

State of the VCSE Sector 2017 - Bolton

Introduction

The State of the Sector 2017 report is a Greater Manchester wide project commissioned by Bolton Community and Voluntary Service (CVS), 10GM* and GMCVO**. The report builds on research conducted in 2013 with the key objective of providing a comprehensive overview of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE***) sector in Bolton and Greater Manchester.

The research was undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University working collaboratively with 10GM and GMCVO.

The research involved a web-based survey of organisations as well as a series of focus groups that were hosted by Bolton CVS and then analysed by CRESR.

To read the full report, please visit:

www.boltoncvs.org.uk/StateoftheSector2017-04-24

It is estimated that the VCSE sector in Bolton provided:

2.3 million interventions

with clients, users or beneficiaries in the past year making positive contributions to the lives of Bolton Citizens

3,000 FTE paid staff

employed in the VCSE sector in Bolton

£ 94.4 million per annum

contributed to the economy by paid employees of Bolton VCSE sector organisations

In 2015/16 the total income of the sector was £137m

*10GM is a joint venture by the Greater Manchester Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Organisations including Bolton CVS. It represents a combined membership of thousands of local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

**GMCVO (Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation) is a voluntary sector support organisation covering the city-region of Greater Manchester.

***When we talk about the Voluntary Sector we mean voluntary organisations, community groups, the community work of faith groups and those social enterprises where there is a wider accountability to the public via a board of trustees or a membership and where profits are reinvested in their social purpose.



Key Findings

The VCSE sector in Bolton

The VCSE sector in Bolton is impressive in its size, diversity and scope of activities. It provides a significant contribution to Bolton's economy and to the health and wellbeing of local people needing help, support, information and guidance. The sector understands the needs and assets in local communities and can help harness social action and bridge the gap between public services and the people they serve.

The VCSE sector can devise, develop and deliver solutions to some of the most challenging problems faced by Bolton and Greater Manchester. 59% of survey respondents are already looking at how to change the way they run their services in Bolton.

Volunteering is an Asset

The research tells us that more people are volunteering than ever before with 46,900 people volunteering and donating 113,500 hours of their time per week. The potential reasons for this include:

- The effects of austerity on the employment market has led to more volunteering as people look to gain skills to enhance their employability.
- It's getting easier to find volunteering opportunities with wider accessibility to online volunteer recruitment platforms.
- More young people looking to gain personal development and life skills to enhance their chances in employment and further and higher education. For most, this has been positive and something that they wanted to encourage by offering a variety of volunteering roles.

1,561

Total number of organisations in the VCSE sector in Bolton

£102.7 million per annum
= estimated economic contribution of volunteers



"We see more people coming in and seeking opportunities from a variety of backgrounds. There are more people seeking job experience. That's the biggest change these last 12 months."

The growth in volunteering has created additional resource requirement due to the systems and number of trained staff needed to support and maintain a strong, quality volunteer offer.

"We are required for the first time ever to report on training and supervision. This has been a challenge...we don't have the resources, time and staff to sustain their training and support."

Key Findings

Partnership working is important

Partnership working is key to the sector. Our research shows that the majority of organisations are already in frequent contact or partnership with at least one other organisation with 86% of respondents having some dealings with Bolton Council and 35% with Bolton CCG.

49% of organisations felt Bolton Council is a positive influence on their success, an increase in the proportion since 2013.

“I think it works when the public sector involves the voluntary sector from the beginning. When you feel that your opinion and input are valued from the start and your involvement from start to finish is considered important.”

90% of respondents have some direct dealings with other VCSE organisations.

Whilst relationships in Bolton are generally positive, there is still work to do both in terms of collaboration with the private sector and also with regards to Greater Manchester Devolution.

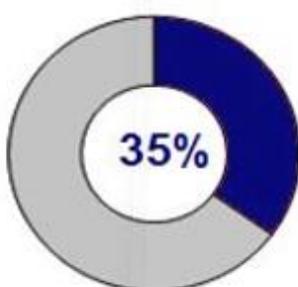
“What does devolution mean for us? Does it mean collaboration, a partnership or a merger? I feel a little bit like a rabbit caught in front of the headlight, with devolution being the headlight.”

The VCSE sector is a key contributor to the local economy and employment

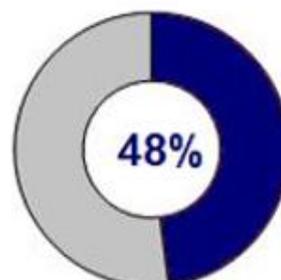
The sector plays a key role in the economy, both as an employer but also in its work tackling poverty and inequalities. However, the inconsistent flow of income over the past three years has placed significant pressure on the sector.

This picture is most stark in the sustainability of micro-sized organisations (under £10k income). 47% of these organisations reported increasing their expenditure but only 22% had increased their income in the comparable period.

The research highlights the fragility of the sector with almost half of all VCSE organisations being vulnerable should their funds be severely reduced or withdrawn.



**Respondents
had less than
1 month
expenditure in
reserve**



**Respondents
had less than
3 month
expenditure in
reserve**

Key Recommendations

Volunteering is an asset

Volunteers make a massive contribution to Bolton. We need to continue to value the positive impact volunteering has on people's lives, provide support for the recognition, development and co-ordination of volunteers and ensure that volunteering opportunities continue to be quality, positive and accessible to all.

Valuing and Equity

The sector has a diverse offer. We need to continue to recognise and invest in this expertise and the sector's ability to work with a range of communities with a flexible and person centred approach. The public sector needs to adopt an equitable approach to the design and development of services, continuing to provide opportunities for the sector to influence current and future service development and provision, valuing their input and communicating the change their input has made.

Economic Contribution

The economic value of the sector including the massive contribution made by volunteers demonstrates a clear financial benefit as well as incredible social value. We need to continue to support this through recognising the valuable role the VCSE sector plays in contributing to the Bolton local economy and a commitment to the 'Bolton pound'.

Areas with the greatest proportion of VCSE organisations working in them:



Investing in the Sector

Investing in the sector will help to provide innovative solutions to local needs, addressing inequalities as well as building capacity within local communities of Bolton. Support around fundraising, navigating the commissioning landscape and access to grants is essential for the on-going and future development of the sector.

Building Strong Alliances

Collaboration and partnership are important in these changing times and it is vital that we continue working together to develop a diverse, strong and effective voluntary and community sector in Bolton. We can do this by embracing alliances between the VCSE and public and private sectors, supporting the VCSE to work together, sharing assets, expertise and knowledge and by embedding social value into commissioning practises.

For more information about the VCSE Sector in Bolton please contact Bolton CVS on 01204 546010 or info@boltoncvs.co.uk