

How to develop a stronger, more vibrant and thriving voluntary and community sector in North Manchester.

This summary is taken from a larger report. If you would like a copy of this report please email omfunds@manchester.gov.uk.

Executive Summary

In response to a gap analysis produced to look at take-up of the Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector (OMVCS) Grants Programme across Manchester, an inquiry panel was formed in February 2019 to consider how to develop a stronger, more vibrant and thriving voluntary and community sector in North Manchester.

The panel was recruited from across multiple voluntary and partner organisations and met over five months to understand the issues from those affected by them, to consider evidence and to use this information to discuss and make recommendations.

The panel concluded that there are many very good voluntary, community, social enterprise and faith sector (VCSEF) organisations working in North Manchester. However the sector is not as consistently well developed as it is in Central and South Manchester. It has historically been underfunded and North Manchester's VCSEF is fragile in many areas as a result. Competition for grants, complex grant processes, a lack of information, a resistance to support in some areas and limited success in attracting and retaining talent compound this fragility.

3.1 The Recommendations

The panel agreed that a long term approach was required and proposes the following recommendations grouped under five themes to develop a stronger, more vibrant and thriving voluntary and community sector in North Manchester. The recommendations have emerged from evidence presented to the panel and incorporate principles arrived at through the inquiry panel process. They are not listed in a particular order of priority as the panel's view is that all are important in developing the North's VCSEF sector.

These recommendations should be further developed into a business case to be presented to the OMVCS Programme Board and used as a basis for investment over a minimum period of 3-5 years.

More detail on each recommendation can be found in Section 7.

Theme 1: Organisational Development

This theme is about providing improved access to various forms of support that are better suited to the diversity of organisations in North Manchester, with the ultimate aim of enabling organisations and individuals to sustain the benefit they provide to the local community over the long term. This support needs to take a variety of forms and take-up should not be insisted upon as a requirement for funding. Organisational development is not just about structural processes and procedures but about supporting and investing in committed individuals to improve their skills and build on their experiences.

Recommendations in this theme are about building the capacity of larger organisations to support others, to make available a variety of training opportunities in North Manchester, to encourage basic quality standards and encourage larger and national organisations to deliver meaningful and relevant work in North Manchester.

Theme 2: People

In addition to growing the skills of the VCSEF workforce in North Manchester, it is important to grow the workforce numerically by focusing effort and resource on the recruitment and retention of local people. The aim of this theme is to create a steady flow of interested, engaged people looking for and seizing local opportunities. This benefits not only the sector, but also the confidence levels and skillset of local people.

Recommendations in this theme are about enabling VCSEF organisations to run their own recruitment and retention activities, to improve the links with partner organisations in terms of sourcing volunteers, and proactively engaging young people to get involved.

Theme 3: Funding

There needs to be more funding and investment opportunities available to North Manchester, of a greater breadth and variety to enable a more diverse group of local VCSEF organisations to successfully apply and ensure that a greater level of investment reaches local communities.

Recommendations in this theme propose a number of funding initiatives that support groups to increase their skills in applying for further funding, provide alternative methods of applying for funding, encourage groups to collaborate on funding bids, encourage very large and national funders to focus investment in North Manchester and to encourage funding of activities that promote local pride.

Theme 4: Communications, Information and Networking

This theme is about ensuring that there is a coherent, strategic approach to the distribution of information in North Manchester that helps bring together groups, organisations and partners, builds local pride, engages local people, fosters an environment of understanding and collaboration across groups and connects strategic partners.

Recommendations in this theme are about bringing together and distributing information about organisations and their activities, establishing annual celebration and networking events, making better use of existing forums and networks, sharing the outcomes of the inquiry and to strengthen VCSEF awareness in the councillor induction process.

Theme 5: Long-Term Strategic Approach

To truly strengthen the VCSEF in North Manchester requires a long term approach and any set of recommendations must be built on this view. To be successful, a long term approach will require championing, as well as collaboration with partners in shaping an overall strategic approach and monitoring progress.

Recommendations focus on setting up a North VCSEF Steering Group supported by the OMVCS Programme team as well as identifying champions in other areas to support the work.