



ISSUE 5  
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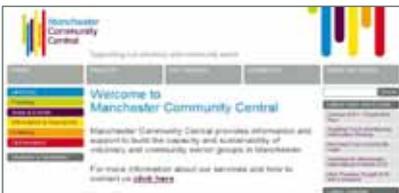
Manchester Community  
Central's quarterly news

# Our First Year



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Supporting our  
Voluntary and  
Community  
Sector

### Welcome to Issue 5 of our Newsletter.

In this issue we are fulfilling our promise to come back and tell you what we've done.

Here is our "memory book" of our first year from October 2009 to the end of December 2010. We hope it gives you lots of practical examples of how Manchester Community Central has grown and evolved in response to the changing environment that the community and voluntary sector now operates in.

If you're interested in facts and figures you'll find them in the centre pages. The rest of the report tells you who we are, what we have set out to do and our hopes for the coming year.

Throughout the report you will see some key questions. If these are relevant to you in your work in the voluntary and community sector, do get in touch and talk to us about how we can support you in our next year.

**Tracey Rawlins**  
Programme Manager

Contact our Telephone Information Service

**0333 321 3021**

Calls made from a landline or mobile phone - charged at local call rate

# Who we are

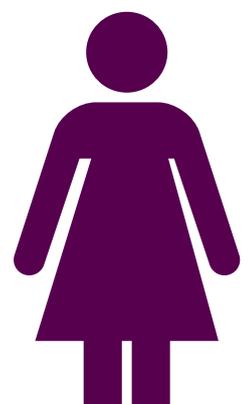
Here are some of the staff team currently working to provide services for the voluntary and community sector.

From answering the phone line and updating the website, to working on a one-to-one basis with groups, we all work to the same objective – to support our voluntary and community sector in Manchester.



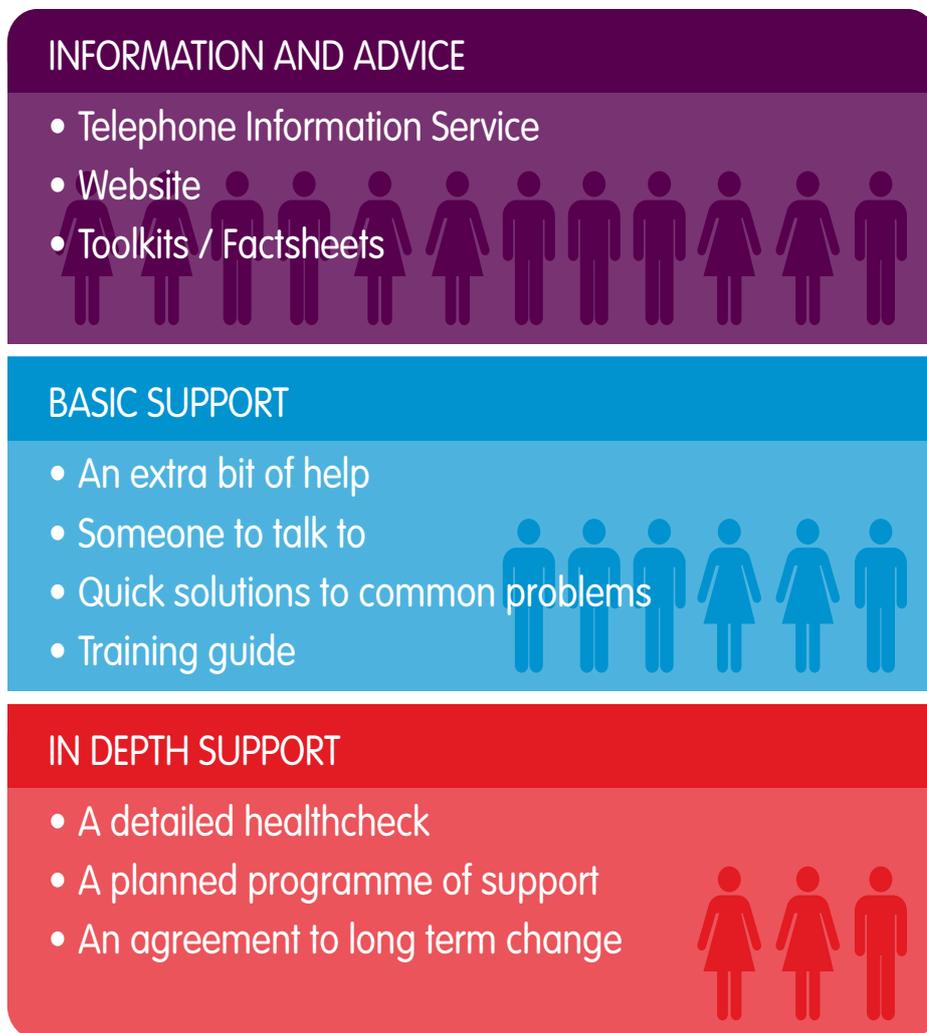
Pictured above (left to right):  
Alison Tansey, Business Improvement Coordinator,  
Cheryl McAlister, Training Coordinator and Mike Blaney,  
Business Improvement Coordinator

Left: Cheryl providing telephone support



# What do we offer?

Below is a diagram of our core services and levels of support we offer:



**There are some things you can expect as a minimum standard:**

To be treated fairly with dignity and respect

To receive quality information you can trust (via our telephone service, our website and from individual team members)

To receive a "call back" or email within 2 days of your enquiry being referred

To have a choice – you decide whether you want to work with us or not when we make an offer to support you

We have worked hard to promote our services. Our phone number is like the "front door" to everything else. We have relied a lot on technology and much of the resources and information we offer is available through our website. We did this because we wanted as many people as possible to be able to access the information available.

Through feedback you told us that this is often a barrier. We have listened to you and have begun to look at different ways of working. We have attended community events and meetings, when invited, to provide an opportunity for groups to have face-to-face contact with the staff team. Over the coming months we will continue to assess this.

**Our Website**  
New Resource

> **Hit the PANIC Button**

Resources and support to help you through challenging times.

# Basic and In-depth Support

Here are some real life examples of our **basic** and **in-depth** support work put together by members of the team:

## Forward Planning

**Survivors Manchester** exists to break the silence of the sexual abuse and rape of men in order to empower those affected to defeat the legacy of abuse and move towards positive futures.

We helped the group to develop a clear sense of shared purpose and to structure their plans and proposals by facilitating strategic planning sessions. We also drafted a bespoke business plan and business case template to show how existing information might be incorporated into these.

*"The support we've received so far has been invaluable, from both a practical and motivational point of view. When things seem like they will never happen, Manchester Community Central have kept us going by giving us that time to talk through things and showing us they believe in the organisation."*

## Group Development

**Irish Community Care**, in Cheetham Hill, asked us to do a brief presentation at one of their Volunteers' Development Days, to highlight how public sector cuts and other changes in the operating environment of the voluntary sector might impact on the work of their organisation. This enabled their team of volunteers to be more informed about the changes ahead, to discuss the possible implications together and begin to plan how the organisation could prepare and adapt to the changes.

*Does your organisation regularly review the changes happening around you? Have you considered how you will respond to them?*

## Funding Support

**Gore Brook Valley Residents Association**, in Gorton, contacted us because they had recently made a funding application and had been asked by the funder to supply more details of their activities. We helped them to compile a report on all their work over the past year and to improve their original application, which led to them being awarded the grant. They have recently come back to us for support in completing a larger grant application, as they want to improve an area of land to make it more attractive and accessible for all members of the community to enjoy.

*Have you had feedback or queries from a funder about a recent funding bid? Could we help you to re-submit an improved application?*

## Fund-Raising and Evaluation

**Revive** offers emotional support, specialised case work and advocacy services to asylum seekers and refugees.

We provided guidance on completing a second-stage bid to the Reaching Communities Fund, helping Revive to draft tighter responses to the funder's questions. We also provided guidance on drafting an evaluation report on past work.

*"My experience in filling funding application forms for big donor agencies is very limited. They require very focused answers, but the support from Manchester Community Central made it an easy task and a learning process for me and my organisation."*





## Not Knowing Where to Start

North Manchester Arabic Ladies Group, in Cheetham Hill, contacted us because they had never made an application for funding before and were unsure where to start. Only one member of the group could speak and write in English, and the form she had tried to complete was very daunting. We helped her to identify other sources of grant funding that had more straightforward application forms and supported her to complete an application so that the group could afford to hire a hall for their meetings. She is now more confident about applying for funding and is researching the costs of some activities the women would like to organise in the hall.

Do you find funding application forms daunting? Do you have ideas for developing a group but are not sure where to start?

## Governance

Image, a charity offering pregnancy, post-abortion and child loss support, needed help in revising the Objects in their Trust Deed to more accurately reflect the focus of their work. We guided them in looking at example Objects on the Charity Commission website and helped them to assess which ones best described the work of their organisation. We also encouraged them to discuss their proposed changes with the Charity Commission direct and they are now waiting to hear whether their proposals have been approved.

Do you have questions about your organisations governing document? Could we help you to follow the correct procedures in making changes to it?

## Incorporation

Trans Resource and Empowerment Centre (TREC) provides a wide range of monthly programming and empowerment opportunities for the transgender community in a safe and accessible space. TREC were an unincorporated association and we helped them to become a charitable company by providing verbal and written guidance on the key issues, as well as a step-by-step action plan covering incorporation, charity registration and transfer of undertakings.

“We have greatly benefited from one-to-one information and guidance as we move from an unincorporated association towards a charitable company, a particularly difficult process which has been smoothly rendered by the pro-active and professional assistance of Manchester Community Central.”

## Board Recruitment/Development

The Roby exists to improve mental health, promote general well-being and encourage social inclusion in Longsight and surrounding areas. We helped the Roby to renew their temporarily depleted Board by coordinating a recruitment and induction process for new trustees, which required us to be quite hands-on.

“When we had an unexpected crisis on our Trustee Board, Manchester Community Central responded immediately, and agreed to give us support. We ended up with three excellent new trustees: a mental health lecturer, a HR consultant and an accountant with a public body.”

# Facts and Figures

These graphs provide a snap shot of the ways in which groups have used our services over the first year. There are obvious seasonal peaks and troughs around holiday time.

## Business Improvement Services

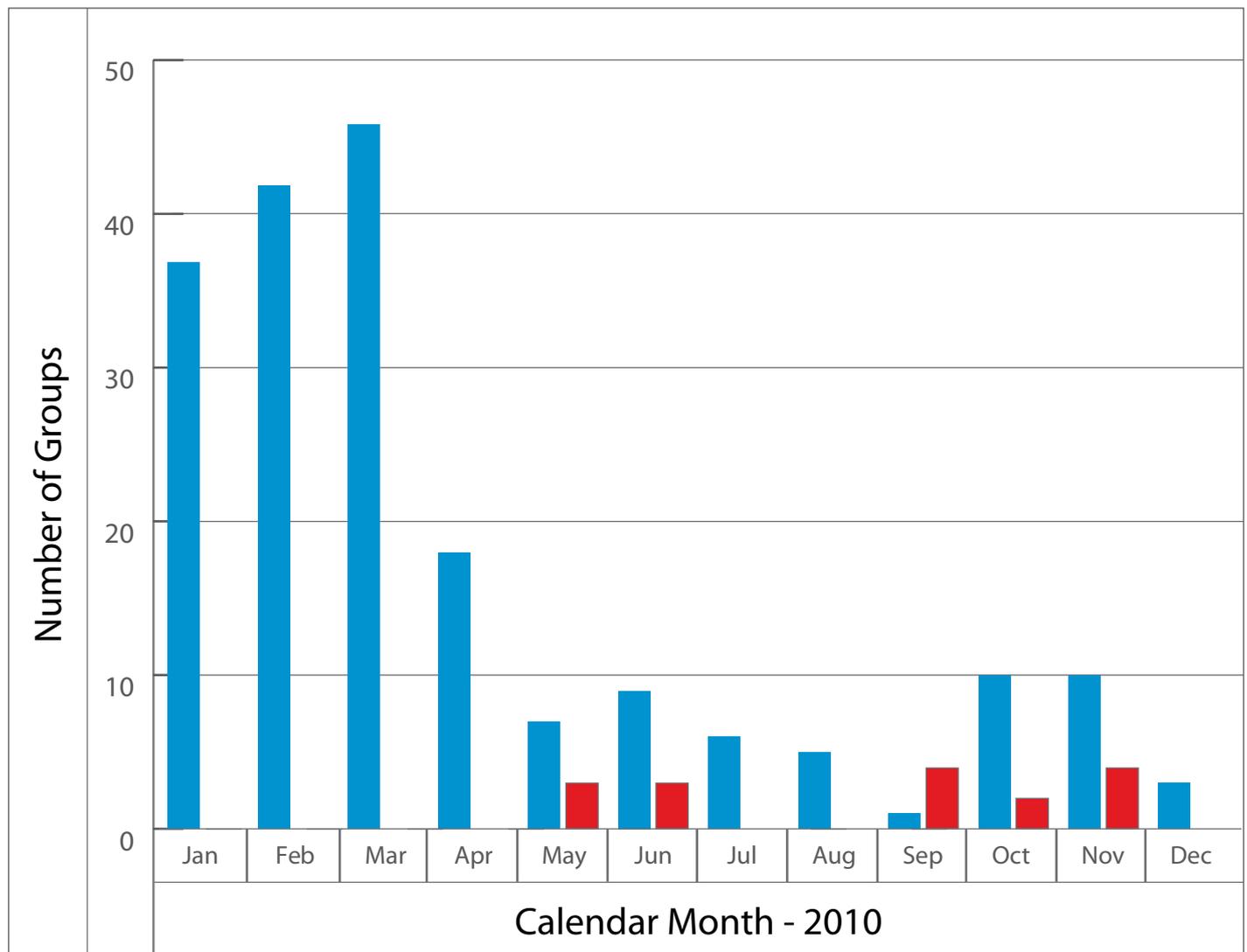
These currently fall into two categories:

### Basic Support

Short term support usually solving common problems  
Most of our work has focussed on guidance with governance and funding issues

### In-depth Support

Longer term support which is bespoke to each group  
The most common areas of in-depth support this year were incorporation, board development and business planning as a key component to development



It should be noted that in-depth support services were not operational until May 2010

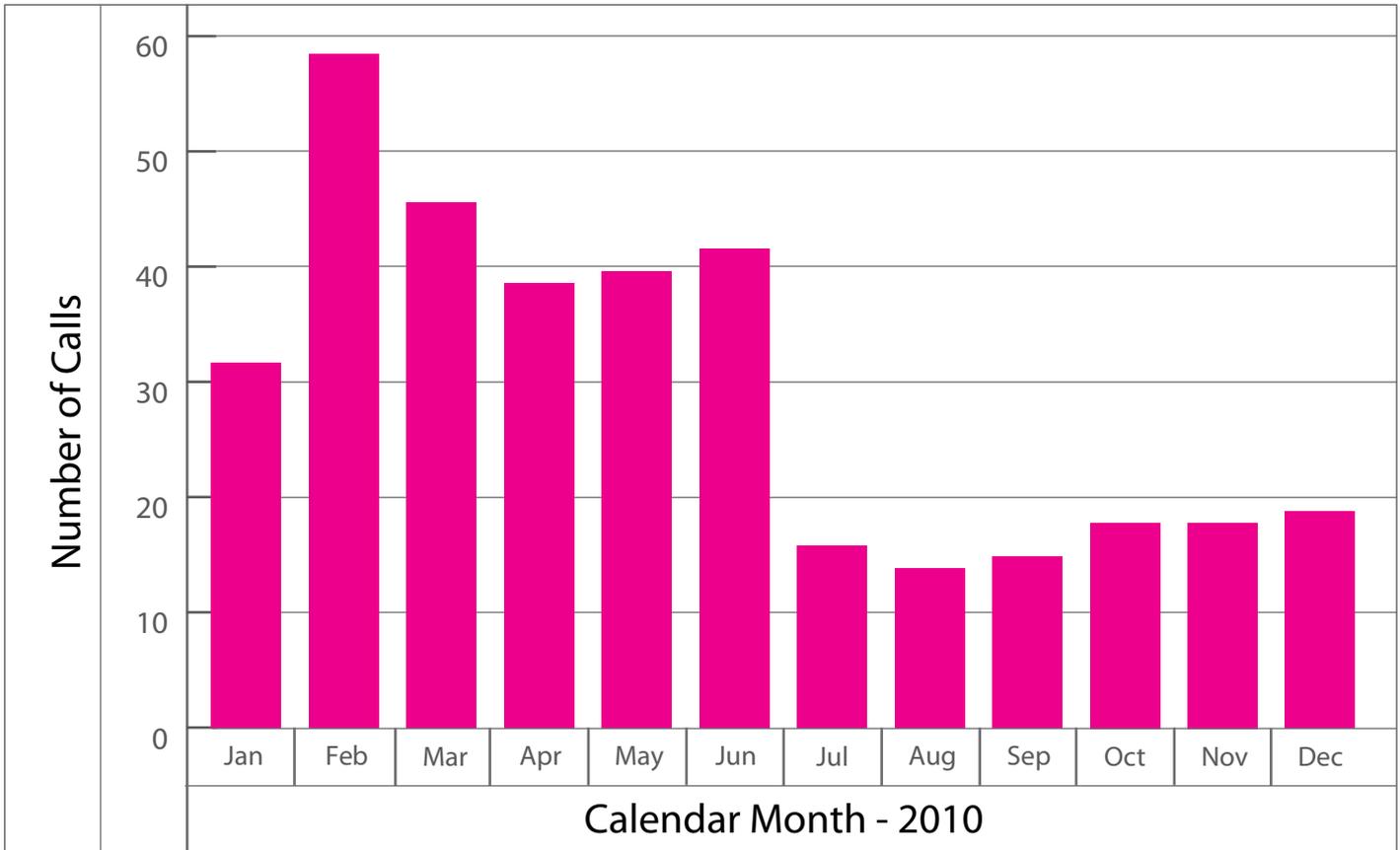
# Information Services

**Telephone Information Service** - the central point for groups accessing support

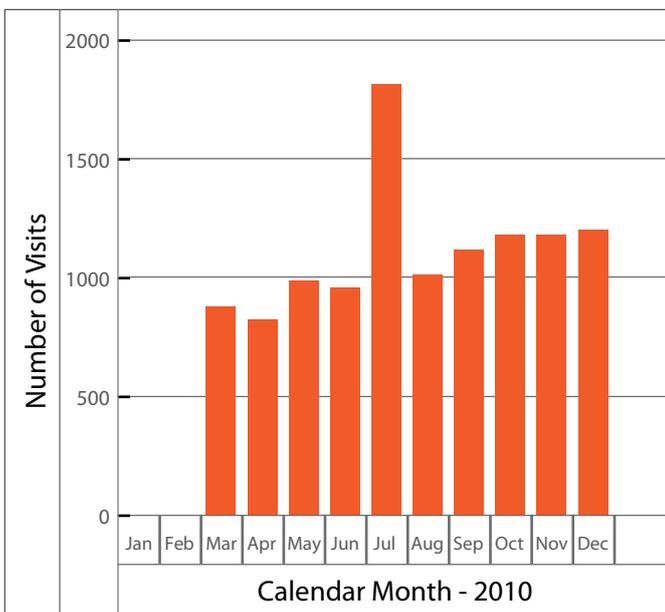
**Website** - providing a wide range of information and resources

**Training** - supporting groups to identify their training needs

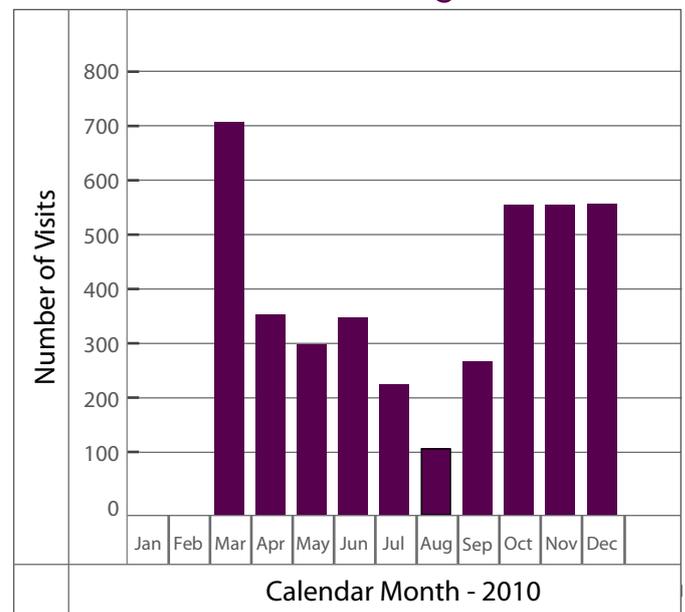
## New callers to our Telephone Information Service



## Visits to our Website



## Visits to our online Training Calendar



Our online services began in March 2010

Further examples of our **basic** and **in-depth** support work.

## Board Development

**Capital City Projects** is a collaboration between two organisations that work with asylum seekers and refugees, they run services for the community from two sites. The existing management structure meant that the services were being directed by two different advisory committees and two separate management groups.

Capital City Projects were supported to explore their options in relation to developing the collaboration into a single structure. Manchester Community Central, by providing specialist expertise, are working with Capital City Projects to draw up an action plan to enable the transfer of assets/liabilities into a new structure. This will be followed by Phase 2: Supporting Capital City Projects to identify appropriate training for their Board members.

**Have you considered merging with another organisation? Do you need to strengthen your Board / Management committee? Do you need help to define the roles of your trustees / committee members?**

## Developing a Business Plan

**Arts for the Future** are a charitable company that works with young people using arts as a medium to encourage young people from Minority Ethnic communities to consider arts as a career choice and promote access to further and higher education.

As part of the review of the service undertaken by us and Arts for the Future, a key concern identified for them was the development of their business plan.

By providing a consultant to work with Arts for the Future, they have been able to complete their business plan, identify

their target audience and analyse the market and use this to identify actions and activities that focus on building the sustainability of the project.

**“Thank you so much for all your support in 2010. We really appreciate and commend your hard work towards helping Arts for the Future in developing our business plan.”**

**Have you been asked to provide a business plan? Are you unsure whether you need a business plan?**

## Merger Exploration

**The Roby** exists to improve mental health, promote general well-being and encourage social inclusion in Longsight and surrounding areas.

We facilitated a number of meetings (both separately and together) of two potential merger partners. A business case for merger was not established, and a clear decision was reached not to pursue merger before any significant costs were incurred.

**“The process of exploration of a possible merger was explained and a number of meetings with both organisations were arranged. In the end, we have agreed not to merge but we have come through this difficult period with a strong, confident board ready to meet future challenges.”**





## Training

Our Training Coordinator has developed an easy to use training database on our website that groups can use to search to find the training that they are looking for. We have a dedicated email address for training enquiries but a lot of work is done through talking to groups to help them identify their training needs. In some circumstances we have been able to negotiate discounts for groups in Manchester:

Three members of a community group based in Ancoats requested basic budgeting training. A suitable course was identified, however the cost for all to attend was £90.00.

Following negotiation on behalf of the group by our Training Coordinator all three members were able to attend the training for just £10.00 each, saving the group £60.00.

In June 2010 our Training Coordinator distributed a Training Needs Questionnaire. There was a good response and the results can be found on our website.

A key issue was funding for training and learning which we are taking on board in our next year.

## Human Resources Support

Youth Alert are a charity youth service who have a long history of providing activities for young people. In a review of their service undertaken with us, an issue was identified by the Board as needing attention, which related to compliance with Employment Law.

We provided a Human Resources consultant to work with the Trustees, and identify actions to ensure that the Charity was complying with Employment Law.

Are you aware of your responsibilities as an employer? Do you have sessional staff? Do you need to consider redundancy or TUPE regulations?

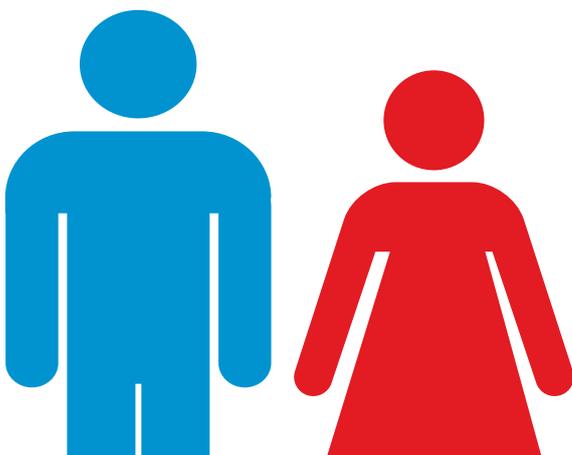
## Opportunities for shared learning

We obtained additional funding to run two 'Thinking The Unthinkable' events in May and November 2010. These were very successful with 40 organisations attending to learn more about partnership, collaboration and merger.

Following on from this we responded to requests for trustee specific events and these will be taking place in early 2011.

## Where does this all fit in the bigger picture for Manchester?

Infrastructure services are at the heart of a vibrant and diverse third sector. Manchester has a long history of good community and voluntary sector activity and we are contractually obliged and committed to contributing to the five themes of Manchester's Community Strategy.



## Our contract with Manchester City Council states:

The voluntary and community sectors in Manchester improve the quality of life for Manchester residents by helping to sustain active and thriving communities. This contract is to provide Infrastructure Support to the voluntary and community sectors in Manchester and through this contribute to the vision set out in the Manchester Community Strategy and its five themes:

- **Economic development**
- **Children and young people**
- **Health and wellbeing**
- **Sustainable neighbourhoods**
- **Crime and disorder**

These have been cross-cutting themes throughout our work. By supporting groups with application forms we have seen additional resources come into the city. This in turn has, in some cases, created employment and volunteering opportunities. We have supported organisations providing opportunities for children and young people to become more effective in their governance so that they can become a model of good practice. This ensures quality provision and opportunities for **children and young people**.

We have seen a number of new groups become established and this supports more **sustainable neighbourhoods** and encourages a greater sense of **health and wellbeing**. Tenants and residents groups have been at the heart of this particular growth. We believe this to be through a desire to work in partnership with statutory agencies, particularly around areas relating to **Crime and Disorder**.

We have also been able to work strategically with partners to influence and challenge decision makers appropriately. We have worked to establish relationships with local and regional networks, with key officers in regeneration, and with funders and commissioners. In terms of **economic development** we have also contributed to several events involving The Work Programme to ensure voluntary groups had access to timely and accurate information.

## Looking to the future

We are always striving to provide a needs-led and bespoke service. We are committed to providing support in the areas it is most needed. We do this by responding to the needs of the sector and filling gaps in support services available in the city of Manchester. We have run events called 'Thinking the Unthinkable' and 'Trustees Facing the Challenge'. We have also run sessions for groups to come together and use our funding search tool called 'GRANTnet'. We have received good feedback on these and will be running some more sessions soon.

**Would you like the opportunity to meet with other groups and organisations? What common issues would you like support to discuss?**

## Working in partnership

The voluntary and community sector in Manchester is so diverse that we work in partnership wherever we can to ensure groups get the best support possible. We are a needs-led service and as such have developed some new areas of work for our next year.



This year we have listened to feedback from other agencies and organisations who wish to support groups to access our services. In November we began piloting a referral form which is now available to download on our website. The key point to note is that we expect referrers to be a part of any support that we offer, which helps to support the group and build on existing networks.

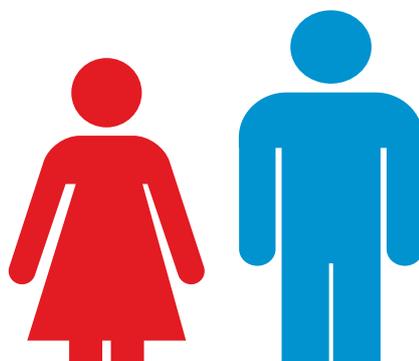
## Influencing policy

We have tried to influence and advocate on behalf of the voluntary and community sector where we can. We are pleased that following intervention by one of our Business Improvement Coordinators, the Guardian newspaper will continue to offer trustee adverts from small charities at the same rate as volunteer adverts. Their new policy would have meant an increase in costs for small charities of around 360%.

There are a number of other additional elements that will strengthen Manchester Community Central in this next phase.

These include:

- A refreshed “people approach” to our marketing strategy
- The launch of the Community Engagement Toolkit and Database, which can be accessed through our website
- Increased use of local expertise and knowledge in our in-depth support work
- A review of our ebulletin service and printed materials
- Filling identified gaps in training by negotiating a fairer price



## What else have people said about the service?

“Great work and good news for the project”

“Thank you for your kind support. There is a Somali proverb which says “those who help others will get the help they need from God” Thankyou for your time, energy and expertise”

“We have just received confirmation of our grant which is very welcome news. Thanks so much for all of your help, you have been brilliant, could not have managed without you”

“Thank you for all your support we are really grateful. We have successfully completed and submitted the application. It wouldn't have been possible without your help”

“I thought the day (Thinking the Unthinkable) was excellent and look forward to more”

“Just wanted to say a big thank you for doing such a great job... the day went really well and I came away feeling very positive about the future...”

# And finally...

Just right now, it's difficult for our sector to find much to celebrate. With many of our valued projects faced with funding uncertainties and colleagues all around us at risk of losing their jobs, it can be difficult to focus on the future. We thought we'd try and focus on something positive so this edition of our Newsletter seeks to show what we've achieved over our first year, and the case studies tell their own story.

As an end of term report, it's a case of "a promising start" but also "must try harder". We've certainly learned a lot about what works and what doesn't and you'll see us developing further over the next year. But we'll have to try harder because life in Manchester is going to get harder and the demands on the voluntary and community sector are going to increase. Manchester Community Central will be there to support you and help your organisation through difficult times. There will be opportunities to find new ways of working in our local communities and our job is to support you and your organisation so you can support the people you're working with.

Thanks to all the staff in all the organisations who've been involved in Manchester Community Central over the past year. Most of all, however, thanks to all those who are going to work with us over the coming year. It's going to be a difficult time ahead, but because of what we've achieved so far in establishing Manchester Community Central we have something on which to build so that we can support our voluntary and community sector.

## **Mike Wild**

Director, MACC (lead partner in Manchester Community Central)

### **Do you want your own copy of this newsletter?**

If you're reading this in a library or at another organisation and you would like to receive your own version of the newsletter then contact **0333 321 3021** or email **[info@mcrcommunitycentral.org](mailto:info@mcrcommunitycentral.org)** and we'll put one in the post and include you on future newsletter mailings.

## **Get in Touch**

Calls are charged at the same rate as a local call, whether made from a landline or mobile phone

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