

VCSE Commissioning & Investment Update June 2024

The Commissioning and Investment Group is a working group of the VCSE Leadership Group, whose aim is to influence and work collaboratively with commissioners and system leaders to improve commissioning and procurement standards and practice across Greater Manchester.

This update is designed to bring you up to speed with recent developments around VCSE Commissioning and Investment, and where to find out more or get involved.

Social Value

Members of the Commissioning and Investment Group and senior officers from **STAR Procurement** have met to identify opportunities to think and act differently around Social Value, including how to make systems and processes better reflect how VCSE provides social value; and how to secure social value offers that reflect the needs of the community. Watch this space for opportunities to get involved in this work.

NHS GM, GMCA, Local Authorities and VCSE

representatives are exploring how we can **connect business with the VCSE sector digitally**, to realise social value that reflects community priorities. VCSE representatives have been clear throughout the discussions that any solution must be transparent and support us to grow long term, reciprocal partnerships - avoiding a 'gift' model. We have explored some of the digital solutions available, including a system called Match My Project, which is currently being introduced by Stockport Council. Watch this space for information on next steps and how Stockport are getting on.

The national **Social Value Conference 2024** - Social Value in Action is taking place in October, and we are securing GM VCSE speakers for this event. The conference includes a Social Value Awards ceremony – please follow the [link](#) to submit a bid (and let us know if you do!)

Thinking differently about Social Value

Bolton Family have created a Social Value Partnership, which brings together a group of public, private and voluntary organisations to work together to make Bolton a strong, vibrant and prosperous place to live.

The Partnership have recognised that current social value practices take a one-size-fits-all approach aimed at larger businesses, and so they are reviewing the questions that procurement teams ask about social value, to better reflect in-built value generated by local VCSE and small businesses.

They are also building partnerships across the local economy and community, by creating 20 Social Value pledges, effectively offering a menu of support and actions that organisations can deliver, which will make a difference real to people in Bolton.

Fair Funding Protocols and Commissioning Principles

A Fair Funding Protocol (FFP) has been approved for use within **Greater Manchester Combined Authority**, and work has commenced to look at where it fits within procurement and how different teams within GMCA can use it as part of their work. The implementation of the FFP is a work in progress, with areas of the FFP such as social value and sector benchmarking still being explored, but the combined authority is considering whether they can build more straightforward elements such as annual uplifts into their policies and procedures when they are refreshed this year.

VCSE Local Infrastructure Organisation leads have also explored opportunities to influence their **Locality Boards** around their own implementation of a Fair Funding Protocol. As a result of this, they developed some shared key messages which can be used to raise the principles around Fair Funding in their area, when the opportunity arises. The principle of Fair Funding has already been discussed with partners in several of localities, including Salford and Rochdale.

A small group of VCSE Commissioning and Investment Group members and **NHS GM** leads have met to develop a set of commissioning principles for use when working with the VCSE Sector (taking a similar approach to the GMCA's Fair Funding Protocol). A draft is currently being pulled together, so watch this space to see an initial version. In addition, the group is exploring where further VCSE representation is required on emerging NHS GM Commissioning and Procurement-related Boards. Keep an eye out for future VCSE rep opportunities, which will be shared through the VCSE Leadership Group.

Influencing Commissioning of Talking Therapies

The Alternative Provider Collaborative (APC) continues to support Mental Health Leads to review and challenge Talking Therapies commissioning, specifically in terms of workforce and training issues and fidelity to the old Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) model. There has been a meeting with Warren Heppolette, Manisha Kumar and Mark Fisher in May, which generated actions around analysis of how/where VCSE Talking Therapies support the NHS GM broader strategy and save the system money.

NHS GM Contract Review Activity

Colleagues at NHS GM have been pulling together information on all VCSE-held NHS GM contracts, following the creation of NHS GM Integrated Care. This work is nearing completion, with Commissioning Intentions letters issued in April/ May, and a target date of 30th June to get all contracts and grants out to providers.

Refreshed commissioning and procurement approaches

Greater Transparency in Locality Commissioning

Whilst Rochdale are experiencing similar financial pressures to other areas of Greater Manchester, local leaders have committed to making decisions as collaboratively, fairly and transparently as possible with VCSE partners.

The VCSE sector have already seen this commitment reflected in action, with the VCSE Local Infrastructure Organisation's (Action Together) Lead holding places on the Strategic Planning and Improvement Group and the Financial Efficiency Group. Action Together are also an active participant in a line-by-line review of commissioned services, where a commitment has been made to avoiding disproportionate cuts to VCSE organisations.

In addition, the Local Authority are building the principles of GMCA's Fair Funding Protocol into their Commissioning Strategy, and through the joint piece of work underway to develop a business case for the Local Care Organisation, to adopt these principles across the system.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority and a number of Greater Manchester localities are reviewing their commissioning and procurement policy and practice, which includes their work with the VCSE Sector. We have spoken to GMCA colleagues undertaking the review in their organisation, and have asked to work collaboratively on this – particularly on the section around Accessible Procurement.

Let us know if you have been involved in this work in your local area, and how it is going.

Mental Health & Childrens Hub Proposal

Representatives from 42nd Street, TOG Mind, GMMH and the APC have come together with input from GM Family Hub Leads to explore opportunities and produce a proposal for the GM VCSE sector based on the Labour Party Health Strategy and Children's Health Action Plan.

Building on VCSE Sector experiences of Mental Health delivery and Family Hubs, the proposal includes developing and managing open access CYP community mental health hubs, recruitment and management of additional 8.5k mental health support staff, supporting public health measures / campaigns into communities to ensure reach, supporting a neighbourhood health service trial into communities, and supporting communities to access it.

Building relationships with Hospital Trusts and Local Provider Collaboratives

The Alternative Provider Collaborative's work to build relationships with our Hospital Trusts continues, with a recent meeting with the Northern Care Alliance Chair, whose Foundation Trust encompasses the areas of Salford, Oldham, Bury and Rochdale.

The Collaborative are also growing their recognition and relationships at locality level, with recent invites to present at Stockport and Trafford's Local Provider Collaborative Boards.

Promoting the Value of Community Grant Making Within the System

VCSE Local Infrastructure and VCSE provider organisations joined a system-wide conversation at the start of June to share learning and insights from how we already design, develop and deliver community-grants and funding for community-led activities in GM, and to explore the potential for collaboration and connection across existing schemes. This included exploring how to make processes as accessible and streamlined as possible; how to make sure grant funding reaches people and communities who need it most; and how to devolve decision making and exploring participative approaches.

The discussions will inform the emerging plans for the Live Well Fund which is due to launch later this year, and link to the plans for the next VCFSE Forum, where VCSE and Place Leads will share their good practice and explore how they can implement changes locally.

Commissioning and Investment Training – Seeking a voiceover star!

Our Commissioning and Investment training modules, aimed at VCSE commissioners are nearly ready to share. These are webinar-style sessions that can be accessed at any time, and will have three separate modules:

1. 'Commissioning with the VCSE sector: who we are and what we do'
2. 'Working with the VCSE sector'
3. 'Key agreements and frameworks'.

These have now been road-tested and refined with commissioning colleagues, and so we now urgently need VCSE Sector people to provide voiceover commentary for the training – let keisha.tomlinson@10gm.org.uk know if you think this could be you!

Ongoing (much shorter!) Commissioning Survey Launches

Following the standalone 2024 VCSE commissioning survey in March, (and in response to your feedback!) we are launching a much shorter version of the survey to gather ongoing insight.

The survey link can be accessed [here](#), and we would welcome anyone (from both VCSE and Commissioning organisations) to share your experiences and views, if you haven't already.

To find out more and get in touch, click on the following links

[The GM VCSE Commissioning and Investment Group and its work](#)

[The GM VCSE Commissioning Framework](#)

[The Alternative Provider Collaborative](#)

[The GM VCSE Accord](#)

[The GM VCSE Leadership Group](#)