



Live Well

VCSE Briefing

August 2025

This briefing highlights how local infrastructure organisations are driving and supporting the Live Well movement across Greater Manchester. Over the past year, localities have tested **participatory grant making**, begun developing flagship **Live Well Centres, Spaces and Offers**, learned from **Accelerator Sites**, and explored the **Neighbourhood Model** to join up services around communities. Alongside this, GM has been selected as an **Economic Inactivity Trailblazer Site**. Together, this work shows how local infrastructure and the wider VCSE sector are central to shaping the next phase of Live Well.

Shortcuts

[Live Well Centres, Spaces & Offers](#)[Participatory Grant Making](#)[Accelerator Sites](#)[Economic Trailblazer](#)[Inclusion & Partnership Fund](#)[Neighbourhood Models](#)

Live Well Centres, Spaces and Offers

Each local authority has now received their Live Well Year 1 Implementation Fund, which includes the allocation for development of at least one flagship Live Well Centre in their area. Some localities have chosen to develop multiple centres. Each centre will aim to adopt a number of 'hallmarks', which are currently being refined based on the learnings from Live Well Accelerator Sites in Salford, Bolton, Tameside, Rochdale and Oldham. The wider sector has fed into these hallmarks via Live Well System-wide events and extensive community reporting and VCSE sector co-production sessions led by Unlimited Potential and the Elephants Trail.

We understand the hallmarks will be iteratively developed throughout the rest of 2025. Examples of some of the draft hallmarks include:

- Easy to access
- Anti-racist and culturally responsive practices
- Intergenerational and universal
- Diverse team that reflects the community
- Digitally enabled and community-connected

We'll share more information as it emerges.





Participatory Grant Making

Over the last 6 months, every locality has been exploring ways we get grant funding to grassroots groups, aimed at helping address inequalities and building community led health and wellbeing, through a £1 million Live Well Communities Fund (made up of £500,000 from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and £500,000 from NHS Greater Manchester). A whole range of new approaches have been tried, from participative grant making, to new ways of making grant processes accessible to shifting who is on decision panels and how they work. All this work has generated new relationships, learning and insight. To understand this a 'Learning Pack' is being developed, informed by Community Research.

Seven Community Researchers, supported by A Brilliant Thing CIC, have been engaging with localities to find out what has been tried and learned. A sensemaking session brought them together with the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Local Infrastructure Organisations who had led the work locally, and identified patterns, theme insights and codesigned the Learning Pack structure.

The Learning Pack will be available in September.

What's already happened?

Bolton

Bolton CVS led a collaborative design group to co-create fairer, more transparent funding systems with local partners. This responded to community concerns about exclusion and inaccessible decision-making. They used co-production methods, design sessions, and flexible engagement to test new approaches, with a focus on resident-led solutions. Challenges included limited public awareness of opportunities and the complexity of traditional processes. The vision is to develop a community-led funding model that empowers residents to influence decisions and build stronger local networks.

Bury

Bury VCFA reviewed previous funding rounds to improve accessibility and fairness. The aim was to shift power to communities and enhance transparency. Flexible application options—like video proposals—and relationship-based support helped applicants engage meaningfully. However, limited funding, strict eligibility rules, and resource constraints remained significant barriers. The long-term vision is to ensure every voice is heard, particularly those facing complex or multiple barriers, and to prioritise wellbeing alongside measurable outcomes.

Manchester

Macc's Live Well team developed a co-design system to shift power to communities in North Manchester. Rather than simply running a fund, they engaged statutory, VCSE and community partners to create a process rooted in trust, inclusion and flexibility. Applications were low barrier, using multiple formats and existing community spaces. The aim was to support what already works, not invent new projects. Challenges included limited time, funding and culture clashes with less participatory partners. Despite this, the vision is long-term: to normalise community-led funding, build local leadership, and embed care, dignity and resident power at the heart of future investment.

Oldham

Oldham piloted a community-first funding model, focusing on lived experience. Action Together engaged residents directly and used local networks to shape priorities. Informal conversations, flexible access, and an emphasis on equity were central. While resident interest was high, clearer follow-up processes were needed. The pilot's vision is a system that evolves with community feedback—embedding flexibility, responsiveness, and trust at every stage of funding design and delivery.



Rochdale

Rochdale focused on ensuring funding was accessible and empowering for local communities. Action Together facilitated co-design sessions where residents, especially from marginalised groups, shared lived experiences to inform priorities. Funding processes were simplified to reduce barriers, but challenges included balancing innovation with risk and ensuring continuity of support. The vision is for a system where residents shape both decisions and delivery, with long-term investment enabling sustainable, community-owned change.

Stockport

Stockport VCSE leaders worked closely with public sector partners to test community-led decision-making through microgrants and peer networks. The approach centred on trust, flexibility, and shifting power to residents. Early learning showed increased engagement when communities had real influence, but also highlighted the need for shared language and clarity of roles across sectors. The long-term goal is a values-led system where communities design solutions, not just deliver them.

Trafford

Trafford Community Collective used a “Dragons’ Den” style process to allocate Live Well funding, supporting grassroots organisations working with priority groups such as unpaid carers, people with learning disabilities, and those with serious mental illness. The approach was informal and flexible, enabling applicants to present their ideas in varied ways; from interviews to creative presentations. While short timescales and limited outreach restricted wider participation, the process demonstrated the value of accessible, community-focused funding. There is strong appetite to build on this foundation, with Live Well seen as a catalyst for expanding grassroots investment and creative, people-centred approaches in Trafford.

Salford

Salford CVS ran the work in Little Hulton, where the Live Well programme piloted a community-led funding model, distributing £65,000 through a participatory process embedded in local relationships. Residents voted on projects via community sessions, with applications accepted in multiple formats to improve access. The aim was to shift power, move away from traditional grant-making, and ensure funds reached those closest to local issues. A hyper-local approach built trust and encouraged collaboration, though short timescales and formal eligibility requirements limited reach. Despite challenges, the model sparked deeper community connection and set a vision for equitable funding shaped by local voices, needs, and shared leadership.

Tameside

Action Together’s approach included strong cross-sector collaboration, with VCSE leaders forming a working group to shape Live Well investment. Engagement events gathered wide input, and there was a clear intention to embed community power into delivery. Capacity challenges were noted, particularly around supporting resident involvement and ensuring follow-through. The emerging vision is a community-powered system rooted in local networks, with investment aligned to what matters most to people.

Wigan

Wigan’s work built on its ‘Deal’ principles of co-production and trust. Though early engagement was limited by staff changes, there was a clear commitment to involving residents and communities in shaping Live Well priorities. Planned work includes local mapping and building capacity among VCSE organisations to lead activity. The vision is for a place-based model where communities are trusted with resources and responsibility, and decisions are shaped by those most affected.



Accelerator Sites

In 2023, with funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, the Live Well programme was launched, enabling five accelerator sites to lead work to tackle persistent barriers (system change enablers) to Live Well and to shift thinking around the needs and recognition of community-led wellbeing and prevention.

Each site is supported through a series of coaching and peer-support learning spaces, to identify and develop their approach to Live Well.

“Enablers” being tested include:

System
leadership

Collective
accountability

Redefined
purpose

Shared power

What’s already happened?

Bolton

Working with Bolton Council Population Health Team, Bolton CVS is developing a ‘Voice and Influence’ model that amplifies the voice and intelligence from Bolton’s communities into spaces where decisions are made.

Key enablers being tested

Shared
power

[Find out
more](#)

Oldham

With public sector colleagues, Action Together are co-designing and embedding a mechanism for the commissioning of prevention with strong place-based, community-led governance.

Key enablers being tested:

Shared
power

[Find out
more](#)

Rochdale

Working with public sector colleagues in Rochdale, Action Together are shifting power and decision making around Rochdale’s anti-poverty work so that communities are working alongside those with positional power.

Key enablers being tested:

Collective
accountability

System
leadership

[Find out
more](#)

Salford

Working with CommUNITY Little Hulton and public sector colleagues, Salford CVS is finding radical ways of collaborating so that communities can play a leading role in creating happier, healthy lives.

Key enablers being tested

Shared
power

[Find out
more](#)



In depth: Tameside

Working with Public and community sector organisations, Action Together are using new and shared outcomes to demonstrate the role of VCSE-led health and wellbeing activity in prevention. They have demonstrated this by using creative data and story gathering methodologies to describe the impact of existing activity and garner greater understanding and support for community-led prevention in Tameside

Key enablers being tested:

Collective
accountability

Redefined
purpose

**Find out
more**

Stories from Tameside: Using the power of stories to connect and create change

Action Together hosted a storytelling workshop with leaders from VCSE organisations to share stories about how the community keeps people healthy and well in Tameside.

They invited colleagues from Population Health to listen to powerful impact stories from The Anthony Seddon Fund, Prime Active Communities, New Life Church, West African Development and how their work is changing the lives of local people.

These stories told the positive outcomes for local people as a result of feeling supported, with the trust and relationships that are built over the long term. Here is what they heard:





Economic Trailblazer, by GM VCFSE Leadership Group

Greater Manchester has been selected as one of eight Trailblazer areas in the [UK Government's Get Britain Working White Paper](#), which sets out reforms to supporting people towards work.

Over the coming year, Greater Manchester (GM) will be testing and embedding new ways of supporting people furthest from the labour market to move towards employment and training.

Each of the 10 localities in GM has developed a delivery plan to drive this ambition. Alongside this, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Local Authorities, Greater Manchester Integrated Care, and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCSE) sector partners are co-designing a shared vision and framework for employment support that reflects the values and strengths of our communities.

This work builds on [Greater Manchester's Live Well movement](#) — our collective approach to community-led health and wellbeing. Live Well is a Mayoral priority and part of a broader shift towards prevention, community power and public service reform. These principles are now being applied to employment and skills.

This document - [A Framework for a Live Well journey to employment](#) - lays out how the programme will support people to access good work with community-led support.

VCSE Leadership

If this work is to be built upon and extended to new places and new communities then it is important that there is a growth in the range and capacity of organisations working to support people into work.

VSNW and 10GM will be working with GMCA to understand implications of the programme for VCSE organisations and help inform local authorities on how to make the most of their local VCSE sector.

We will be providing regular updates on this work, and we are happy to talk to interested organisations.

If you're a VCSE leader in GM, please get in touch for more information on opportunities and risks related to this programme.

For enquiries related to activities at an Local Authority district level please contact, Zara Hakobyan and Anushka Swannell at zara@macc.org.uk or anushka@macc.org.uk



A note on terminology

In GM there are concerns across the VCSE and public sector on the use of the term “economic inactivity”. Many people designated under this label face barriers to engaging in work that are placed there by society at large and many with caring responsibilities and undertaking volunteering may be actively supporting other forms of economic activity through their efforts. We will only use this term when referring to the formal title of this central government programme or official national statistics with the label.



Live Well Inclusion and Partnership Fund for Geographically Dispersed Communities

The GM=EqAL Inclusion and Partnership Fund pilot is a strategic, community-led initiative funded via the Live Well Communities Fund. It aims to prototype inclusive grant-making methods that support geographically dispersed communities—groups who share protected characteristics or experiences of marginalisation but are not concentrated in a single borough. Delivered by GM=EqAL, a pan-equalities coalition, this pilot tests collaborative commissioning and participatory funding principles to address long-standing barriers in mainstream grant processes.

The fund is expected to go live in Autumn 2025.

Neighbourhood Models

Based on existing locality examples, the neighbourhood model intends to bring together public services and partners around local institutions like schools and GPs, with co-located teams, shared resources, and new roles (e.g. community coordinators). There will be daily multidisciplinary meetings support joined-up responses to interventions including employment support, housing standards and support, social prescribing, management of long-term conditions – such as diabetes and CVD. This approach aims to make it easier to respond to the needs of a community, helping prevent people from being admitted to hospital or needing crisis-based care through Live Well approach.

VCSEs are key to delivering holistic, place-based support. The model could offer opportunities for deeper integration, influence in local planning, and access to investment—but also requires collaboration, data-sharing, and alignment with system goals.

More information on this work will be shared as it emerges.

What's next?

As the Live Well movement evolves, we'll keep the sector updated on both current and emerging workstreams as soon as details are confirmed or clarified. Follow us on LinkedIn or Bluesky to be the first to know.

To learn more about our work with VCSE Infrastructure partners, or to discuss how we can work together, please get in touch - we'd love to hear from you.



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