



Improving Health & Wellbeing for People in Salford

Assessing the strengths of the VCSE Sector in Salford - 2023





Acknowledgements

Salford City Council commissioned Salford CVS to carry out this research as part of their Joint Strategic Strengths and Needs Assessment project. The purpose of the research was to capture the strengths that the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector bring to the mission of improving the health and wellbeing of adults within the city of Salford.

Salford CVS would like to express our utmost gratitude to the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations who participated in the research, and to our public sector colleagues Dr. Muna Abdul Aziz (Director of Public Health) and Gordon Adams (Strategic Intelligence Manager) who contributed to the completion of this research project. Without their time, insight and expertise this report would not have been possible.

The research lead would also like to thank the wider staff team within Salford CVS for their support in developing the survey and interview questions; and for their efforts to ensure a wide range of involvement from VCSE organisations from across the city. Their support greatly enhanced the strength of the findings within

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Foreword – Alison Page


Salford CVS has been working to make a difference in Salford since 1919. We are proud of all that the VCSE sector in Salford accomplishes, usually on a shoestring and at short notice. We were happy to be asked to undertake this piece of work to shine a light on our colleagues' endeavours.

During the year 2016/2017 Salford CVS undertook a comprehensive piece of work, commissioned by NHS Salford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Salford City Council, to research and evidence the work of c.50 VCSE groups and organisations working with children and young people in Salford.

Then in 2022/23 we undertook a refresh of that work, given a lot had happened since 2017 – including a pandemic followed by a cost-of-living crisis, all in the context of longer-term disinvestment into the VCSE sector - to see what had changed for our VCSE children, young people and families sector in Salford during those six turbulent years.

What follows is a companion piece of work that we have undertaken in the first half of 2023 to understand the strengths and contributions of the VCSE sector in delivering health and wellbeing services and solutions for adults in Salford.

The VCSE sector is under unprecedented strain in 2023 – with demand for our services and solutions higher than ever, at a time when inequalities are growing and funding is too little and increasingly under threat. Yet the sector continues to support the people and communities of Salford in a myriad of ingenious ways. This report should give you a flavour of that work...



Thanks go to Dr. Muna Abdel Aziz for commissioning this work; to my colleague Michelle Warburton for leading this work; and to Sam Bate-Francis for undertaking this research.

I hope you find it an illuminating read.

Alison Page
Chief Executive
Salford CVS



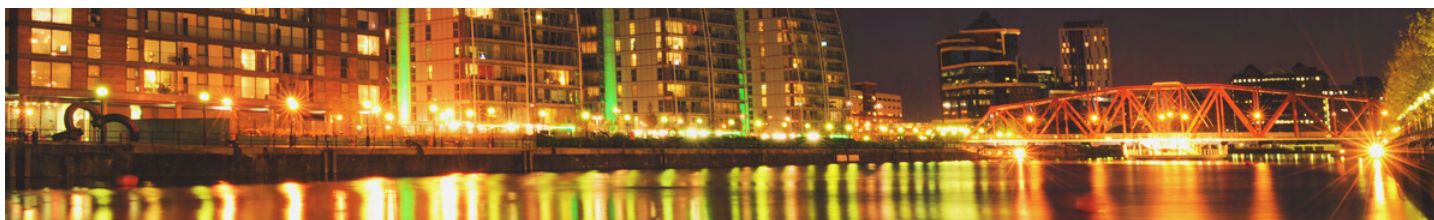
Contents

Section	Title	Page
1	Introduction	7
2	Research Aims, Scope & Methodology	8
3	Strategic Context	12
4	Findings	14
5	'Place' in Salford	42
6	Concluding Remarks	50
7	Case Studies	52
8	Reference List	60



Table of Figures

Figure	Type	Depiction	Page
1	Graph	Does your organisation have access to a dedicated physical space from which it is able to deliver its services?	15
2	Graph	The Salford City Council neighbourhoods in which participants are based	17
3	Graph	Number of volunteers active within Salford VCSE organisations	23
4	Chart	How often does your organisation interact with other VCSE organisations?	31
5	Chart	Does your organisation maintain relationships with organisations in the private sector?	35
6	Chart	Provisions for Communities of Identity amongst VCSE organisations in Salford	37



1. Introduction

In October 2022, Salford City Council commissioned Salford CVS to undertake research into the strengths of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in the city. The project served as part of a refresh of the council's Joint Strategic Strengths and Needs Assessment (JSSNA). It included a companion research report focusing specifically on children, young people and families (CYPF).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as 'a matter of complete mental, physical and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (World Health Organisation, 2021). It is through this holistic lens that the concepts of health and wellbeing have been analysed in this report.

With over 250,000 residents, Salford's population is growing at a rate faster than any other locality in the North West of England. Partnered with shifts in the city's demographics (age and ethnicity), Salford is becoming increasingly diverse as newer communities emerge throughout the region. Alongside this growth, however, we have undergone numerous challenges, ranging from the Coronavirus pandemic to the ongoing cost of living crisis. This has placed the goal of achieving positive health and wellbeing outcomes for some of the city's residents under greater strain.

According to 2021 census data:

- 45.1% of people living in the city described their health as 'very good', an increase from 41.7% in 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2021).
- This was accompanied by a decrease in the percentage of residents describing their health as both 'bad' (7.0% to 5.7%) and 'very bad' (2.1% to 1.7%) over the same time period.



This report intended to analyse the role played by the VCSE sector in supporting positive health and wellbeing outcomes for adults in Salford within the context of these changes. It also contains extensive commentary on the theme of 'place' examining the nature of the changes that Salford has undergone in recent decades.

2. Research aims, scope & methodology

The objective of this research was to map the strengths and assets of the VCSE sector in Salford with regards to its capacity to promote good health and positive wellbeing outcomes for local communities through the provision of services and support for adults.

2.1 Scope

The project aimed to engage a sample of 50 VCSE organisations conducting work in Salford in support of adults, including those that are not commissioned by the city's public sector. This included:

- Community organisations working with adults in community settings
- Voluntary organisations providing targeted programmes of work and support for adults
- Social enterprises providing innovative programmes of work and support for adults
- African, Asian, Middle Eastern, Eastern European, Hong Konger and Refugee organisations working within diverse communities in Salford
- Faith groups delivering community work
- VCSE organisations engaging with adults with protected characteristics including, LGBTQ+, disabilities, women and older people

It also aimed to include the full spectrum of organisational size and cover all eight of Salford City Council's neighbourhoods.



2.2 Methodology

The deliverables outlined in the research brief were as follows:

- Data from a minimum of 50 VCSE organisations working with adults in Salford
- Quantitative data captured via closed questionnaires
- Qualitative data captured via semi-structured interviews
- A focus group populated by members of VCSE organisations working primarily with Communities of Identity
- Case studies on five organisations, analysing impact on beneficiaries

2.3 Survey

The quantitative aspect of the survey permitted Salford CVS to acquire a wide range of up-to-date information on the operational situations of VCSE organisations working with adults in the city. The survey questions were designed to extract a broad overview of the capacity of each organisation.

Prompts included:

- Organisation annual turnover
- The Salford City Council neighbourhoods in which the organisation operates
- Types of services offered by the organisations
- Extent of the organisation's reliance on volunteers
- The organisation's involvement with residents from Communities of Identity

2.4 Interview

Much of the qualitative data was collected during the semi-structured interview phase of the research. For the most part, the pool of interviewees was sourced from contact details held by Salford CVS and through the promotion of the survey via the organisation's communication channels.

Some participants elected to take part in the interview without completing the survey. Interview questions ranged across seven key themes:

- A general overview of the fundamental operational details and mission of the organisation
- Access to physical assets from which those organisations operate
- The neighbourhoods within which those organisations operate
- Staff, volunteers and the strengths they offer
- What the organisation does, what makes it good at doing it and how it benefits the community
- The extent of an organisation's relationships with businesses, statutory institutions, educational centres and other VCSE organisations
- Work with Communities of Identity and the strengths of their engagement



2.5 Focus group

Representatives from five VCSE organisations were contacted to take part in a focus group centred on work conducted with Communities of Identity.

Discussions focused on the sector's strengths in supporting health and wellbeing outcomes for Salford residents. Participants discussed the unique strengths of not only their organisations but also the beneficiaries from the local community who interact with them.



2.6 Case studies

The aim of the case studies was to select five organisations for deeper examination based on the strength of the health and wellbeing outcomes they deliver for adults across Salford's neighbourhoods.

The case studies included in this report analyse groups that have delivered services with particularly noteworthy health and wellbeing outcomes for their beneficiaries. Much of the data conveyed within was acquired through face-to-face interviews.

2.7 'Place'

In addition to the acquisition of information regarding the strengths and assets of the VCSE sector in the provision of good health and positive wellbeing outcomes for local residents, commissioners requested that the research incorporated an exploration of the theme of 'place' and the sector's role within this context.

Six VCSE groups with long-standing histories and reputations of service in each of the designated neighbourhoods were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Each discussion lasted around one hour, with some continuing beyond that point. In the interviews, participants were invited to offer their insights on the changes they have witnessed in Salford in the preceding decades, the impact these changes have had in the neighbourhoods in which they operate, and how they have responded to these shifts in order to maintain the standards of service that had won them their reputations within their communities



The list of participants in this additional phase of research is as follows:

- Salford Foundation
- Eccles Community Connect
- Salford Lads and Girls Club
- Mustard Tree
- Lifecentre
- Hamilton Davies Trust

3. Strategic context

Throughout Salford, there is considerable emphasis on partnership working between the VCSE sector and statutory bodies to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes for local residents. On the national level, NHS England has recommended greater interaction within communities in order to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes at population level. In doing so, NHS England hopes to empower communities to play a greater role in the shaping of policy by providing a stronger platform for the advocacy of their own needs. The two main steps to achieving these objectives are detailed by Salford City Council in the Salford Locality Plan 2020- 25 (Salford City Council, 2020):

- Engaging communities in the design and delivery of the services that affect their lives
- Supporting them to play their part in looking after the local area and developing strength and connectivity

According to 'A Realist Evaluation of the State of the Salford Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector 2021', there are 1,665 individual groups and organisations in the city (Salford CVS, 2021). Each organisation offers a unique package of support for the local community. As the city-wide infrastructure organisation for the VCSE sector, Salford CVS is uniquely placed to be able to engage with and survey the impact these groups and organisations have on the health and wellbeing of residents in the area. In doing so, Salford CVS has drawn upon its extensive connections within the sector in order to ensure that a broad range of voices and interests are represented in this report.

Similarly, Salford CVS's unique position within the sector enhances the extent to which both this report, and the wider JSSNA, support NHS England's principles for VCSE engagement. Salford CVS' relationships with over 1,000 members, and the intimate knowledge of the sector it has accrued through over a century of place-based working means that the report's findings can help the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership and Salford City Council meet commitments laid out by NHS England's People and Communities Taskforce (NHS England, 2018). These include:

- Challenging inequalities
- Demonstrating impact and building an evidence base
- Adopting co-production
- Transparency
- Being a critical friend
- Working towards the same goal

The findings of this report will go some distance towards ensuring these principles are adhered to in the future.

On the local level itself, the research reflects the unique significance of the role of the VCSE sector in Salford, particularly in reflecting the importance of working towards improved health and wellbeing outcomes for local residents within the context of the structural shifts that have taken place in the city.





4. Findings

The following pages detail the findings of the research conducted at the survey and semi-structured interview phases, contextualised by the rich body of secondary information relating to the city of Salford, its VCSE sector and the state of health and wellbeing within it.

In order to offer greater clarity to the reader, these findings have been categorised according to five key themes:

- Physical assets, location and place
- People
- What the sector does
- Interconnectivity
- Equality, diversity and inclusion

The findings in this report relate to the information collected from the 61 VCSE organisations that participated in the research.

4.1 Physical assets and location

In the survey, participants were prompted with the question, 'Does your organisation have access to a dedicated physical space from which it is able to deliver its services? (I.e. offices, rooms, recreational centres)'. Of the 61 participants, 48 reported regular access to a physical space, with 13 reporting that they did not.



Fixed locations provide organisations with a 'base' from which they are able to operate. In this sense, they help contribute to the retention of beneficiaries. Many participant organisations reported the impact of an unchanging location on improving accessibility through the mitigation of fluctuating travel costs, as well as a sense of 'ownership' that emerges amongst groups of beneficiaries as a consequence of continued access to a single space.

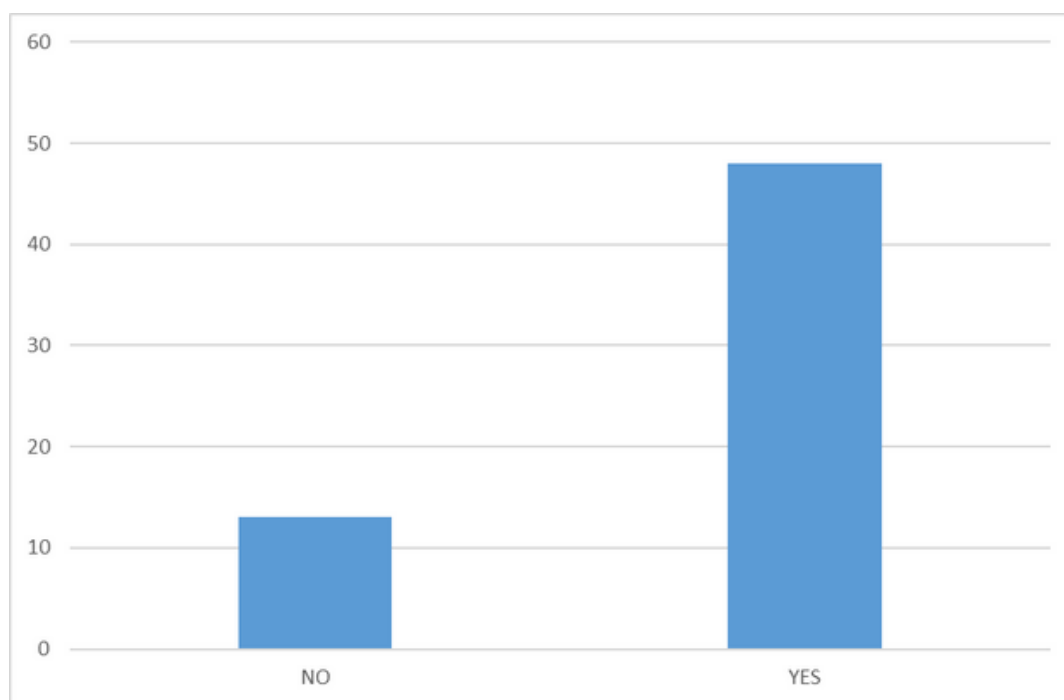


Figure 1: Does your organisation have access to a dedicated physical space from which it is able to deliver its services?

This sense of 'presence' and the ability to be 'in' the community an organisation seeks to represent emerged as a key theme over the course of the research.

Through the ownership and leveraging of community assets - whether they be mental health one-to-one sessions, local venues, or access to artistic spaces – VCSE organisations operate inside a 'mutual space', wherein local residents take responsibility for one another's health and wellbeing needs on an interdependent level. This contrasts with the relationship fostered by an individual approach to healthcare, in which those in need are placed in a position of dependence to medical institutions.

The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, pioneered by social theorist Cormac Russell, seeks to tackle the determinant factors of health by revitalising the collective environments in which residents live and through fostering a sense of social cohesion that supports good wellbeing at the individual level (Russell, 2022).

With regards to community assets, the idea of a culture of stakeholding in various locations around Salford goes some distance towards supporting health and wellbeing outcomes for local residents on a number of levels. Community 'ownership', even when not official in structure, significantly contributes to wellbeing on the collective level by tackling the social determinants of health. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) suggests stakeholders, 'build social capital within communities so that people benefit from having strong social networks and greater control over their health' (Johnstone, 2017). These 'social networks' – augmented through the promotion of users and beneficiaries to stakeholders in the spaces that host them – allow for greater connectivity between residents in the local area.

One Eccles-based organisation operating a gym and sports centre for local residents since the early 1950s reported that in recent years, their location underwent renovation following a community-led campaign to ensure its continued existence in the local area. Their representative detailed what the new space means for both members and the wider community.

'After the success of the community campaign to save the gym, we were offered land by Salford City Council to create a new athletics facility in Eccles in 2016. We are now able to provide state-of-the-art equipment for our members. This attracts people from the local community to the club and, once they are in, they are able to take in our culture. We strive to make good citizens through achievement.'

This case presents a good demonstration of collaboration between the community, the organisation and the local authority, who worked together to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents through the leveraging of a key community asset. This resulted in local people having access to a space with state-of-the-art equipment in which they are now able to exercise in a safe, welcoming, inclusive environment.

At the same time, the organisation's long-standing connections with the community have been fostered through a membership system that empowers residents to give back to an asset that they take responsibility for as stakeholders.

In this case, the beneficiaries produce and maintain benefits for themselves and other residents through the maintenance of a culture of support and excellence. The asset itself acts as the nexus through which these strengths are projected throughout the wider community.

Neighbourhood

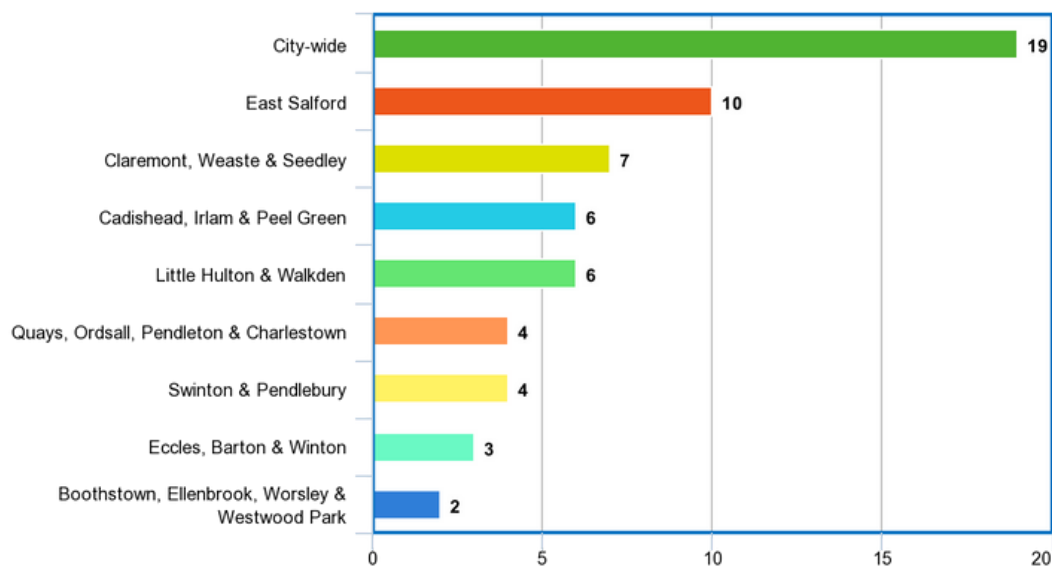


Figure 2: The Salford City Council neighbourhoods in which participants are based

Of 61 participant organisations, the largest number reported delivering packages of support and services on a citywide basis, with many operating across Greater Manchester and in some cases beyond. At the same time, a number of organisations, particularly those at the earliest stage of development, reported operating on a fully remote or outreach basis with no fixed location at which they are based.

In every case, the organisations participating in this project deliver work within the administrative boundaries of Salford City Council.



While Salford continues to make progress with regards to tackling inequality, deprivation persists. Within the city, there are nine Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) among the top one percent most deprived in England. 76,400 Salford residents live in areas of Salford classified as 'highly deprived', accounting for 30.4% of the total population, while a further 10,500, people reside in areas of extreme deprivation (Salford City Council, 2020). The Salford LSOAs falling into these categories are as follows:

- Broughton (East Salford)
- Ordsall (Quays, Ordsall, Pendleton and Charlestown)
- Eccles (Eccles, Barton and Winton)
- Little Hulton (Little Hulton and Walkden)

37.7% of the organisations that participated in the research are located within neighbourhoods containing LSOAs.

One organisation with physical sites in both Little Hulton and Eccles agreed to discuss the work they conduct around tackling homelessness in those areas. In addition to providing refuge for those who are rough sleeping, the organisation also looks to tackle the root causes of homelessness, and offer holistic, wrap-around support for beneficiaries. In recent months, the organisation has observed a number of shifts with regards to the make-up of the people in the areas they serve, and those arriving at their hubs in Little Hulton and Eccles seeking support. The interviewee discussed how they have adapted their services in collaboration with other VCSE organisations in the area in order to streamline their support package to meet newly emerging demands.

'In building our hubs in Little Hulton and Eccles, we have tried to bring as many providers as we can together in order to create a 'one-stop shop'. It helps that we are agile and flexible in our support, but it is also important that we reduce the time it takes people to access our offer. Reduced travel time contributes to this a lot.'

Given that the group conducts most of its work with people who are homeless, enduring food and energy insecurity, or refugees from countries such as Ukraine, ease of access is incredibly important. In addition to this, the organisation has optimised the support they offer by working with other organisations in the area.

Volunteers

Salford CVS' 2021 State of the Sector report indicates that there are 61,828 volunteers across the city contributing 210,299 working hours per week. Projecting these figures at the living range rate of £9.50 per hour, this manifests as £104mn in added value to the Salford economy per annum (Salford CVS, 2022). Through these statistics alone the importance of the VCSE sector to the continued development of the city can be comprehended.

Salford's volunteering infrastructure is an integral aspect of this significant contribution. As the city's sole Volunteer Centre Quality Accredited (VCQA) organisation, Salford CVS works closely with its almost 1,000 members to screen, coordinate and promote volunteers and volunteering opportunities across the city and throughout Greater Manchester. Between April 1st, 2022, and March 31st 2023, Salford CVS administered 1,401 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on behalf of volunteers seeking opportunities to work with vulnerable adults and children.

In addition to this, initiatives driven in collaboration between the VCSE, private and statutory sectors such as the Salford Social Value Alliance (SVA), seek to further emphasise the importance of volunteering to the local economy by formalising local businesses' commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through programmes such as Employer Supported Volunteer (ESV) schemes.

Salford's volunteers are the pillar upon which the VCSE sector is built. Their impact extends into the private sector and supports statutory institutions seeking to enhance engagement with the community through VCSE organisations.

Participants who completed the survey phase of this research project reported a total of 4,385 volunteers across 60 organisations in response to the prompt 'How many volunteers does your organisation presently engage with?' With one participant opting not to report any relevant information. Among participants, the median average size of an organisation's volunteer pool was 73. The largest organisation with regards to volunteer capacity was a charity consulting and project management group with a pool of 1,380.

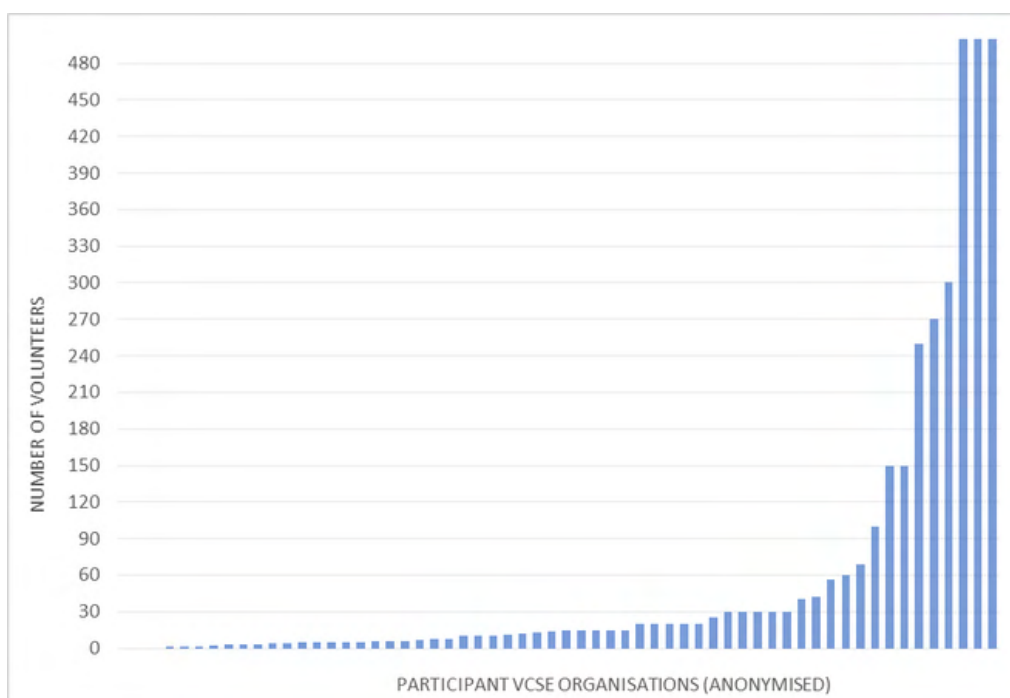


Figure 3: Number of volunteers active within Salford VCSE organisations

In our focus group, participants from organisations working with Communities of Identity expressed the importance of representation in volunteering. For example, a participant from an organisation based in Eccles working with the Muslim community discussed the crucial role their organisation's volunteers played in the retention of beneficiaries and, by extension, the improvement of health and wellbeing within the community.

'One of the benefits of having volunteers who come from the community and speak the language is that we engage with the people who come to us. We can do this in a way that really shows we understand their issues, cultural differences and barriers. In addition to that, we are also able to offer people a route into volunteering through our organisation that they might not find elsewhere. From there, we have seen many people grow through engaging with us.'

In interviews, participants were invited to respond to the prompt, 'How do volunteers contribute to the delivery of services for the improvement of health and wellbeing in Salford?'. Interviewees gave a range of responses, in many instances detailing the role volunteers had to play in the delivery of organisational work, as well as discussing the effect long-term volunteering has had on the culture of their organisations and the wellbeing of their volunteers.

One participant, a representative from an organisation providing project management and consulting work for VCSE organisations, discussed the importance of the expertise volunteers are able to offer as a strength of the sector.

'All of the volunteers we take on here are vetted and reviewed with regards to their skills. We receive briefs assigned to the organisation by other charities, from there, we assign roles to the most appropriate volunteer based on availability, interest and skillset.'

In utilising this experience, the organisation seeks to support the implementation of a wide range of projects, boosting the clients' reach and effectiveness in a number of areas, including strategy, IT and communications capacity-building advice.

The participant explained that while these services do not bring the organisation into direct contact with their ultimate beneficiaries (Salford residents); they have a positive impact on improving outcomes for those people at every stage of the value chain, whether they be the clients' staff, their beneficiaries, or even the volunteer consultants themselves.

'The strategies our volunteers implement when working with clients help VCSE organisations connect with their beneficiaries and one another in a more effective manner.'



As a unique case with regards to the package on offer, the organisation in question demonstrated how volunteering can affect outcomes for Salford residents in a variety of ways. As a consequence of the vast depth of expertise contained within the VCSE sector's human resources, particularly amongst those who contribute their time voluntarily, organisations are able to respond to needs at each layer of engagement. In this case, that translates to the provision of operational support in the form of project management, communications development and more, ultimately supporting the client organisation to maximise their ability to deliver their packages as effectively as possible.

Staff

60 VCSE organisations participating in the survey that opted to submit relevant information in response to the prompt, 'What is the number of paid staff working at your organisation?', reported a combined total of 1,333 staff, an average of 22 staff per organisation. According to ONS data, there are 6,832 paid employees working in the Salford VCSE sector (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Calculating according to a Real Living Wage rate of £9.50 per hour, this translates to £76mn in added value to the Salford economy per annum (Salford CVS, 2022).

During interviews, participants were invited to respond to the question, 'Does your organisation seek to recruit staff from the local area?' Across 61 participants, 43 interviewees indicated that their organisations prioritise hiring candidates from Salford and Greater Manchester as part of their recruiting processes (70.5%). However, in some cases, organisations expressed a desire to pursue balance with regards to the pursuit of local recruitment and the need to ensure representation of the communities they support in their staffing bodies.

One participant from an organisation that supports the LGBTQ+ community in the city discussed how they recruited their workforce of 97 paid staff, and how they helped support the delivery of the organisation's objectives.

'Our staff help us to be more diverse as an organisation - more inclusive. They help us to connect with LGBTQ+ people from all different backgrounds. As an LGBT+ charity, we obviously have to promote our organisation in a variety of different ways because representation is so important to us. However, we always look to recruit locally where we can.'

To do so we try to link in with locally based organisations. LGBT+ communities are communities of identity, but they can also be concentrated in geographical and neighbourhood communities. It's important to remember that.'

The participant demonstrated how the overlap between representation on the level of identity and locally emphasised recruiting practises can serve to strengthen an organisation's ability to secure better health and wellbeing outcomes for beneficiaries. The importance of 'lived experience', not only in the research methodology of this report, but also within the context of wider approaches to health in general, is becoming increasingly prominent. Better representation, in this case on the geographical level, within the VCSE sector, goes some distance towards embedding this lived experience within the functions and processes of various organisations. Studies show that ensuring representation at all levels of the organisation stimulates development (Sunkel and Sartor, 2021). This creates a dynamic between provider and beneficiary that is more inclusive of the needs of the latter, better allowing the former to tailor its package to maximise wellbeing outcomes for people in Salford through collaboration.

The VCSE sector's ability to engender these connections by acting as the driving force behind initiatives designed to change the cultural impetus of workplaces in Salford transcends the significant monetary impact it has on the local economy.

4.3 What the sector does

While the knowledge, experience and dedication of Salford's VCSE sector are contained within its people, they are expressed in the quality of the support it provides.

As part of the survey, participants were invited to respond to the prompt, 'Please tick all boxes that relate to the services provided by your organisation'. Amongst 61 participant VCSE organisations, 33 reported offering mental health services, 31 reported providing services relating to advice, information and skills, and 30 reported offering some type of food provision - these being the most popularly reported types of support on offer.

In addition to this, VCSE organisations taking part in the research reported an extended range of wider support, including financial management and banking, sport, domestic abuse relief, homelessness action and more.

Mental wellbeing

According to Salford City Council's All Age Mental Health Commissioning Strategy, it is estimated that 36,357 residents live with mild to moderate mental health conditions (Salford City Partnership, 2019). A crucial aspect of the approach to addressing mental health needs in Salford is the recognition of the strengths and skills of individuals as a means for improving wellbeing.

A contributor to the focus group provided a description of how their organisation approached the matter of mental health, and how it helped to inform a more holistic vision for conducting support for refugees from LGBTQ+ backgrounds.

'We look into the issues that define people's moods and try to approach mental health needs that way. We might look into housing or different ways in which people can be productive members of their communities.'

The role of community and inclusion as a means of imparting mental health benefits are assets with which the VCSE sector is uniquely placed to leverage as part of the mission to improve wellbeing in Salford. In the case of Communities of Identity, cultivating this sense of inclusion is a vital tool in overcoming feelings of marginalisation. The abundance of diversity contained within Salford allows for VCSE organisations to draw upon extensive bodies of lived experience to achieve these goals.

'Integration is very important to us. Things like accessing legal and asylum services, securing housing, getting support with language so that people are able to join a local GP. All of this contributes to a person's mental health by helping to overcome isolation and provide access to key services.'

VCSE organisations such as that represented in the above quote offer Salford residents from ethnic minority backgrounds a route to inclusion through the provision of a holistic support package.

In this instance, the pathway is tailored by those with lived experience themselves in the hope that representation will help beneficiaries obtain the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes.

In interviews, one participant discussed their community interest company's approach to supporting health and wellbeing outcomes for men in the local area. They discussed how they have sought to utilise the positive aspects of their beneficiaries' personal experiences and relationships to help rebuild the self-esteem that is essential to wellbeing.

'We know that men's mental health is under-provided for in Salford, but we see that as an opportunity to make a massive impact. Everything we do is about confidence and self-esteem, restoring men's sense of self-worth. We achieve that by creating social spaces in which men feel relaxed and comfortable around one another. Better mental health leads to better physical health. Not only that, but we see many of the people who come through our organisation begin to engage with other services in Salford - they're able to be active members of the community again.'

The participant's description is a demonstration of how the strengths-based approach redefines 'need' in new contexts, using the term as a platform to identify where maximum impact can be elicited.

In understanding the demographic makeup of its beneficiaries, the organisation places an emphasis on a strong sense of community, proximity to social spaces, and shared identity. From there, they focus on building upon these strengths to create better wellbeing outcomes for those who seek their support.

By taking an active, strengths-based approach to tackling issues around mental health and wellbeing, organisations in the VCSE sector are able to leverage their unique positions in the heart of communities to improve health and wellbeing outcomes that extend beyond the individual.



Physical Health

A crucial aspect of the Salford Locality Plan (2020-25) centres on tackling health inequalities in the city. Male life expectancy for residents at birth is 2.5 years below the UK average, with female life expectancy being two years below (Salford City Council, 2018). Men and women in Salford are expected to spend a lower percentage of their lives in good health compared to the national average. Within the city itself, men in Salford's most deprived areas have an average life expectancy 10.9 years below those in the least deprived, while women in the same areas are expected to live 7.6 fewer years in comparison (Office for National Statistics, 2023).

The VCSE sector in Salford has an important role to play in reversing these inequalities. Initiatives such as the Wellbeing Matters programme seek to establish stronger links between the public and VCSE sectors through an approach to treatment known as social prescribing. In the case of Wellbeing Matters, VCSE-based Community Connectors take referrals from primary care professionals to provide non-clinical treatment for residents who have recently received diagnoses relating to poor health or wellbeing. For example, organisations conducting work around sport may accept referrals from Community Connectors who believe that their beneficiary would be better served engaging in physical activity and social connection rather than receiving clinical treatment. This method of provision seeks to utilise the VCSE sector to connect individuals to community assets for the purpose of improving wellbeing and reducing the need for intervention by health and care services.

Since commencement, Wellbeing Matters has received 6,896 referrals and is now accessible by all GPs in Salford. Today, 1,100 VCSE organisations, groups, activities and sources of support deliver a package to which a Community Connector is able to refer a beneficiary (Salford CVS, 2022b).

One organisation taking referrals as part of the Wellbeing Matters programme agreed to take part in the JSSNA. Their work, focused on improving the wellbeing of those living with dementia, emphasises the importance of physical activity in overcoming some of the challenges associated with the condition. They discussed how their offer, centred around dance, provides a link between physical activity and social connection that is important to tackling the wider wellbeing impacts associated with chronic illness and long-term care.

'We want to improve and prolong positive living for the people who use our services - not just those with the condition but also their friends, family and carers. Since the pandemic, we have extended our offer to people who found themselves socially isolated and lonely. It has become a support group in a way.'

In offering these services, the organisation has utilised one of Salford's most unique community assets, the Grand Palais ballroom in Swinton. The site serves as a point of connection between the older people who make up the majority of the beneficiaries and the heritage associated with the communities in which they live.

'We use the Palais on Mondays in order to host our Tea and Dance sessions. We invite live artists to perform and our older visitors have a chance to dance, sing, take refreshment and meet friends. The Palais has been here since the twenties; it brings back so many great memories for the members!'

The participant demonstrated how VCSE organisations are able to utilise innovative approaches to improving wellbeing in Salford. Through initiatives such as Wellbeing Matters, the sector is able to provide avenues for treatment that differ from those offered in a clinical capacity. Not only does this holistic approach to wellbeing blend physical activity with the mental benefits associated with reducing social isolation, it also reaffirms the importance of community through the utilisation of one of the city's famous landmarks.

Food Provision

The ongoing nationwide cost-of-living crisis has affected food security for households across the country, including in Salford. Since July 2022, 95% of UK households have reported a rise in the amount of money they spend on food (Francis-Devine, Tyler and Danechi, 2022). In April 2022, the Food Foundation found that 15% of all UK households were 'food insecure' (The Food Foundation, 2023), in that they ate less or went a day without eating because of an inability to access or afford food.



Rising prices have affected Salford residents in equal measure. In some parts of the city, one in three report living with food poverty (Mustard Tree, 2023). The VCSE sector has played an important role in ameliorating some of the effects of these issues in the local area.

Food poverty alleviation initiatives such as foodbanks, clubs and pantries support residents across Salford to access affordable meals. As part of the survey, 49% of all participant organisations reported offering some form of food poverty relief as part of their package.

One participant organisation talked about their work across Greater Manchester around the issue of food poverty. Their strategic vision extends beyond the provision of food into tackling the root causes of food poverty and insecurity, starting with overturning the approach to provision itself.

‘We were inspired to get started partly by negative first-hand experiences of accessing support we had in the past. We wanted to prove that things could be done differently. For us, that involved putting dignity, agency, control and choice at the heart of everything we do; not having people queuing up in the rain outside, or sitting people down and asking them why they’re poor...’

Starting from this platform, the organisation was able to demonstrate how VCSE organisations employ strengths-based approaches to challenging food insecurity, and how they can contribute to better health and wellbeing outcomes for local residents. Instead of the traditional, means-based method of assessing the relative need of a potential beneficiary, the organisation developed a model in which the onus is placed on the user, allowing them to define the terms of the interaction. The participant suggested that this method increased the likelihood of beneficiaries returning to the foodbank if they require further support, which in turn guarantees access to the healthy, balanced provision on offer.

‘We support over 800 people a month. In addition to our three-to-four-day emergency food parcels, we also run



a community grocers, which has proven to be a lifeline for some people. Within that group of 800, we have about 200 families, all of whom are receiving access to really high-quality meat, fish, dairy, and prepared meals with complimentary fruit, veg and bakery items. It is essentially a good weekly shop at a massively reduced price.'

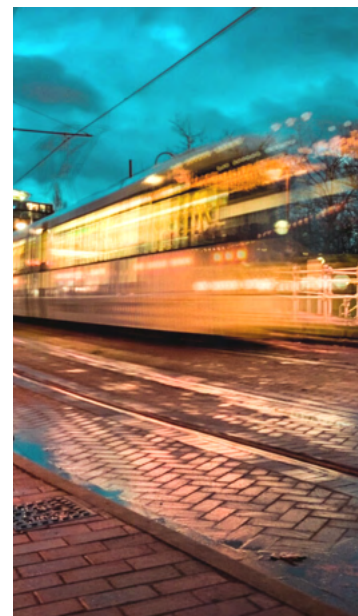
Crucially, the organisation in question sought to redefine the scope of its outcomes beyond mere emergency food support, with the focus instead being on obtaining healthy, balanced, high-quality food that not only serves to alleviate the immediate pressure placed on individuals and families by the cost-of-living crisis, but also helps to build good habits that have a positive impact on health and wellbeing. In the case of mitigating the effects of food insecurity in local communities.

4.4 Interconnectivity

The VCSE sector in Salford is more than an agglomeration of disparate groups and organisations operating within the same space, it is a network. Through constant interaction, organisations across the city work together to share intelligence, spread information and build upon their strengths in order to provide the best possible support for local residents.

In addition to fostering solid intra-section connections, VCSE organisations have an important role to play in linking communities to other structures operating in the local area. Upon publication of the Salford VCSE Strategy, Salford CVS (part of the plan's collaborative 'writing group') laid out these objectives (Salford CVS, 2018):

- A clear position and role for the VCSE sector in strategic partnerships
- Recognition and agreement about how the sector supports and benefits local people, delivers services and influences policy and strategy



- Shared understanding between the VCSE sector, Salford City Council and NHS Salford CCG (now NHS Greater Manchester - Salford Locality) of the relationship that the VCSE sector has with its key stakeholders, including beneficiaries/service users and clients (current and future), funders and donors, commissioners, delivery partners, and the wider public sector
- Resources that are appropriate, accessible, and sustainable
- A consistent approach to strategic and operational thinking
- Consistency of practise and high standards in the conduct of the relationships between the VCSE sector and our key public sector partners
- A VCSE sector that works in partnership with the City Council and NHS Salford CCG (NHS Greater Manchester) for the benefit of the people of Salford

By positioning the VCSE sector in close collaboration with statutory bodies in local government and health, VCSE organisations are best placed to be able to project not only the needs of local residents but, crucially, the strengths latent within the community in order to attain better health and wellbeing outcomes for people in Salford.

As part of the survey phase of the research, participants were prompted with the question: 'How often does your organisation interact with other VCSE organisations?'

Of 61 respondents, 45 replied 'weekly', 10 replied 'monthly', 2 'quarterly', and 4 'yearly'.

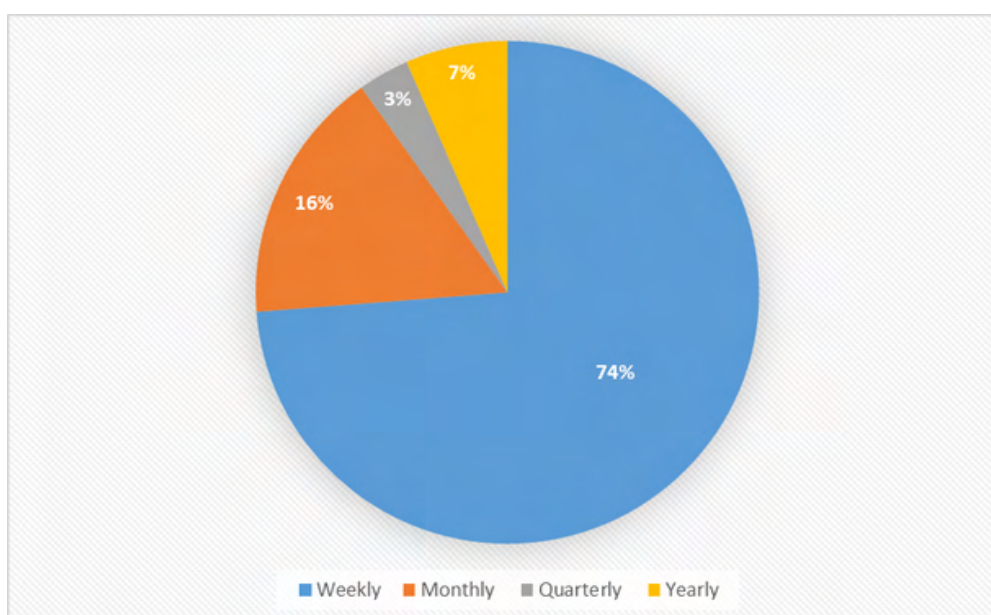


Figure 4: How often does your organisation interact with other VCSE organisations?

Intra-sector cooperation

In the focus group, a participant from an organisation that supports disabled people to access services that support healthy, active lifestyles described the impact that the Salford VCSE sector's impressive layers of interconnectivity had on their mission.

'Not being from Salford myself, before I started in my role I'd heard lots of scare stories about the place involving gangs and drugs, but I've been really pleasantly surprised by the people in the city. So many different people from every neighbourhood have come to us, referred others to our organisation, and helped disabled people to become active and supported us, so it has been a real joy.'

Another participant from a VCSE group based in Eccles agreed to take part in the interview phase of the research. They discussed how their group, a support network for unpaid carers in Salford, has utilised the wider ecosystem of VCSE organisations and infrastructural institutions in the area in order to obtain better outcomes for beneficiaries.

'Our mission is to support the health and wellbeing of carers in Salford. To do so, we use the Salix Homes community centre to host events, meet-ups and even therapeutic sessions led by experts, which is important in helping us offer support to as many people as we can.'

'One of our strongest links is with another Greater Manchester organisation that provides advocacy support for carers in Salford. Most of the work we do involves not just carers and the cared-for, but also NHS workers and people in the residential care setting. We take referrals from this organisation on the basis that we can provide a type of pastoral care that might be better suited to certain people seeking support.'

For smaller VCSE organisations, securing access to a location from which they're able to offer support to residents is often one of the largest hurdles they face.



By connecting with a local social housing provider, the organisation in question demonstrated the strength of the links already in place in Salford, and how they can be utilised in a cross-sectoral context to elicit better outcomes for local residents.

From this position, they have been able to use the space to host not only their own activities, but also other VCSE organisations in the local area who find themselves looking for a location to conduct work with beneficiaries of similar backgrounds to those attending the interviewee's group. By cultivating connections within the sector, either through the sharing of assets or the establishment of referral networks, VCSE organisations are able to widen the extent of the support available to potential beneficiaries. As a result, residents who pass through organisations such as those represented by the participant are presented with a holistic range of support, stemming from their initial point of access, that ensures that more of their health and wellbeing needs are met within the sector.

VCSE organisations and the statutory sector

Ensuring that the needs of local residents are represented among stakeholders in local government and the statutory sector is a crucial element of the Salford VCSE Strategy (2018). The role of the VCSE sector in achieving this objective is significant and centres on the projection of the strengths of the organisations that make it up and the residents who engage with them.

A research participant representing an organisation working to support male victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault discussed the significance of the connections they had made with the statutory sector.



'Most of our funding comes from Westminster, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the NHS. In securing this funding, we have opened up opportunities for our organisation to contribute to working groups; shaping national policy and even the law. We are able to show them what our beneficiaries are telling us directly.'

Strong connections between VCSE organisations and statutory institutions generate exchanges between both parties, both of which ultimately benefit local residents. In the case of the above organisation, multiple streams of interaction with various public bodies at different levels mean that they have been able to secure a diverse range of funding— ensuring they are able to remain a presence for residents in Salford in the future. At the same time, their track record of support and delivery with the funds they have managed to secure has demonstrated their significance to statutory partners, in turn providing them with influence within these bodies and a platform to represent the health and wellbeing needs of local residents directly, as well as the strengths latent within the community for tackling these issues.

Another organisation operating a community gym and athletic facility in Eccles discussed the impact they were able to have in the Eccles, Barton and Winton neighbourhood through the delivery of a much sought-after asset on behalf of residents with public funding, and the importance of maintaining it thereafter.

'Salford City Council provided us with the land on which the site is now based to deliver a new community athletics club. The campaign for our gym to stay in the local area was backed by over 7,000 local residents. After securing the support of the local authority, we delivered a £1.3mn project for £600,000.'

In conducting a joint project with Salford City Council, the organisation above demonstrated how VCSE organisations are able to tap into their direct connections with local residents to deliver and maintain assets that are vital to the community and the individual health and wellbeing of the people who utilise them. Furthermore, they similarly demonstrate how the utilisation of the VCSE sector as an alternative means of delivery can result in better value-for-money, going some way towards the alleviation of financial pressures on public bodies enduring budgetary constraints across the board.

Working with the private sector

Utilising Salford's dynamic private sector is an equally significant aspect of interconnectivity within the context of the city's VCSE organisations. Numerous multi-sector initiatives, the most notable being the Salford Social Value Alliance, have sought to integrate businesses operating in the area into the movement to produce more social value and, by extension, better environments for the pursuit of good health and wellbeing outcomes, for local residents.

75% of the VCSE organisations that participated in the research reported maintaining positive relationships with organisations in the private sector, demonstrating the extent of the interconnectivity between the two. In some cases, individual VCSE organisations have developed partnerships with private companies operating on larger footprints beyond Salford and Greater Manchester.

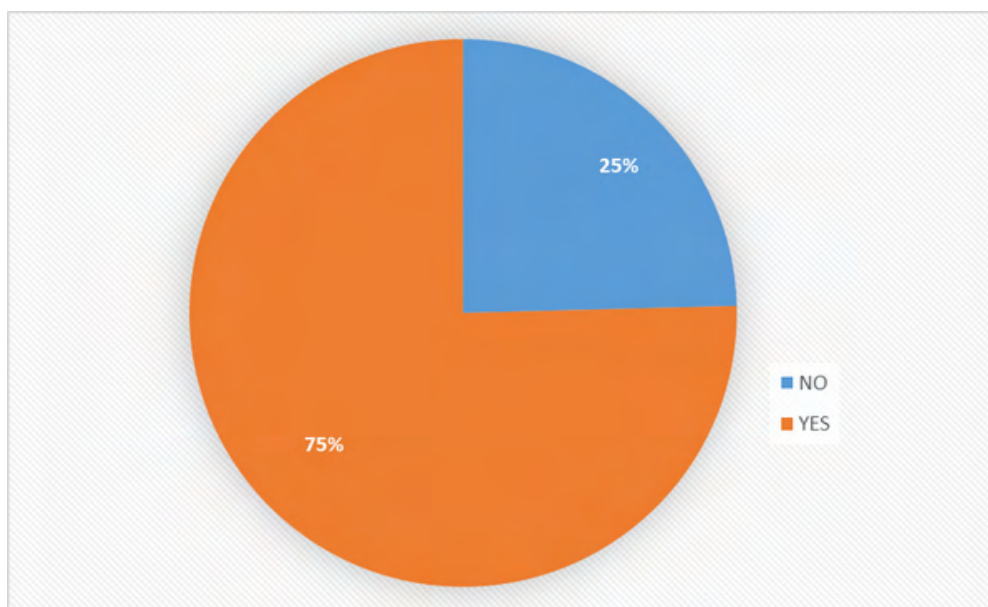


Figure 5: Does your organisation maintain relationships with organisations in the private sector?

As the evidence suggests, in most instances, cooperation with businesses based in Salford is an essential aspect of the work of VCSE organisations in the city. One participant in the interview phase of the research discussed how this dynamic worked in their organisation and the positive impact they were able to deliver as a consequence of it. Their work centred on developing climate resilience in the local area through planting trees, managing woodland areas and maintaining green spaces in Salford and throughout Greater Manchester.

'We have great relationships with some significant companies. United Utilities, for example, have worked with us to develop projects on their land.'

By building relationships with businesses in the local area, VCSE organisations have the ability to transform privately-owned resources into important community assets.



In this case, the organisation's mission to leverage its relationships for the purpose of greening disused or non-residential land has important health benefits for Salford residents, namely improvements to air quality, climate resilience and other long-term determinants of wellbeing.

Another example involving the same organisation from the focus group that specialises in supporting disabled people to pursue healthy, active lives demonstrated how VCSE organisations are able to utilise the resources and expertise of the private sector to improve their offer for beneficiaries.

'In recent months, we engaged with a large national consulting agency that helped us tackle some important issues. This helped us pursue some routes we wanted to explore; mainly around how we could bring in additional capacity to the organisation. We've got a really good ongoing relationship with them now.'

By leaning on the expertise and specialist support of businesses operating in the area, VCSE organisations are able to improve their packages of support for local residents. For example, by increasing their capacity and strengthening key aspects of their approach to delivery, the organisation in question has been able to support more disabled people in Salford to access resources for living healthy, active lives. Not only does this obviously contribute to improved states of physical health for the individual beneficiaries, it also impacts positively on mental wellbeing

4.5 Equality diversity and inclusion

A fundamental aspect of improving health and wellbeing amongst Salford residents involves proliferating access and tackling inequalities in minoritised communities. In its position at the heart of local communities across the city, the VCSE sector has an important role to play in this regard.

Since 2011, Salford has seen the second-largest increase in the percentage of residents who did not identify with any United Kingdom nationality. In 2011, the figure stood at 8.5%, rising in 2021 to 12.9%. Within this shift, there has been a diversification of cultural and ethnic groups, the largest proportion of which identify as 'Black' (6.1%).

Those identifying as 'Asian' make up 5.5% of the local population, while people identifying as 'mixed' make up 3.1%. Within Salford, there are also thriving centres of Jewish, Polish, Eastern European and East African culture (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Representatives from these communities contributed significantly to this report through the VCSE organisations that exist to support them. Salford's VCSE sector also has a significant number of organisations working with older people, people from the LGBTQ+ community, women and girls, and Disabled People.

When prompted with the question, 'Does your organisation tailor its services specifically for people from Communities of Identity? (e.g. race/ethnic, sexual, or gender minority backgrounds)', 65% of the participants who opted to respond answered 'YES'. Of these organisations, 23% worked with older people, 23% with people from Black, Asian or other Ethnic Minority backgrounds (BAME), 20% with disabled people, 20% with women and girls, and a further 14% with LGBTQ+ people.

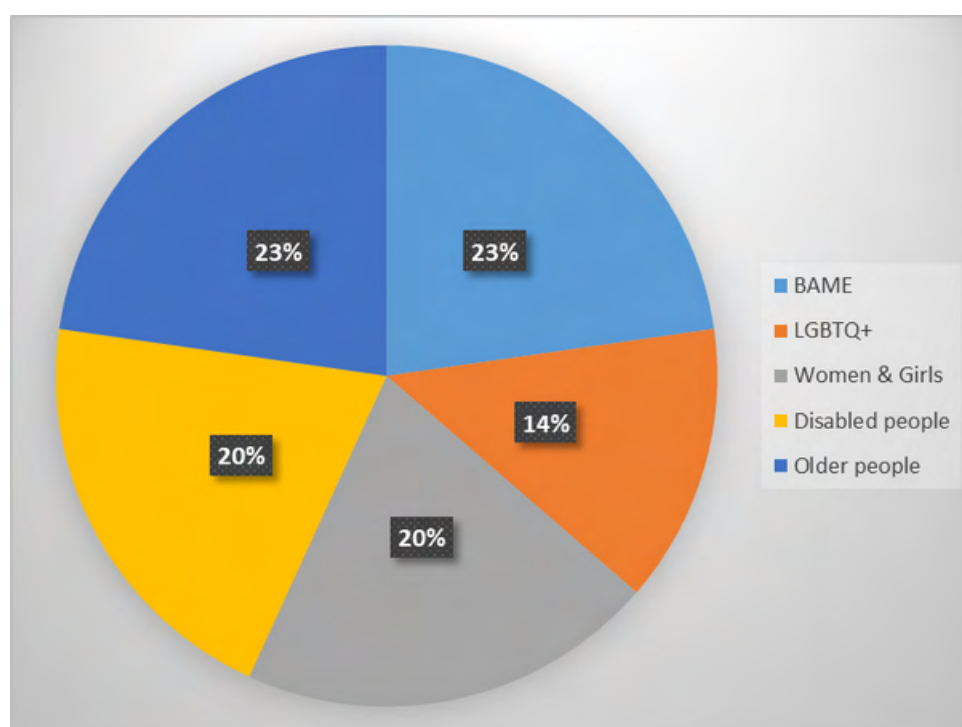


Figure 6: Provisions for Communities of Identity amongst VCSE organisations in Salford

The grassroots nature of VCSE organisations is a key aspect of the formula that enables them to tackle health and wellbeing issues effectively. This fact is embodied in the locations in which they operate and the diversity in the backgrounds of the staff and volunteers they recruit. Diverse practises mean that VCSE organisations are able to draw upon lived experience when responding to health and wellbeing needs present within their communities.

They are also able to communicate the needs of these communities to stakeholders in the public sector as a result of the connections they build.

Engaging with Black and Minority Ethnic communities

An interviewee representing an organisation focused on tackling health inequalities amongst South-Asian women discussed how their position in the community enabled them to attain the best outcomes for their beneficiaries.

‘One of the big challenges our beneficiaries face is culturally-enforced social isolation, which in turn has knock-on effects on diet, physical activity and overall health. As a result, hidden mental health issues are often prevalent among the women we engage with, so we host therapeutic sessions run by South-Asian counsellors. All of our staff and volunteers have the lived experience to understand the best way to work with the women who come to us, including a variety of language expertise.

Essentially, we operate a community gym for South-Asian women. We’ve got an exercise area and a ‘ladies lounge’, from which we deliver therapy sessions. We also offer walking football, badminton and arts, crafts and coffee days.’

Through its work, the organisation was able to identify the specific determinant factors contributing to health inequalities amongst South-Asian women in Salford. From there, they designed an offer that is culturally inclusive and effective in tackling both the mental and physical health problems prevalent in the community.

Another organisation, operating from Eccles and specialising in support for the neighbourhood’s Muslim and Arab-speaking residents, used the focus group to discuss how they have worked to remove barriers for members of their community to access health facilities.

‘One of the main difficulties members of our community face concerning physical health is accessing public health services due to language barriers, or gyms because of a lack of single-sex sessions.



It is one of our main priorities to overcome those challenges, so it's important for us, as representatives of our community, to do whatever we can to make it easier for people to stay on top of their physical health.'

A participant representing the Eritrean community in Salford discussed the significance of their role in helping new arrivals from the country integrate into Greater Manchester, highlighting the importance of providing support that extends beyond the individual, impacting both families and their children.

'Many refugees from Eritrea who arrive in the country do not speak English and have difficulties accessing bank accounts, housing and understanding the culture. Through our organisation, we are able to support them through that process. It allows us to support our community in a different cultural environment.'

VCSE organisations engaging with staff and volunteers from diverse backgrounds are able to connect to the heart of Communities of Identity in a manner more direct than statutory institutions. The utilisation of lived experience, language expertise and cultural understanding means that organisations such as those discussed above are able to navigate the cultural complexities of the communities they serve and, in turn, produce the best, most effective outcomes for the physical health and mental wellbeing of their beneficiaries.

Support for Disabled People

Throughout interviews with organisations specialising in supporting Disabled People and those with life-altering illnesses, one of the biggest concerns participants raised regarding health and wellbeing was around limitations to access.

Of the 12 organisations reporting some form of specialised provision for disabled people, eight indicated that improving access to sports facilities, physical activity sessions and wellbeing services was a priority. A crucial aspect of good wellbeing is social interaction. For some Disabled People, inadequate accessibility limits the extent to which they are able to engage with activities and provisions that foster social engagement.

One participant organisation, specialising in emotional support and practical help for those with life-affecting illnesses, discussed how their work seeks to break down the barriers to social engagement and the positive impact it has on mental and physical health.

'We were initially founded by a group of people living with cancer who had concerns about the condition. Since then, we have expanded our support to people from across Greater Manchester who are living with life-altering conditions. Our volunteers connect with beneficiaries in a variety of ways. We host social groups from community spaces in Langworthy and Worsley, run a befriending service, carry out home visits and provide practical help with things like shopping, as well as operating a hospital transportation service.'

Providing a space for people who may otherwise find themselves excluded through the utilisation of community assets is a crucial strength of the VCSE sector, and one of the principal means through which it is able to connect with parts of the community less likely to engage with services run by statutory bodies. Through this work, organisations such as the above provide an important means for the identification and alleviation of symptoms of negative mental wellbeing by fostering social interaction. These effects proliferate beyond the beneficiary; extending to the volunteers themselves, the statutory health bodies operating in the area and, consequently, the wider community in Salford.

Provisions for women and girls

In their March 2023 Final Report, the Salford Women and Girls' Commission identified a number of barriers faced by women in obtaining good health and positive wellbeing. These ranged from inadequate signposting for women in abusive relationships to gaps in affordable childcare provision, a lack of support for disabled women in the workplace and more. At the heart of the Commission's recommended solutions was the acknowledgement of the role grassroots organisations would have to play in alleviating these problems.



‘Capacity building work within the VCSE sector was listed as a ‘key tool’ in achieving this aim (Salford Women and Girls' Commission, 2023).

One of the areas in which VCSE organisations are uniquely placed to be able to impact the wellbeing of women and girls is in providing support for those who have experienced sexual violence. The careful utilisation of lived experience in recruitment practises, flexible and compassionate approaches to engaging with those in need and the cultivation of referral networks amongst similarly-minded organisations are integral when addressing issues of this kind. Concerning the matter of sexual violence, these cautious, community-led approaches to restoring survivors to good health fold into wider sectoral strategies around therapeutic approaches that centre the agency of the beneficiary. A participant in the research from an organisation specialising in providing support to those who have experienced sexual violence discussed the role of the VCSE sector in this regard.

‘We look to centre the agency of women who come to us for support. We do not leave people after they have secured a referral – our stabilisation group offers women the chance to develop coping mechanisms regarding trauma while they wait for counselling sessions.’

Across a number of discussions with interviewees from VCSE sector organisations providing mental health support to residents, participants frequently referenced long waiting lists for NHS counselling services, during which those in need received little support. The impact of the VCSE sector is demonstrated in this example through its capacity to deliver holistic support for mental health needs throughout the process of referral, rather than simply at the point of delivery. The ability of Salford VCSE organisations to deliver specialised offers, such as support around sexual trauma, permits them the ability to engage with targeted groups of people, in this case, women. In turn, this means they are able to play a role in mitigating demand issues with NHS services.



5. 'Place' and Salford

In 2008, Professor Michael Marmot published a landmark review on the optimal strategy for tackling health inequalities in Britain. His findings, contained within the publication, *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, identified six key points of action for breaking down barriers to good health (Marmot, 2010). These were:

- To every child, the best start in life
- To enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their own lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

Marmot envisaged a new approach to public health that would tackle the impact of negative outcomes at source; rooting out determinant factors of illness and poor wellbeing by strengthening communities and the institutions that serve them, as well as equipping them with the social toolkit necessary to create safe, resilient, sustainable and ultimately healthy places to live, learn and work.

Borrowing from Marmot's recommendations and similar strategies, including the Labonte Model, some localities have begun to tackle health inequalities with these objectives in mind.

In Salford, this model is known as the 'place-based' approach. holistic in conception, the place-based approach to improving wellbeing involves systemic collaboration amongst stakeholders in every sector, as well as the pursuit of community integration, in order to achieve comprehensive progress with regards to not only wellbeing outcomes, but also in community cohesion, employment quality and environmental resilience. The approach forms a key aspect of Salford City Council's Locality Plan: 2020-2025 (Salford City Council, 2020b).

As findings in this report have already demonstrated, the best-placed, most effective sector in ensuring that the voices, needs and strengths of residents are amplified is the VCSE sector. This is due to the sector's extensive networks, diversity of workforce and volunteers, wealth of human expertise and close proximity to the communities in which they operate.

Contained in this section is an account of the research findings concerning the role of 'place' within the Salford VCSE sector's approach to the pursuit of good health and positive wellbeing outcomes for local residents.

In a series of six additional interviews with representatives from VCSE organisations that have been operating in Salford for extended periods, themes of collaboration, demographic change, structural and economic transformation and much more were explored in depth. The intention behind the process was to reveal how Salford VCSE organisations conceive of the idea of 'place' and how they have adapted to the structural changes that have unfolded in the local area in recent years and beyond.

VCSE organisations engaging with staff and volunteers of diverse backgrounds are able to connect to the heart of Communities of Identity in a manner more direct than statutory institutions. The utilisation of lived experience, language expertise and cultural understanding means that organisations such as that listed above are able to navigate the cultural complexities of the communities they serve, and in turn produce the best, most effective outcomes for the physical health and mental wellbeing of their beneficiaries.

What is 'place?'

Unpacking the concept of place from the perspective of the VCSE sector reveals complex and often alternating perceptions as to how it should be implemented in a strategic context. Salford Foundation, an organisation that has operated across the city and beyond since 1989 was represented by their CEO, Phil East, who offered insight on their behalf.

'It is interesting in terms of how we have grown and developed in the last few years. I was meeting with someone a few weeks ago, who introduced me to someone else who suggested that Salford Foundation is almost a misnomer because we are a Greater Manchester organisation, which made me giggle. Nevertheless, it is somewhat fundamentally wrong because we have always been clear that Salford is our spiritual home, as it were. That does not sound too grandiose, but we need, sometimes, with regards to scale, capacity, and the kind of grants we want to go for, to play on a bigger stage.'



While Salford VCSE organisations like Salford Foundation, that have been in place for long periods of time, retain an intensely Salford-oriented ethos concerning where they wish to direct the majority of their work, some feel the path to progression must entail an expansion of the organisation's geographic footprint. With regards to the place-based model, this poses intriguing questions as to the extent to which its strategic value can be contained within a pre-determined geographic area, especially when considering the demands placed upon the VCSE organisations upon which its implementation relies to support residents further afield, due to increasingly pressing socio-economic factors.

Changing Salford

One consistent aspect of Salford as a 'place' is the pace of change that has unfolded across the city in recent decades. Hamilton Davies Trust (HDT) has operated in the Irlam, Cadishead and Peel Green neighbourhood since 2004. The organisation's area of operation, while an important part of Salford's neighbourhood composition, is comparatively geographically remote.

Consequently, the area has undergone a process of evolution unique within the context of the locality. The result has been an approach to progress with regards to the VCSE sector's impact on health and wellbeing that is place-based and yet specific to the area's developmental model. Operations Manager Tony Prescott gave his insight.

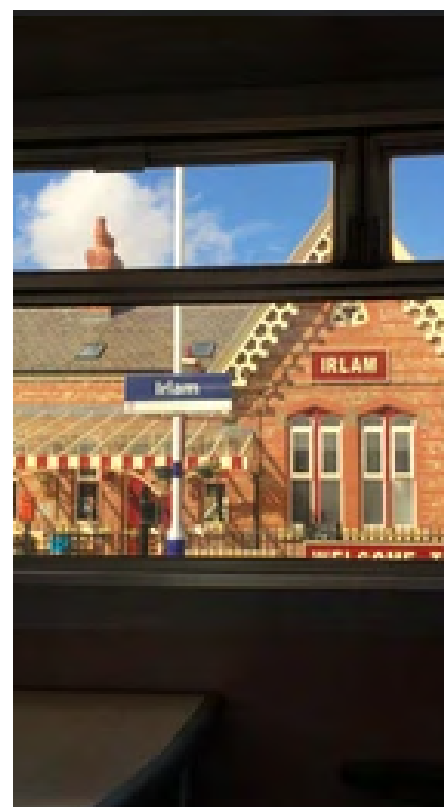
'Lots of changes took place in the 1980s and 90s in terms of Irlam and Cadishead being manufacturing towns, meaning that they had a lot of industry that provided most of the employment in the area. There were steel works, margarine works, etc. With de-industrialisation, the people who tended to work there and a lot of their community organisations suddenly found that work was no longer available, which massively restricted economic growth. The area then really struggled because no money was coming in.'



The initial idea behind our organisational concept was to be a grant-supporting charity. Community groups that wanted some financial support would be able to approach us and we would help them. For a while, our work was probably 100% centred on funding groups, but as the charity grew, we became a little bit more influential in the area. At that point, it enabled us to look at the regeneration of the area and then take up some of the bigger projects, with Irlam train station being one of the largest in terms of the amount of money that was spent and also the difference it made in that community. We also helped at Lady James' Hall and a number of other projects; helping support football clubs, rugby clubs when they were looking at new premises, etc. I think because of that, we kind of changed the dynamic between ourselves and the local area.'

In taking this approach, HDT has seen itself emerge as a key driver in the resurgence of the Irlam, Cadishead and Peel Green neighbourhood. Owing to their relative geographical isolation from the rest of Salford, they have also taken measures in trying to retain talent, expertise and infrastructure within the area.

'Because of our geographical distance from the rest of Salford, we're a little bit out of the way. So we tend to support and look after ourselves without relying too much on the rest of Salford, which is obviously a little bit further down the line. What we didn't want to happen was for our younger people to have to make their journeys outside of Cadishead for work and employment when it's often really difficult for them to do that. We're like a Republic, basically, I think that's probably one of the better ways to explain it. We're very much self-contained. So we're looking to change the mindset amongst local organisations; making sure that they don't forget about local pupils and local people for employment.'



Patterns of change and their impact on 'place'

Since 1901, Salford Lads and Girls Club has been based at Coronation Street, in the heart of Ordsall. Initially established to provide a space for young boys away from the area's cramped slum accommodations and the criminality that emerged within them, the club now hosts a variety of activities for young people, including sports and trips to the countryside.

Project Manager Leslie Holmes discussed the impact the place-based approach has had in Salford, and compared the plight of Ordsall to that of the neighbourhoods surrounding it, particularly at the Quays and in Manchester.

'When the docks closed in Salford, there were over 7,000 houses knocked down in this area. As a result, Ordsall suffered from massive social problems in the 1980s and 90s. Since then, our organisation has acted as the bedrock of what is left of this community. That's crucial because of how long we've been here. In the past, community centres have opened up and initiatives started, but once the funding for them dries up, they disappear. Our reputation has been built up in this community for generations. People have seen their buildings knocked down, tower blocks built around them, tramlines designed around, rather than through our community, but we have always been there. That is an important part of what it means to be 'in place', it is about continuity as much as anything.'



In Little Hulton and Walkden, embedded structural inequalities have increased negative health outcomes within the community. In Little Hulton, one in three residents live in food poverty, 29.5% of the adult population has no qualifications, and the ward ranks 18th out of 20 in Salford in relation to the average lowest income.

Mustard Tree is a VCSE organisation that has been working to combat poverty in the area since 2002. Their Finance and Operations Manager Graeme Woodworth explained how issues around accessibility have negatively affected wellbeing in the area, and the significance of utilising the place-based approach in overcoming them.

'The essential aspect of our work in Little Hulton revolves around engaging with that community and addressing their needs, because you cannot do anything else out there. You cannot be a city organisation in that community; it does not work. People will just not talk to you or switch off to what you are saying. Part of this is due to a sense within the community that they have been neglected.'

'We've got our food offer, there's your strategy for food poverty. We've got the training offer, which is about qualifications, and then we've got the service offer, which investigates and works with the housing associations to look at the needs of their clients in social housing, Those have been established for years. So it's really about passing up the work that we're doing to these bodies to try and get them to address people's needs. And although we don't think it's changed radically enough, it is starting to change.'

Involving communities in the decision-making process is a crucial aspect of the place-based approach. In the case of the Little Hulton and Walkden neighbourhood, protracted periods of economic and, by extension, democratic neglect, have erected barriers between residents and the institutions of governance and social provision upon which they rely. The role of the VCSE sector in this instance is to remove these barriers and offer a bridge between the community and stakeholders in the local authority and the private sector so that the voices of those who live in the neighbourhood can be utilised in tackling the issues they face. This method of interaction plays a crucial role in generating synergy between residents and external or institutional stakeholders, as well as proliferating democratic approaches to the place-based model that are inclusive of the needs of local people and receptive to the strengths they can offer in achieving social and economic change.

Every organisation engaged with this during this research project emphasised the deep connections they have cultivated with the people of Salford through their work.

Denise Green of Community Connect CIC based in Eccles described how they have utilised these relationships in order to improve the health and wellbeing of their beneficiaries. In strengthening its connections with its user base – many of whom find themselves isolated due to factors relating to age, Community Connect has adopted an approach to the place-based model that builds its foundations upon the people who live there.

‘For us, it is really about making sure that the older members of our community are being active and staying social through our organisation. Luckily, in Eccles, we have many connections with tram and bus services to different parts of Salford and Greater Manchester. Things like that help with accessibility, which for older people is one of the most important things for their wellbeing.’

This emphasises the significance of the place-based approach in ensuring that provisions for health and wellbeing improvement are contained within the local area, whether that be a single location or a neighbourhood, in order to ensure that residents from every part of the community are able to access them.

Place-based thinking in action

Natalie Lane of Lifecentre, a Christian organisation based in the Claremont, Weaste and Seedley neighbourhood explained that at the time of their organisation’s establishment, the area was riven by a number of complex sociological factors. Much like Ordsall, this area of Salford suffered significantly from the departure of industry that accompanied the closure of the Quays docklands. As a consequence, criminal activity, including gang violence, gun crime and drug misuse played a prominent role in the lives of local people. Overcoming those barriers through the establishment of community cohesion, trust and cooperation were central elements of Lifecentre’s ambitions in the organisation’s early years.

‘We initially emerged out of an organisation called the Message Trust. They conducted work in areas of Manchester suffering from crime and deprivation. Langworthy, at the time, was one of those areas. We were set up as a youth work charity looking to tackle some of the issues that had arisen out of a lack of employment opportunities and funding cuts.’

We noticed that many young people would just hang around on the streets because there was nothing else to do and that is how they ended up getting into trouble. Our early programmes were focused on sports groups and homework clubs, but we soon realised we needed to connect with families.'

Lifecentre identified a key issue facing the community they operate in immediately upon beginning operations. After setting out with a programme to tackle the most visible problems they could see in the neighbourhood – namely a lack of provision for young people – they expanded their programme further in order to tackle the determinant factors driving a wedge between residents.

The work of the organisation now focuses on offering a variety of wellbeing activities for residents of all ages. They discussed how the place-based approach unfolded as part of a long development in which their organisation came to utilise the strengths of the communities they operate in more effectively. This process involved not only working with residents, but also other VCSE organisations in the area.

'When we started back in 2000, I was one of many volunteers. We probably had about 20 of us who would volunteer at the Lifecentre, all locally based. Because we lived in the community, we had an influence over what the projects looked like, but we were also listening to our friends and neighbours and whoever was coming along to the groups as to how best to run them. So the Lifecentre project kind of developed and evolved out of that, and it really helped to shape the organisation in terms of its sense of place.'

Lifecentre's community-centred and place-based approach enabled a new organisation to win the support of local residents and connect on a deeper level with members of the community. In addition to this, a strong, organic culture of cooperation amongst the neighbourhood's VCSE organisations laid the groundwork for integrated approaches to supporting the local community.



6. Concluding remarks

Salford continues to stand out as one of the most dynamic, diverse and forward-thinking cities in the north-west. Shifting populations and new opportunities produce ever-changing health needs among residents. In order to ensure that these needs are met, utilising the strengths of the VCSE sector remains imperative.

Amplifying this fact is the underlying economic reality. The cost-of-living crisis, strains on the NHS and increasingly bleak economic projections are set to exert additional pressures on the lives of local residents and the public services they seek to access. Salford's robust and expansive VCSE sector has a significant role to play as the city heads into the future, with provisions for residents set to assume an increasingly central position as the sector is further integrated into local strategies for development. With this in mind, it is worth reviewing some of the key findings of this research.

The VCSE sector has a crucial role to play in the city, especially as residents undergo a period of demographic change and economic uncertainty. The role VCSE organisations and the support they offer play in providing a safety net for Salford residents is an essential aspect of improving health and wellbeing throughout the city.

VCSE organisations, in offering a variety of different means of improving health and wellbeing through the vast array of support provided, permit greater autonomy for individuals in achieving health and wellbeing goals. Sports, the arts, environmental work, mental health provision and volunteering itself all contribute towards improved wellbeing and health outcomes for local residents. This imbues an elective aspect into the process of engaging with residents that helps bridge the gap between those who live and work in Salford and those who seek a mandate to make decisions on their behalf. The sector boasts a suite of high-value, multi-purpose physical assets; such as community venues, sports pitches, outdoor spaces and more from which they are able to deliver this support.

The wealth of human resources, intelligence and commitment on offer in the VCSE sector means that support is adaptable and effective for residents. Similarly, it ensures that activities and interactions are safeguarded and do not in themselves have an adverse effect on health and wellbeing

Relationships already in place within the sector similarly help to augment these strengths and assets. The sharing of knowledge, sign-posting, referral networks

and resource-sharing on display amongst VCSE organisations helps to expand the number of services, activities and support accessible to Salford residents.

For marginalised people in Salford, there exists a variety of services tailored for and run by members of minority communities living within the city. For organisations that do not specialise in providing services for people from communities of identity specifically, inclusivity and openness emerged as a universal theme throughout the research.

Salford CVS is confident that this report will go some way towards providing commissioners with the context they require for understanding the role the VCSE sector has to play in taking strengths-based approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of the people who live here.

Below are the four principal takeaways from this research project:

- **Physical assets:** 78% of organisations reported consistent access to a physical site or venue from which they delivered their services, which demonstrates the importance of place
- **People:** Participant organisations reported a combined volunteer force of 4,385
- **Interconnectivity:** 74% of participant organisations collaborate with other VCSE organisations on a weekly basis
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion:** 65% of VCSE organisations, tailor their services to meet the needs of communities of identity within the city

7. Case studies

Emmaus Salford

Key Facts

Location: Swinton & Pendlebury

Established: 2014

Size: Medium

Service users per week: 26

Volunteers: 30

Staff: 5



A truly unique VCSE organisation operating within Salford, Emmaus plays a vital role in supporting those in the city who find themselves homeless or at threat of homelessness.

Through their re-purposing of second-hand furniture, social supermarket and People's Pods, Emmaus seeks to provide a safety net for vulnerable residents. Not only ensuring they have a place to go but also that they have a place in which they feel secure.

'We look to build a culture of wellbeing from our base for our companions...'

Beyond merely offering a place for vulnerable residents to go, Emmaus focuses on building skills amongst their companions so that they are able to progress, grow and work towards securing their own wellbeing needs through education and employment.

'We focus on upskilling, but we're here for our companions for whatever they need. Recently we supported someone who required help with their council task – all of it goes a long way.'

In addition to their support on accommodation and skills. The organisation also seeks to provide support for the community through their many social initiatives.

'We're always looking to move our companions into training, or to support them with job applications, but we also offer more. Our social supermarket in Pendleton offers sustainable and affordable locally sourced goods for those in the community struggling with income insecurity. We also operate a school uniform hub with donated items from the previous year which we're able to offer families and pupils.'

Emmaus acts as a vital anchor in the local community for some of Salford's most vulnerable residents. Over their existence, they have built an offer that extends beyond provisions regarding accommodation and has sought to tackle social determinants of negative health and wellbeing at every level. From accommodation to furniture, food and uniform and skills provision and training opportunities. Emmaus embodies the innovative, holistic values of the VCSE sector with regards to improving the lives of people in the area.

Salford Credit Union

Key Facts

Location: Quays, Ordsall, Pendleton and Charleston

Established: 1988

Size: Medium

Service users per week: 4270

Volunteers: 3

Staff: 6



Salford Credit Union (SCU) has offered affordable, community-led financial support for residents for over thirty years.

As a credit union, the organisation occupies a unique space in the city's VCSE ecosystem. SCU provides fair, affordable loans with an emphasis on commitment to the community at every level. Fully regulated savings and loans services help to guarantee the financial security of residents while providing an alternative to the high-cost lending schemes pervasive throughout the mainstream banking sector.

'We're trusted within the community. Anyone in Salford can join us and receive access to the benefits we offer. The size and scale of support we provide in the city are significant.'

As a non-profit, SCU not only benefits from the ability to offer better rates on loans, but also the capacity for higher levels of capital investment which in turn benefits residents.

'Our new mobile phone app and other technological projects we've launched recently improve the service for our users. This ultimately encourages our members to engage with the service – securing their personal financial situations.'

The organisation's status as a credit union means that the members, those with accounts, are also owners.

'We're able to pay dividends to our members out of the income we generate. All of this goes towards improving the financial security of the community.'

The presence of a well-respected financial anchor at the heart of the Salford VCSE community is a vital element in the mission to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for residents. The security SCU provides and the loans they offer ensure that essential community-led projects have a source of capital to engage with in the process of turning schemes and initiatives into concrete reality, while at the same time maintaining a degree of independence from other capital-sourcing bodies in the statutory and private sectors.

Cranfield Trust

Key Facts

Location: City-wide

Established: 1988

Size: Medium

Service users per week: n/a

Volunteers: 1380

Staff: 25



While not based in Salford, volunteers from the Cranfield Trust have supported VCSE organisations in the city with pro bono consultancy support for three decades.

Established by graduates of Cranfield University, the Trust has grown into an organisation with a nationwide footprint seeking to help grow the VCSE sector. Volunteer consultants lend expertise developed throughout careers in business, public life and time in the charity sector.

'We consult on projects sponsored by a major organisation or charity that contacts Cranfield directly in order to receive support. Cranfield receives a brief, and we then assign a volunteer from our database who is locally based and qualified to support the work. We support business and strategy, IT and communications and a variety of other projects.'

While the enormous reserve of human expertise remains one of the Salford VCSE sector's foremost assets, the impact of external perspectives on operational matters is significant in assisting organisations of every size to pursue their developmental objectives. Better IT networks, communications systems, business plans and growth strategies translate to increased capacity, and a better offer for Salford residents.

'The funding strategies, technologies and schemes we put into place are all designed to help charities connect with their beneficiaries better. Everything we do ultimately impacts the user of the service.'

One of the underappreciated impacts of this dynamic is the positive effect it has on the health and wellbeing of those Cranfield volunteers who assist client organisations in their roles as consultants. In their interaction with the city's VCSE sector, Cranfield volunteers afford themselves the opportunity to pursue their passion and leverage their expertise outside of the traditional professional environment.

'Our volunteers find the process to be a really enriching experience. They stay active and busy and it benefits their mental wellbeing.'

Lady James' Hall

Key Facts

Location: Cadishead, Irlam and Peel Green

Established: 1951

Size: Micro

Service users per week: 600

Volunteers: 15

Staff: 0



The beautiful Lady James Community Hall is based off Liverpool Road in Irlam. Constructed by the town's steelworkers as a gift to veterans of the Great War living on state pensions, the Hall has served the local community since 1951.

In recent years, those maintaining the hall have sought to continue supporting the area's older population, whilst also offering an expansive range of activities for people from the wider community.

'We target the community through the provision of inclusive events and services. All of them are either free of charge or as affordable as possible.'

In the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic and the acute impact it had upon communities of older people, Lady James' Hall sought to solidify its role in the area.

'For many of the people who come here, it's one of their most important means of social interaction. We've seen clear benefits to our own mental wellbeing through volunteering, and we hope that those who use the hall have too.'

Another key aspect of the committee's vision for Lady James' Hall is the maintenance of the space as a means of connecting residents with the area's history. The original wooden flooring in the hall, built by steelworkers in the 50's, was constructed from teak planks taken from the local canal. New renovation projects have enabled those running the hall to offer new activities for an increasingly diverse range of beneficiaries whilst also maintaining a key element of Irlam's historical character.

'With the money we raise from our activities and events, we've been able to improve the building, making it stable and sustainable. There have been significant capital investment projects in the kitchen, main room floor, heating and the roof.'

HUMANS MCR

Key Facts

Location: Little Hulton and Walkden

Established: 2019

Size: Medium

Service users per week: 400

Volunteers: 6

Staff: 6



Humans MCR is a foodbank operating in Salford with a mission to challenge social factors contributing to food insecurity nationwide. Established by residents with lived experience of accessing foodbanks, HUMANS decided to operate their organisation in a different way - placing the emphasis on compassion and holistic support for the user rather than the simple provision of goods.

'Part of what makes our approach unique is that we put dignity, agency and choice for the user at the heart of everything we do.'

The significance of HUMANS to residents in Salford and Greater Manchester is substantial. Through their holistic approach, the organisation is able to identify and tackle the determinant factors that push families and individuals towards food insecurity, as well as the finer effects those factors have. Working to improve health and nutrition for users is a key element of their work.

'It's a weekly shop at a massively reduced price, and everything we provide is fresh, high-quality food.'

In addition to this, the organisation also works to ensure its provision is accessible to as many residents across Salford and Greater Manchester as possible. In achieving this, HUMANS has engaged in cooperative projects with other VCSE organisations in the area, as well as ensuring its offer is broad enough to accommodate a diverse range of users, should the need arise.

'In conversations other organisations have had with mothers and parents, a lack of food in the house has often emerged as an issue. We support them in the provision of baby food and things like that. We also make sure we have alternative provisions like halal meat, or when people from the Caribbean diaspora come to us, we get them the right carbohydrates.'

Salford Foundation

Key Facts

Location: City-wide

Established: 1989

Size: Large

Service users per week: 1000

Volunteers: 300

Staff: 65



The Salford Foundation has been working to provide better opportunities for people across Salford for nearly 35 years. Focusing on the most disadvantaged in the city, the organisation has offered a suite of support around tackling key issues including youth violence, employment, domestic abuse, wellbeing and poverty.

‘We support around 12,000 residents a year.’

The impact of volunteers engaging with the Salford Foundation is a significant part of the organisation’s contribution to good health and wellbeing in the city. From the perspective of the Salford Foundation, it is the volunteers who help them to reach those communities most in need, particularly when they are under-engaged by statutory institutions.

‘Volunteers provide us with a local voice and a level of depth with regards to our understanding of the needs of the communities we’re looking to serve. Their knowledge is rich and much of it comes from their lived experiences.’

As a consequence of the outstanding reputation they have attained through their work in the city, the Salford Foundation has also been able to develop crucial relationships with key stakeholders in other sectors. Not only does this benefit the health and wellbeing of Salford residents through the utilisation of the resources of partners in the private and public sectors, it also further amplifies the importance of VCSE organisations in acting as a bridge between communities and decision-making fora.

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‘A big part of our ambitions for improving health and wellbeing in the city involves triangulating the third, private and public sectors in order to drive our agendas on things like domestic abuse or our work with young people. Ultimately it’s about ensuring senior leaders in every sector take ownership of key issues.’

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