

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee - 25 June 2024

Subject: Manchester Volunteer Inspire Programme (MCRVIP)

Report of: Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

Summary

Manchester Volunteer Inspire Programme (MCRVIP) provides a Council platform for residents to engage in volunteer activity to support communities and add value to the delivery of services that benefits their self-esteem, confidence, wellbeing, skills development, and work experience with currently over 6,000 residents registered.

This report provides an update on the delivery and progress of the MCRVIP volunteering platform, the progress of the programme and plans for its future development.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- Consider and comment on the information in the report.
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Wards Affected: All Wards

<p>Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city</p>	<p>The MCRVIP programme and app promotes opportunities for residents and MCC staff to volunteer their time towards activities that contribute to achieving the zero-carbon target for the city, for example, GB Spring Clean, in Parks and Green Spaces and to support Active Travel projects.</p>
<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments</p>	<p>Data relating to the background of volunteers is collected and collated across all volunteer opportunities. This data is analysed by PRI (Performance, Research and Intelligence) and reported and discussed at every quarterly governance meeting.</p> <p>This information is used to ensure that actions are developed to broaden the reach and accessibility of the programme across all communities and areas of the city in line with the Council's Equality Objectives. The Equality Impact Assessment for MCRVIP is due to be reviewed in 2024/25.</p> <p>In terms of the MCRVIP app, this has undergone a full assessment for accessibility which has been undertaken by an external provider to ensure that the app is accessible for people with disabilities or users of assistive technologies.</p>

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Volunteering makes a significant economic impact with the annual value of voluntary work in the UK currently estimated at £18.7 billion and in Manchester over £300 million. Alongside this, for those entering or re-entering the workforce volunteering can be a stepping stone to paid employment offering practical experience and boosting confidence.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Volunteering offers individuals the chance to develop new skills, gain valuable work experience and build networks that can lead to job opportunities if that is the outcome the volunteer is seeking. It develops a sense of confidence, purpose, and motivation for volunteers.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The broad range of volunteering opportunities available across MCRVIP supports and involves communities, enhancing the quality of life within those communities and fostering a sense of social cohesion and belonging for those who participate and those who benefit from their activities. In this way we are supporting well-being and building a more inclusive and supportive society for Manchester.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	MCRVIP includes access to volunteer opportunities that support our liveable and low carbon city ambitions including work in parks and green spaces, ensuring that the city is clean and well maintained, sports, events and cultural activities. Residents offering their time to make a difference where they live, work and play has a huge impact and continues to be supported by MCRVIP.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	MCRVIP connects residents with opportunities to support activities at a neighbourhood and city-wide level. Volunteering contributes to residents having more ownership of their neighbourhood/street and getting involved with the world class infrastructure, which connectivity makes it as easy as possible for them to get around.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management

- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

MCRVIP is funded by services across the Neighbourhoods Directorate.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Manchester Volunteer Inspire Programme (MCRVIP) volunteering platform, the progress of the programme and plans for its future development.
- 1.2 MCRVIP is a Council managed website that promotes volunteering opportunities to support a variety of events and activities. Alongside this the Manchester Volunteer Centre/Macc provides an offer for residents to volunteer with the voluntary sector; City Council suppliers carry out volunteering as part of their social value commitments and corporate volunteering days take place in a variety of settings. This report focuses on MCRVIP volunteering.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 MCRVIP evolved from a volunteering database set up in response to a requirement for a volunteering solution for and as a legacy of the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games. The system was relaunched in June 2019 following it moving from a one service solution to include other areas of the Neighbourhoods Directorate outside of Sports & Leisure (MCRActive) which included Neighbourhood Teams, Libraries & Galleries and Parks & Green Spaces.
- 2.2 The web-based volunteering platform (www.mcrvip.com) supports the recruitment of volunteers to support the delivery of activities that have a positive impact on other residents and the neighbourhoods where they live. It also provides volunteers with the benefits of engaging in activity to support their own self-esteem, confidence, wellbeing, skills development, and work experience.
- 2.3 The system provides the public and officers with one single point of access to either register to volunteer or to post volunteer opportunities. It also assists in the collection of data to develop the understanding of where Manchester volunteers live and their background, which can feed into understanding how to develop volunteering support for the future.
- 2.4 MCRVIP also provides a different function to the Manchester Volunteer Centre operated by Macc. MCRVIP is the Council (Neighbourhood Directorate currently) platform to recruit volunteers to add value to service delivery / help residents get involved in their neighbourhood. The Manchester Volunteer Centre is focused on supporting the voluntary sector with their own volunteering needs.

3.0 MCRVIP Objectives

- 3.1 MCRVIP supports the delivery of the Our Manchester strategy at a neighbourhood level. People volunteering their time and skills contributes to residents having more ownership of their neighbourhood/street by making it as easy as possible for them to get involved in adding value to the existing

service offer, as well as attracting more help for them to do more things that matter to them.

3.2 The following objectives have been agreed for the programme:

To engage with and maximise the number of people of all ages and backgrounds volunteering across the wider Neighbourhoods Directorate offer to:

- Improve the look & feel of neighbourhoods
- Provide residents with quick and efficient access to a variety of volunteering opportunities across Manchester's neighbourhoods;
- Enable the self-management of the volunteering process from providing opportunities and promoting the service, to the delivery of the activity.
- Provide a more streamlined volunteer management system, allowing Officers greater efficiency in managing volunteers using one system across the Directorate (including monitoring performance, cross selling opportunities between services and targeting volunteers).
- Improve people's health & wellbeing
- Make families more resilient
- Improve residents' skills/employment prospects
- Attract external resources into the City to deliver services that matter to Manchester people.

3.3 Based on the experience of MCRVIP, an evaluation was carried out in 2020 to understand its future direction. Overall, the conclusion was that MCRVIP had been established with a clear intent / strategy, was engaging residents and should continue to be developed further. Therefore, the ambition remained the same, as outlined above. Following the evaluation, Coronavirus and various lockdowns had an impact on progress, but the next section highlights improvements / progress that has been made since.

3.4 From the 6,000 residents registered, the MCRVIP volunteer videos and Appendix 1 case studies, highlight the breadth of opportunities residents engage in. Examples include supporting the City Council's Digital Inclusion team to build residents confidence online, helping to deliver large sports events in the city like the Davis cup tennis and facilitating conversations at local neighbourhood Chatty Cafes.

3.5 Services report that by utilising MCRVIP for their volunteer recruitment they are able to reach the large number of volunteers that are visiting the website. MCRVIP also actively promotes new opportunities on behalf of services via its social media, weekly newsletters and at events. MCRVIP is a great way for services to recruit volunteers in a short space of time and there is often interest from registered volunteers who are keen to get involved and provide support in a variety of ways.

3.6 City Council teams have also highlighted that the platform also offers an efficient means for managing volunteer data, making their reporting and monitoring more effective.

4.0 Improvements 2021 – 2024

Post the pandemic, the project has focused on several key actions to improve the approach:

4.1 MCRVIP System Improvements

- 4.1.1 In collaboration with MCRVIP's software provider, TeamKinetic, a MCRVIP mobile volunteer app has been developed for Apple / Android phones. The app will improve the usability of the system, making it more accessible and improve a volunteer's experience. The app enables volunteers to manage their MCRVIP volunteer journey, from registering with the programme, signing up to new opportunities, and logging feedback and hours. Appendix 2 of this report provides details of how to download the programme app onto a mobile device.
- 4.1.2 MCRVIP has integrated DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) functionality within the software, providing a more streamlined process for volunteers to obtain a DBS when required before volunteering. There are further opportunities to streamline the volunteer offer with the software, which offer a means to manage expenses and provide a way to manage volunteer incentives.
- 4.1.3 An external accessibility audit was also completed setting out requirements to ensure that the MCRVIP website and the app, is compliant with web content accessibility guidelines for Local Authorities (WCAG 2.2). The programme app has been assessed by MCC ICT's security team to ensure it meets their security standards and can be safely downloaded on city council devices.

4.2 Communication and Promotion

- 4.2.1 MCRVIP's branding has been updated to reflect the Our Manchester strategy. MCC Comms have produced materials including videos, volunteer case studies and printed marketing material to promote the programme and celebrate the contribution of volunteers across the different opportunities on the system. Social media channels (X/Twitter and Facebook) are actively promoting MCRVIP opportunities and messages around volunteering. MCRVIP is promoted at events such as volunteer fairs, work and skills fairs and with local colleges.

4.3 MCC Staff Volunteering

- 4.3.1 Each year, Council Officers have 3 days volunteering leave. The criteria is that the activity takes place in the City and does not need to relate to an Officer's current role or skills, must contribute to the objectives of the Our Manchester Strategy, benefit the organisation (either directly or by building the knowledge and experience of workforce), and contribute towards personal development. Links have been strengthened with HROD so MCRVIP is promoted to staff via the intranet and internal communications, so they can find volunteering

opportunities. A MCRVIP/HROD workshop was recently delivered at the Neighbourhoods Directorate Staff Conference to promote the volunteering offer and encourage its use/take-up.

4.4 Emergency Response

- 4.4.1 An emergency response staff volunteer site has been developed with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and MCRVIP's software provider, TeamKinetic. This is to enable MCC emergency response volunteers to be activated to support the response to or recovery from a major incident or emergency, alongside highlighting briefing, training, and exercise opportunities. Examples relate to responding to a fire, a met office weather warning and a reception centre being activated. The existing emergency response volunteers from the city council have registered on this platform and a briefing and training package will be rolled out over the next few months, alongside internal communications aiming to increase the number of staff who register to support in emergencies.

4.5 Partnerships

- 4.5.1 MCRVIP has established a partnership relationship with MACC and other volunteer broker organisations. There are further opportunities to develop a city-wide strategic approach to volunteering, sharing resources and toolkits and developing consistent messaging to potential volunteers and volunteer Providers. As stated previously, MCRVIP is the Council (Neighbourhood Directorate) platform to recruit volunteers to add value to service delivery / help residents get involved in their neighbourhood (while also helping other public service providers the Council is working with), whereas MACC and the Manchester Volunteer Centre, are focused on supporting the voluntary sector with their volunteering needs.

4.6 Contract and Funding Sustainability

- 4.6.1 The Council now funds a permanent / dedicated MCRVIP Project Manager. A new contract arrangement has been negotiated and is in place for the next three financial years with TeamKinetic (locally based software company who have been the provider since the website was first introduced in 2002). Agreement has been reached from Neighbourhood Directorate services using MCRVIP to contribute to its running costs from April 2024 for the next three years.

4.7 Oversight and Monitoring

- 4.7.1 Officers within the Neighbourhood's Directorate provide oversight and direction for the delivery and progress of MCRVIP, along with MCC Communications support. This includes the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators and updating data/policies from a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) perspective. There is also a user-group made up of front-line officers to help promote MCRVIP within their teams and with the communities they are working with. This approach facilitates a greater

connection to promote volunteering to support national and local campaigns such as the Great British Spring Clean and the delivery of Holiday Activity with young people during school holidays.

5.0 Performance - The Impact of MCRVIP

- 5.1 The MCRVIP software provides a large dataset for council services and the programme overall. It collects various forms of data including website analytics, volunteer data including age, ethnicity, postcodes, and gender and captures the number of volunteer opportunities by 'type' i.e. galleries, parks and category level data such as volunteering linked to employability and skills or zero carbon. This data supports how we target and evaluate the programme, specific pieces of work and with developing actions and priorities.
- 5.2 There are currently over 6,000 volunteers registered on MCRVIP. In 2023/24, an average of 342 new volunteers registered on MCRVIP each quarter (compared with 253 per quarter in 22/23), with a year-end figure of 1,366 new volunteers. These new registrations show an increase of 34% during 23/24 compared with the previous financial year. It should be noted that the MCRVIP offer enables volunteers to sign up and support activities and events if they live outside of Manchester boundaries, figures for 23/24 show that 38% of the new registrations reside in Greater Manchester. Residents from all 32 Manchester wards are registered with MCRVIP.
- 5.3 Looking at figures from the start of 2019 (when MCRVIP expanded its offer within the Neighbourhoods Directorate) until the end of 2024, 25% of registered volunteers participated in volunteering via MCRVIP volunteering in a variety of settings. These volunteers logged 38,500 volunteer hours, for 2023/24 volunteers logged 8000 hours on the website. This is against a background nationally of decreasing volunteer participation rates since the pandemic. The [Community Life Survey 2021/22 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-2021-22) found that volunteer participation rates have fallen to their lowest level with 16% taking part in formal volunteering once a month in the past 12 months compared with 23% in 19/20.
- 5.4 Appendix 3 provides a breakdown of volunteers by age and ethnicity (broad categories). This is only a snapshot in this report, as the project has more detailed information that it analyses on a regular basis to better understand where the project needs to focus and prioritise to ensure reach to Manchester's diverse communities.
- 5.5 The largest cohort of volunteers are aged 34 and under, 61% with of those registered are between 13 (minimum age of a volunteer) and 34. 50% of volunteers identify as White, with the next largest ethnicity Asian. As stated above the ethnicity data has been put into broad categories however full ethnicity data is collected by the programme and can be provided.

6.0 MCRVIP Priorities for 2024/25+

Building on all the improvements to date (21-24) and progress, the following priorities are guiding the ongoing work programme:

6.1 Expansion of the volunteering offer

- 6.1.1 We want to provide a varied, exciting, and attractive offer to residents enabling them to support ongoing and one-off activities / events within Manchester. This will continue to be informed by national campaigns such as National Volunteers week, Great British Spring Clean, Love Your Parks week and National Play Day, enabling residents to take part in supporting these initiatives.
- 6.1.2 We will offer a volunteering platform that responds to council priorities and strategies, for example volunteering in activities linked to zero carbon, Clean and Green, Child Friendly Manchester, Building Stronger Communities together. We will also listen to volunteers and expand the offer in line with their aspirations and the types of opportunities they are interested in, in the neighbourhoods where they live and across the City.

6.2 Expansion of programme

- 6.2.1 The MCRVIP product offers a volunteering solution that could be adapted to add value to the delivery of wider council services that sit outside the Neighbourhoods Directorate. This would ensure a straightforward and clear offer to residents to engage with volunteering opportunities through a single front door with the capacity for effective and supportive volunteer management and cross-promotion of different opportunities, GDPR compliant record keeping and allowing detailed analysis of the reach of the volunteering offer. This is a more value for money approach and reduces duplication.

6.3 Group volunteering

- 6.3.1 Develop an improved offer for teams wishing to volunteer as a group from within and outside the Council. That would also provide council teams that facilitate groups of volunteers with a way to effectively manage this process and report on activity.

6.4 Incentive scheme

- 6.4.1 Develop an incentives offer for volunteers in exchange for them giving their time e.g. access to training and development linked to employability and skills, offering access to Manchester's leisure, sporting and cultural offers etc. These incentives could for example offer volunteers the opportunity to access sport coaching courses with MCRactive or provide low-cost tickets for exhibitions or the theatre.

6.5 Employability and Skills

- 6.5.1 Volunteering can positively impact people's employability and increase their skills and be a route into further training and work. Local colleges and universities are keen for their students to have access to volunteering

opportunities to enrich their student's experience, but also to support their studies where there may be a requirement for placements are part of their qualifications. MCRVIP has the potential to be used as a tool for development for people who are looking to use volunteering to expand their CVs and make them more employable. The Project will explore routes to strengthen links with work clubs operating across the city, MCC Work and Skills and the Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES).

6.6 Comms and Engagement

- 6.6.1 Ensure that the programme has an effective communication and engagement plan to attract new volunteer registrations and activating existing volunteers. Informed by robust data, ensure that the project focuses on improving awareness and engaging where there may be a lower uptake in areas of the city, as well as where residents may be under-represented considering the diversity/demographics of the city (an Equality Impact Assessment will also be completed).

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Overall, it is clear to see the significant progress that has been made with MCRVIP and the next stage of improvements.
- 7.2 MCRVIP will continue to keep the Scrutiny Committee updated on the progress of the programme.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the information in the report.

9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – MCRVIP Case studies

Appendix 2 – MCRVIP Programme App QR Codes & Instructions

Appendix 3 – MCRVIP Vols Ethnicity & Age