

### Introduction and Purpose

The Commissioning and Investment Group recognise that there continue to be significant concerns regarding VCSE-held contracts and grants that are due to end in March 24, or later in the year 24/5. Many of these contracts provide vital support and services to our community and the wider system by addressing inequality and poverty; improving health and wellbeing and preventing ill health; and supporting community resilience and solutions – all of which align closely with GM system and commissioner strategies. If these contracts are not extended, the impact on individuals, communities, the VCSE contract holders, their workforce, and the wider system will be felt for many years.

Whilst we are working with our NHS GM commissioners to review each of their VCSE-held contracts at risk; we recognise that a lot of these decisions are being taken locally. This briefing therefore aims to give VCSE organisations information on key strategies and policies that may you support in your local negotiations.

### Key Messages from the VCSE Sector

The VCSE sector recognises the significant financial challenge facing the public sector. However:

- The VCSE sector is already part of the solution to tackle the systemic and societal challenges faced by people and communities across Greater Manchester - this needs to be recognised and maintained.
- Whilst long-term strategies reflect the importance of the VCSE sector, short-term disinvestment decisions will mean the loss of experienced organisations, staff, and services in the sector, which will be difficult and costly to recover in future years.
- Even proportionate cuts to the VCSE sector have a disproportionate impact due to the smaller nature of the organisations and their infrastructure.
- A whole system view and equality impact assessment is needed when making commissioning decisions, so that the full impact is recognised, and mitigated against.

### What Key Strategies and Policies Say

- The **VCSE Compact** states that 3 months' notice (6 months in Salford) should be given regardless of whether contracts are fixed term or longer (e.g. A 12-month contract would still require a 3 month notice period).
- The **VCSE Commissioning Framework** details guidelines and best practice on both process and purpose when commissioning with the VCSE sector. Direct your commissioner to this good practice, where this is not being adopted.
- Each GM Local Authority, NHS GM and GMCA have signed up to the **GM VCSE Accord**, which includes commitments to reducing inequalities and inequity; embedding the VCSE sector as a key delivery partner of services for communities; and building a financially resilient VCSE sector that is resourced to address our biggest challenges of ending poverty and inequality.
- Decision-making should include an Equality Impact Assessment process – ask to see and contribute to this during the decision-making process, to ensure that this reflects a concerted effort to reduce inequalities.
- Grants are a recognised route to investing in VCSE sector to deliver as part of the GM model of care. A grant agreement still comprises a contract- just in a different form.
- Insourcing is being used to offset public funding cuts. Insourcing means that principles previously agreed within the VCSE Accord/Commissioning framework are being undermined.
- **The NHS GM Strategy, [Improving Health and Care in Greater Manchester 2023-2028](#)** identifies a priority action to strengthen our communities through “working across Greater Manchester to support communities through social prescribing, closer working with the VCSE and co-ordinated approaches for those experiencing multiple disadvantage”. It also identifies embedding “a comprehensive approach to reducing health inequalities” and demands reduction as crucial actions.
- The **GMCA [Greater Manchester Strategy](#)**'s theme of a Fairer Manchester recognises the need to be informed and guided by communities and their voices and experiences; and commits to actively targeting resource toward greatest need. It also contains shared commitments around tackling food and fuel poverty, reducing health inequalities, and improving both physical and mental health.
- Prevention and early intervention are themes that run throughout GM strategy, such as the **[GM Primary Care Blueprint](#)**, and the **[GM Greater Than Violence Strategy](#)**.

**If you are concerned about a current contract and need support, contact your Local VCSE Infrastructure Organisation in the first instance. They may be able to offer advice escalate the issue for resolution.**

Produced by [IOGM](#) on behalf of the Commissioning and Investment Working Group of the [Greater Manchester VCSE Leadership Group](#).

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VCSE LEADERSHIP GROUP**  
the sector's voice in Devolution