, at the same time as Volunteer Centres are struggling to find suitable sports opportunities for interested volunteers. An event was organised to bring together representatives from the volunteering and sports sectors to share information, learn how each other works, and explore ways of streamlining routes into sports volunteering. Participants also had the opportunity to begin to make plans for future joint working at Borough level.*

**For more information on the Volunteering project please visit <http://www.volunteering-gm.org.uk/> or contact Lynen Kent, [lynne.kent@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:lynne.kent@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1027**

## Economic and Social Inclusion Network

The **Economic and Social Inclusion Network (ESI)**, brings together Greater Manchester's voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, plus individuals and groups, who are working to build economic and social inclusion in the region.

ESI aims to:

- Demonstrate the impact of Greater Manchester's VCS organisations in building economic and social inclusion to third sector funders
- Support Greater Manchester's VCS organisations that deal with issues caused by worklessness and deprivation
- Work in partnership with Greater Manchester's public authorities, including local councils and the NHS
- Build economic and social inclusion by influencing policy-makers through informing, involving, consulting and collaborating with all of our Network members, external partners, and friendly organisations
- Facilitate discussion and debate between those working to build economic and social inclusion
- Encourage a collaborative approach to building economic and social inclusion in Greater Manchester
- Use a pan-equalities approach to inform statutory bodies and VCS organisations of the needs of disadvantaged communities and groups
- Campaign and lobby on behalf of VCS organisations working with disadvantaged communities and groups
- Encouraging participation and partnership working to strengthen the involvement of VCS organisations in decision making in Greater Manchester

ESI is free to join and provides an opportunity for information sharing, as well as participation in consultation, research and the chance to influence social and economic policy across Greater Manchester.

**For more information on the Economic and Social Inclusion Network please visit <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/building-economic-and-social-inclusion-0> or contact**

**Andy Rawling, [andy.rawling@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:andy.rawling@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1032**

## Reducing Reoffending Network

The Reducing Reoffending Network aims to work with our statutory partners such as Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Probation Trust, the National Offender Management Service and the Ministry of Justice to create opportunities for the local VCS in delivering services to reduce re-offending in Greater Manchester.

The Greater Manchester Transforming Justice agenda seeks to:

- Reduce crime, reoffending and the wider impact of crime and dependency on society.
- Reduce the number of victims of crime.
- Improve working across criminal justice and partners to streamline delivery, reduce duplication and deliver sequenced, integrated interventions.
- Reduce overall demand and cost to the criminal justice system.

GMCVO is leading on the 'Point of Release Strategy' for which we are contacting voluntary organisations to discuss carrying out a mapping exercise. The mapping work will inform the statutory sector of VCS offer and secondly contribute to a directory similar to the voluntary sector health services directory, which can be accessed by clicking on the following link: <http://www.voluntarysectorhealth.org.uk>

The Reducing Reoffending Network produces and circulates the *Clean Slate* newsletter on a six-weekly basis which goes out to over 200 members of the network. For further information or to subscribe to the newsletter/network, please contact [nasir.hussain@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:nasir.hussain@gmcvo.org.uk), 0161 277 1024.

**For more information on the Reducing Reoffending Network please visit <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/reducing-re-offending-network> or contact :**

**John Hannen, [john.hannen@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:john.hannen@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1013**

**Nasir Hussain, [nasir.hussain@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:nasir.hussain@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1024**



## Other GMCVO Services/Projects

This section of the *Engagement Guide* is designed to give you an insight into other GMCVO services/projects, such as *training, research, ICT* and *St Thomas Centre (STC)*.

### GMCVO Training

Training delivered by GMCVO is designed specifically to meet the development needs of workers and their organisations. All GMCVO courses are available both to individuals joining our advertised open programmes and to organisations wishing to develop programmes specific to their needs.

For more information GMCVO Training please visit <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/gmcvotraining2> or contact Ian Taylor, [ian.taylor@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:ian.taylor@gmcvo.org.uk) ,Tel: 0161 277 1040

### GMCVO Research

Research conducted by GMCVO has been aimed at improving understanding of the VCS, both within the sector itself and the statutory sector, raising the profile of the VCS and highlighting the issues VCS organisations face.

The GMCVO researcher conducts qualitative research, some of which has been linked to internal projects, whilst some has been commissioned by external bodies, including statutory agencies and other voluntary organisations.

Topics of research vary widely and include work conducted on Greater Manchester's rural areas, VCS experiences in commissioning and the contribution of community transport to health. The researcher also responds to external requests for support around research and organises research-related events for VCS audiences.

The researcher is working to establish links with colleagues both in academia and the VCS where appropriate. These links have led to the creation of an informal network of Greater Manchester-based researchers from academia and the VCS, envisaged as a source of peer support and review and potentially of opportunities for partnership working.

## Case Study

*Recently two wide-ranging pieces of research were conducted on behalf of the health partnership with the aim of informing public sector commissioners. Firstly, Commissioning Possible, a report based on 20 in-depth interviews, made recommendations for successful commissioning from local voluntary organisations.*

*Secondly, the Third Sector Health Services Directory (directory of care providers) used an innovative mapping methodology to demonstrate how a sample of 80 groups contributes to NHS care pathways and to provide an objective evidence base on their impact. These reports have gained national readership and have been taken up by local commissioners.*

**For more information GMCVO research please visit**

**<http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/research> or contact**

**Susanne Martikke, [susanne.martikke@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:susanne.martikke@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1019**

## GMCVO Databases

GMCVO Databases understands how IT can help your organisation and can provide professional and accessible solutions.

By making use of open source technology, including the CiviCRM software, the service we give is both flexible and cost-effective.

A professionally-designed database delivers numerous benefits. These include management of clients, grants, events, training courses, newsletters, membership, donations and project activities and automated reporting. In addition, members of the public and clients can interact with your database via your website, for example, by signing up for an event in a controlled and secure manner.

**For more information about on GMCVO Databases, please visit**

**<http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/GMCVODatabases> or contact Oliver Gibson, [oliver.gibson@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:oliver.gibson@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1028**

## **St Thomas Centre – Conference and Events Facilities**

As well as providing GMCVO's office base, the St Thomas Centre is a fully accessible conference facility. Discounted rates are available to both GMCVO members and voluntary organisations. The Centre, which is managed by GMCVO, is a Grade 2 Georgian Church within easy reach of both Manchester City Centre and Piccadilly Station.

Our Main Hall can cater for 140 people depending on the layout required. Use of the PA system, hearing loop, overhead projector and screen are all included in the price. There are six other meeting rooms available which can cater for up to 30 people, again depending on layout. There is a portable hearing loop system for use in Rooms 3 or 4.

We can also make available the following equipment at a small additional charge;

- TV with video and DVD
- Data projector
- Flipcharts
- Laptop computer (with wireless internet access)

We provide a complete catering service of both hot and cold food, again at very reasonable prices, and can respond to your special dietary requirements.

**For more information st Thomas Centre please visit**

**<http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/stc> or contact :**

**Lisa Brown, [st.thomas@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:st.thomas@gmcvo.org.uk), Tel: 0161 277 1010**

**For more information on GMCVO projects, services and partnerships please visit <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/what-we-do>**

**Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation  
St Thomas Centre,  
Ardwick Green North,  
Manchester,  
M12 6FZ**

**Tel: 0161 277 1000**

**E-mail: [gmcvo@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:gmcvo@gmcvo.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.gmcvo.org.uk](http://www.gmcvo.org.uk)**

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