

GMCVO

Greater Manchester
VCFSE Leadership Group
The sector's voice in devolution

A Portfolio of Good Practice for an Inclusive Economy

Part 4: Trading for Social Good

November 2024

GMCVO

St Thomas Centre
Ardwick Green North
Manchester
M12 6FZ

 0161 277 1000
 www.gmcvo.org.uk
 gmcvo@gmcvo.org.uk
 GMCVO

Registered charity no. 50442. Company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 1223344. Registered office as above.



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This portfolio series is produced by [GMCVO](#) on behalf of the Inclusive Economy working group of the [GM VCFSE Leadership Group](#). This is working towards the commitments of the [GM VCSE Accord](#).



What is an Inclusive Economy?

An inclusive economy is fairer for all. It is an economy where there is equitable distribution of wealth, capital and social connection. There is equal access to opportunities for everyone in society, whether that be employment opportunities, housing, education or health and wellbeing. It includes good employment where people are supported, treated and paid well enough by their employer. It is an economy where those who are often missing out have access to opportunities to live healthy and fulfilling lives. For Greater Manchester, an inclusive economy would help tackle the growing challenges of poverty and inequality across the region.

Current and previous economic structures and previous attempts to fix the economy have left far too many people across Greater Manchester unemployed or underpaid, facing poverty and excluded from opportunities to thrive. As the economy grows, so does the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest in society and the consequences associated with this. With the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit exacerbating inequalities, it is important that action is taken to create a fairer society.

Many Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations in Greater Manchester, whether they are aware of it or not, are helping to build a more

inclusive economy. They do this in a number of ways, particularly in places with high levels of deprivation and poverty.

This portfolio series will delve into specific examples of this but first we will explore what an inclusive economy looks like and what enables it.

To develop a deeper understanding of what an inclusive economy is and consider the impact this can have, we must first recognise the components of an inclusive economy. There isn't a universally agreed definition for what an inclusive economy is; it will vary in different places depending on context, but there are some commonalities you would always expect to see.

The [Rockefeller Foundation outlines a framework](#) of five, inter-related characteristics required for an Inclusive Economy:

- **Participation**
- **Equity**
- **Growth**
- **Stability**
- **Sustainability**

There is emphasis on these characteristics being inter-related, as independently they would not make an economy more inclusive.

What is the VCFSE sector's role in the Greater Manchester Economy?

VCFSE sector approaches mean the sector plays a pivotal role in the delivery of the Greater Manchester Strategy vision of being 'a place where everyone can live a good life, growing up, getting on and growing old in a greener, fairer more prosperous city region'.

VCFSE organisations are crucial in the delivery of the Strategy, with the VCFSE sector's work across every aspect of tackling inequality and inequity in Greater Manchester including skills, employment and enterprise; health and social care; housing and transport; environmental issues and carbon reduction; poverty reduction; inclusive economic growth and inclusive governance.

VCFSE organisations contribute directly to the Greater Manchester economy and create more equitable local economies with their inclusive models. This may be via shared community ownership, sustainable and 'just' low carbon approaches, good employment practices and community wealth building (a people-centred approach to local economic development which redirects wealth back into the local economy). VCSE organisations do not function for financial gain, rather to achieve social environmental and economic value for the communities they serve.

The [GM State of the VCSE Sector 2021 report](#) tells us that Greater Manchester VCFSE sector organisations generate £1.2 billion per year in income. These organisations are not driven by profit and nearly 20% of those organisations are social enterprises who reinvest money back into the people and communities they serve, so they are already helping to create a more inclusive economy.

In addition, the report recognises that 71% of Greater Manchester's VCFSE sector is made up of small community 'grassroots' groups, who are well positioned to respond to the needs and inequalities in their specific communities.

The sector plays a role in [the foundational economy](#). The goods produced and services provided as a result of the sectors activity help to make the economy more inclusive and contribute towards reducing inequalities. Nearly 500,000 volunteers across Greater Manchester provide an estimated £692 million per year through the hours they provide which contributes towards goods and services that benefit the region. This activity mainly benefits local economies and the people who live in those communities.



Inclusive Economy characteristic	What does this mean?	Examples within the VCFSE sector
Participation	People are able to participate fully in economic life. They are able to access and participate as workers, consumers and business owners. They have knowledge of rules and norms to start a business, find a job and engage in markets. Technology is more widely distributed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social investment including advice and support for getting started and growth • Community wealth building • Local charities & social enterprises • Good employment • Employment and skills support including tech
Equity	More opportunities are available for upward mobility for all, particularly poor and socially disadvantaged groups. We see declining inequality and equal access to adequate public goods, services and infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks e.g. GM Equality Alliance • Local charities & social enterprises with inclusive governance models • Community grocers & cafés • Community wealth building • Cooperative and community ownership
Growth	An economy is increasingly producing enough goods and services to enable broad gains in well-being and greater opportunity. Good job and work opportunities with increasing incomes for all. Economic growth and transformation is not only captured by aggregate measures of economic output (such as GDP), but must include and be measured by other outcomes that capture overall wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good employment • Cooperatives • Community ownership • Social enterprise • Community wealth building
Stability	Individuals, households, communities and enterprises have confidence in their future, secure enough to invest in their future and a good ability to predict the outcome of their economic decisions. Economic systems are increasingly resilient to shocks and stresses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperatives - banks • Community owned housing • Social investment
Sustainability	Economic and social wealth is sustained over time. Economic and social wealth is the worth of all assets (human produced and natural capital) that contribute to human wellbeing. In the case of natural capital, human use must preserve or restore nature's ability to produce the ecosystem of goods and services that contribute to human well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens and grocers • Environmental charities • Community ownership of disused space • Social investment • Wellbeing charities • Good employment

Part 4: Trading for social good

An Introduction to this Portfolio series

This portfolio series highlights different ways the VCFSE sector is helping to create a fairer and more inclusive economy in Greater Manchester.

Each part of the portfolio will focus on a specific aspect of an inclusive economy, we will explain how each aspect works and how the approaches delivered by the VCFSE sector help to make our economy fairer. We will share profiles of organisations that showcase practical examples of how the sector works with and in communities and illustrate how the sector increases participation, equity, growth, stability and sustainability; all of which are required to make our economy more inclusive.

Over time, we will add new topics to the portfolio, focusing on different aspects of an inclusive economy, highlighting more examples of the VCFSE sector's role in creating a fairer economy and their contribution to achieving the commitments of the Greater Manchester Strategy.

We hope these examples will be shared widely with colleagues across sectors to raise the profile of the VCFSE sector's impact in achieving the Greater Manchester vision.

Part 4 of this portfolio looks at Trading for Social Good.

[Click here to read Part 1 - Community Ownership](#)

[Click here to read Part 2 - Net Zero: A Just Transition](#)

[Click here to read Part 3 - Good Employment](#)

Introduction

Traditional business models are often extractive, focussing on profit over people and the planet, and exacerbating inequalities as they grow.

Charities on the other hand focus on people and planet, working to improve the lives of those at risk of being left behind. But with every crisis that we experience (most recently Covid, Brexit, cost of living) it gets harder for charities to meet the needs of their communities. Less grant funding is available, with an increase in demand for many services.

However, it does not have to be this way. Social enterprises: trading charities, community businesses and co-operatives show that there is a different way to do business that that balances profit with purpose.

Social businesses find creative ways to solve the issues in our society while at the same time making enough money to be financially independent and sustainable. They are run by the communities they serve, attracting money into an area and keeping it there.

[Recent research from Social Enterprise UK](#) states that there are around 6,812 social enterprises in Greater Manchester, creating around 127,600 jobs and generating £3.5bn in turnover.

Of the £68 million they generate in profit, around £57 million is re-invested into their social missions.

These innovative enterprises tap into a diverse pool of talent, giving those furthest from the employment market equal access to employment that is fair, inclusive, supportive and secure. By employing the people they are set up to benefit, they have a greater understanding of the challenges faced and are therefore better able to address the problems.

Mission-based trading is not limited to creating good employment though. There are social enterprises that address a wide range of issues including health and wellbeing, homelessness, environment, inclusion, access to the arts and much much more.

For this portfolio, we have gathered together a range of social businesses that demonstrate the clever ways in which our communities are solving today's problems with a trading model. We are at a crucial stage in the development and growth of these kinds of organisations; if we all come together to create the right environment to enable them to thrive, we can have our cake and eat it by delivering impact AND turnover.

Recycle-IT

Organisation type: Community Interest Company (CIC)

Based in: Bolton

What they do:

Recycle-IT! collect and recycle electronic waste and redistribute to the local community at low or no cost.

They offer a free collection service to businesses, schools and households who want to donate unused computer equipment.

This equipment is then refurbished and either sold or donated to people and communities experiencing digital exclusion.

If the donated items cannot be refurbished to become useful again they get broken down into constituent parts, such as metal – even the tiny bits of gold in the are extracted – plastic and cardboard, and sold on.

How they create a more inclusive economy:

Digital exclusion is more likely to be experienced by people with low income and older people who are more at risk of social isolation. Recycle-IT! sell their refurbished equipment at half market value to counter technology **inequality** and ensure marginalised communities have opportunity to **participate** in the digital world.



By providing refurbished computers to those in need, they empower individuals, support education, and foster community development.

Their mission also includes training people in IT skills by providing volunteer opportunities to those with disadvantaged backgrounds as well as college placements. This enables them to develop the skills they need to move into paid employment within the IT industry and thereby improve their economic **stability**.

E-waste is one of the fastest-growing waste streams globally and without proper disposal methods, e-waste can release harmful toxins into the environment, endangering both human health and biodiversity. Recycle-IT! are helping to build a more **sustainable** future by taking this e-waste and either giving it a new lease of life, or by recovering precious

metals and other materials to be re-purposed. This approach contributes to a circular economy where resources are reused and recycled, reducing the demand for new production and the associated environmental costs.

Training workshops and educational programs delivered by the team aim to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to engage in **sustainable** practices and advocate for digital access for all.

Recycle-IT!'s success illustrates the potential of community-driven initiatives in addressing environmental challenges. They intend to further their ethical practices with community involvement at the heart of their **growth** by creating co-production opportunities and becoming a worker cooperative.

[Visit their website.](#)



Society Support

Organisation type: Community Interest Company (CIC)

Based in: Wigan and Leigh Borough

What they do:

Society Support CIC support and house over 50 vulnerable adults who have experienced issues such as homelessness, substance misuse and domestic violence.

They maintain 11 properties which offer supported accommodation in self-contained or shared accommodation throughout Wigan and Leigh borough.

How they create a more inclusive economy:

Society Support recognise the importance of good quality

accommodation in providing **stability**, but it's the additional support they provide that helps individuals reintegrate and **participate** in community life. They provide support across a wide range of issues, including employment, mental wellbeing, money management, substance misuse, general life skills such as cooking and cleaning, attending appointments, and more.

Referrals into Society Support come via organisations such as The Brick, as well as the Police, Complex Needs Team within the NHS, Local Authority, Probation and many others.

Once accommodation is secured for individuals within one of the CIC's 11 properties, a team

of dedicated staff provide onsite support and advice on a variety of areas including, life skills and employment, maintaining a property, health and wellbeing. They also work with several agencies in the borough to enhance the services offered.

Tenants are supported to deal with a variety of different issues from breaking the domestic abuse cycle that they are stuck in, through to mental health problems and substance misuse. Many individuals Society Support work with don't have the life skills most people take for granted such as budgeting, reading, writing, cleaning, cooking and dealing with appointments. The team support tenants with practical issues such as money management, debt and gaining employment, and work with them to

acquire the skills needed for long-term individual **growth** and change.

Once tenants are ready to take the next step, the team provide assistance in finding suitable **sustainable** move on accommodation.

Society Support also partner with landlords and investors who provide funding, investment and property. In return they offer services to landlords such as leasing, guaranteed rent and management services. This access to quality accommodation, alongside with the intensive support offers tenants a helping hand to reach their potential whilst giving landlords a regular healthy return, and ensures their properties are kept in great condition.

[Visit their website.](#)



STEAM Hubs and Pubs

Trading as: The Old Abbey Taphouse

Organisation type: Community Interest Company (CIC)

Based in: Manchester

What they do:

The Old Abbey Taphouse are a community focussed ‘hub-in-a-pub’ whose work is based on the principles of STEAM, combining science and technology with art and creativity to create positive futures for all.

They connect businesses institutions to local groups through innovative community engagement practices. They help academics to reach local audiences, to enhance the impact of research outcomes and to provide opportunity for residents to learn about research through hands-on events.

Ultimately the team nurture collaborative communities who

put the heart and soul back into areas and assets which have been forgotten, over-ruled by decision makers and neglected.

How they create a more inclusive economy:

The Old Abbey Taphouse (The Abbey) is much more than a local pub. They are a live music venue, club space, offer music studio and meeting room hire and are home to many community projects.

The Abbey work with local schools and community groups on their **sustainability** projects and work with Gaskell Garden Project who help support asylum seekers and refugees. They regularly host events that attract hard to reach communities, providing opportunities for them to meet new people and **participate** in their local community. They also provide a platform for local music talent through their community radio station, Steam Radio.

They support local economic **stability** by hiring people from the local community and use local SMEs for

contract work. They offer free training pizza training sessions to groups who work with adults experiencing multiple disadvantage. The team further support **growth** of the local economy by helping a number of people set up their businesses at The Abbey, offering space for free, providing help with marketing, setting up websites and informal networking.

With a focus on improving health and wellbeing The Abbey provide events that help improve mental health (in particular among musicians) and offer free venue hire to groups who host wellbeing events that are aimed at the community. They also offer a warm bank for the local community,

The Abbey regularly put on cultural events to engage the community, bringing together local musicians, artists and SMEs. They work closely with other community groups to help develop active networks that support the local community and residents and deliver STEAM events that are fun and hands on, helping people to start thinking creatively.

[Visit their website](#)





Gaydio

Organisation type: Community Interest Company (CIC)

Based in: Manchester

What they do:

Gaydio are the UK's broadcast radio and training service for the LGBTQ+ community. They see themselves as an exciting, vibrant media company with a passion to improve the lives of their target audience. Having a community radio licence is a unique asset which brings responsibility and opportunity which they work hard to

maximise for as many LGBTQ+ people as possible and with a particular focus on those that experience disadvantage, to ensure **equity** of opportunity.

How they create a more inclusive economy:

Gaydio broadcast 24 hours a day with a mix of music, speech and content aimed at LGBTQ+ people. They also broadcast in other areas of the UK on DAB Digital Radio, giving them a weekly audience of just over ½ million listeners. This means

that they are able to sell a range of advertising packages which generate around two-thirds of the income of the business. This is used to fund the radio service and invest in the people that they are set up to serve.

The existence of Gaydio provides a huge benefit for not only the audience, but for their volunteers who donate their time to broadcast on the station and in return feel a sense of belonging and **participation** in their community. For many LGBTQ+ people, Gaydio are a connection and a lifeline to the wider-community. They also work with charities and social enterprises to promote services and help them to reach the people that are most in need.

Alongside their broadcast service they also run the Gaydio Academy – this is a series of short term workshop style programmes that address specific problems that their community face. For example, they currently run the Gaydio Youth academy, providing a unique environment for LGBTQ+ people aged 13-19 where they can come and create radio from their perspective. Gaydio also run the 'Work Club' which aims to skill people that are currently unemployed and use their engagement with Gaydio to build confidence and self-esteem, helping them to find work and participate in economic life. Each year Gaydio work with up to 200 project beneficiaries – many of which then go on to long term volunteer with them.

[Visit their website.](#)





SharpFutures

Organisation type: Community Interest Company (CIC)

Based in: Greater Manchester and across the UK

What they do:

SharpFutures supports diverse talent into employment in the creative digital sector.

By offering a range of training courses, apprenticeships and placements, SharpFutures helps people from diverse backgrounds develop their creative digital skills and broaden their employment opportunities.

SharpFutures work with broadcasters, production companies and education providers to identify and support talent, helping them to

build a career in the emerging content creation industries in Greater Manchester and across the UK.

How they create a more inclusive economy:

SharpFutures ‘Discover’ inspires young people to work in the creative, digital and tech sector by highlighting skills, opportunities and pathways into employment through offering a wide range of masterclasses, courses and practical workshops.

They work with universities to prepare students for the world of professional employment, with colleges and academies to highlight career opportunities and with schools to introduce the exciting world of creative, digital and tech.

This work helps to build the next generation of digital creatives and assists with **equity** of opportunity across the diverse communities in Greater Manchester.

Sharp Futures ‘POD’ (People On Demand) is a pool of entry level, eager to gain experience, new entrants with the ability to provide important, flexible support to fledgling and fast-growing organisations in need of creative digital services.

With members recruited and retained based on a desire to develop sector-relevant skills, SharpFutures POD offer clients the opportunity to bring on board temporary, support staff while also playing a valuable part in

members’ career development.

By connecting members with clients in this way, young people are able to earn money while they gain work experience, giving them access to **participate** in the working world earlier than they might normally do. Exposure to work in this way also helps equip members with the skills and confidence to build a **sustainable** future for themselves.

The service that POD members provide also helps SME’s access creative digital services that they might otherwise not be able to afford in their quest for **growth**.

[Visit their website.](#)