

Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord **Impact report**

April 2024 -April 2025

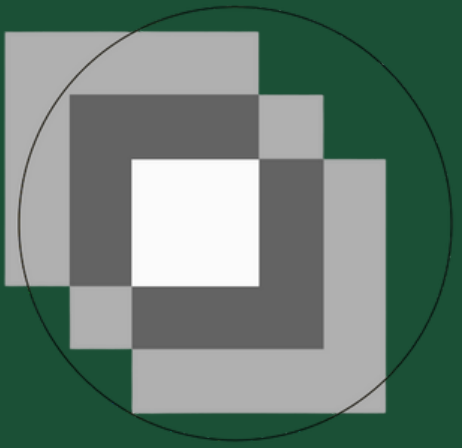
Greater Manchester
VCFSE Leadership Group
The sector's voice in devolution

GMCA GREATER
MANCHESTER
COMBINED
AUTHORITY

 Transport for
Greater Manchester

Greater
Manchester
Integrated Care
Partnership


Greater Manchester
Integrated Care



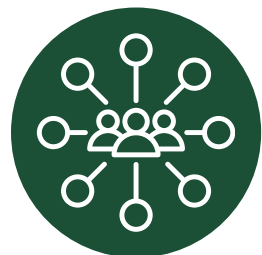
Introduction

The GM VCFSE Accord, signed in 2021, is a 5-year agreement between the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and TfGM, NHS GM and the GM VCFSE Sector represented by the GM VCFSE Leadership Group, based in a relationship of mutual trust, working together, and sharing responsibility. Its purpose is to further develop how we work together to improve outcomes for Greater Manchester's communities and citizens.

This impact reports build on the [Accord Interim report](#), published in December 2024. It brings together details of engagement and reach, along with case studies of work under the Accord to meet its commitments, or where the Accord has acted as an enabler of work due to its vision and aims.

Engagement

These figures present just a small picture of the Accord's engagement. Much of our engagement data didn't include named organisations so we weren't able to track beneficiaries of their work, for example.



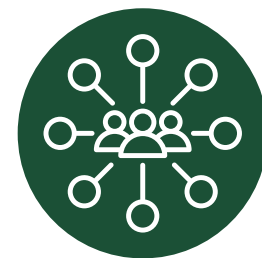
9,160 organisational engagements across the work streams of the Accord.

This includes engagements made with VCFSE and public sector organisations at meetings, events and via e-bulletins.



283 organisations directly engaged with the work of the Accord

This includes GM VCFSE Leadership Group members, it's Working Groups group members, VCFSE representatives on various boards and steering groups, and colleagues across the Greater Manchester public and VCFSE sector.



81 VCFSE Leaders

in the GM VCFSE Leadership Group and members of its Working Groups



1/3 of engagements at meetings and events related to the work of the Accord were with organisations representing 'inclusion' groups

This includes engagements at **meetings and events** with groups that support a range of inclusion groups: disabilities, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, younger people, older people, pregnancy & maternity, race & ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, carer status, refugees, veterans, sex workers, low socioeconomic status and long term health conditions.

Reach



1,432 ebuletin subscribers (878 unique organisations)

The **GM VCFSE Leadership Group bulletin** is distributed throughout the year. It shares recent work related to the Accord, updates from our partners at GMCA, TfGM and the NHS GM Integrated Care System, as well as other useful news and opportunities for the wider GM VCFSE sector.



556 followers on GM VCFSE Leadership Group LinkedIn

This following was built in the last financial year. Total followers increased from **140 in December 2024 to over 500 in April 2025, and still growing quickly.**



107 VCFSE seats on 64 public sector boards

17 new representation positions were recruited for and filled in the final 6 months of 2024 alone.

Reach

This highlights the reach of Accord partners across a range of communication channels. Communications across the partnership aim to **build knowledge and understanding of the diverse VCFSE sector** across the public sector, and **promote understanding of Greater Manchester structures in VCFSE organisations.**



12,173 VCFSE Sector Accord partner bulletin recipients

This includes the bulletins of the GM VCFSE Leadership Group, GM Equalities Alliance, 10GM and Greater Manchester's local VCFSE infrastructure organisations.



10,291 X followers for leading VCFSE Accord Partners

GM VCFSE Leadership Group, GMCA and NHS GM.



3,114 LinkedIn followers for leading VCFSE Accord Partners

GM VCFSE Leadership Group, GMCA and NHS GM.



Reach

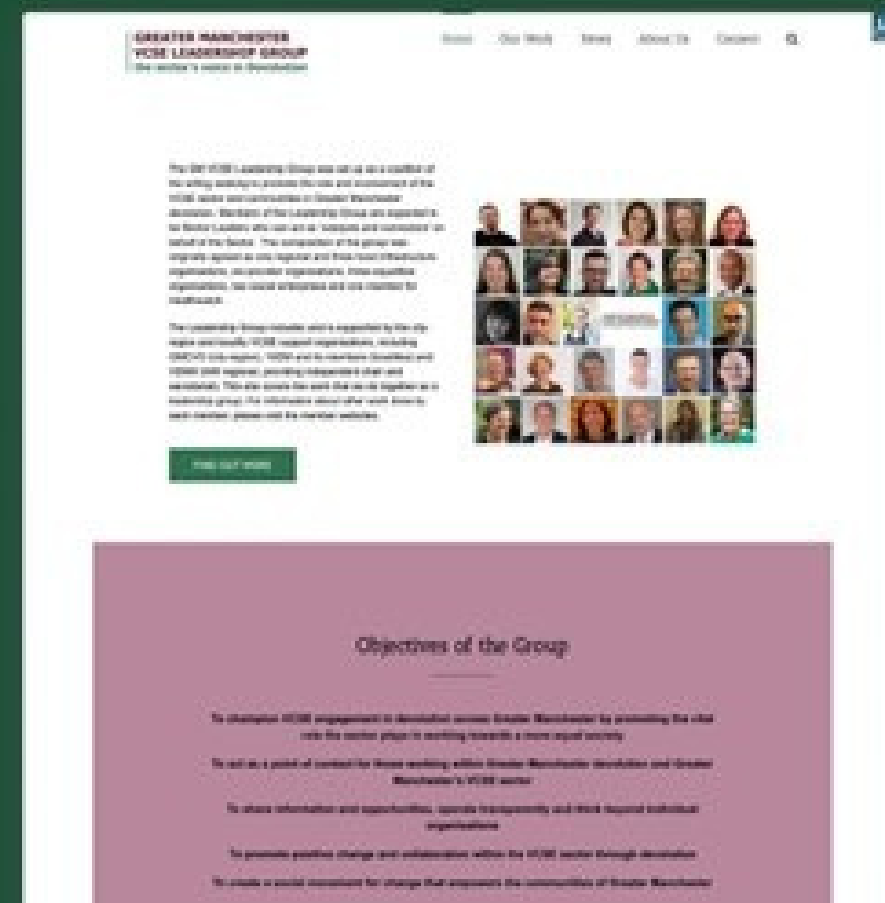
The **GM VCFSE Leadership Group** launched a new website in 2024.

- ✓ New visual branding
- ✓ Refreshed content
- ✓ Full accessibility review
- ✓ A stronger and better connected sector

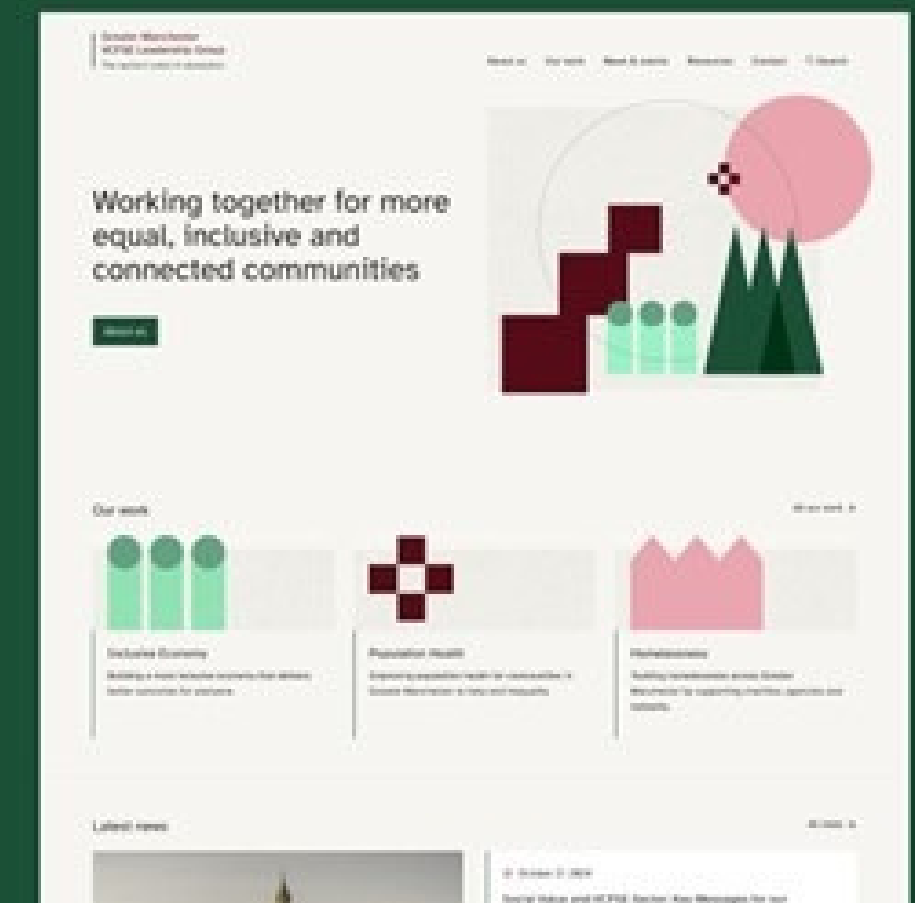
Average monthly users have increased from **51 to 355**, with latest number of active users in June 2025 **over 500**, with **almost 1,500 views**.

The website's increased usability and accessibility has significantly grown it's reach.

Website before



Website after



Case Studies

The following case studies highlight some of the work being done to meet each of the **eight commitments of the Accord**.

1

Work together to achieve a **permanent reduction in inequalities and inequity within Greater Manchester**.

2

Embed the **VCFSE sector as a key delivery partner of services** for communities in Greater Manchester.

3

A **financially resilient VCFSE sector** that's resourced to address our biggest challenges of ending poverty and inequality.

4

Grow the role of the **VCFSE sector as an integral part of a resilient and inclusive economy**.

5

Build on our existing strengths to build the **best VCFSE ecosystem in England**.

6

Put into place meaningful mechanisms to make **co-design of local services the norm**.

7

Fulfil the potential for **building productive relationships between the VCFSE, public and private sectors**.

8

Put in place a **comprehensive workforce programme** to support organisational and workforce development for VCFSE employers.

For each case study, the Accord has directly funded the work, or the work has resulted from the partnerships developed through the Accord.0

The Accord is a catalyst. The 'outcomes' include people and organisations talking and working together to improve outcomes for communities and citizens of Greater Manchester.

VCFSE Strategic Advisor Roles in the GMCA

Two voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) advisors have been embedded into the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to strengthen VCFSE voice in strategic planning and discussions.

In September 2024 the GM VCFSE Leadership Group met with the GMCA Chief Executive, Caroline Simpson, to make the case for the VCFSE sector's vital inclusion in the Integrated Single Settlement deal between Greater Manchester and government.

As a result, a request for **two VCFSE strategic advisor roles to be embedded in the GMCA** was put forward. Weekly meetings between the advisors, VSNW and key leads at the GMCA was set up to oversee and support. A strategic influencing group task and action group of the GM VCFSE Leadership Group was set up to support the two new roles and provide accountability and links to other parts of the VCFSE sector.

Due to the success of the roles, there has been a sustained investment beyond the initial period, and overall integrated and collaborative working between GMCA and VCFSE sector has been strengthened.

The Impact:

Policy and initial implementation has been influenced for two specific priorities, identifying and designing opportunities for co-production, policy development, and some new paid resources to enable a more integrated approach in the Live Well and Economic Inactivity/pathways to work. A second phase of the plan has been put forward, which includes plans to scope for and design further co-production between GMCA and the VCFSE for upcoming areas of opportunity.



Liz Windsor-Welsh,
Action Together & 10GM



John Hannen, VSNW

Commitment 2
VCSE a key
delivery partner
of services.

Commitment 7
Building
productive
relationships.

VCFSE Sector Instability Campaign

The VCFSE Leadership Group wrote an open letter to Greater Manchester commissioners, asking that they work with us to support our sector at a time of significant instability.

Systemic and historical issues with commissioning processes, and new financial pressures meant the VCFSE sector faced a period of significant instability. As a result, the GM VCFSE Leadership Group wrote an open letter that **sought to encourage GM Commissioners to work with our sector to tackle these issues.**

The open letter was shared far and wide with sector support across Greater Manchester, through a range of channels. A brief key messages document was produced to provide a summary of the campaign to VCFSE representatives to use in their conversations on various boards and steering groups.

The letter broadened understanding of the current landscape for the VCFSE sector, and encouraged dialogue on the issue at key locality and GM boards, the GM Integrated Care Board, and with GMCA leadership.

The letter also cemented the commitment made by GMCA and NHS GM to work together through the Accord to resolve the issues.

The Response:

We saw a range of responses, including commitments, letters and discussions of support from local councils, NHS partners, and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) which highlighted commissioners desires to work more closely with our sector to improve support and care for Greater Manchester residents. **[Read all of the responses here.](#)**



Greater Manchester VCFSE Leadership Group

The sector's voice in devolution

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c/o Voluntary Sector North West
3rd Floor, Swan Buildings
20 Swan St, Manchester
M4 5JW

Open Letter to Commissioners: Sector Warning - High Level of Instability Threatens VCFSE Organisations

Action and Response by Greater Manchester Commissioners Required

Dear Commissioners,

The Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector in Greater Manchester (GM) is issuing a stark warning: our organisations are experiencing significant instability due to a combination of long-standing challenges, new financial pressures and poor commissioning practices. **Years of systemic underfunding, contract cuts, delayed and perverse commissioning decisions with negative unintended consequences, and stagnant grants, have left us vulnerable.** The recent increase in National Insurance Contributions (NIC) is now pushing us into a critical period of instability, with **devastating consequences for the communities we serve.** Without urgent support from our commissioners, our shared ambitions – including Greater Manchester's Live Well ambitions, the NHS Long Term Plan, the GM NHS Sustainability Plan, will be impossible to achieve. If you fail to protect us now, you *will* face increased challenges and costs down the line.

A Critical Call for Action

Immediate action is needed. We, the Greater Manchester VCFSE Leadership Group, call on commissioners at both locality and GM levels to take urgent and decisive action. We are asking for **more transparency and consistency in the approach taken by commissioners.** Work with us to understand and mitigate risks of continued disinvestment, underfunding, and commissioning delays.

Whilst we have already seen support from local and GM leaders, including Mayor Andy Burnham and Councillor Arooj Shah who called on Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, to urgently reconsider proposed NIC changes in order to protect the sector¹, we now call upon commissioners to support our shared vision of a thriving VCFSE sector in Greater Manchester.

VCFSE Organisations Routinely Subsidise Statutory Issued Contracts

Grants and contracts to the VCFSE sector consistently fail to cover the true cost of delivery, forcing the VCFSE sector to routinely subsidise statutory-issued contracts with its own limited resources. These subsidies go beyond financial contributions; VCFSE organisations also fund essential elements such as estates, staff development, and wellbeing - costs that are typically covered for NHS providers, for example. **This practice is unfair and unsustainable**, placing unnecessary financial burden on organisations already stretched to their limits. The NIC increase only exacerbates this imbalance,

¹ <https://www.vcfseleadershipgm.org.uk/news-and-events/andy-burnham-and-councillor-arooj-shah-demand-urgent-government-action-to-protect-greater-manchesters-vcfe-sector-from-budget-strains>

Greater Manchester
VCFSE Leadership Group

Commitment 3
Financially
resilient VCSE
sector

Development of NHS Greater Manchester Commissioning Principles



The Accord has enabled more consistent, equitable and transparent commissioning practices.

Following the publication of the **Commissioning Framework in 2019**, and the development of the **GMCA Fair Funding Protocol in 2024**, NHS GM commissioners and VCFSE colleagues recognised the need for a more practical tool which would help to embed key elements of the Framework, with the aims of **addressing inconsistent practice and addressing risks to sustainability in the Sector**.

We have already seen an increased understanding between VCFSE and NHS GM commissioning leads about sector fragility, varying practice across the system, inequity in decision-making and allocation of uplifts, largely in NHS GM's response to the **VCFSE sector instability campaign** and their engagement with the sector.

The Commissioning Principles include:

- **A recognition of the need to invest in VCFSE sector activity and give recognition for its role**, and a way of working that **acknowledges VCFSE is pivotal part of system**.
- **A more financially resilient VCFSE sector**, with payments made on time and up front; longer term contracts; equal allocation of uplifts; parity of esteem; greater VCFSE involvement in decision making; with full cost models understood and funded.
- **Clearer communication channels between VCFSE and NHS GM** to identify practice issues and collaboratively design and test new models of commissioning and procurement – enabling a conversation based on **trust and transparency** to understand funding challenges.

Commitment 2
VCSE sector as
a key delivery
partner of
services.

Commitment 3
Financially
resilient VCSE
sector

Commitment 6
Co-design of
local services

VCFSE Data & Intelligence Peer Learning Network

A dedicated and resourced VCFSE Data and Intelligence Peer Learning Network has been established to inspire improved data approaches and foster a supportive community.

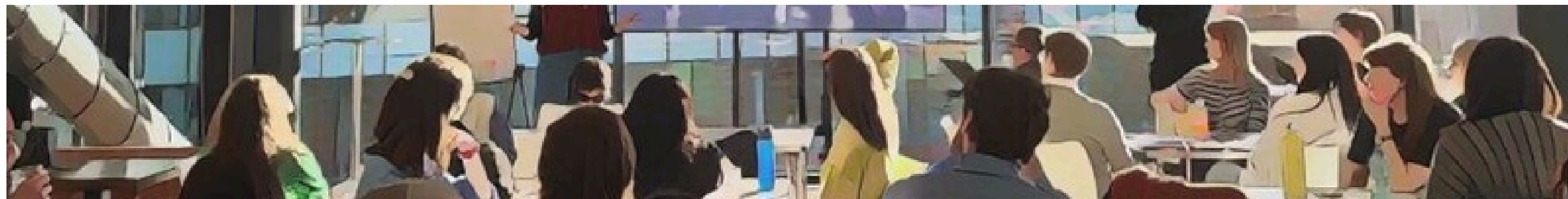
In response to the NHS GM funded VCSE Data and Intelligence Improvement Report which developed insight into what is needed to enable the better use of data and intelligence in the VCSE sector in Greater Manchester, an opportunity was identified to establish a dedicated and resourced VCFSE Data & Intelligence Peer Learning Network.

Since July 2024 **there has been over 140 sign ups** across three co-designed sessions from a wide breadth of VCFSE organisations in Greater Manchester – ranging from Local VCFSE Infrastructure Organisations, to emerging hyperlocal grassroots groups – who are all at varying points in their data maturity journey.

VCFSE organisations such as MACC, Open Data Manchester, and HOME Start Host have been funded to present at these sessions, sharing their experiences and knowledge with attendees. We have also hosted presentations from the GMCA Research Team. This has led to a **resourced opportunity for members of the Network** to engage with specialist support to develop emerging data projects and a chance to host a Q-Step student placement with the University of Manchester for 8 weeks in July / August 2025.

Short term impacts of the VCFSE Data and Intelligence Peer Learning Network are an increased sense of connection and collaboration, knowledge and skills sharing, and exploration of data as a sector wide priority.

VCFSE Data, Intelligence, and Insight is one of the main delivery areas of the Population Health work stream of The Accord.



Commitment 2
VCSE sector as a key delivery partner of services.

GM Social business-led Translation & Interpretation service development

There are longstanding issues surrounding quality, standards and access to translation and interpretation services for service users in Greater Manchester.

Initially, current providers were convened in a scoping exercise and drew on external expertise to consider what works for Greater Manchester residents. Following this, colleagues linked in with NHS England, GMCA and other partner bodies to scope out appetite and demand for this service. Current providers of this work are largely national, so this new model has allowed the resources to stay in Greater Manchester.

This work is still in development, but ultimately, the **outcomes and impact will include:**

- **An improvement of quality and standards after concerns raised around current provision:**
- **Bringing income to under-resourced communities by** upskilling community language speakers and developing cultural intelligence training programmes.
- **A local alternative to current extractive model** that keeps money in Greater Manchester, offers a cost effective alternative for statutory sector and reduces layers of sub-contracting and profit concerns so more money goes into delivery of services.
- **Tackling the inequitable experience of healthcare** by providing timely access to interpreters, culturally intelligent interpreters.

The APC emerged following the signing of the Accord in 2021 where a need was identified for a VCFSE provider voice within the system.

Commitment 1
Permanent reduction in inequalities and inequity.

Commitment 2
VCSE sector as a key delivery partner of services.

Commitment 6
Co-design of local services

Commitment 7
Building productive relationships.



Rethinking Public Service Delivery:

The Alternative Provider Collaborative (APC) is partnership of charities and social businesses operating across the GM Integrated Care System. They represent **VCFSE provider voice** in the system.

Development of Inclusion & Wellbeing Partnership Fund

As part of the £1m Live Well investment fund for Greater Manchester to support devolved decision-making and grassroots health initiatives. The GM Equality Alliance (GM=EqAl) were asked to develop a proposal for £100k focused on geographically dispersed communities across Greater Manchester to improve their health and wellbeing.

This work is needed to address deep-rooted health inequalities. GM=EqAl will specifically target **geographically dispersed yet substantial communities of commonality that reside across Greater Manchester.** These communities often 'get missed' within locality-based funding due to their population often being seen as limited by locality though substantial when looked at across Greater Manchester boroughs. This funding opportunity will support to empower these communities.

The Accord resourced the work to develop the proposal through a collaborative approach led by GM=EqAl members.

This work will result in **a transformative model for impactful health funding that reduces inequalities across Greater Manchester** while ensuring as much as possible that all residents are reached. Strengthened local empowerment and better alignment of resources with community needs by focusing on ensuring community-based solutions are invested in.

GM=EqAl deliver the Equalities work stream of The Accord.



Greater Manchester Equality Alliance (GM=EqAl) deliver the Equalities work stream of the Accord. They are a coalition of individuals and organisations that aim to influence decision-making at the highest levels by channeling the expertise of grassroots groups, equality organisations and inclusion champions.

Commitment 1
Permanent reduction in inequalities and inequity.

Including the voice of lived experience in policy making

GM=EqAl published a set of clear principles and guidance around remuneration for including the voice of lived experience.

This work aims to counter tokenistic engagement and power imbalances by ensuring that lived experience is valued equally in policymaking. GM=EqAL are actively seeking policy makers and colleagues involved with the communities engaged with for their lived experience to understand what the challenges, needs and benefits to implementing this in their work.

GM=EqAl led a process to develop a collection of best practice, information and resources on equitable involvement and fair remuneration for those with lived experience taking part in the co-production of policy.

The document was launched in March 2025 along with a shorter summary and videos of GM=EqAl members speaking about why it's important to include the voice of lived experience in policy making

GM=EqAl and VSNW are continuing to lobby for the adoption of this work by key public sector bodies in Greater Manchester, enhanced inclusion in policy design, and structured payment processes through a socialisation and implementation plan. Over the longer term, we hope to embed community-led policymaking in Greater Manchester, and driving sustainable equity.

In terms of what's next, we are developing alternative formats of the work to support with embedding the principles. This includes an online training module, and short and accessible online or in-person training sessions across summer and autumn 2025.

[Read the principles for including the voice of lived experience in policy making, here.](#)



Commitment 6
Co-design of
local services.

Live Well Investment Fund

This £1million fund from NHS GM and GMCA has been established to grow stronger healthier communities in Greater Manchester as part of the GM Mayor's Live Well ambitions.


All ten localities are **working together to grow capability as a system**. The funding is being deployed through localities and those closest to neighbourhoods based on locally identified priorities.

The core aims of the fund are to:


- Generate more funding for community-led health and complement existing pots
- Agree a long-term aim and clear common purpose
- Make a real difference by bringing partners together
- Shift power by devolving decision-making to communities and make funding easier for marginalised groups to access
- Enable innovation to help communities try new things
- Strengthen and build on our VCFSE sector strengths and expertise
- Build on and complement what is already in place and works by working in partnership with localities and other GM grant making processes

Co-design was key to the development of the pilot programme, with 'GM System Changers' (community researchers) working with LIOs to identify local priorities. The programme encouraged LIOs to learn together how to reach and get funding to new people and groups - something work under The Accord has helped to facilitate and enable.

On top of the investment locally, GM Eq=AI will be distributing funds to geographically dispersed communities.



GM Live Well is just one example of how the The Accord has facilitated and enabled effective work between Local VCFSE Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs)



Commitment 3
Financially
resilient VCSE
sector

Local VCFSE Infrastructure Organisation Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Framework

This piece of work supported local VCFSE infrastructure organisations (LIOs) to identify and assess gaps in membership and engagement, and to collaborate on potential solutions to engage and involve organisations that are not currently engaged, in order to support a wider and more diverse range of organisations.

There were two collaborative sessions with LIOs, facilitated by 10GM, to develop a solution that could be utilised and implemented easily across all LIOs. From these sessions, it was agreed that an overarching framework would be put in place based on the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data LIOs already collect as part of their membership onboarding, or from events and training attendance. The first collection of data was reviewed in Q1 2025/26 - this included a review of the EDI framework and scoping of initial plans for solutions to identified gaps.

Wider outcomes and impact:

- The sharing of current knowledge, practice and resources including templates and processes for collecting EDI data on organisations LIOs engage with.
- A stronger LIO ecosystem.
- A collaborative effort to identify and reduce inequalities and inequity through shared efforts and solutions.
- A contribution to other pan-GM work such as State of the Sector and VCSE data and intelligence insights and tools.



Commitment 1
Permanent
reduction in
inequalities and
inequity.

Commitment 5
Best VCSE
ecosystem in
England.

Local VCFSE Infrastructure Organisation Learning Sessions

These sessions were set up to share learnings, good practice, tools and resources across the LIO network.

A space was needed to swap, shop and share work taking place so local VCFSE Infrastructure organisations (LIOs) could support each other and identify areas for further joint progression or collaboration in specific areas.

The sessions were themed on the core functions of LIOs: training and development, membership models, social enterprise and investment, voice and influence, and information strategies. Each was led by a different LIOS who had been working on developing one of these specific areas, either through formal presentation or more informally, through the sharing of tools and resources.

Ultimately the impacts of these sessions will include:

- A **stronger LIO ecosystem** with the ability to collate data from across Greater Manchester.
- A collaborative effort to identify and reduce inequalities and inequity in Greater Manchester through **shared efforts and solutions**.
- A contribution to other pan-GM work such as State of the Sector and VCSE data and intelligence insights and tools.



Commitment 5
Best VCSE
ecosystem in
England.

An aerial photograph of Greater Manchester, showing a dense urban landscape with various buildings, green spaces, and infrastructure. The image is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the dark green background.

What's next?

The final year of delivery of the Accord will focus on the 4 commitments below. Delivery will focus on completing delivery under existing workstreams whilst ensuring alignment with emergent GM system priorities. The aim is to ensure a realistic and streamlined programme that prioritises impact, whilst providing space to lay the groundwork for a new Accord agreement.

Commitment 2: **VCFSE is a key delivery partner of services**

Commitment 3: **A financially resilient VCFSE sector**

Commitment 5: **Greater Manchester has the best VCFSE ecosystem in England**

Commitment 6: **The co-design of local services is the norm**

Planning and wide consultation is currently underway for a refreshed Accord agreement, to start April 2026.

[Visit the GM VCFSE Leadership Group website](#) to find out more.

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