



# **Manchester Alliance for Community Care Credibility Check**

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The findings are my responsibility. It has been a privilege to evaluate such an innovative and groundbreaking project which is held in such high esteem.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

MACC commissioned this piece of work in order to explore how stakeholders perceive them. They wanted this to inform their thinking for their annual programme and to be a potential starting point for a range of evaluation activities.

15 interviews were undertaken with stakeholders. The focus of the interviews were to identify stakeholders:

- understanding of what MACC does
- when and how they work with MACC or might encourage others to
- the value of MACC for them and their organisation
- levels of satisfaction with work done by MACC

An issue for discussion for each work area was identified.

<b>Work programme</b>	<b>Issue for interviews</b>
Older People	Manchester Older Peoples Network & the role in implementing the National Service Framework for Older People
Mental Health	Support to the development of the Delivery and Inclusion Network
Health and Wellbeing	Contribution to the work of the Food Futures Project
Children and Families	Strategic engagement & joint working with the voluntary and community sector
General	Stimulating partnership work between the voluntary and statutory sectors

**Table 1: Issue for discussion for each work programme**

## 1.1 METHODS

An appreciative approach<sup>1</sup> was used for the interviews. This is a solution focused approach to change which focuses on starting from what is working to ensure that can be maintained and built from.

Details about the interviews including the selection procedure for interviewees and the aide memoire used can be found in the Appendix.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/> for more information about appreciative approaches

## 2.0 FINDINGS <sup>2</sup>

16 people were interviewed; 14 by the consultant by phone and 2, in a group, by a worker in their organisation. 5 of the interviewees were from statutory organisations and 11 from voluntary organisations.

The findings are written up under the four areas of focus for the study. The information on the specific focus for each work programme area is integrated under these headings.

### 2.1 UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MACC DOES

Information about what MACC does was collected in 2 ways, by asking people directly and where relevant using information about how interviewees were working with MACC see Aide Memoire p26).

Several people said they had a better understanding of the specific strand they worked within and not surprisingly, the answers varied depending on where people came from and how they were involved in MACC, in particular, senior staff from large voluntary organisations and statutory organisations tended to be more confident that they know what MACC does than people from smaller voluntary organisations or most users, who did not all feel they understood MACC's role as well as they would like to.

The main roles that interviewees understood were:

#### **Bringing people and agencies together**

Bringing people and agencies together was the most widely understood area of MACC's work. This was seen to take a number of forms including through:

- Events that might be organised and involve users, activists and workers from voluntary, community and statutory organisations, which among other things, provide opportunities to network
- Groups which encourage people to work together (collaborate) for example the Manchester advocacy partnership or Food Futures work.

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<sup>2</sup> The wording in italics are quotes from the interviews. After each quote the word in brackets says which sector the interviewee who is quoted came from.

## Promoting a voice

A range of interviewees understood MACC to have a role in promoting a voice. MACC:

*'is good at letting you have your say' (voluntary)*

*'facilitates, enables and encourages people to bring up their own issues' (voluntary)*

*'ensures that the voluntary and community sector have a voice in strategic work' (statutory)*

The quotations show that stakeholders identified a range of groups; individuals, voluntary and community sector, whom MACC enables to be heard.

MACC is understood to stimulate and support the voices of people in the voluntary and community sectors and service users and also to be a voice in its own right:

*'MACC has become a strong voice speaking up for voluntary organisations with statutory agencies' (voluntary)*

MACC was seen by some to have its origins in campaigning work and to have a campaigning role. It is widely seen as raising the profile of the sector.

*'MACC fights the corner and defends the voluntary sector'*

MACC was also seen as important in giving a voice to issues that might be neglected.

*'they held the flag for [a particular set of users] in East Manchester pre-regeneration. They did get results but they had to stick at it for years.' (voluntary)*

## Sharing information; developing understanding

One voluntary sector contributor felt that

*'MACC provides a voice for voluntary sector providers and users of care services, information is key to that'*

MACC are understood to have a wide range of information roles including:

- collection,
- interpretation
- giving out & feeding back of information to their sector.

They are seen by some as a 'conduit' (pipeline) for information between different organisations and sectors.

As well as sharing information they develop understanding for example of policies and what they might mean for the voluntary sector and of the voluntary sector by statutory agencies

*'MACC are very good at*

- *understanding agendas,*
- *explaining agendas*
- *organising responses'* (statutory)

*'They help us to understand what is going on at a local and national level'*  
(voluntary)

*'If MACC was not there we would miss the interpretation of national and regional policy into a local context'* (statutory)

*'MACC make sure the statutory agencies understand the voluntary sector'*  
(statutory)

## **Representation**

Some interviewees understood one of MACC's roles is to co-ordinate representatives e.g. Children's Board, Food Futures Steering group, Greater Manchester Older Peoples Reference group. They do this, often through support groups for users or people from the voluntary sector who attend meetings as representatives of their sector. They also ensure the voluntary sector is represented:

*'MACC ensure that the voluntary sector is represented on statutory boards and that they have a voice. .. the local authority would not dare not to involve the voluntary sector and they appreciate their contribution because of MACC'* (statutory)

*'MACC reminds you that you should be doing more to engage the voluntary sector and their representatives'* (statutory)

*'They have made enormous inroads ensuring that the voluntary sector is represented on statutory bodies'*  
(statutory)

## Support

*'There is a big change agenda . . . voluntary sector organisations need an organisation to help them understand the changes and their changing roles within that. MACC do that and do it well.'*  
(statutory)

MACC is understood to give support to both the voluntary and statutory sector.

The main types of support for voluntary organisations included practical support, advice, information, work alongside, mentoring, capacity building and development. Some see it as a safety net for the voluntary sector.

*'MACC support the community and voluntary sector to deliver services and outcomes for communities'*  
(statutory)

Not only do MACC give support but also encourage a more supportive, collaborative approach within the sector.

### CASE STUDY

The **Manchester advocacy partnership** was a forum which met for 2 years coordinated by a MACC worker who:

*'got mental health organisations round the table and encouraged people to work together. It was very informative. The benefit . . . was gaining knowledge, support from other organisations in terms of more collaboration and working more together. There was a lot of peer support. Lots of people in the voluntary sector have been very stressed over the last 3 years. It meant lots . . . to have peer support.'*  
(Voluntary)

### Overview of MACC's role

*'an intermediary between the voluntary and statutory sector, which aims to inform and empower.'* (voluntary)

*'an umbrella organisation which brings together the voluntary and community sector on health and social care issues'* (Statutory)

Terms to describe MACC's role included *'intermediary'*. Statutory sector stakeholders suggested an *'umbrella'* or *'infrastructural'* organisation, a *'co-ordination point'* or their function being *'liaison'*.

Some interviewees mentioned that MACC is not a forum or responsible for forum meetings. For one this was a gap:

[The worker says that she/he] *is not responsible for Forum meetings; [she/he] is very good at that role. [She/he] should own it and commit to doing it.'* (voluntary)

MACC was felt to have :

*'good involvement of service users for example the [client group] Forums, this is something which is lacking in Manchester'* (statutory)

MACC is understood to have both strategic and operational functions. Some voluntary organisations understand the MACC helps them to develop their thinking to be more long term and/or strategic. MACC is seen as both a strategic and operational partner by some statutory stakeholders.

Some identified monitoring roles of MACC:

*'It is a charity. Its role is to oversee care in the community and ensure it is in line with current legislation'* (voluntary)

*'MACC lobbies for Adult and Social Care. It reminds the powers that be of their responsibilities.'* (statutory)

*'MACC ensures that the Manchester Compact is adhered to'* (statutory)

If a statutory agency does not do things as well as they could,

*'MACC hangs in there and reminds them about appropriate decision making and governance.'* (statutory)

**'They are always fantastic if you know what to ask for'**

The information above shows that MACC's role is both wide ranging and not easy to explain. Users from one group who had been involved in MACC activities understood that MACC brought people together but felt unsure about what MACC did. Some people felt that they did not always know how MACC could help them

and unsure what they did or did not need to know. In addition some found it hard to understand what MACC is trying to achieve.

*'I can get lost when trying to understand what MACC is trying to achieve' (voluntary)*

In summary, many interviewees could identify a wide range of things that they understood that MACC does. Some stakeholders from the voluntary sector felt they had limited understanding of what MACC does and felt that this should be addressed. This is explored further in section 2.5.2.

## 2.2 WHEN & HOW STAKEHOLDERS WORK WITH MACC

The main areas of work identified by stakeholders were;

<b>Voluntary sector</b>	<b>Both sectors</b>	<b>Statutory sector</b>
Representing the voluntary sector Training	Information advice and support Attending meetings, conferences etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To develop ways of involving users and the voluntary sector eg develop structures for involvement, allocation of funds, representation on Boards and other bodies etc</li> <li>- Develop the capacity of the voluntary sector for change</li> <li>- To challenge them</li> <li>- Work alongside eg on steering groups, organising events, facilitate at one another's events</li> </ul>

**Table 2 : When & how stakeholders work with MACC**

Interviewees from big and small, statutory and voluntary organisations most frequently said that they use MACC for information, advice and support about both operational and strategic issues. MACC workers are seen to be extremely knowledgeable about policy issues in relation to their areas of work.

*'I often ring for advice, support and information, at least once a week. This can be on a wide range of issues, for example, staffing, volunteers, what is going on strategically, nationally and locally, clarifying and gathering*

*information. E-bulletin (and sometime e-mails) keep us informed about what is going on e.g. funding opportunities.'* (voluntary)

*'MACC are very supportive. The council wants me to work more with [client group]. One MACC worker introduced me to the right person, who has been very helpful. They give good advice and are very knowledgeable. They will find out if they do not know something. They are very reliable and dependable.'* (voluntary)

*'I phone staff for information, I know them and the areas they work in. eg I needed to know about joint commissioning with [client group], so I rang [the appropriate MACC worker]. The newsletter is quite useful for news, keeping up with things. It is the only one coming out at present. . . e-mail bulletins are also useful. There is always a need to keep up to date.'*

## **2.3 THE VALUE OF MACC**

Participants were asked to describe a piece of work which had gone particularly well and about what working with MACC enabled them to do in order to explore the value of MACC to them.

*'I get information about the local and national situation; it gives me a strategic picture. This is a bridge between the day to day work and the bigger picture. I understand more and can influence things. It helps make sense of the local structures, changes and opportunities.'*  
(voluntary)

*Being informed about how national policy impacts in Manchester and how Manchester services are changing. MACC takes a lot of initiative.*  
(voluntary)

*'They can help us to engage in the best way we can'* (statutory)

*'They can influence some of the decision making via membership of the [thematic area] Board. I value having them there, especially with the development of the [strategic picture].'* (statutory)

*'I have been involved with their [thematic area] work which was brilliant. I encouraged some of the agencies I work with to apply for funding.'*  
(voluntary)

Not surprisingly, there was a lot of overlap between how stakeholders work with MACC and what they valued about MACC or MACC what enabled them to do.

Key areas included:

- Knowledge of MACC staff e.g. extensive knowledge of the voluntary sector, knowledge of how to consult particular groups e.g. young people
- enhancing stakeholders understanding e.g. of local and national policy, thinking long term
- facilitating networking and engagement,
- partnership work
- support
- influencing policy.

### **Keeping in touch with people and issues**

Interviewees valued how MACC could help them keep in touch :

*MACC 'provides access to relevant information without having to go to every meeting or have meetings with lots of people' (voluntary)*

*'Allows me to be involved in several things without having to take full responsibility.'* (Voluntary)

While several interviewees from the statutory sector emphasized that MACC was not the only way in which they consulted with voluntary sector organisations:

*'It makes it easier to work with voluntary sector organisations in practical ways, I don't have to talk to all of them, which has advantages and disadvantages.'* (statutory)

### **MACC Staff**

*'The people are very easy to work with, knowledgeable and supportive. The people make the organisation. I very much value working with them. They co-ordinate [thematic area] activities in Manchester and are very good negotiators on behalf of [thematic area] voluntary organisations in Manchester.'* (voluntary)

*[His/her] ability to identify the implications for the group of new policies/situations; the wider view of how it affects [client group]. [She/he] continues to see [client group] as individuals not one big group. They are forward looking. They don't get stuck in a rut about what they are doing.*

*[She/he] is very aware and knows Manchester. [She/he] is always talking about a new group that [she/he] has been to talk to.'* (voluntary)

People particularly valued the staff for their knowledge, skills, commitment, hard work, consistent high quality work, reliability, values, approaches, creativity and excellent communication skills. Several mentioned that they liked all the staff they had contact with and thought they were all exceptional. Only one example of inefficiency was cited in all the interviews. Several questioned whether it was the organisation or the staff that gave the organisation such a high level of credibility. Without detracting from the outstanding qualities of all the individual staff members it would appear that there must be qualities within the organisation which have enabled it to recruit, keep and develop such good staff.

Some interviewees value the way the staff think about issues, they :

*'are bright, intelligent, analytical. They have an intelligence led approach to work. They are good thinkers.'* (statutory)

*'have an analytical, dispassionate approach. If you are dealing with statutory organisations the less objective approach does not always work. MACC can step back from the individual client group or condition, which is very valuable.'* (voluntary)

Several interviewees from the statutory sector valued the sharing of ideas, thinking things through and the challenge of working with MACC:

*'They are a critical friend. They challenge me eg. my assumptions and generalisations about the voluntary sector, something I might have said in a newsletter. They are usually right and forgiving although we have some differences. They also help me handle tricky situations in the voluntary sector and keep me updated about voluntary sector issues, information and thinking.'* (statutory)

*'We are lucky in Manchester. We have a sophisticated voluntary sector compared to many other places. . . They do challenge us. This is very useful to someone like me . . . But some officers don't appreciate it.'* (statutory)

*'I value being able to bash about ideas . . . , check out ideas . . . it is good to talk things over . . . It is very important at strategic level when you are trying to promote ideas from the ground with people at the top.'* (statutory)

There was a sense from the majority of the statutory stakeholders and some of those from voluntary agencies of sharing values with MACC workers and where they may feel marginal being able to work 'alongside' MACC was particularly valued.

### **Qualities of the work**

*'They have a really good grasp of current issues facing both sectors. They are appreciative of the demands on statutory agencies as well as the voluntary sector. They have a realistic, broad understanding of both sectors; not just the voluntary sector.'* (statutory)

Several people valued the quality of the work and that the focus is on process:

*'They are trying to build really good foundations and relationships, they are very methodical and don't run before they can walk. They want to try and get it right. They test out, try out different processes, are well researched and don't make snap judgments. They are good decision makers.'* (statutory)

*'[The worker] can also be quite dogged e.g. when [an agency] did not want to give them information, [she/he] kept on requesting it until they eventually got it. This is a useful skill when statutory agencies won't share as much as they should.'*

### **Developing Organisations**

- **The Voluntary Sector Perspective**

Some voluntary sector interviewees valued the things MACC had enabled them or their organisations which had had a tangible impact on their work in the following ways:

*'To meet people, be informed and follow through ideas users identify. So it enhances my work to service users'* (Voluntary)

*'My organisation is where it is now because of opportunities to network. MACC had a role in this and can help others. When you are a small organisation you need networking on a plate. They can help others to grow or to be resilient.'* (Voluntary)

*'I do not think that we would have got the contract without MACC's support.*

*...*

*The way MACC works tends to reduce competition and promote cooperation. They look at the voluntary sector and identify who is best placed to do a piece of work. They are very good at strategic work and not totally funding orientated. They are good at seeing where they fit in and what others can do.'* (Voluntary)

*'The interface with commissioners and planners. MACC have helped us to communicate with them and also bridged the communication (by representing groups well). This has enabled me to attend Board Meetings . I have got contacts and developed relationships through working with MACC and it has built my confidence to negotiate successfully with people. (My organisation) exists through influence but has not always been very good at this. Working with (MACC worker) has made us more effective. It is about communication. (Voluntary)*

- **The Statutory Sector Perspective**

Statutory sector stakeholders relied heavily on MACC for help with user involvement, allocation of funding and to develop the capacity and quality of the voluntary sector either in order to be able to ensure a more diverse range of provision to ensure diverse needs are met and/or so that they can accommodate the national agenda for commissioning of services to the Third Sector.

## **CASE STUDIES**

'The Business Improvement work within the POPP programme was incredibly successful. MACC employed a Business Improvement Worker to support individual and collaborations of groups to help them get prepared for the contracting era and improve standards eg of bids and accountability '

'**Food Futures** developed a new approach to giving money with MACC. This focused on encouraging groups to come together to develop bids rather than do them individually on the assumption that this would result in greater added value. MACC drove this. They proposed that it would both be good for the community and voluntary sector and Food Futures to develop skills in collaboration, working with other groups and developing joint action plans. The focus was on being collaborative rather than competitive.

I am particularly interested in collaboration over quality alongside developing capacity in the voluntary sector. It is not always easy for people struggling with mental health issues to access the voluntary sector. GPs are concerned about quality of services and won't refer. I want to encourage GPs to socially prescribe. So I want to increase their confidence by ensuring quality so that people can try different things . . .'

### 2.3 ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO WORK WITH MACC

The majority of stakeholders did encourage others to work with MACC by word of mouth. Stakeholders from both sectors encouraged people in their own sector to work with MACC. Some statutory stakeholders were keen to encourage colleagues to work with MACC:

*'I frequently encourage colleagues to work with MACC, from primary and secondary . . . health teams, public health development . . . I hope they do or would like them to work with MACC eg health trainers.'*

In particular where MACC might help colleagues whose work from working with the community and voluntary sectors:

*'Frequently for example, a colleague was pulling together work about [client group] support, which you can't do without looking at the contribution of the voluntary sector. I referred her to [a MACC worker] to get [her/his] contribution.'*

Or want to consult or work with the voluntary and community sector:

*'I would suggest to other PCT/LA colleagues who wanted to work with or consult the community and voluntary sectors to contact MACC e.g. to get advice on how to consult.'*

All voluntary stakeholders said they would encourage others to use MACC and the majority did so. The main reasons were to help them get involved, access information, develop their understanding of policy issues, find out more about what is going on and access MACC's relationships with the statutory sector. While some said they did this all the time others rarely found opportunities to do so.

*'Lots of people, everyone I talk to. They have a wealth of information. They have helped us over the years to negotiate with commissioners; we could not have done that on our own'*

*'In theory I would tell a small voluntary organisation which is struggling or needed help about MACC. I would suggest they got in contact but this has never come up.'*

Some voluntary stakeholder illustrated how they encouraged others in their networks to get involved in activities they heard about through their involvement with MACC:

*'If I think it will be beneficial. For example,*

- I involved a colleague who works for [a local statutory service] when they were doing [work on a particular initiative].*
- I sent round e-mail to colleagues about the [thematic area] commissioning and one of the agencies was awarded funding.*
- I suggested to someone on a committee of a block of flats to contact MACC after checking out it was appropriate with [the MACC worker].'*

## **2.4 SATISFACTION WITH WORK DONE BY MACC**

Interviewees were asked to rank their level of satisfaction with MACC on a scale of 0 -10<sup>3</sup>. They were then asked 2 further questions:

- what made them choose the number they had chosen rather than the one below, this was to tease out the particular features that made MACC as good as it is for them
- what might make it one number higher, to tease out their priorities for making MACC even better.

Several stakeholders discussed their levels of satisfaction in relation to issues of MACC's capacity and the context in which MACC are working.

### **Capacity**

Several stakeholders mentioned that they thought that MACC did everything they could given their capacity. One questioned whether the balance of activities was right

*There are issues about organisations being included on bodies- do they get sucked in? This is not specific to MACC. There is a tendency for people*

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<sup>3</sup> The group of users interviewed by their worker used a word scale; not/quite/very/ totally good job and scored quite a good job.

*who work for organisations like MACC to spend more and more of their time on steering bodies. Do they have enough time with voluntary sector organisations? (statutory)*

Several felt that they needed more resources:

*“They are not funded to do everything you would like them to do. They have an important role as an intermediary between the council and groups’* (Voluntary)

Especially, to do outreach work with voluntary sector organisations:

*‘They do not have enough resources to ensure they can get all groups involved and represented eg different areas, ethnicities. This is always a hard area. It is not a criticism but a possible weakness. Some groups may need issues to be taken out to them but this is very resource intensive. They do well, but if someone wanted to fund this, it would be good and it is something they should constantly keep as a priority area for monitoring.’* (voluntary)

*‘I would like more of them – if there was more I could work a bit faster. The need is for more individual support to voluntary organisations. More creative, interesting work would benefit the sector greatly, especially capacity building.’* (statutory)

Another voluntary sector stakeholder felt MACC should recognise what they are good at and bid for services where they will be better than alternative agencies who might get the bids. In contrast another stakeholder felt expansion may bring its own problems:

*‘They do as much as they can within their capacity. There is a danger if MACC expands that it will become too bureaucratic, the balance is right. They are a good team and have managed to grow without losing their edge.’* (statutory)

## **Context**

In talking about satisfaction several stakeholders mentioned contextual issues. Many said that MACC have a ‘tough’ job that they do well and were not clear whether any deficiencies were those of MACC or others:

*‘They have an important and difficult role and do a good job. The voluntary sector is huge and it is hard to engage such a broad range of agencies,*

*with limited resources. It can be frustrating working within the voluntary sector and partnership work with the local authority is a challenge. They have a realistic and strong view of how it should go.'* (voluntary)

*'The LA does not understand partnership work very well. There have been 3-4 major changes at Assistant Director level . . . all with a different understanding of partnership working. MACC have had to influence them all, going over the same old ground. The current regime is especially top down; it doesn't invest in partnership.'* (statutory)

In particular, reasons stakeholders thought MACC was not as influential as it should be were not seen to be related to weaknesses of MACC:

*'The voluntary sector could be treated better; they are treated shabbily. You could say they should have more clout about valuing the voluntary sector, but it is hard to influence people in strategic positions and they are good at it.'* (statutory)

*'The problem is they are not able to influence as much as they should. The ASC agenda is very directed by Government office. Officers also do not feel listened to. In the current situation the agenda is how we do things; not should we do things.'* (statutory)

*'It is a difficult environment in Manchester. Partnership work with the Council is hard to get operating as you would like. It is a struggle to engage; this is both historical and cultural. There is lots of negativity and anger. There is room for improvement. It is difficult to say whether this is a weakness of MACC or statutory agencies. Relationship building with statutory agencies for effective engagement should be a long term aim, 4-5 years.'* (voluntary)

The stakeholder quoted below talked as if they were on a journey towards a situation which would be totally satisfying:

*'There is a need for infrastructure changes to make it a 10. In order to put in place [thematic area] commissioning arrangements, we have the vision but we are not 100% sure of the structure. We still have to get the accountability and governance in place. Then there will be perfect working.'* (statutory)

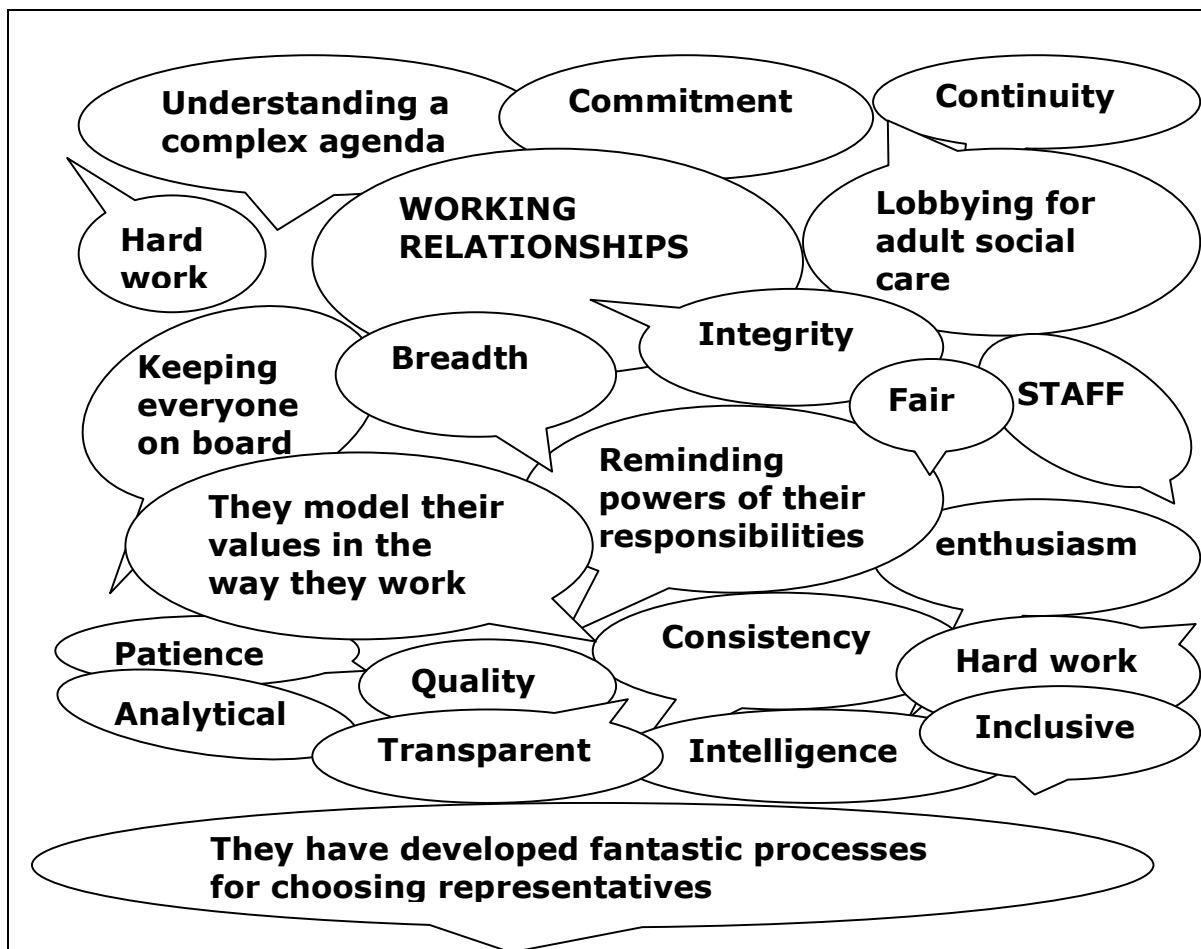
One statutory stakeholder thought it inappropriate that she would be totally satisfied:

*'I would not want MACC to be an organisation that met all my needs, it should not be. I am marking high because I appreciate the need to be challenged, not all colleagues do. . . . I appreciate genuine involvement, I am not sure that others do.'*

The majority of stakeholders were exceptionally satisfied by work done by MACC. While the numbers were a tool, the median (middle score) of statutory stakeholders was 9 (including two 10's) while that of voluntary stakeholders was slightly lower at 7-8/ 8 (including one 10). Several people said they never gave 10's as they either gave a 9 or gave a 10 anyway.

### 2.5.1 Factors that contributed to satisfaction

The factors identified were often similar to those that stakeholders valued about MACC, in particular the working relationships and staff. Qualities mentioned included:



**Factors that contributed to satisfaction with MACC**

Stakeholders related their satisfaction to a range of factors as illustrated above and detailed in the quotes below:

*'Consistency; the high quality of delivery and the way they deal with you. I have never felt that something wasn't very good. They do things to the best of their ability and to time.'* (Statutory)

*'They are patient, intelligent. [The worker] will say something in three or four different ways until people understand.'* (statutory)

*I am really concerned that older people will lose out as the Older People's division is going. We need MACC to keep pushing the Older People's agenda.* (voluntary)

*'They are inclusive, fair, transparent and thought through. They have developed fantastic processes for choosing representatives and shown up the way the Local Authority choose people to represent the voluntary sector'* (statutory).

## **2.5.2 Factors that would increase satisfaction with MACC**

### **Better promotion of MACC**

While the majority of were not concerned about promotion of MACC, as a whole, this was an issue for a stakeholder who worked with housing workers:

*'Many people both the statutory and voluntary housing sector do not know about MACC. I am finding out what they do as I go, what they can provide and I wonder whether I could be better informed about this, partly so that I can tell others what is available.'* (voluntary)

### **More accessible information**

The following areas emerged where satisfaction could be greater in relation to information with some stakeholders particularly from the voluntary sector

- less and simpler information as a whole, especially feedback
- easier to understand information about what MACC does and what MACC achieves
- greater clarity about MACC's role in relation to other agencies doing infrastructural work with the voluntary sector

While in general people appreciated the quality of MACC's information especially the briefing papers and web-site, some people experienced information overload, both written and at meetings.

*'it is not always clear what they are trying to say if there is too much information. . . . I come out of meetings with lots of paper, I don't need it or know what to do with it.'* (voluntary)

While all stakeholders thought MACC was good at letting them have their say they did not always feel the feedback was so good.

*'I want feedback but the highlights and then I can find out more as and when it is relevant; I think sometimes the feedback goes above the heads of people at the pool. They get bogged down.'* (voluntary)

*'I want simple feedback focusing on the main concerns of voluntary and community organisations which is resources.'* (voluntary)

Some stakeholders would prefer more short reports and signposting:

*'It would be better to disseminate it in a very simple form'* (voluntary)

The issue of accessible information is linked to that of understanding what MACC does, as already described in section 2.1 and what MACC achieves:

*'I would like more information that was accessible, so I could understand what they do.'* (voluntary)

Some suggested that people, especially in smaller voluntary organisations, would have a better understanding of what they did if they did more direct work with them.

*'they could promote themselves better – they need to demonstrate the changes that they make even if progress is slow.'* (voluntary)

There are several voluntary organisations in Manchester concerned with infrastructure; MACC's role in relation to other agencies of this type was not clear to everyone.

*'There needs to be more clarity about what they do, their logo, mission, what they are achieving, how much they are influencing. There are too many infrastructural organisations – they duplicate and compete which is*

*wasteful – I want to see them working together, (Voluntary)*

One voluntary stakeholder pointed out this could be a threat to such organisations. Furthermore the role of MACC in relation to other umbrella organisations in Manchester is not always clear and could be a potential threat to credibility.

### **Work with Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary organisations**

While the number of stakeholders in such a small sample representing Black and Minority Ethnic groups or interests was limited, one stakeholder felt strongly that she would like to see MACC

*'Work side by side ( in partnership) with BME organisations to address BME needs better e.g. MCCR, BME network' (voluntary)*

### **MACC's focus**

While 2 voluntary sector stakeholders were very positive about MACC's current work, they said they would continue to be satisfied as long as MACC did not change too much. For one the concern was that they maintain the work with users and for both that they do not become too focussed on supporting voluntary organisations with their provider functions. `These were areas that statutory sector stakeholders valued very highly as did some voluntary sector stakeholders

*'They do not do as much networking of older peoples providers of services as I would like. Their emphasis is on older people's involvement in influencing health and care.'*

This suggests that some stakeholders have both strong and possibly opposing views of what work should be MACC's focus in the future.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

The credibility check was done to start the process of evaluation; interviews are ideal for depth of information showing how things work. The limitations as 'evidence' are the small numbers involved. For example,

- the stakeholders involved could not include a full range of stakeholders e.g. all communities of interest
- it is likely to have included more people who work a lot with MACC and may have been biased in favour of people who identified as having similar approaches, values and/or ethical base as MACC.

The findings should be most useful therefore as identifying themes and issues that could be tested out with a wider group of stakeholders.

Overall, the findings show that MACC is a highly credible organisation with those interviewed who had very high levels of satisfaction with the work they have done with MACC. The information is rich with the range of ways stakeholders understand, use and value MACC which can be hard to synthesise.

The majority of stakeholders felt that they understood what MACC does and a wide range of roles was identified. The most commonly understood role was bringing people and agencies together. A minority of stakeholders, from the voluntary sector did not feel that they understood MACC's role as well as they would like to.

The most common ways stakeholders identified of working with MACC were

- for information, advice and support
- attending meetings, workshops and conferences

Stakeholders valued all MACC staff very highly for a wide range of qualities including, their knowledge, skills, approaches, the way they think, commitment and above all positive working relationships.

All stakeholders valued the way MACC provide efficient mechanisms for people to keep in touch. Voluntary sector stakeholders especially valued the way MACC kept them informed and aware of the strategic picture. Statutory sector stakeholders valued the ways in which MACC helps them to engage with the voluntary sector and influence decision making. Several stakeholders valued tangible ways MACC had helped them, including :

- getting contracts,
- developing confidence, relationships, skills, increasing effectiveness at working with commissioners
- helping their organisation to grow

- developing capacity in the voluntary sector
- developing and supporting structures for voluntary sector involvement/ allocation of funds to voluntary organisations.

All stakeholders said that they would in principle encourage others to work with MACC, largely within their own sectors. The amount they did so varied between never to 'all the time'.

In general stakeholders were very satisfied with work done by MACC. They emphasised the high quality of the work and strengths of the staff and their working relationships with them. Factors that would increase satisfaction concerned accessibility of information, having more input from MACC and better partnership work with Black and Minority Ethnic group voluntary organisations. Some issues were raised about the balance of work in relation to supporting involvement of individuals and the voice of voluntary organisations and developing capacity of voluntary sector organisations that provide services.

While there was general recognition that MACC works to capacity, a need for more direct work with voluntary sector organisations was identified. While some stakeholders thought MACC should get more resources and expand to do this, there was some concern that expansion could change the organisation negatively.

Where there were frustrations with the speed at which MACC could achieve change in how the statutory sector works with voluntary organisations, many stakeholder felt that MACC did a tough job well and the problem was with the responsiveness of local and national agencies, not MACC.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this credibility check should be tested out with a larger number of MACC stakeholders. The voluntary and community group stakeholders should include communities of interest including Black and Ethnic Minority groups, Disability groups, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender groups.

Some strategic issues emerged for MACC which should be reviewed.

- Should MACC look for opportunities to get additional capacity to work more with the voluntary sector? Would expansion for this change the organisation in undesirable ways?
- The balance of work between :
  - promoting involvement of individuals with statutory services and promoting the voice for the voluntary and community sector and
  - providing support and capacity building to voluntary sector organisations that provide services

The following areas were identified by stakeholders as needing particular attention:

- Developing information in more accessible forms, including about what MACC does and what MACC achieves
- Greater clarity about the role of MACC in relation to other umbrella organisations in Manchester ; this could be a potential threat to credibility.
- Working in partnership with Black and Minority Ethnic organisations to address Black and Minority Ethnic Groups needs better eg MCCR Black and Minority Ethnic Groups network

## **APPENDIX**

### **DETAILS OF INTERVIEWS**

#### **Selection of interviewees**

Staff were asked to identify stakeholders for each of the programme areas (see Table 1) and a group of stakeholders with a more general link to MACC were identified.

31 stakeholders were identified and contacted with details of the study, to check if they had any objection to being part of the potential interview pool.

They were given an information sheet about the piece of work and told that:

- participation was voluntary and that non-participation would not prejudice their access to using MACC in any way.
- The information collected for the evaluation would be confidential to the evaluator and written up to preserve the anonymity of participations as far as is possible.

#### **The sample**

16 people were interviewed; at least 3 identified with a link to each of the work programme areas. For every area at least 2 were from the voluntary sector and 1 from the statutory sector. There were no refusals to go on the initial list or to be interviewed.

#### **The interview process**

One person contacted, wanted users in his/her organisation to participate and given time restraints agreed to interview 2 people him/herself. A more accessible aide memoire and information sheet were developed for this. The remaining interviews took place during April and took between 20 and 45 minutes. Notes of the telephone interviews were taken, typed up and sent to interviewees to double check that the interviewer had understood what they had said and they were happy with the record.

**MACC Credibility Check**  
**AIDE MEMOIRE**

**Interviewee**

**Organisation: stat/vol**

**Programme of work OP/MH/CF/HW/gen**

**Agreement of interviewee to be interviewed Yes**

*Over view of their work/ involvement with MACC*

*Piece of MACC work which went particularly well*

*What things do you value most about what MACC enables you to do?*

*Understanding of what MACC does*

*When and how they work with MACC*

*When and how they might encourage others to work with MACC*

*Satisfaction with work done by MACC*

*Not at all 0.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10 Totally*

*What made you choose the number you have chosen and not the number below (what is good)?*

*What might have made you choose one number higher (what could be improved)?*

*Key points about you experience of MACC*

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