

Statement for Voluntary Sector Assembly to be held on June 25th

This statement is based on the discussions of voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) organisations who attended the Manchester Voluntary Sector Assembly held on April 16th, 2015. It is the starting point for the debate at the Manchester Voluntary sector Assembly being held on June 25th where Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations will develop this statement with Manchester City Councillors.

The VCFS is deeply concerned about the levels of poverty and inequity in Manchester. Our experience is that the lives of many people in Manchester have become much harder over the last few years and we do not think that the action of public bodies is likely to reverse that trend. We believe that there has to be a radically different approach; we need to invest the resources that Manchester City Council and other public bodies receive in different ways.

We want to fully engage with Manchester City Council about how it uses its resources to help the people of Manchester. We want to talk about how we can address the high levels of inequity and poverty in the city and make the best use of our strengths and resources together. We are an essential source of understanding of what is happening to people in Manchester.

Developing a radical approach requires:

- 1) A much greater level of engagement between VCSF and public sector through:
 - a. Visiting our organisations
 - b. Talking to the people who use our services
 - c. Exchanging staff so we can learn from each other
 - d. Using and responding to our monitoring reports where you fund us
 - e. Responding and using our manifestos, charters and reports
- 2) Building a more constructive and positive language and attitude through:
 - a. Focusing on people's rights and voice
 - b. Talking about collaboration rather than competition
 - c. Emphasising people's resilience and strength rather than their problems and needs
 - d. Stressing people's abilities to bring about change for themselves rather than about how to change their behaviour
 - e. Acknowledging the broad role of VCSF organisations and not reducing the role to "provider"
- 3) Getting real value for money through:
 - a. Ensuring all resources go to organisations seeking to improve the lives of people in Manchester rather than to profit
 - b. Investing in organisations that have demonstrated their effectiveness in Manchester
 - c. Removing barriers, facilitating growth and releasing the potential of local organisations
 - d. Encouraging organisations to work together rather than forcing them into competition

- e. Building on the high level of innovation by the VCSF that already goes on in the city
 - f. Playing a strong role in building a strong and resilient VCSF sector to maximise our ability to bring in resources
- 4) Developing a truly collaborative approach and a partnership of equals through:
- a. Being open and transparent about the problems and challenges in the city and coming to us for evidence, ideas and constructive discussion
 - b. Fostering and encouraging good relationships in the sector
 - c. Including us from the start in all relevant discussions
 - d. Engaging not consulting

To further this discussion that we have begun here we want to hold a series of meetings with Manchester City Council to discuss the principles and approach underlying investment of Manchester City Council resources in creating resilient and capable communities that can address the problems of poverty and inequity in the city.