



Manchester Community Central Launch Event Report

Monday 22nd February 2010
Lord Mayors Parlour, Manchester Town Hall

Supporting our
Voluntary and Community Sector

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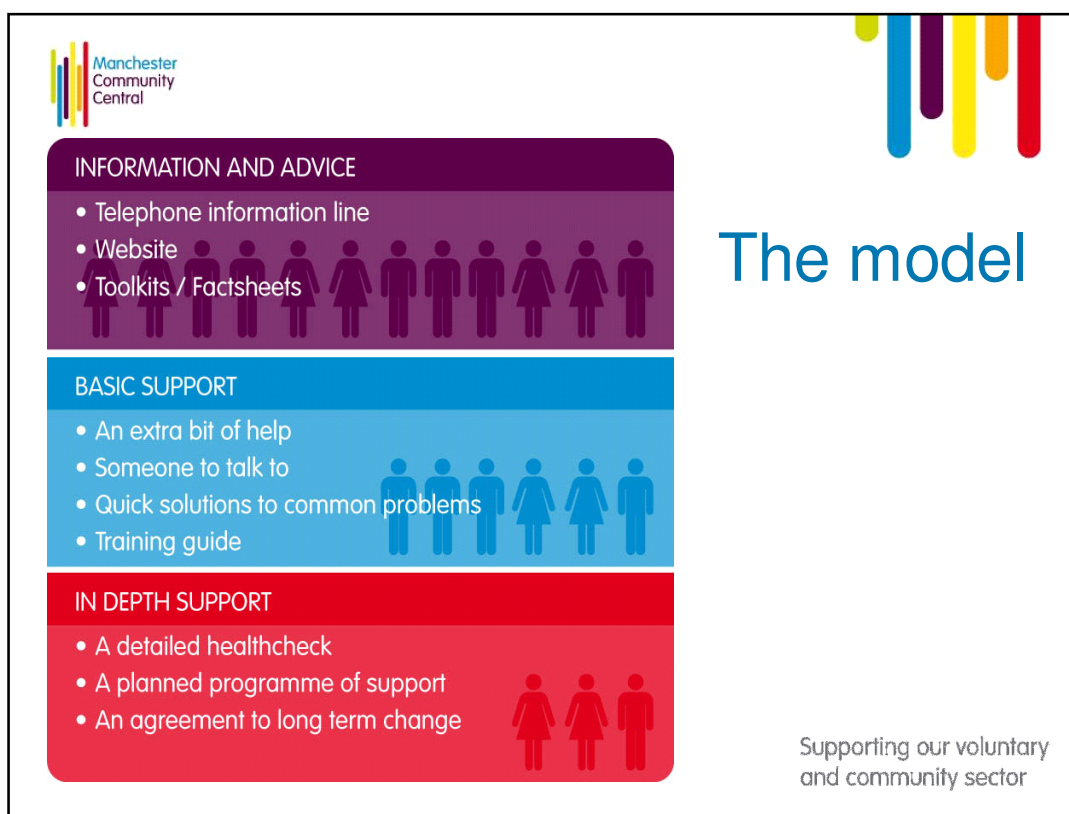
1. Delegate List

89th Withington Scouts	Ladybarn Community Centre	Organisational Development Consultant
Adult Services	Lesbian & Gay Foundation	Pankhurst Centre
African Francophone Integration Project	Manchester Crime and Disorder Partnership	Peoples Voice Media
Age Concern	Manchester Deaf Centre	Regenesiis
Blackartists	Manchester Royal Naval Association	SEVA
Care and Repair	Manchester Social Media	Slade and Cooper
Carers Strategy Team	Manchester Sport and Leisure	South Manchester Regeneration Team
Central Manchester Community Nutrition Service	MARIM	St Luke's Neighbourhood Centre
Children's Partnership Team	Mashed Youth Project	The Big Life Company
Church and Society	MCC Adult Social Care	The Coffee Club
Clariant Ltd Management Consultants	MCC DAST	Transmission Creative
Community Foundation for Greater Manchester	MCCR	Tree of Life
Community Strategy Consultants	Mcr BME Network	United Estates of Wythenshawe
Copperdale Trust	Mcr Care and Repair	USBC
Creative Hands Foundation	Mcr Service User Network for Homeless People	Valuing Older People
Debdale and Woodlands	MDPAG	Virtual Construction
EMUG	MISPA	VYM
Faith Network for Manchester	MRSN	WomenZone
GMCVO	Mustard Tree	Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre
Here to Help Trust	Neighbourhood Services	Wythenshawe Community Farm
Herunic Communications	Norbrook Youth Club	Wythenshawe Regeneration
Indian Senior Citizens	North Manchester Community Network	YDM Ltd
Jam Society Manchester	North West Network	Young at Heart Group - West Gorton
Keele University	Northwards Housing	

2. Introduction

Manchester Community Central is the new service providing information and support to build capacity and sustainability of voluntary and community sector groups in Manchester.

The service will work closely with other local infrastructure organisations to offer a coordinated approach to support across the city. Information and support is made available through a dedicated telephone information service and on the Manchester Community Central website www.manchestercommunitycentral.org



Manchester Community Central is a service provided by a partnership formed by Manchester Alliance for Community Care (MACC), Community Network for Manchester (CN4M) and Third Sector Essentials (TSE).

Third Sector Essentials (TSE) Community Interest Company has taken over VAM's previous role in the Manchester Community Central Project.

3. How the Day Ran

The launch event held on Monday 22nd February was the first in a series of events aimed at updating the sector on the service and providing an opportunity for people to feed in their views and shape the development of the service.

The event began with a series of presentations which can be downloaded from the Manchester Community Central website at (*add link*).

- **‘Welcome/introductions/outline for the day’** (Tracey Rawlins, Programme Manager of Manchester Community Central)
- **‘The new partnership approach to delivery’** (Mike Wild, Director of MACC)
- **‘What you can expect from Manchester Community Central’** (Manchester Community Central Team)
- **‘Manchester Third Sector Strategy’** (Mike Wild, Director of MACC)

Presentations were followed by a series of group discussions. The aim of the discussion groups was to get participants thinking and talking about the services we provide, they provide and build links to each other. Using this method we were able to capture the strengths of those attending, establish their vision of what they want from our service and importantly identify any emerging issues that we need to build into the project or use as evidence to lobby for support via the 3rd Sector Strategy group.

4. Discussion Groups: 4D's to a stronger, vibrant voluntary and community sector?

4.1 Discover

What do we like? What's working well? What are we good at? Tell us about your project and ideas, what are the issues we are facing as a sector

- Holistic support – don't send groups all over the place.
- Draw on diversity and representation of communities (rather than Manchester Community Central trying to do it all).
- It's not the size of the organisation that matters, it's the quality of the service.
- Bottom up involvement – not imposed using top down approach.
- Passion – but needs direction to be useful.
- Keep One Central Place as a central function for contacting volunteers and community groups.
- Have a look at what CVS's and NAVCA do nationally and how they do it.
- Working together = stronger = louder more coherent voice.
- CN4M networks have worked well.
- Support networking, sharing resources, helping each other, communication, sharing problems and solutions to those problems, sharing good practice.
- Free training available to all: opportunities for training are really important.
- Build understanding of what outcomes are; how to engage/prepare for tendering opportunities.

- Need to support small groups and build their capacity for applying to tenders. Need funding tips/support.
 - Groups and organisations need opportunities/prompts to contribute their skills/knowledge/experience.
 - Manchester Community Central needs to be able to ask questions a group may not even know how to ask
 - Keep communities, keep diversity, keep cultural relevance.
 - Need more accessibility to website information e.g. British Sign Language videos and other community languages.
 - Create opportunities to engage. Enable smaller grassroots groups to be heard and involved and enable all round understanding
 - VCS warm and friendly and more informal. Don't underestimate the importance of the personal touch.
 - Really good mix within VCS – we must not lose smaller groups through tendering process.
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4.2 Dream

What is our dream? What do we want? Share your vision for the service, the sector and the city into the future. What do you want from Manchester Community Central?

- For Manchester Community Central to act as a bridge between the VCS and Local Authority. To advocate on behalf of the VCS in terms of Local Authority VCS policy and enable the VCS to become an equal partner.
- For Manchester Community Central to act as a single point of contact. To join people up with the same needs and help organisations get the right support.

- To have a jargon free environment where information is communicated in plain English.
- To have a volunteer bureau in Manchester which enables young and old people to get involved. For volunteers to reflect the communities they work within.
- To develop the VCS market. For providers to have strong, well trained and knowledgeable management committees.
- To have more funding and longer term contracts to enable sustainability.
- For VCS providers to learn more about the market they are in and for the sector to wake up to what it needs to do. To plan according to sector budgets.
- To support each other and share examples of good practice across the city.
- To have more accessible, affordable office space for community groups.
- To join people up and better coordinate local services. To have a central point to meet under one banner to share issues and viewpoints with each other.
- To have safe places for young and old people to go. To have more trips and things to do for people across all ages.

4.3 Design

What can we do? What are we already doing? What skills or attributes have we got? Who do we need to connect to?

- Need Manchester Community Central to be objective and propose changes to benefit organisations (internal political issues can be difficult especially for new volunteers/staff).

- Encourage collaborative working. Put groups in touch with each other – keep records of those organisations which are willing to have their details shared and positively promoted.
 - Facilitate sharing. Encourage/support VCS providers to continue to work together despite a culture of tendering and commissioning, which ultimately can be divisive or discourage working together and sharing skills.
 - Mapping is key! Map support as well as the other providers in the area.
 - Ensure people understand they operate in a ‘knowledge economy’.
 - Talk to network members at the grassroots, not just the ‘leaders’. The service must be accessible to people who don’t have it or English is not first language. Involve young people more in consultations and networking.
 - Encourage co-production, sharing, mentoring and peer support.
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4.4 Deliver

Where do we go from here? How can we help/support, what needs attention now, what can be done sooner and what can be done later?

- Offer a diverse range of services including:
 - governance support (training and best practice)
 - volunteer management
 - templates Policies/job descriptions etc
 - recruitment and retention
 - regular update on funding information
 - funding advice
 - links to employment and legal services
 - information on training opportunities
 - financial help – PAYE, accounts, payroll
 - IT help
 - volunteer bureau
 - business support links to corporate responsibilities
 - mentoring and work shadowing

- corporate support especially HR – mentor small charities
- central point for contact and information incorporating existing organisations
- accessible website

- Facilitate collaboration bringing together those who want to give and receive skills/experiences for benefit to the community. Educate and help groups to share skills, ideas and resources.

- Get the whole VCS together under one banner to talk to each other.

- Contact the Local Authority communications team to find out how to work together.

- Train up/skill up other frontline workers already working with VCS groups to provide support services/tools.

5. Question Time

Here are a selection of questions and answers posed at the launch event and from the evaluation forms.

5.1 Managing Expectations

Q: Please be specific on what your resources and targets are so people are aware of capacity limitations

A: The contract is for £350,000 per year for three years. There is an expectation that the following outputs will be met:

- Capacity building support: a yearly average of 600 individual basic enquiries; 250 basic support packages and 50 in depth support packages.
- Training: 150 organisations accessing training via the website or training coordinator in Year 1 and 250 organisations in Year 2; additional training commissioned where gaps are identified.
- Information service: weekly email bulletin, quarterly newsletter.
- Website: 1000 visits in Year 1; 1,300 in Year 2 and 1,600 in Year 3.

Q: How can you ensure that you will be able to offer as much in depth support as will be needed across the city.

A: The level of demand is currently an unknown quantity as there's never been any real analysis of what the local voluntary and community sector's needs are. It's inevitable that demand will be much greater than we can meet and the City Council are starting to look at how they might make additional resources available. However, we've designed our service to grow over time so that others such as commissioners can invest in the service to provide additional capacity and groups that have their own resources will also be able to contribute. We've also talked to other groups across the country about criteria and priorities for services.

5.2 Service delivery model

Q: Why is this programme an improvement on previous delivery models?

A: A number of elements make this programme different from previous services. It's a co-operative model delivered in partnership by three extremely well-established local voluntary and community sector organisations which are extremely well connected into the local voluntary and statutory sectors.

We recognised from the start that there are already many organisations in Manchester providing specialist infrastructure support to the voluntary and community sector. This service is designed as a way to bring existing provision in Manchester together in a co-ordinated way rather than adding something new on top.

This then provides a platform to build upon: a structure if commissioners and other partners wish to invest in capacity building and market development for particular parts of the sector.

A single brand has been created to keep things as simple as possible for the people using the service. The three partner organisations have committed to handing this brand on to the next contract holder as we want to ensure continuity for voluntary and community sector.

Q: Please give an example of how you anticipate involving / have involved a specialist 3rd Sector organisation to deliver services to one of your customer organisations.

A: This will be a developing feature of our quarterly newsletter. We are currently visiting other organisations to discuss how we might work together in future.

Q: How will you work with statutory services such as the police and health service?

A: We will develop partnerships across all services that support/contribute to the voluntary and community sector in Manchester. This is in development as part of the Programme Manager's remit as directed by the Board

5.3 Governance

Q: Is there a conflict of interest due to the Director of MACC being Chair of the Programme Board and the Lead Delivery Partner?

A: As MACC has signed the contract with Manchester City Council, they are both the lead delivery partner and the accountable body which subcontracts work to TSE and CN4M. Therefore it is essential that MACC chairs the Board. A robust Partnership Agreement has been developed to ensure clarity on areas of responsibility and how to deal with any conflict of interest. Quarterly and annual reports must be submitted to Manchester City Council and a three year evaluation will take place. Our contract terms state that it is recognised that development needs are commercially sensitive and for the service to be effective, the relationship between the contractor and customer organisations must respect commercial confidence. Liaison will be maintained with the Manchester City Council Third Sector Team to enable concerns about particular organisations to be raised with the contractor and handled in accordance with principles of confidentiality and data protection.

The Board has seven places and whilst this includes a representative each for MACC, CN4M and TSE, there are also four additional Board roles for non-partnership members to ensure that any conflicts of interest arising are dealt with in the correct way.

Q: How will the programme be monitored and evaluated?

A: Quarterly and annual reports must be submitted to Manchester City Council and a three year evaluation will take place of which reports must be provided to the Senior Programme Officer, Area Coordination and Third Sector Team.

5.4 Equality and Diversity

Q: How are you incorporating a BME equality perspective into your work?

A: We have a firm commitment to embed an equality perspective in

our work across all strands of diversity including BME, age, disability, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. We recognise that there are dedicated organisations in the city which represent the views and interests of each of these strands and we will be working with them to map out the issues and try to ensure the most accessible service possible. recognise that we are not the experts and this will take time. In six months' time we will hold a review to assess progress made and report back to you.

Q: With regards to working with BME groups, how will you ensure that you will be culturally sensitive to their needs?

A: We held a briefing session in November and specifically invited BME groups. We will be inviting the BME network to be co-opted onto the Board and conversations are taking place to enable us to fill this role as soon as possible. Our aim is to improve as we develop the service.

We have staff within our team who have experience of working successfully with a diverse range of groups across Manchester. We also recognise that there are many infrastructure and community organisations in Manchester with a wealth of skills and experience in supporting BME groups and we intend to work with such organisations to inform and strengthen the delivery of the service for the benefit of the groups seeking support.

Q: How are you addressing accessibility issues for the website?

A: A meeting has already been offered to look at the issues raised. Again, we are keen to improve wherever we can.

5.5 Types of support

Q: What can you offer in terms of supporting application processes for funding which can be onerous, difficult and time consuming?

A: We will support you with things like action planning or detailed business planning but that would involve co-ordinating a range of measures and services. If we invest in this then hopefully that gives you a good foundation when building an application. We are also

working with funders where we can to make the forms simpler and may potentially arrange workshops on particular skills for fundraisers. But please remember we won't write bids for you!!

Q: Will you cover expenses individuals who aren't able to access training because of course fees and/or travel expenses?

A: To provide "free" training is not part of our contract but we will work with groups to identify the most cost effective training and where appropriate funding that may be applied for.

5.6 Quality Assurance

Q: As well as offering a list of training courses groups can access, what are you doing to ensure the training you are advertising is good quality and meeting equality and diversity standards?

A: Essentially you are all our best quality mark. We have started to meet many training providers and will follow them up with mystery shopper exercises etc but the best way to know is by people giving us direct feedback when they have accessed something via Manchester Community Central. Let us know if you are aware of good training. In terms of equality and diversity we are committed to best practice and will work with the staff team to ensure we are raising awareness amongst others as much as possible.

The Programme Manager will be working to identify an appropriate and recognised quality standards framework which the service will work towards achieving.

Q: I have concerns that the telephone line approach might mean that problems are dealt with inappropriately. How are you monitoring your services?

A: This is an evolving service and we are making changes to this regularly in response to the calls we are getting already. We'll also be doing follow up calls to some groups to ask what they thought of the service.

7. Actions Based on Feedback from the Day

- We are working with the BME Network to ensure input at Board level and producing a joint working agreement.
- We are committed to collecting customer feedback on how people experienced the service every three months.
- We will carry out a general "how are we doing" review after 6 months
- We have produced a shorter, punchier version of the presentation which sets out what the service is - presented at the BME Network market event on 19th March & got good feedback.