

GMCVO

What the Local Voluntary Sector Needs from a New Government

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WHAT THE LOCAL VOLUNTARY SECTOR NEEDS FROM A NEW GOVERNMENT

GMCVO believes 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. We believe 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.

We further believe that government, both national and local, can benefit from the reach and knowledge of the local voluntary sector in shaping policy and taking decisions. The policies and decisions of national government have an impact on the environment for voluntary action in Greater Manchester. We therefore ask all political parties and candidates to consider the following requests to the new government in 2015.

What the local voluntary sector needs from a new government –

1. Acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of the voluntary sector, volunteering and social action as part of a civilized society, and of their essential independence from government.
2. An explicit commitment to reducing inequalities, with a sensible target set, and an acknowledgement of the contributions of voluntary organisations in meeting it. Inequality is rising. It reduces economic performance, creates social tensions and is reducing solidarity.
3. Recognition of the inextricable connection between economic and social (and political) inclusion and the importance of the voluntary sector in that interface.
4. More autonomy for core cities like Greater Manchester, to raise and distribute public money and take decisions based on local strategic priorities; this would enable core cities to participate internationally and drive the economy. Autonomy should come with obligations to take account of the intelligence and perspectives of all local stakeholders in decision making – including the voluntary sector.
5. Development of a comparable rural strategy which recognises the significance of the countryside and the relationships between urban, semi-rural and rural areas in the context of a city-driven economy.
6. Acknowledgement of the value of strong community-owned local institutions which can strengthen networks and neighbourhoods and create social capital.
7. A more effective and efficient Office for Civil Society which is itself valued by wider government as a source of information about the value and role of the voluntary sector, and a route into its internal networks and communications channels. This would mean investing in communications and research to gather intelligence, test and learn, and undertake proof of concept work, to enable it to speak with authority.
8. Timely support with specific issues, for example:-
 - a. Promote the value of small grants as an effective way of investing in good local organisations
 - b. Simplify, clarify and publicise Gift Aid to increase take-up
 - c. Clarify the procurement process and the degree of flexibility available to commissioners, who are often unclear about EU competition law, so that requirements in tenders are appropriate
 - d. Develop practice in impact measurement beyond the use of cash equivalents
 - e. Remove the obligation for charities to charge VAT in transactions with each other