

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 29th November 2024
Subject: Implementation of Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord
Report of: Cllr Arooj Shah, GM Portfolio Leader for Communities and Equalities,
Andrew Lightfoot, GM Portfolio Chief Executive for Communities

Purpose of the Report:

In September 2021, the Combined Authority approved a tripartite Accord agreement with the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector and NHS Greater Manchester to act as a framework for collaboration involving VCFSE leaders and organisations in the delivery of the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) and the thematic strategies and delivery plans that will exist to deliver the GMS vision. The Accord has been endorsed through the Executive structures of all ten of the GM local authorities.

This report provides an update on the work that is currently taking place across Greater Manchester, including implementation of the VCFSE Fair Funding Protocol, agreed by the CA in October 2023.

A huge amount of progress has been made already, with VCFSE sector representatives “at the table” in many of the places where important decisions are made across the NHS Health and Social Care, GMCA and Transport for Greater Manchester partnerships. The sector is playing a strong role across all the commitments and thematic areas of the GMS, and improvements have been made in support for the sector’s workforce, in communication, in partnerships and in service delivery.

However, at the current time there is huge pressure on both public budgets and the resources available for VCFSE activities, and recent months have seen significant developments that will affect future delivery. The VCFSE Accord and its associated workstreams have built capacity across the sector, but it is important that this commitment by the GMCA and its constituent local authorities is strengthened if VCFSE organisations are going to continue to play their vital role in our communities and our ambitions.

BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

VCFSE organisations should be part of shaping our strategy, at the heart of our delivery and an ambassador and trusted friend in our communities. Greater Manchester should achieve parity of esteem for the VCFSE sector with the way that we regard our business community. It is proposed therefore, that the CA extends an invitation to the Chair of the GM VCFSE Leadership Group to attend all future CA meetings.

Furthermore, it will be important that activities led by the VCFSE sector that are currently funded through UKSPF can continue into the 2025/26 financial year.

Work is ongoing between VCFSE leaders and public partners to explore the sector's role in the refreshed GMS and in Growth and Reform, including the delivery of flagship missions such as Live Well, the Bee Network, MBACC and Housing First. It is proposed therefore that a further paper is brought to the CA for consideration early in 2025 which describes a series of strategic undertakings in partnership with the VCFSE sector, which will be implemented through the VCFSE Accord.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note the progress update provided, and next steps outlined at section 4, including that a further paper will be brought for consideration early in 2025.
2. Agree that an invitation should be extended to the Chair of the GM VCFSE Leadership Group to attend future meetings of the Combined Authority.

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Results of the [Sustainability Decision Support Tool](#) are included here:

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation	
Equality and Inclusion	G	<p>The Accord enables involvement of a range of communities of identity, experience and geography, facilitating support and advocacy for particular communities.</p> <p>Key to the work of the VCSE sector under the Accord will be to enhance its ability to tackle poverty and disadvantage</p> <p>The Accord will facilitate the involvement of VCSE organisations in the service reform programme and 'services for people' in localities and neighbourhoods.</p> <p>The VCSE Accord will include work to increase co-design of services, support the GM Equalities Alliance and enable structures that allow communities to have a say in shaping decisions that affect them</p> <p>Involvement of VCSE organisations will be key to work to support community cohesion across GM, and this will be embedded in work to deliver the Accord.</p>	
Health	G	<p>Through key VCSE-led programmes like GM Moving, also through development of structures for the GM-wide Live Well service.</p> <p>The VCSE Accord will build from existing successes around VCSE-led low level mental health programmes.</p> <p>Through key VCSE-led programmes like GM Moving, also through development of structures for the GM-wide Live Well service.</p> <p>Through facilitation of key VCSE-led wellbeing programmes including development of structures for the GM-wide Live Well service.</p> <p>Improving referral pathways and connections for support, via VCSE organisations collaborating with statutory services</p> <p>The VCSE Accord will enable VCSE involvement in key healthy food programmes, and enable a support infrastructure and resilient forms of funding</p>	
Resilience and Adaptation	G	<p>The VCSE sector has an important role to play in creating environmental benefits, reducing carbon use, responding to emergencies and mitigating risks to communities.</p> <p>The VCSE sector has an important role to play in the Coronavirus recovery work</p> <p>The VCSE Accord describes the sector's role in supporting resilience of society and environment</p> <p>A strong agreement with the VCSE sector will enable involvement in key community safety programmes such as the Violence Reduction Unit.</p> <p>VCSE organisations play a significant role in enhancing and maintaining green and blue space in GM</p>	
Housing	G	<p>The VCSE Accord will build from strong experience around the Homeless Action Network, for example</p> <p>Through the VCSE-led community homes programme</p> <p>Through community ownership and management of redundant and underused buildings and public spaces</p>	
Economy	G	<p>The VCSE Accord contains a commitment around making a more inclusive and social economy</p> <p>The VCSE Accord contains a commitment around improvement of workforce capacity and capability, also seeking for the sector to have 100% employees paid the Real Living Wage</p> <p>The VCSE Accord contains a commitment around improvement of workforce capacity and capability, also seeking for the sector to have 100% employees paid the Real Living Wage</p> <p>The Accord will include work to support social enterprises and other social economy organisations to thrive</p> <p>VCSE organisations play a key role in social innovation activities</p> <p>The VCSE sector can leverage funds from charitable funders, social investors and other philanthropic givers.</p> <p>VCSE organisations play a key role in community learning programmes that wrap around statutory provision</p>	
Mobility and Connectivity	G	<p>Focus in the VCSE Accord on accessible services, facilitating the hearing of lived experience from communities and co-design of infrastructure</p> <p>VCSE organisations play a role providing low carbon transport schemes</p> <p>Focus in the VCSE Accord on accessible services, facilitating the hearing of lived experience from communities and co-design of infrastructure</p>	
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G		
Consumption and Production	G	<p>VCSE organisations make commitments to reduce waste in their activities</p> <p>VCSE organisations make commitments to increase reuse and recycling in their activities</p>	
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		<p>The UKG are interested in bids which are particularly strong on the need for UKCRF projects to demonstrate a contribution to national net zero and carbon reduction ambitions and this forms a key part of the UKG's assessment criteria. GM priorities should contribute to our carbon neutrality and environmental objectives. We would welcome projects which are innovative, inclusive and support the</p>	
Further Assessment(s):		Equalities Impact Assessment and Carbon Assessment	
 Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	 Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	 Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	 Negative impacts overall.

Carbon Assessment

Overall Score		
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation
New Build residential	N/A	
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A	
New Build Commercial/Industrial	N/A	
Transport		
Active travel and public transport		
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A	These may result through implementation of the Accord
Access to amenities	N/A	
Vehicle procurement	N/A	
Land Use		
Land use	N/A	
No associated carbon impacts expected.		High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.
		Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.
		Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.
		Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

Risk Management:

This report is considered to have a low level of risk

Legal Considerations:

Any legal considerations are set out in the body of the report

Financial Consequences – Revenue:

To support this work, a budget of £228,400 was approved by the GMCA in September 2020 funded from Cultural Fund met from District contributions, and approval delegated to the GMCA Treasurer, in consultation with the Communities Portfolio Leader and Chief Executive, to award grant agreements, subject to final agreement of GMCA budgets. This funding has been further supplemented by funding from GM Integrated Care Board.

Financial Consequences – Capital:

N/A

Number of attachments to the report:

Annex 1 - GM VCFSE Accord Interim Evaluation Report

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an update on progress with the VCFSE Accord and implementation of the Fair Funding Protocol at its meeting in March 2024, noting the report. Comments made by Committee members can be viewed at [Public Meeting Minutes Template \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

Background papers:

Information about GM VCFSE Leadership Group – <https://VCFSEleadershipgm.org.uk/our-work/>

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In September 2021, the GM Health & Social Care Partnership Executive Board and the Combined Authority approved a new tripartite Accord agreement with the VCFSE sector lasting until March 2026. The Accord acts as a framework for collaboration involving VCFSE leaders and organisations in the delivery of the Greater Manchester Strategy and the thematic strategies and delivery plans that exist to deliver the GMS vision.
- 1.2 The Accord has also been endorsed through the Executive structures of all ten of the GM local authorities and is an integral part of services for people in our communities.
- 1.3 The VCFSE Accord agreement facilitates a unified way of working and allows a single conversation with the sector in relation to all aspects of the GMS and its partner strategies. It also enables a focus on sustaining the sector's valuable work in communities and creating more resilient VCFSE services.
- 1.4 The work described in this paper is set within a period of extreme demand and dependence placed on both the public and VCFSE sectors. Active involvement of voluntary and faith-based organisations, community groups and social enterprises in places and neighbourhoods will be key to Greater Manchester being able to respond to these pressures and drive growth in the local economy, while addressing the priorities of tackling inequalities, building confidence, and co-design of a resilient city region.

2. Delivering the Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord

- 2.1 In April 2023, a Delivery Plan was put in place for the final 3 years of the current VCFSE Accord agreement which contains an iterative programme of enabling and developmental activities driven at a GM-wide footprint, informed by the support and capacity needs identified through locality working. These actions invested in at a GM footprint aim to enable and facilitate delivery in localities, neighbourhoods and communities. All commitments will be achieved in partnership.

Progress Update October 2023 – October 2024

- 2.2 Work to date at a GM footprint has focussed on building relationships: bringing people together, developing improved ways of working and addressing barriers to

productive working. It provides dedicated support, creates capacity and helps the VCFSE sector function as a collaborative ecosystem across the city region .

The successes so far have included:

- **Population Health** – strengthening relationships between the VCFSE sector and the population health system including increasing the sector’s delivery role in early intervention and prevention; in GM’s community-led Cardiovascular Disease and diabetes work; in Primary Care Networks and local referral pathways; establishing a data and intelligence community of practice and active participation in the Live Well system design.
- **Commissioning and Investment** – collaboration around implementation of the GMCA Fair Funding Protocol and its roll out for NHSGM alongside new VCFSE commissioning and contracting principles. The continuing development of the **GM Alternative Provider Collaborative** as a key player in the health provider system. Exploration of the implications of the new Procurement Act for the VCFSE sector in GM.
- **VCFSE Workforce development** – Launch of a pioneering GM-wide workforce development programme for the VCFSE sector, including a new workforce development hub and purpose-built recruitment website.
- **Communication** – delivering a communication and engagement strategy linked to groups across Greater Manchester to improve the sharing of information, build links to Accord delivery and better connect to public sector partners. New GM VCFSE Leadership Group website - [GM VCFSE Leadership Group](#)
- **Ecosystem development** – building capacity in the social infrastructure which underpins the VCFSE sector across GM, which links with strategic relationships at a locality and neighbourhood level. Increased collaboration between the VCFSE local infrastructure organisations across and between the 10 districts of GM. Enhancing links to faith communities, and bolstering sector capacity to collectively connect to action on poverty and inequality. Development of a shared EDI framework, creation of a new Local Infrastructure Climate Group and Volunteering Network.
- **GM Equalities Network** – acting as a collaborative of people from a wide range of communities of identity, working closely with the GM Equalities Panels to advise, support and bring insight from diverse and intersectional viewpoints on

key strategies and service design issues such as the GM Fire and Rescue Plan, Employment and Skills proposals and Transport Strategy, for example.

- **Inclusive Economy** – policy development arising from VCFSE-led discussions about the creation of a fairer and more inclusive economy, including a range of case studies and pieces of evidence of what an inclusive economy might look like in action as part of local growth in Greater Manchester.
- **VCFSE Involvement and Influencing** – involvement of members of the GM VCFSE Leadership Group as well as leaders from the wider sector in the partnerships, Boards and other collaborative structures of the work of the GMCA, NHS GM and GMS. Publication of the GM [VCFSE Manifesto 2024-2028](#).

2.3 **Annex 1** contains the mid-point evaluation report for the current Accord grant agreement, which shows that significant progress is being made towards the creation of a thriving VCFSE sector that is **involved, empowered and responsive**, and therefore better able to support diverse communities across Greater Manchester. There has been clear progress towards the Accord Commitments, evidence of increased understanding of the VCFSE sector, and successful building of effective partnerships and relationships across Greater Manchester. The VCFSE sector has been welcomed with, not only an open door, but with open arms, by public sector partners in order to improve outcomes for Greater Manchester communities and citizens.

Complimentary activities

2.4 Aligned to the work described above, activities across the 10 districts of Greater Manchester through **UK Shared Prosperity Fund E11** are focussing on capacity building of infrastructure support for local civil society. This work is led by a partnership of Local Infrastructure providers across Greater Manchester and has established a common framework of VCFSE infrastructure functions, working with each locality in Greater Manchester to identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps and development needs. This has led to a programme of capacity building which includes improved communication channels, development of new types of support (for example around social enterprise / investment, social value and Net Zero carbon), improved membership and collaborative leadership models, staff training, standardised equalities monitoring, and new arrangements for VCFSE

organisational health checks. This additional investment of UKSPF funding directly into localities has complimented locally commissioned VCFSE infrastructure and grants but is currently time-limited and will end on 31st March 2025, one year before the end of the current VCFSE Accord.

- 2.5 Additional UKSPF funding has also led to the creation of '**Our Business**', which supports the more commercial part of the VCFSE sector, acting as a new 'front door' to relevant business support services, creating a community of social economy service providers and an information hub to support VCFSE managers. This online platform is complimented by a programme of business support activity provided by the VCFSE local infrastructure bodies. As per paragraph 2.4, funding for this work currently ends in March 2025.
- 2.6 The **VCFSE Forum** has uniquely brought together representatives from all ten GM Councils, NHS and VCFSE together to discuss some of the key issues facing Greater Manchester and the VCFSE sector's role in addressing inequality. The Forum continues to drive forward consistent ways of working in partnership with the VCFSE sector across Greater Manchester, involving senior local politicians, local authority and NHS officers working with VCFSE representatives.
- 2.7 In September 2023, the GMCA Education, Skills & Work directorate procured a managing agent (the Workers' Educational Association) to deliver a long-term, **£5m Community Grants programme**. Community based projects are supported up to the value of £100k per grant and delivered by VCFSE sector organisations and housing providers working with disadvantaged and/or excluded unemployed and inactive residents (aged 16 and over) for the purpose of enabling their progress towards and skills employment across Greater Manchester. So far there has been an equitable share across all 10 GM boroughs, with 139 projects supporting over 5000 residents. Lessons learnt from Phase 1 will inform the potential Phase 2 programme of grants.

3. The changing landscape for VCFSE Sector activities

- 3.1 It should be noted that there have been significant changes in the last 12 months which will directly affect the work of the VCFSE sector.
- 3.2 The first of these changes has followed the re-election of the GM Mayor, whose Manifesto contained clear priorities which will require significant contributions from the VCFSE sector. Supporting people to **Live Well** in communities is endemic to the

work of the sector and it plays a vital role in prevention. VCFSE organisations can play a role across the supply, standards and support strands of the **Housing First** programme, as operators, users and supporters of the **Bee Network** and in providing a wider support ecosystem for the **MBACC and Adult Skills support system**, for example.

- 3.3 The change in national government has brought forward a set of **National Missions** around economic growth, clean energy, criminal justice, childcare, education and health – in which the work of the VCFSE sector plays an integral part. Furthermore, there will be a requirement for a **GM Plan for Growth and Reform**, in which the VCFSE sector will play a key role, in addition to the planned refresh of the GMS.
- 3.4 Work with government towards the **Integrated Settlement** for Greater Manchester must consider the role that the sector can play across each of its pillars, and lead to the channeling of support and funding into VCFSE activities and solutions. It will be important that the sector is engaged and involved throughout the development of the Settlement, and the VCFSE Accord principles and other commitments around co-design and Fair Funding, for example, are embedded within it.
- 3.5 The role of the VCFSE sector will also be instrumental in supporting the delivery of the **Greater Manchester NHS (three-year) Sustainability Plan**. The Sustainability Plan is based on five key pillars:
- Cost Improvement
 - System Productivity and Performance
 - Reducing Prevalence
 - Proactive Care
 - Optimising Care
- Pillars three (Reducing Prevalence) and four (Proactive Care) will require significant VCFSE support. The VCFSE sector are already involved programmes of work that are working to maintaining the population in good health and avoiding future cost through prevention. In addition, the sector will be integral to delivering the Proactive agenda:
- Catching ill health early
 - Managing risk factors

- Delivering evidence based, cost effective interventions to reduce the level of harm.

The Integrated Care Board is currently considering a number of papers which will clearly establish operational arrangements for commissioning, Fair Funding and VCFSE delivery in the GM Integrated Care System.

VCFSE organisations and localities

3.6 Recent engagement involving representatives from all 10 GM local authorities has shown:

- **Each of the GM local authorities has a different relationship / set of relationships with their local VCFSE sector**, with issues including policy capacity and available funding within the local authority for work with the VCFSE sector, leadership capacity within the local VCFSE sector and their ability to engage in council-led projects, and the current 'churn' in the system meaning that new relations are continuously having to be formed and re-formed. The impact of historic policy decisions and past relationship breakdown, for example, has led to a huge diversity across Greater Manchester's local authorities in the level of involvement and role of the VCFSE sector in each place.
- **Availability of sufficient, long-term, funding** for the activities of the VCFSE sector was described by all local authority areas as the biggest single issue that they face.
- All localities talked about the **role of VCFSE organisations in neighbourhood working**, supporting local communities. However, it was noted that many things that the VCFSE sector does could be regarded as 'services' in communities, not 'projects'. As such, funders such as the National Lottery Communities Fund find it difficult to support these activities, and individual Councils don't have the budget to pay for them. This will be a huge risk for programmes such as 'Live Well' as they roll out across GM.
- All local authority areas have some form of **local VCFSE 'Infrastructure Support'** and recognise the value of this service to both local authorities and the wider VCFSE sector in building partnerships and collaboration, enabling sector leadership and advocacy, building capacity and supporting volunteering. However, the capacity of this support is extremely limited in some localities, and

although some have 'place-based' community anchor organisations, much of the support to the wider VCFSE sector is provided through short-term contracts that can barely support an increasingly diverse and changing sector.

- Several local authorities described a challenge around being better able to jointly **describe the difference** that partnerships with the VCFSE sector are making and being able to articulate the added value of work with the VCFSE sector. A pressure to be constantly evaluating and re-evaluating value for money is being felt.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 The sheer scale of the challenge ahead means that the GMCA will need to work collaboratively with a range of partners, including the VCFSE sector. It is clear that leveraging VCFSE capacity is key if we are to deliver our commitment to the new Government.
- 4.2 Greater Manchester should achieve parity of esteem for the VCFSE sector with the way that we regard our business community. VCFSE organisations are a key part of our local economy, partners in our services for citizens, and anchors in our communities. **It is proposed therefore, that the CA extends an invitation to the Chair of the GM VCFSE Leadership Group to attend all future CA meetings.**
- 4.3 VCFSE organisations should be part of shaping our strategy, at the heart of our delivery and an ambassador and trusted friend in our communities. It will be important to involve VCFSE representatives in shaping Live Well and other key programmes of work at both a GM and locality footprint, as well as in our negotiations with Government around the Integrated Settlement. It will be vital that funding from the devolution settlement for GM can flow through to activities led by the VCFSE sector in localities.
- 4.4 The success of VCFSE delivery and their contribution towards community resilience in localities is underpinned by an ecosystem of support, and we will work with the sector to build on UKSPF funded work, and enable resilient VCFSE ecosystem / support infrastructure arrangements that support the sector effectively in every locality as well as working across and between localities and GM. It will be important that activities led by the VCFSE sector that are currently funded through UKSPF can continue into the 2025/26 financial year and that activity can connect directly with the emerging Live Well model during this funding extension.

4.5 In signing the Accord, GMCA has made an organisation-level commitment to the VCFSE sector and supporting / enabling the capacity building of VCFSE organisations. However, over the coming months and years it will be important to continue to support the sector to maximise their role. It is proposed therefore that a further paper is brought to the CA for consideration early in 2025 which describes a series of strategic undertakings in partnership with the VCFSE sector, which will be implemented through the VCFSE Accord.