

# **GREATER MANCHESTER VCSE LEADERSHIP GROUP**

**the sector's voice in Devolution**

27<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Dear Mayor Andy Burnham and Local Authority Leaders,

We are writing to you today on behalf of the GM VCSE Leadership Group to send our support and solidarity to you all as Greater Manchester Leaders, in light of the recent news that the Region has been placed into the highest Tier 3 COVID alert level following the conclusion of talks with the Government.

We are extremely grateful for the approach you have taken in the negotiations leading up to Tier 3 restrictions and for standing up for what is right for our communities and devolution values, despite facing much resistance and frustration. We are also appreciative for the recognition and support you have provided the VCSE sector throughout the coronavirus pandemic including the acknowledgement of the challenges presented to the sector so far and challenges we have yet to face in the coming weeks and months.

GM VCSE Leadership Group members have been working closely with Councils across Greater Manchester and the Health and Care Partnership. GM VCSE Leadership Group members have met to discuss the new Tier 3 restrictions that will affect our communities across Greater Manchester and the impact the “very high” COVID alert status will have on the VCSE sector in the months to come, including the potential long term consequences if the sector is not supported to stay resilient.

We have concerns regarding the ability of the sector to respond to the predicted high increase in demand for services that are already stretched following the previous national lockdown, our sector's exhausted financial reserves, and severely limited availability of trust funds. We would like to bring these concerns to your attention for your consideration:

- Many VCSE organisations have dealt with significant increases in demand due to increased needs and vulnerabilities of their communities throughout the pandemic. Now, organisations that have managed to remain operational once again face increased demand at a time when they have experienced significant loss of income and depletion of reserves, putting a significant number at risk of closing for good.
- Closure of VCSE organisations will result in less support available for our communities.
- The implementation of Tier 3 restrictions coincides with the end of the furlough scheme, putting those employed in the hospitality and arts sectors, for example, into a challenging financial situation. VCSE support, along with others, will be greatly needed.
- As you have clearly stated, the new job retention scheme (67% of an individual's salary) is inadequate and will increase the demand on VCSE services, such as those providing financial and practical support.
- Many VCSE organisations will be impacted by business restrictions, with many offering vital community services that will be forced to close, such as community cafes and activity centres, impacting on those dependent on that support.
- [ACEVO](#) reported in August that one third of charities will need to make redundancies in the next 12 months. With 42,600 people working in the VCSE sector across Greater

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Manchester, this is likely to equate to between 2,000 and 5,000 redundancies. The additional concern is which communities this will most adversely affect.

- Without adequate financial support for our VCSE organisations, we are at risk of job losses within the sector and consequently a lack of capacity and an inability to provide much needed support to our residents.

In order to continue to provide much needed support for our VCSE organisations, we are currently lobbying nationally for investment from the National Emergency Trust (NET) and DCMS to support the sector to respond to the crisis and to prevent as many job losses as possible. An initial request via the VCS Emergency Partnership has been rejected but we will pursue this and ask for your support. We believe that if the sector is not supported with additional investment to continue to provide services now, it will result in facing higher costs to statutory services further down the line.

We also ask that:

- There is further flexibility from Councils, funders and commissioners to enable the VCSE sector to continue to provide support during this time, and to utilise funding in the most flexible way possible. The Statement of support from commissioners (29<sup>th</sup> March 2020) has been greatly appreciated and going forward as we head into budget discussions for 2021/22, we ask Council colleagues to be open with us and fully include us in what we understand will be very necessary discussions.
- Public sector colleagues support VCSE fundraising campaigns as part of their communications and messaging strategies; highlighting the VCSE funding campaigns in each borough and building on the positive principle of subsidiarity established right at the start of lockdown with its work on volunteering.
- The importance of the sector is recognised in relation to the programme of community engagement and insight work.

This is an extremely challenging time for all of us, and we thank you all for your hard work so far in supporting and standing up for our VCSE organisations. We welcome continued dialogue with you to help shape the Tier 3 response and in calling for the support that the VCSE sector will need and look to you all to continue to advocate for the people, communities, groups and businesses across Greater Manchester.

Thank you for everything you are doing for our communities. We are proud to stand alongside you.

Yours Sincerely,



Warren Escadale, Chair,  
on behalf of the GM VCSE Leadership Group