What Difference Do We Make?

Manchester's Voluntary & Community
Sector's Contribution to the
Every Child Matters Agenda

An Evaluation by
Manchester Alliance for Community Care

July 2006

Contents

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to those organisations who contributed to the research by attending the district events:

Anson Cabin Project
Barlow Moor Community Association
Barnardos (Sure Start)
CARISMA
Catholic Children's Rescue Society
Catholic Children's Society
Cheetham Hill Community Association
Cheetwood Community Centre
Chinese Health Information Centre
City Centre Project
Community Network for Manchester
Connexions
Contact a Family
Cornerstone Centre
Development Education Project
Eclypse
Family Service Unit
Friends in Manchester
Gaddum Centre
Gurudwara Dashmesh Sikh Temple
Health Through Action Project (Barnardos)
Henshaws Society for Blind People
Homestart
Hulme Locality Forum
Jeena Health Project
Lightbowne Outreach Play Project
Longsight Adventure Playground
Lorna Lodge (Manchester Methodist
    Housing Group)
Mama Torro Resource Centre
Manchester Care & Repair
Manchester Carers Forum
Moss Side Adventure Playground
Moss Side and Hulme Rollersports and
    After School Club
Neesa Well Women
New East Manchester Education Team
New Start Trust
North Hulme Adventure Playground
NSPCC
Partners of Prisoners Services
Reconnect (Depaul Trust)
Safe in the City (Children's Society)
Signpost
Slade Lane Neighbourhood Centre
Sowing Seeds
St Cuthberts and Apostles Youth Project

TLM Neighbourhood Centre
Trinity House
Victim Support
Wai Yin Chinese Women's Society
Whitemoss Club for Young People
WHIZ
Woodhouse Park Family Centre
Wythenshawe Voices
YASP
Young Black Perspectives (Black Health Agency)

1 Introduction

In 2003 the Community Audit and Evaluation Centre at Manchester Metropolitan University was commissioned by the Child & Family Support Forum (CFSF) to undertake an audit of voluntary and community sector organisations providing services for children and families in Manchester [1]. As well as providing a snapshot of services offered, it also highlighted ways of strengthening the sector and improving partnerships between voluntary and statutory partners.

A key recommendation which came from this was that **the voluntary and community sector needs to improve its capacity to evaluate and promote its own work** both as individual agencies and collectively as a sector.

With the results of this report in mind, and within the context of the government programme of reform being driven through the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* agenda, it was agreed that in 2005/2006 a key piece of work undertaken by the Child and Family Support Forum should be to carry out a further piece of research.

One key feature of the Every Child Matters agenda is that all types of agencies (including the voluntary and community sector) are increasingly expected to provide evidence of how their services contribute to the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children, young people and families. Although we know that the voluntary and community sector is contributing a huge amount to improving the lives of children, young people and families in Manchester, there is little which can be used as evidence to support such a broad claim.

> **Every Child Matters outcomes**
>
> 1. Be Healthy
>
> 2. Stay Safe
>
> 3. Enjoy and Achieve
>
> 4. Make Positive Contribution
>
> 5. Achieve Economic Wellbeing

As a result, this research aims to address this by seeking to illustrate the value and contribution of the work being carried out by the voluntary and community sector in Manchester and to highlight some of the challenges which organisations are facing in their work.

> **The objectives of this research are:**
>
> 1. To identify the unique contribution of the voluntary and community sector to the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people in Manchester
>
> 2. To demonstrate the value of joint working and planning with the voluntary and community sector
>
> 3. To increase the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to evaluate and measure the outcomes of its work
>
> 4. To develop the understanding by members of the Children & Young people's Partnership of the scale and impact of the voluntary and community sector

1 See Marris, V (2004) '*From Playgroups to Prisoners Families: A Study of voluntary sector children and families services in Manchester*'.

2 Research Process

A qualitative process was used to gain information in a number of different ways including local district events and one-to-one evaluation with a small number of groups. This was complimented with a literature review.

Child and Family Support Forum district event

Literature review focus

- The integration of children's services at a national and local level

- The role of the voluntary and community sector in delivering the Every Child Matters agenda

- Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes

The research was publicised through mail outs, CFSF email bulletins, Voluntary Action Manchester email bulletins, Community Network for Manchester email bulletin, MACC newsletter, Voluntary Youth Manchester newsletter, MACC Website, CFSF meetings and CFSF district events. The most fruitful method of engaging organisations in one-to-one evaluation was through the district-level events, with three of the four organisations expressing an interest through these. Care was taken to highlight the benefits to individual organisations of being involved (see the flyer in **Appendix 1**).

2.1 Local district events

In order to reach out to as many voluntary and community sector providers as possible an event was arranged in each of the six Children's Services districts of Manchester 2 (see **Appendix 2** for map of district boundaries). All discussions which took place were recorded and transcribed after the events and quotes have been used throughout the report.

The purpose of these events was to:

- Update organisations on the developments taking place within children's services

- Discuss the implication of these changes for voluntary and community groups

- Carry out a mapping exercise of local services to show how they contribute to city-wide targets using an outcomes approach

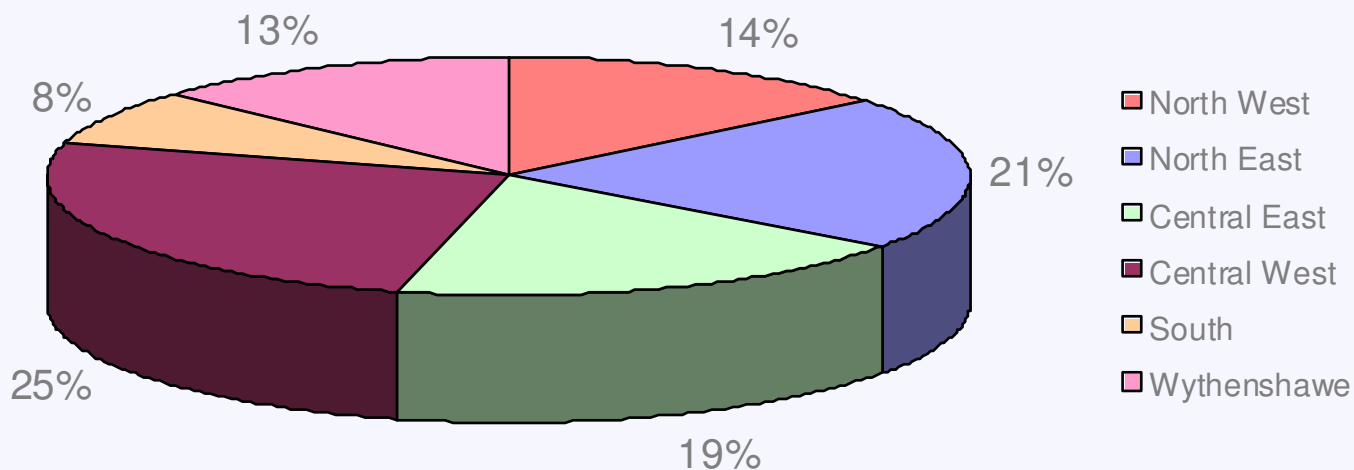- Highlight the importance of evaluating outcomes and discuss what this means in practice

2 Due to a lower response in the North West district and South district, these events were combined into one, so although events were promoted in each of the six district, only five events actually took place.
3 Some statutory agencies attended these events and the information collected from them hasn't been in-

A total of **75** people from **63** different organisations attended these events ₃. Of these, **44** organisations contributed information to the mapping exercise which has been used in this piece of work. Districts were well represented (see **Pie Chart 1**) and the organisations which attended the events represented a good cross section of different services (see **Pie Chart 2**). See **Appendix 3** for the range of activities/interventions carried out by participating organisations.

Pie Chart 1
Geographical Distribution of Participating Organisations (64)

- North West — 14%
- North East — 21%
- Central East — 19%
- Central West — 25%
- South — 8%
- Wythenshawe — 13%

Pie Chart 2
Activities of Organisations
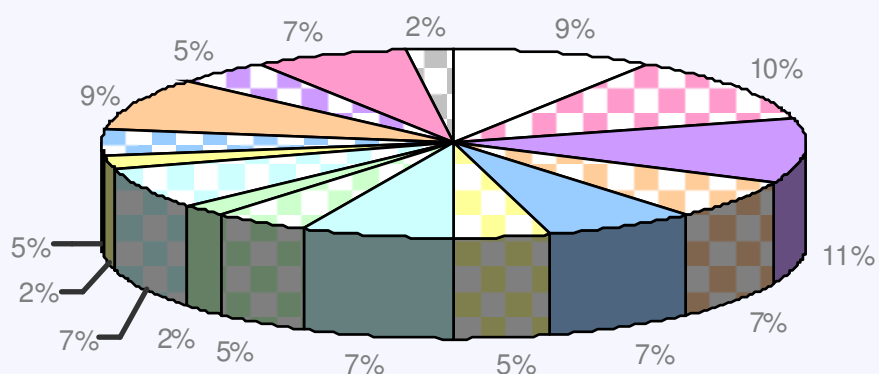
□ community centre	■ play
■ health	■ homelessness
■ afterschool/holiday care	■ playgroups/creches
■ counselling/support/therapy	■ housing
■ befriending	□ specialist support and guidance
■ education	■ drugs/alcohol
■ family support	■ youth club
■ community engagement	■ home safety

2.2 The mapping exercise: using an outcomes approach

The aim of each mapping exercise was to provide detailed information about how the services/activities of each organisation contribute to the five every child matters outcomes.

Outcomes are the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of an organisation's activities. They often describe positive changes for service users but can also be about maintenance of the current situation or about reducing something e.g. criminal behaviour. They occur at many levels and may be for individuals, families, the community, the environment or the organisation. Outcomes are concerned with change over a longer term.

Where outcomes occur	
Area	**Examples**
Individual	• Change in circumstances • Improved physical or psychological health • Change in behaviour • Change in attitude • Improved self-perception • Increased knowledge • Increase in skills or ability • Improved relationships
Family	• Improved relationships • Feelings of control • Less conflict
Community	• Less fear of crime • A reduction in vandalism • Feelings of community pride • More involvement in the local community
Organisation	• Better management of resources • Increased staff skills & development • More financially stable • Increased ability to contribute to and affect local planning and initiatives • More local people employed and shaping service development

Care needs to be taken not to confuse outcomes with outputs. **Outputs** are the immediate or short term impacts of services, products and activities which have been delivered to clients. These should indicate that progress is being made *towards* outcomes.

Activities are the measures of the actual service provided: these might include key work sessions, group work sessions, training or advice and information. Indicators include things such as quantity (the number of services run or products delivered); take up (the number of people or organisations who use a service or product) and access (the type of people or organisations who use a service or product).

For the mapping exercise service providers were asked to focus on each activity they provide in turn and answer the following questions:

1. Think of an activity or service you carry out to support people to be healthy (or other ECM outcome)
2. What needs are you responding to by providing this service?
3. What signs would you look for to see that an improvement has been made?
4. Do you measure or monitor this improvement? If yes – how? If no – can you think of ways you could?

Answers were documented on individual forms. The same questions were then repeated for another activity focusing on the same outcome or for the same activity but focusing on a different outcome e.g. **stay safe, enjoy & achieve, make a positive contribution or achieve economic well-being**. By the end of the exercise, each participant had broken down their services/ activities in relation to all five outcomes documenting what needs they are responding to and what changes take place in the service user as a result of these activities.

Outcomes wall

By collating all the forms by outcome on the wall under the Every Child Matters framework (photo), we were able to provide a visual representation at each event of how organisations within that district are improving the lives of children and families in their area.

2.3 One-to-one evaluation work

One-to-one work took place with four organisations (see Box overleaf). An in-depth interview was carried out with the manager of each organisation/project which was recorded and transcribed. In addition, for three out of the four organisations, key outcomes were identified for one of their projects and questionnaires designed to measure the impact of their work over a 3 month period. It was not appropriate do this part of the evaluation with one of the organisations due to staffing changes that were taking place at that time.

2.4 Additional information

During the period this research was carried out, the Child & Family Support Forum was involved in organising three city-wide events for voluntary and community sector and statutory sector partners. The aim of these events was to improve partnership working between sectors, and to engage the voluntary and community sector in consultation on the Children and Young People's Plan for Manchester.

The focus for the three city-wide events was:

- How Do We Work Together – looking at the role of the voluntary and community in the provision of services (55 (63%) voluntary sector delegates; 38 (37%) statutory sector delegates)

- What Do We Want to Say – writing a voluntary sector contribution to the Children and Young People's Plan (48 voluntary sector delegates)

- How Do We Make it Happen – looking at how voluntary and statutory partners can work together to improve key issues (49 (67%) voluntary sector delegates; 24 (33%) statutory sector delegates)

Through people's contribution at these events, a valuable insight was gained into the role of the voluntary sector in Manchester and how they play an integral part in improving outcomes for children, young people and families. Some of the information gathered at these events is included in this report.

Organisations who took part in one-to-one evaluation

Barlow Moor Community Association was set up over 15 years ago to meet the needs of local people. Their core work with children and parents includes a playgroup and crèche for the under 5's, junior and senior youth club, holiday play schemes, parent and toddler group and courses for adults. They also provide support for older people and have been running a credit union for five years.

Discus Family Support Project aims to engage 'hard to reach' families in need with children aged 4-16 years. They work to reduce crime and increase access to education, employment and training opportunities through practical support with parenting issues through outreach and home visits based on the principles of building long term relationships through mutual trust and respect.

Manchester Care & Repair (MC&R) is a voluntary sector home improvement agency which primarily works to meet the needs of older residents. In addition MC&R provides support to parents by providing home safety equipment and advice, thereby creating a safer home environment in which to raise children and helping to deliver the best start in life. They also offer child safety training to professionals working in the Early Years/Family Support sector. The project works in partnership with Sure Start to provide individual, bespoke packages tailored to meet the needs of each Sure Start project, thereby making services more accessible to families living in Manchester.

Slade Lane Neighbourhood Centre acts as a resource centre for the neighbourhood and surrounding areas providing support for individuals and community organisations that deliver charitable services to local residents. Activities and services include a parent and toddler group and Easter and summer play schemes. The centre has continued to develop as a resource for other organisations in the area by providing venue facilities and offering management and administrative support to a number of organisations including Anson Cabin Project, Himmat Support Centre and Health First Longsight.

2.5 Limitations of this research

In planning this research, we recognised a number of limitations within which we would need to work. From the outset, our intention has been to provide an **illustration** rather than a detailed study of the impact of the local voluntary and community sector in securing better outcomes for children, young people and families.

Due to the diversity and complexity of the voluntary and community sector in Manchester, we identified that it would be a poor investment of the limited time available to attempt to arrange a balanced, representative sample of the sector. We therefore chose to encourage as many groups as possible to take part – and to work on a district basis to encourage participation from smaller organisations who do not often participate in city-wide activities. As a result we engaged a relatively small number of groups (i.e. relation to the total size of the sector) but which included a reasonably broad spectrum of organisations (see Pie Chart 2). The sample is therefore broadly reflective, but only in very general terms.

It should also be remembered that the project itself was partly a research activity and partly an awareness-raising exercise. While we intended to gather as much data as possible, we were also concerned with encouraging groups to recognise the need to gather evidence and starting them on the process of considering their impact – essentially, this was about demystifying the concept of an outcomes approach.

The mapping exercise at each district event was time limited, which restricted how extensive the data collection could be. In some cases, organisations focused on the impact of just one project they provide within a larger service. Consequently this research is only **illustrative** of the impact the voluntary and community sector is making.

The research has focused on general outcomes and has not mapped other factors e.g. diversity of service users or the impact on specific service user groups. There is a focus on service delivery and other roles such as campaigning and lobbying have not been touched on. These areas could be the focus of further study.

Ideally the sample of organisations involved in the one to one evaluation would have been from each of the six districts in Manchester and represent small, medium and large organisations working across a broad range of different types of service users. Due to time restrictions and limitations in terms of who was able to be involved, this has not been possible. This part of the research would have been enhanced by carrying out further interviews with service users in addition to managers.

3 Context

3.1 Every Child Matters: Change for children

In 2003, the Government published a green paper called *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. This was published alongside the Lord Laming Review which formed the formal response to the death of Victoria Climbé. Through this review, profound weaknesses were identified in the provision of services for children and young people across the country. The Government responded by embarking on an ambitious programme of reform, set out in the Children Act 2004 and the linked *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* guidance. The main aim is to improve outcomes for all children, young people by delivering integrated services under what has become known as 'Children's Trust' arrangements'. These have four essential components which can be shown diagrammatically:
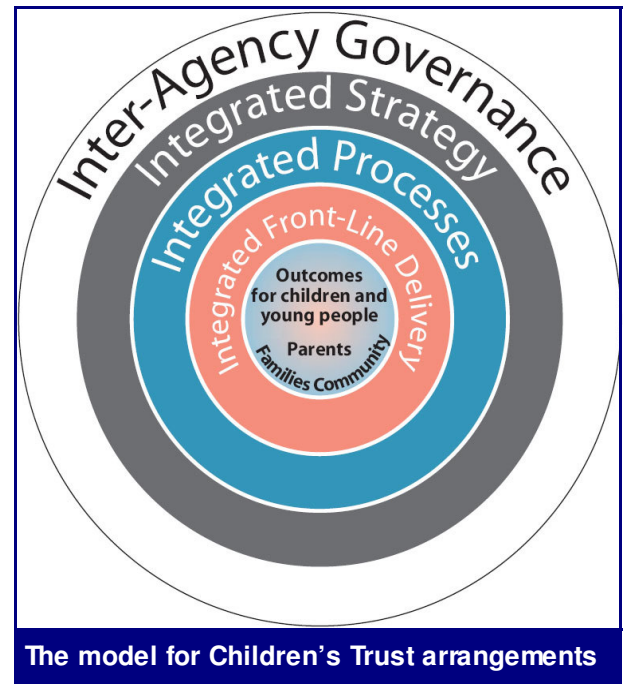
The model for Children's Trust arrangements

Every Child Matters outcomes

1. Be Healthy

2. Stay Safe

3. Enjoy and Achieve

4. Make Positive Contribution

5. Achieve Economic Wellbeing

Through consultation, the Government identified five key outcomes for children and young people. These are universal ambitions for every child and young person, whatever their background or circumstances and are to be used by *all* services as measures of quality and effectiveness.

Improving these outcomes for all children and young people underpins the whole of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* agenda and all the development and work within Children's Trusts.

3.2 The Voluntary and Community Sector

Key statistics for 2003/04, the latest available indicate that the UK voluntary and community sector as a whole:

- has an income of £26.3 billion
- derives 38% of its income from statutory sources
- has an operating expenditure of £24.9 billion
- has total assets of £66.8 billion; and
- has a paid workforce of at least 608,000

(Source: The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2006: The State of the Sector)

Within **Manchester**, previous research in 2004 shows that **92** voluntary and community sector organisations had a total workforce of:

Total full time Staff	Total Part Time Staff	Total Volunteers
443	334	664

(Source: From Playgroups to Prisoners' Families: A study of voluntary sector children and families services in Manchester)

This number represents only about **one fifth** of all those organisations on the MACC database. Even allowing for the fact that these will include many smaller organisations and groups with few or no paid staff, it would be reasonable to assume that the figures above represent **less than half** of the total number of paid staff and volunteers in this field across Manchester.

At a local level, a small scale audit carried out in 2006 indicate that **19** voluntary and community sector organisations providing services for children and families in **Wythenshawe**:

- have a paid workforce of 33 full time staff and 40 part time staff
- have 271 volunteers
- has an income of £1,007,815 (plus other unspecified funds)
- derives 32% of its income from charitable and private trusts

This gives some idea of the size of the voluntary and community sector contribution to children and families work in the city.

(Source: Voluntary Sector Audit of Parenting and Family Support Services for District Collaboration)

In 2002, HM Treasury published *The Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery – A Cross Cutting Review.* This report sets out Government thinking on the relationship between the voluntary and community and public sectors and it has been enshrined in much policy and legislation ever since, most particularly in relation to health and social care and well being. The voluntary and community sector is seen as playing a central and unique role in improving the health and well-being of the nation and the services required to support this.

The review also endorsed a view long understood within the voluntary and community sector but which had never before been so explicitly acknowledged by Government before: that **the sector has a *dual* role: not only as providers of services but also as voice for the community.**

Even before much of the recent legislation, the report demonstrated that of the total £3.7 billion in statutory sector funding identified as being received by the voluntary and community sector in 2000-2001, 16.1% (0.59 billion) came from the NHS, 30% (1.1 billion) came from local authorities with the overwhelming majority of this (61%) being from social care. MACC's local research suggests that the voluntary and community sector doubles every £1 of local statutory investment it receives.

> **The HM Treasury review drew a number of conclusions:**
>
> - To involve the voluntary and community sector in the planning as well as the delivery of services
>
> - To forge long term strategic partnerships with the sector
>
> - To build the capacity of the sector
>
> - That it is legitimate for service providers to factor in the relevant element of overhead costs into their cost estimates for services delivered under contract
>
> - To implement the Compact at all levels

The contribution the voluntary and community sector makes to local communities (often targeted at those who are outside of the mainstream) grows from particular characteristics common to many voluntary and community sector organisations. These include key features such as expertise, innovation, flexibility, openness in approach to new ways of working and the ability to work in partnership. Through the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme, the government has again recognised the voluntary and community sector's role and has provided guidance which sets out expectations to ensure that voluntary and community organisations are involved in all aspects of the drive to improve outcomes [4]. This strategy sends a clear message about the importance the Government attaches to the role of the voluntary and community sectors in all aspects of delivering the Every Child Matters agenda:

> *'Voluntary and community organisations are not only major providers of services to children, young people and families, they have significant expertise to offer in developing strategy and planning these services. Often, this is expertise that has been developed over a considerable period of time – the voluntary and community sectors are the birthplace of much provision that is now considered mainstream'* (p1)

3.3 The Manchester Partnership - working to meet local needs

The Manchester Partnership (Manchester's Local Strategic Partnership or LSP) works to improve the way agencies in the city work together to deliver services to local people. The Manchester Partnership consists of seven thematic partnerships and is involved in negotiating the Public Service Agreements (PSAs) for the city. The PSAs include targets which challenge public services to stretch their performance to improve the quality of life for Manchester residents. Ultimately the PSAs are 'owned' and have to be delivered by the thematic partnerships within the Manchester Partnership. The changes put in place through the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* agenda will make a significant contribution to meeting the goals, not only for the Children and Young People's Partnership, but also for the other thematic partnerships within the Manchester Partnership whose agendas reach far beyond that specifically of children and young people.

The table opposite shows how the five Every Child Matters outcomes link to the Public Service Agreement targets: an approach established in the Manchester Children and Young People's Plan.

4 See Every Child Matters: Change for Children. Working with voluntary and community organisations to deliver change for children and young people

One of the statutory requirements of the Children Act 2004 is that every local authority has had to produce a Children and Young People's Plan by April 2006. This is the single, strategic, overarching plan for all local services for children and young people, for example health services, police, local authority and voluntary and community sector organisations. It sets out a vision for children and young people and identifies how outcomes for children and young people can be best improved. The Children and Young People's Thematic Partnership (part of the LSP) works to try to ensure that the performance targets within the Plan are being met.

Every Child Matters outcomes	Manchester Children's Plan 2006 - Performance Targets
Be Healthy	• Increase the proportion of mothers initiating breastfeeding • Reduce the proportion of women smoking during pregnancy • Increase uptake on 2 year old children who receive MMR vaccinations • The proportion of 16-17 year olds with health needs supported by developmentally appropriate services • Reduce the year on year increase in childhood obesity in the under 11 age group by 2010 • Reduce the under 18 conception rate by 55% by 2010 • Reduce the number of low birth weight babies
Stay Safe	• Reduce the number of children and young people coming into the looked after system as a consequence of domestic abuse • Reduce the impact of alcohol and drug misuse • Reduce the number of 0-15 year olds killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions by 50% by 2010
Enjoy & Achieve	• Improve primary school attendance • Increase by 2% annually the number of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional areas of learning • Reduce the number of schools in which less than 50% of pupils achieve Level 5 or above at Key Stage 3 (Age 14) in each of English, Maths and Science • % pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE's and equivalent (Key Stage 4) • Children leaving care with 5 A*-C GCSE/GNVQ
Make a Positive Contribution	• Increase % children and young people aged 10-17 served with an ASBO who do not breach in 6 months • Reduce the % of people who perceive high levels of disorder to lower than the baseline year • Participation in volunteering • Increase % young people who feel they can influence decisions in their area • Reduce re offending by young offenders
Achieve Economic Well-being	• Reduce % 16-18 year olds not in employment, education or training • Increase % of 19 year olds achieving NVQ level 2 or equivalent

3.4 Monitoring Outcomes

Whilst the Government recognises the strength of the voluntary and community sector in reaching marginalised children, young people and families, it also increasingly requires organisations to be increasingly accountable and demonstrate a commitment to high quality services. There is a move towards organisations being expected to be familiar with an outcomes driven culture of working and to have developed appropriate ways of measuring the impact of their work to demonstrate clear outcomes for the children, young people and families that they support.

At an individual level, an outcomes approach helps services and organisations to deliver more effectively for their client groups. In particular it helps make services more client focused and needs led, by identifying what works well in services and what could be improved.

Benefits to individual organisations include:

- Improved and shared clarity of what the organisation is trying to achieve, leading to a greater sense of purpose and team work.

- A positive effect on staff as they are motivated when they see evidence of changes within their clients.

- A positive impact on service users and provides encouragement for clients when they see evidence of changes in themselves.

- A means to build the reputation of the organisation among commissioners and funders and enable an organisation stand proud and state what they have achieved.

In Manchester, the move towards commissioning of services at a district level relies upon joint working to identify needs, analyse performance and assess the effectiveness of service delivery in achieving the outcomes. Consequently, reviewing the service against outcomes and reassessing need is a critical part of the commissioning cycle, and something organisations are increasingly being expected to do.

By setting a national standard through the *Every Child Matters* agenda, Government is encouraging all agencies (voluntary and statutory) to move towards the use of a similar monitoring system which will strengthen the ability of organisations to compare performance, and enable them to use the same system for different funders. This should hopefully enable a move away from the current practice of voluntary and community organisations having to respond to a plurality of paymasters and shoe-horning their services to fit several different funding requirements.
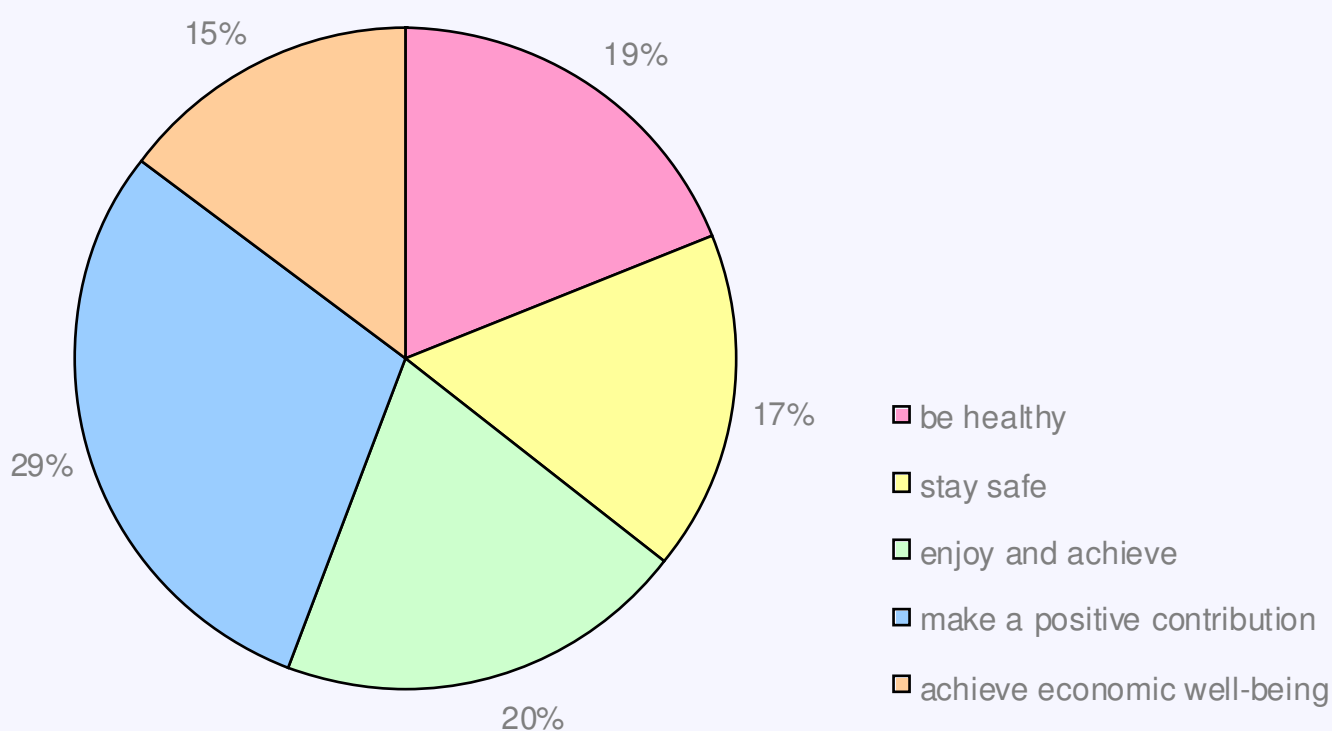
4 Contribution to the five Every Child Matters outcomes

MACC's database currently contains details of over five hundred voluntary sector organisations working to improve the lives of children, young people and families in the City of Manchester. This chapter focuses on the work of just **44 organisations** who contributed to mapping exercises which took place at each district event 5.

Overall these organisations mapped their contribution across the five Every Child Matters outcomes fairly evenly, however the 'make a positive contribution' was identified as the outcome which people felt their projects contributed towards the most.

Pie Chart 3

How the organisations (combined) mapped the impact of their services across the five ECM outcomes

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

Graph 1

How each district mapped the impact of their services across the 5 ECM outcomes

Legend:
- achieve economic well-being
- make a positive contribution
- enjoy and achieve
- stay safe
- be healthy
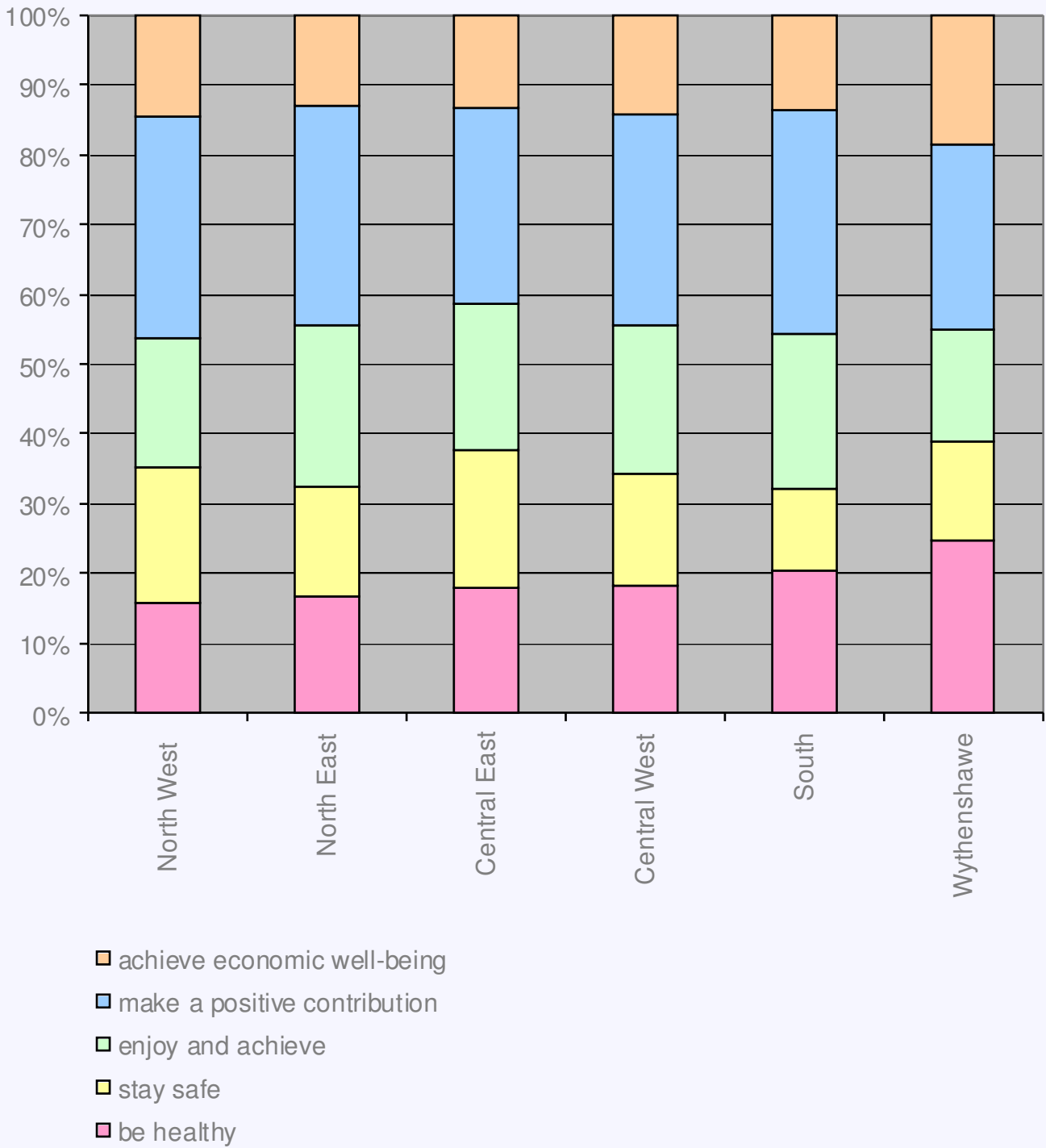
Graph 2

How each individual organisation mapped the impact of their services across the 5 ECM outcomes

Legend: ■ Be Healthy ■ Stay Safe ■ Enjoy & Achieve ■ Make a Positive Contribution ■ Achieve Economic Well-being
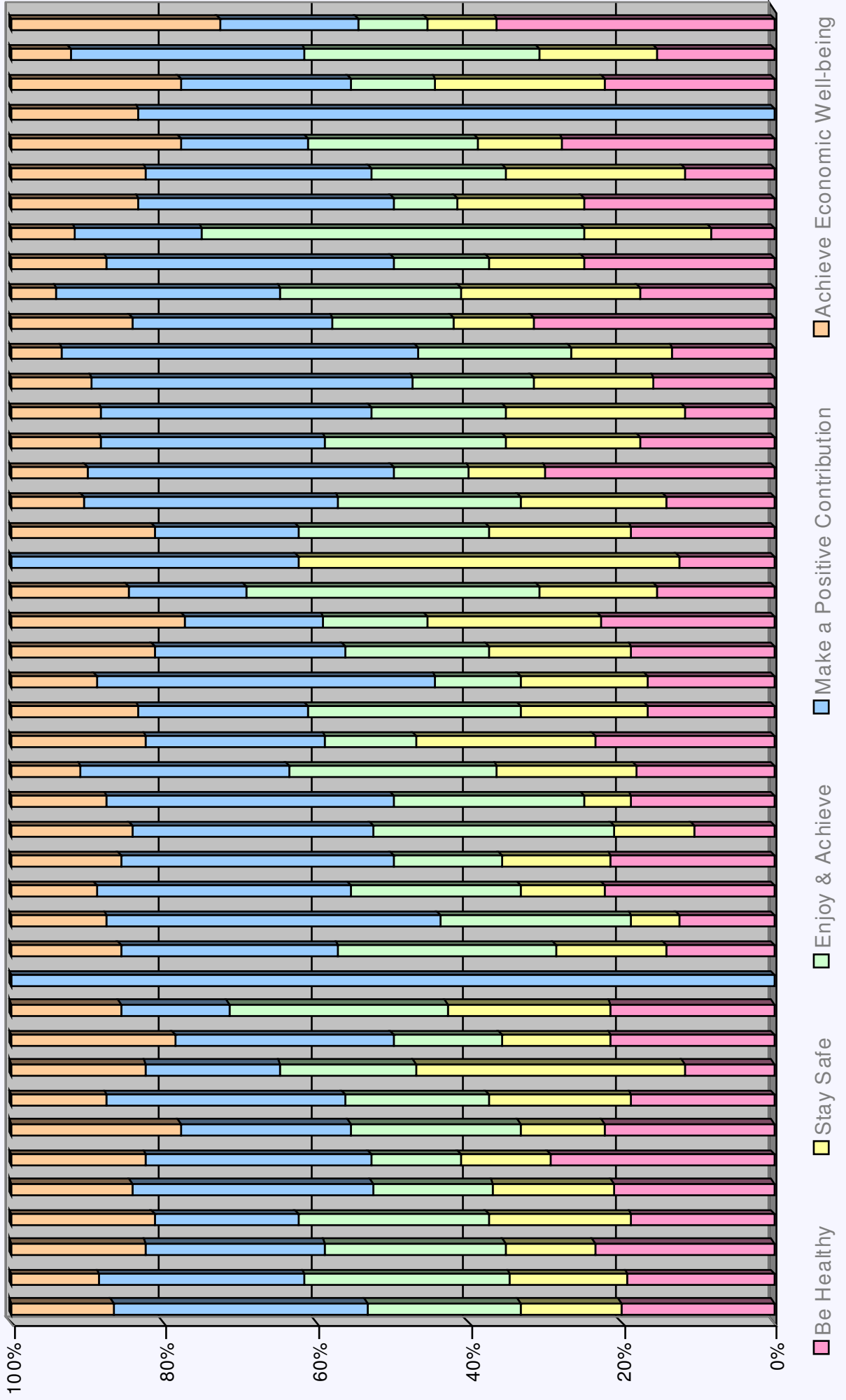
The following section explores the link between voluntary and community sector activity and achieving positive outcomes for children and families in Manchester.

4.1 Be Healthy

Prevention: The role of voluntary and community sector providers in improving health outcomes has largely been identified to be that of providing support before things reach crisis level or a 'need' may even be acknowledged. Voluntary and community sector organisations offer support which enables children, young people and families to cope but who, without support, would develop needs. This is about prevention, not just by education, but by active support in building resilience and self esteem which enables individuals and families to make better choices.

Be Healthy outcome wall
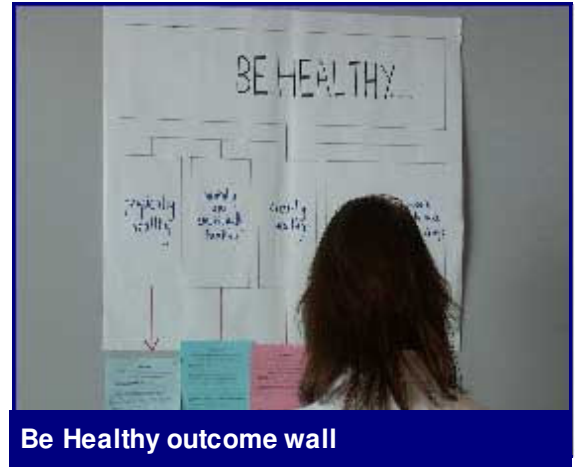
Promoting physical health: The voluntary and community sector plays a key role in promoting physical health by providing safe environments within the local community for physical activity and play opportunities for children and young people throughout the city. This type of structured and unstructured activity has an impact on childhood obesity levels and illness in later life such as heart disease. It was clearly identified that participation in these activities outside of school is also key to maintaining children and young people's mental and emotional well-being as well as offering an environment for personal and social development where children and young people learn how to interact with each other and develop social bonds.

39% of organisations identified that they offer **physical activities** for children and young people which in many cases may be the only opportunity for recreation outside the home

Promoting healthy lifestyles: Voluntary and community sector organisations are well placed to complement education provided within schools over a sustained period of time. Providing this type of education outside of a formal setting has positive outcomes in terms of changing behaviour within the home. Organisations introduce new ideas to children who in many cases take the knowledge they have gained home about what they would like to eat.

50% of organisations identified that they work to promote **healthy lifestyles** for parents and children by building awareness of the importance of healthy eating through activities such as healthy cooking activities, providing healthy snacks and tuck shops, healthy eating and healthy living projects for children and parents

Mental well-being: Informal interventions such as relaxation sessions, adult education courses, family support and advice, one-to-one support and childcare support are often not regarded by the service user as interventions responding to mental health needs. They are, however, in many cases a crucial way of engaging with a service user, building up trust and providing a pathway of care for that person. Many types of community based services offered by the voluntary and community sector meet this need and prevent more serious mental health needs developing.

41% of organisations identified that they provide informal services where young people and parents who are coping with difficulties can get support in a way which looks at their **mental and emotional well being** in a non intrusive and non stigmatising way

Specialist support: As well as addressing low level need, the sector is able to provide specialist support which focuses on higher level need. Often, these high level support services are well-placed to offer alternative models of service delivery around physical and mental health problems. Such services tend to also focus on people who may be marginalised by mainstream services. Key to the success of these interventions is the ability to build trust with the service user, with the independent status of the organisation being a significant confidence-building factor. Voluntary and community sector organisations provide support which is non-stigmatising and often flexible enough to tailor services to the unique circumstances of individual service users. **5** organisations in the study identified they provide this type of support for issues such drugs and alcohol abuse, mental health, homelessness, bereavement counselling, HIV/AIDS and sexual health.

27% of organisations identified that they work to ensure that young people and parents are able to make informed choices about risk taking behaviour such as **taking illegal drugs**, **alcohol, smoking and sexual health**

Non formality: The impact of improving the quality of young people's decisions in terms of risk taking behaviour is difficult to measure but cannot be underestimated. Through working in an informal, accessible and non-intrusive way with key risk groups, these services are effective in preventing self-destructive behaviours develop which destroy emotional, mental and as physical well-being. Frequently, support services are user-led groups where people are encouraged to come together to talk about issues which they may have to deal with.

4.2 Stay Safe

Safe Environment: One of the things that children and young people identify is really important to them is having a safe and secure place to play and socialise. For many young people this is made available to them by voluntary and community organisations in the way of local after-school and holiday provision, youth clubs and community centres.

Stay Safe outcome wall

55% of organisations identified that they offer a space where children and young people can be **safe from bullying and discrimination**

Inclusive Environment: Through anti-bullying policies children and young people learn to value difference, not to discriminate against other people and become able to support their peers/siblings. By experiencing an inclusive environment, the overall behaviour and well-being of children and young people engaged with these services improves; young people do not spend so much time on the streets, and there are less accidents and less 'anti-social behaviour'. Children and young people are taught to respect their local environment and are given an alternative to engaging in negative behaviour. Furthermore through activities and consultations, children and young people become more aware of their personal safety and are able to identify to service providers which local areas they feel are particularly unsafe.

Trust: Because organisations work to build voluntary relationships, based on mutual trust and respect, voluntary and community sector organisations often provide a place where people feel they can open up to share issues around their personal safety and well-being (e.g. domestic violence) which they may not feel confident to share with mainstream agencies.

Being trusted to share issues means that incidences of child abuse and neglect are often minimised or dealt with before the problems become acute. With child protection policies and procedures in place, organisations are in a good place to identify risks and work with the whole family to find ways to improve circumstances. Voluntary and community sector organisations provide a critical pathway to statutory support services and play an important role in breaking down negative stereotypes people may have about statutory provision.

> *'We're lucky because we're not under the same pressure as a social worker going out to families. They've got to have an assessment completed quickly, whereas we can carry on with contact and discover what's going on underneath. That's how the domestic violence project started up. From family support work came out that loads of families were experiencing domestic violence, but it takes ages down the line before you get that out of some of the families'*
>
> (VCS organisation, NW district)

Advice and Guidance: Through advice and guidance, children, young people and families are more likely and better able to engage with other services and agencies which leads to greater security and stability in the home. Parents feel better able to support their children and all members of the family are better able to develop positive relationships and to prevent internal conflict developing into something serious. Because of their independent position, voluntary and community sector organisations can take on an advocacy role to support this process if necessary. This is particularly important for families in high risk groups.

> **14%** of organisations identified that through engaging with their services families **increase their knowledge of supporting services** and professional support which is available to them

Wide-ranging: The voluntary and community sector is also well placed to offer specialised support. In terms of higher level needs, **3** organisations identified that they work with young people to access supported housing and enable young people to live independently in a safe and secure environment. Addressing the needs of homeless young people is a significant need within the city. One organisation reports that about 1,000 young people a year visit them for support on housing issues.

> **16%** of organisations identified that they offer advice on **reducing safety risks** in the home, on personal safety issues and fit safety equipment in the home thereby reducing accidental in-jury and death

Because of their independent nature, voluntary and community sector organisations are often better placed to provide services which are aimed at reducing safety risks. This is because of the stigma attached to receiving this type of support. It is the experience of many organisations that families are often more comfortable receiving advice from what they perceive to be a more informal service than a statutory agency (where service users sometimes feel intimidated by official status and statutory powers and duties). Not only does this type of support have an impact in reducing the risk of accidents, but it also reduces stress levels, as parents feel more confident in their ability to care for their child and both child and parent have more freedom within the home.
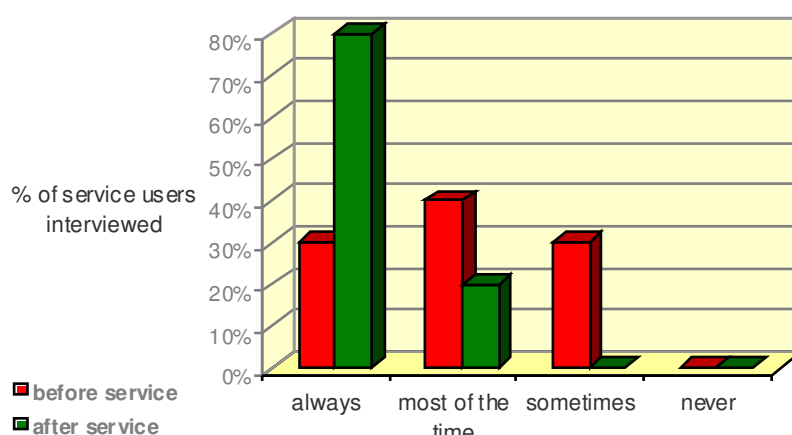
Stay Safe : Manchester Care & Repair Case Study

Manchester Care and Repair (MC&R) are a home improvement agency which works to improve safety in the home. This data has been produced from a small scale one-to-one evaluation which took place between November 05 – March 06 with Manchester Care and Repair. This was collected from questionnaires and telephone interviews with 10 service users. The aim of the evaluation was to produce some evidence of how the child safety project contributes to improved outcomes in terms of parental confidence and emotional well-being.

Impact on child safety in the home

Before receiving a service from MC&R only **30%** of the people interviewed said that they **always** feel confident that their child is safe from injury in the home.

After receiving the service, **80%** of people interviewed said they **always** feel confident that their child is safe from injury in the home.
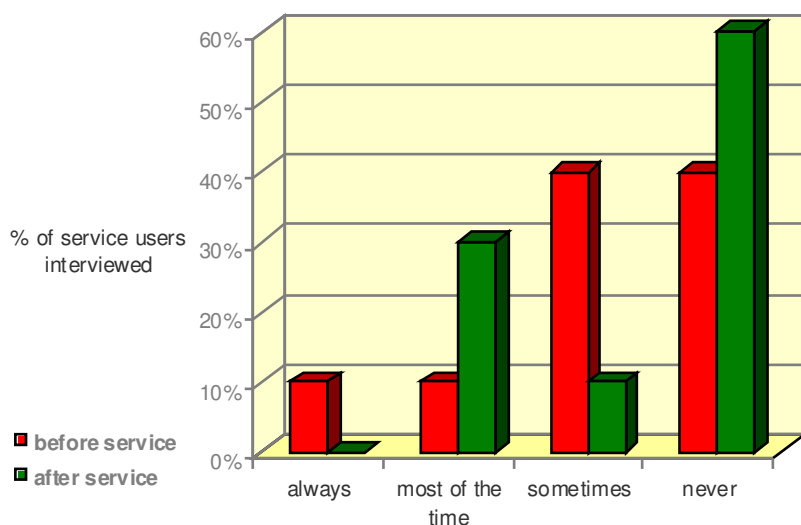
Q: I feel confident that my child is safe from injury in my home

% of service users interviewed

- before service
- after service

always | most of the time | sometimes | never

Impact on feelings of

parental stress in the home

Q: I feel stressed when I'm at home alone with my child because of the safety hazards in my home

% of service users interviewed

- before service
- after service

always | most of the time | sometimes | never

Before receiving a service from MC&R only **40%** of people interviewed said that they *never* feel stressed when they are at home with their child because of the safety hazards around the home.

After receiving a service, **60%** of people interviewed said that they *never* feel stressed when they are at home with their child because of the safety hazards around the home.

Impact on parental confidence in the home

Before receiving a service from MC&R only **10%** of people interviewed said they *always* feel confident as a parent when they are at home with their child because of the safety equipment around the home.

After receiving a service, **80%** of people interviewed said that they *always* feel confident as a parent when they are at home with their child because of the safety equipment around the home.

Q: I feel confident as a parent when I am at home with my child because of the safety equipment around the home

% service users interviewed

before
after

always | most of the time | sometimes | never
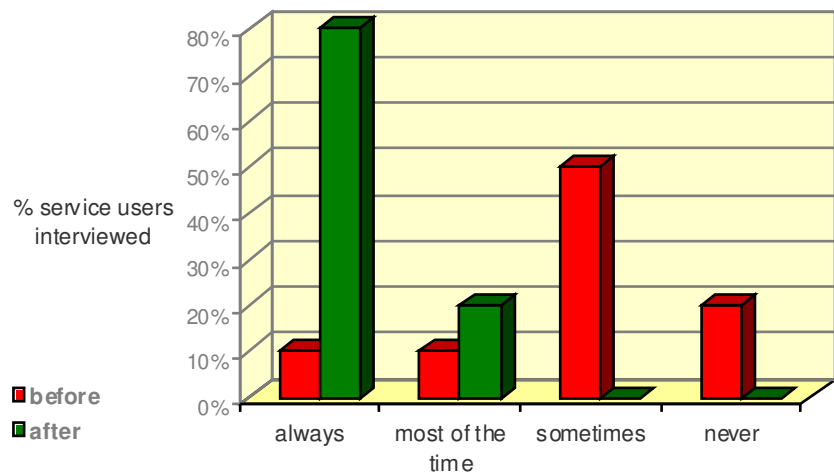
4.3 Enjoy and Achieve

Supporting school provision: The voluntary and community sector continues to develop a broad range of activities which are shaped and delivered by the community and are accessible to the whole family. These activities stretch from after school sports clubs and play schemes to social and cultural activities which run throughout the year for the whole family.

Enjoy & Achieve outcome wall
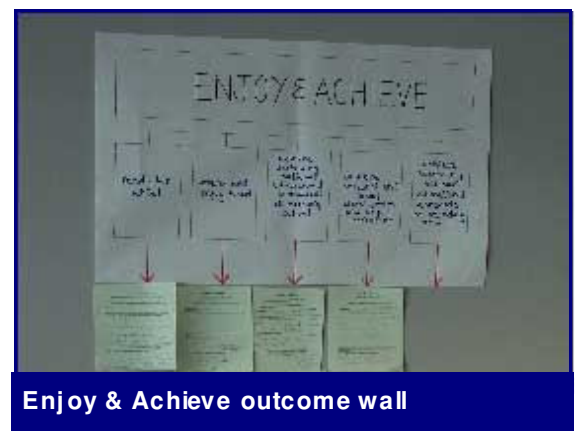
Through play activities and crèche provision **30%** of organisations identified that they support children to become **ready for school**

By engaging children in learning activities through play, children improve their literacy and numeracy skills, develop their attention span, and learn how to interact with other children. For those who English is not their first language, these activities provide an opportunity to improve their proficiency in English and thereby cope better at school.

Supporting personal and social development: Voluntary sector organisations often deliver informal social and cultural education – particularly that which is based around cultural and creative activities for the whole family. These are hugely significant parts of personal and social development bringing families from diverse backgrounds together and diverting children and young people into positive behaviours.

'A local man came in a year ago and he's an artist. He has run lantern processions in other parts of the country and he wanted to do something in his own community. We got local people together so he could tell them what he'd done and we got different organisations together to see if they were interested in what was really a local carnival event. And we had this wonderful event which 400 local people attended. We went into local schools and ran workshops so that children could make lanterns to carry in the parade. We went into local churches and did the same. We went into a local estate, Nell Lane Estate, where there is very little community provision and did workshops there. So people processed from all those different venues and all met in the park. And that was from someone coming in through the door. And we were able to respond to that. And I think that increasingly we're being seen as an organisation that if people have some ideas they can come in and get some support'

(VCS organisation, south district)

Inclusion: Voluntary and community sector organisations are well placed to offer increased support for families who have children with delayed development or special needs. One organisation cited an example of a child with behavioural difficulties, for whom they were the only agency who had supported the family throughout the whole of the child's development and accompanied the parents to assessments and meetings with mainstream services. This extra support was critical for the parents to enable them to feel sure they received all the support they are entitled to.

7% of organisations identified that they play an **advocacy and supporting role** to enable families to access the mainstream educational support services they are entitled to

47% of organisations identified they had a role to play in providing support or activities which enable young people to **deal with things better at school**

Holistic approach: The outcomes of providing activities such as youth clubs, one to one support, group work, youth forums, holiday schemes, counselling and mentoring are reflected in changes in attitudes to learning, attendance levels at school and improved attainment levels for young people. Before children and young people can engage in a positive way at school they need to have a certain level of self-esteem and confidence and feel that they can deal with issues in their personal life. By being supported outside of school, children and young people feel better understood, able to express themselves and develop skills which enable them to attend and enjoy school. This will have an impact on the levels of young people truanting. An important distinction to make here is that the focus for voluntary and community sector organisations is not on the ability of individuals to achieve in exams but rather to support children and young people to reach their full potential which may or may not be reflected in exam results.

Key points of transitions for a child or young person are from nursery to primary school, primary to secondary school and school to college. These are often very difficult to deal with particularly if that person has a complexity of personal issues. By providing informal activities young people are engaged in a way which offers them a place to share their experiences and get support to deal with these challenges in a way that is suited to them.

36% of organisations identified that their services help children and young people **deal with transitions** better

14% of organisations identified that an outcome of their support was that parents become better able to deal with their child going to school

Working with parents: One of the strengths of the voluntary and community sector is that they are able to tailor the work they do to the needs of the whole family. It is already acknowledged that if young people are educated about issues soley through schools, it only targets the individual child and doesn't consider the conflicting messages the young person may get in the family home. This means that parents are supported to enable them to understand the educational system and what they should expect from it. If parents have had negative experiences of the education system, this may be reflected in a lack of confidence around their child going to school. By working with parents, voluntary and community sector organisations have an impact on a parent's ability to support their child to have a positive experience within school.

Enjoy & Achieve: Slade Lane Neighbourhood Centre Case Study

Slade Lane Neighbourhood Centre (SLNC) provides a playgroup five mornings a week which offers a safe and caring environment for children under five. By providing the playgroup SLNC contributes to achieving the following outcomes for the children and families who access this service:

Enjoy and Achieve
- Children become ready for school
- Children achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation
- Children deal with transitions better
- Children develop their literacy and numeracy skills through play

Stay Safe
- Children have a safe environment to participate in a range of activities
- Children have an environment that is free from bullying and discrimination

Make a Positive Contribution
- Children become happy and confident and make new friends
- There is a reduction in anti-social behaviour and bullying

Achieve Economic Well-being
- Childcare is available to meet the needs of parents in work or seeking work

A self-assessment tool was designed to evaluate the impact of the children using the playgroup over a period of four months. A questionnaire was designed which asked staff to grade each child according to competencies which related to the *enjoy and achieve* and *make a positive contribution* outcomes. A questionnaire was completed for each child once in November and March. The graphs below shows the outcomes from a selection of questionnaires.
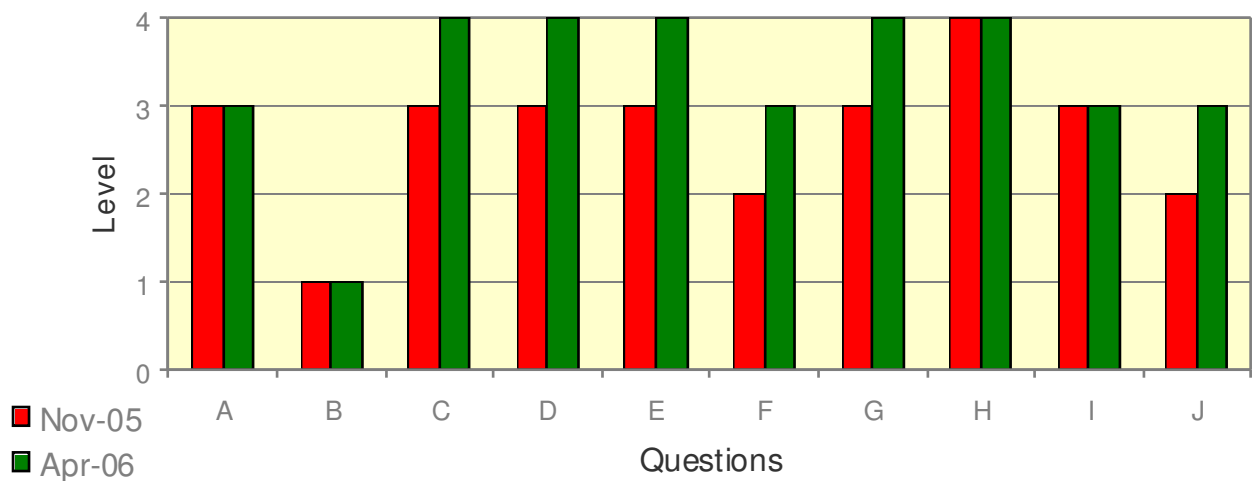
Overall 74% of the questions showed either an improvement or that the child had the highest competency in November and in April. 25% of questions showed no change, while only 2% of questions answered showed a decline in competency. This provides clear evidence of how the children who access the playgroup are being supported to 'enjoy and achieve' and 'make a positive contribution'

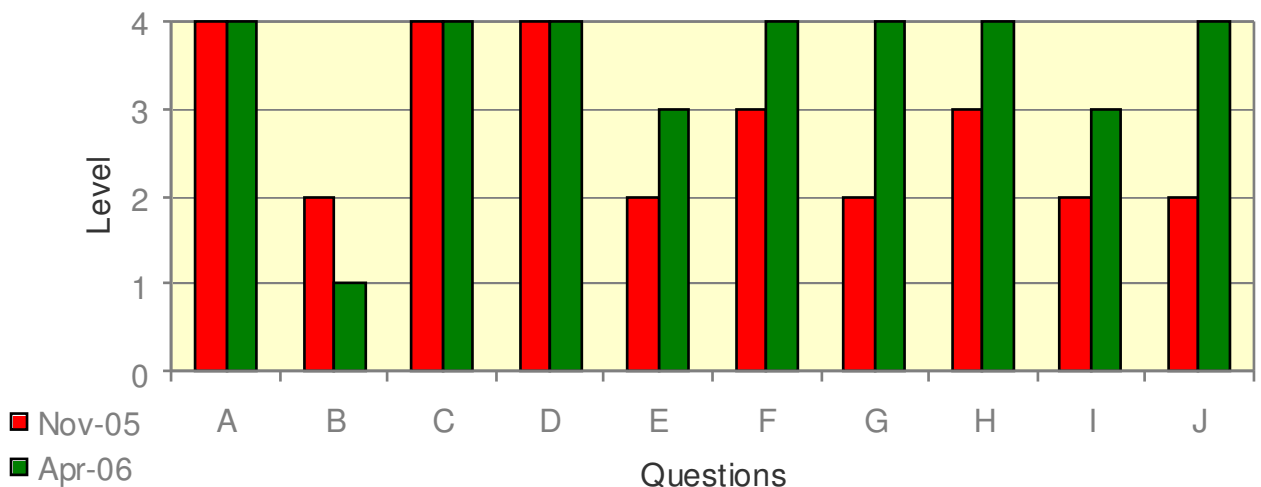For each question staff indicated a level for each child:

1 = Never;   2 = Sometimes ;   3 = Most of the time;   4 = Always

A   He/she enjoys spending time with the other children
B   He/she finds it hard to say goodbye to his carer when they drop him/her off
C   He/she join's in with songs
D   He/she plays games with other children
E   He/she responds to you when you ask them to do something
F   He/she is able to make friends
G   He/she is quiet when you ask them to be
H   He/she responds to you correctly when you ask them about colours
I   He/she responds to you correctly when you ask them about numbers
J   He/she responds to you correctly when you ask them about letters/words
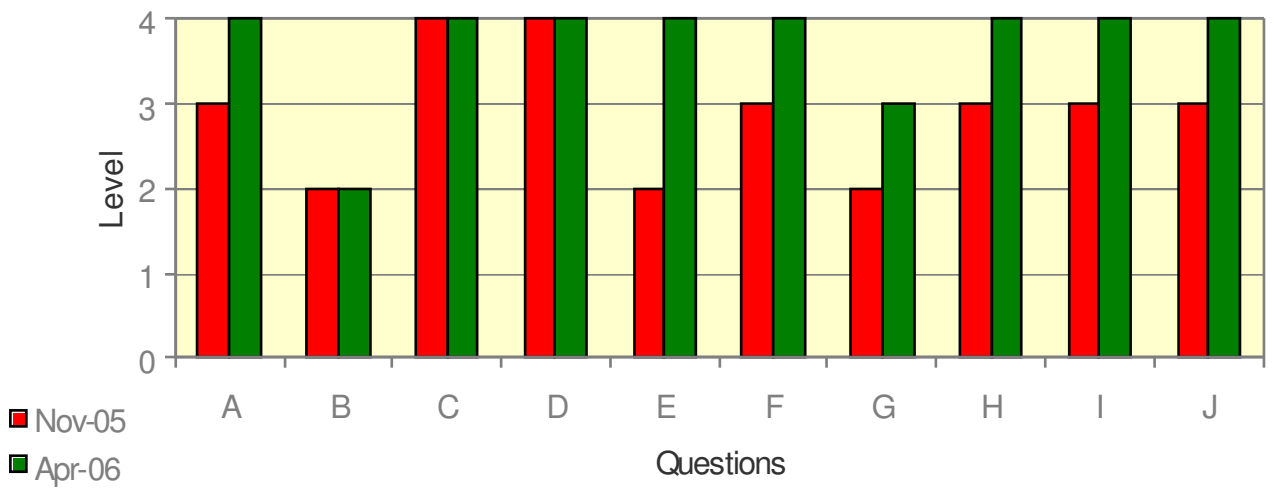
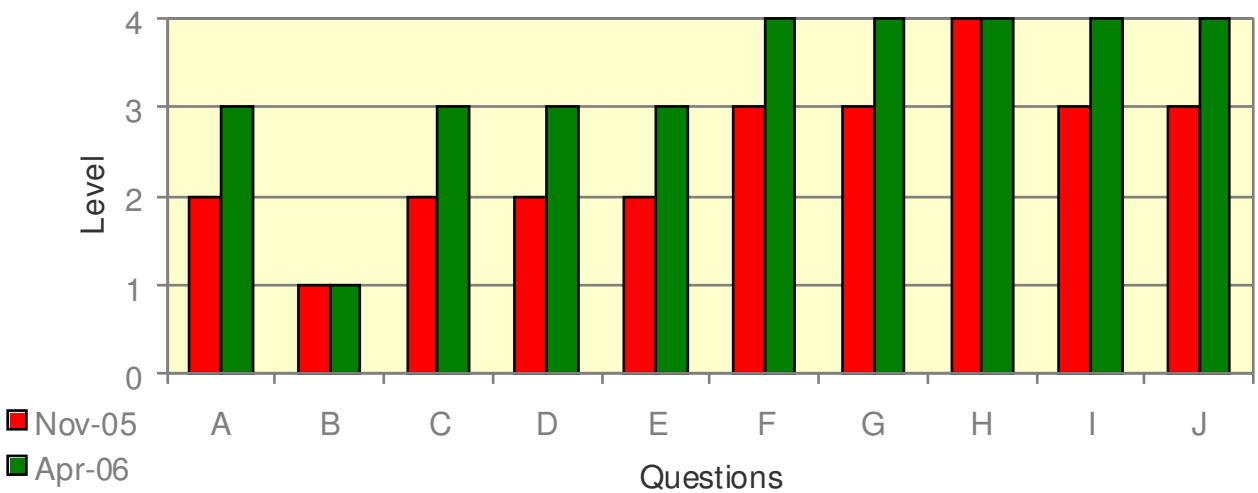**Participant 1**

Particpant 2

Participant 3

Level

Nov-05
Apr-06

A B C D E F G H I J

Questions

Participant 4

Level

Nov-05
Apr-06

A B C D E F G H I J

Questions

Participant 5

Level

Nov-05
Apr-06

A B C D E F G H I J

Questions

28
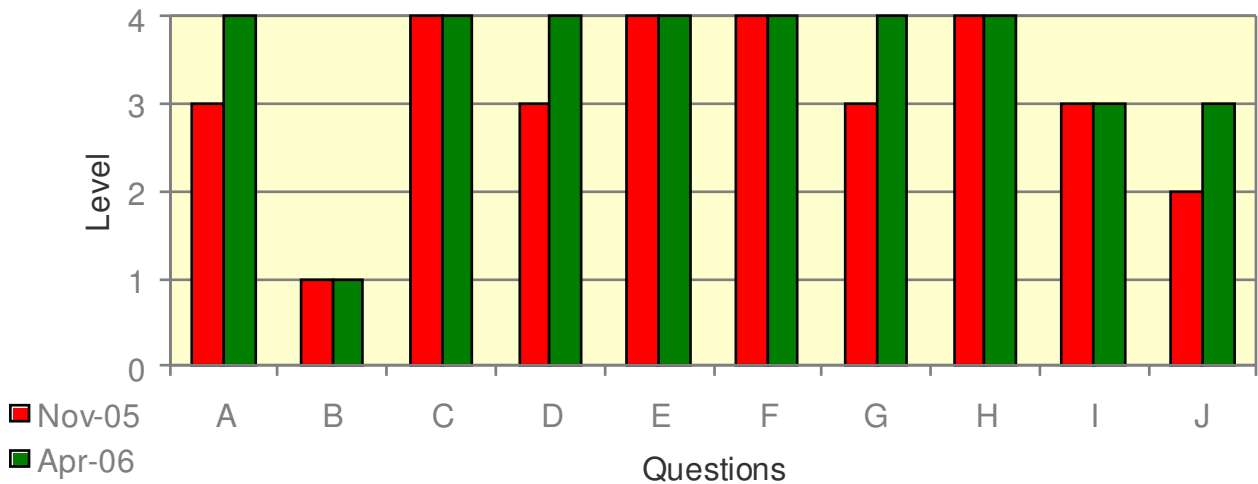
4.4 Make a positive contribution

Challenge discrimination: A key role of many voluntary and community sector organisations is to introduce different value systems and moral ethics which help children and young people develop positive identities. Through getting young people to set behaviour guidelines and talk about bullying issues, they are able to challenge discrimination and divisions between themselves and others. It is primarily because of the position organisations hold within the community that they are successful in achieving these goals.

Make a Positive Contribution outcome wall
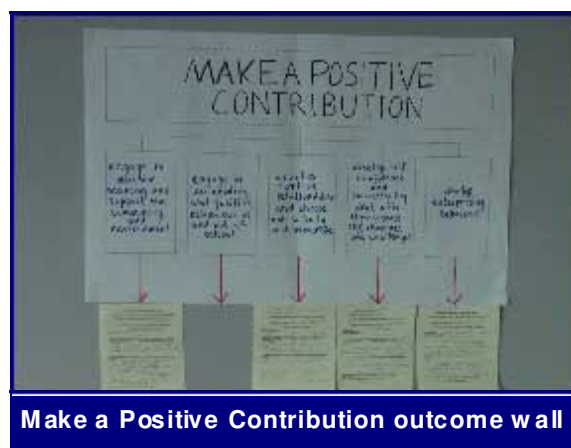
34% of organisations identified that they **reduce anti-social behaviour and bullying** through activities and events which break down barriers in communities between different cultures, generations and groups of people

Inclusion and participation: Some of the best examples of meaningful participation in the development of services come from the voluntary and community sector in Manchester. They run a significant number of youth forum's outside the Young People's Council. Young people are often judged according to stereotypes, however the value systems employed by the voluntary and community sector means that young people do not experience this type of discrimination and are encouraged to engage with services and other service users in a non-judgemental way.

36% of organisations identified that service users were **engaged in making decisions** about their services and/or involved in running community projects

Service users are regularly involved in service development through planning activities, management committees, consultations and volunteering opportunities. Through this type of engagement local people experience a sense of empowerment through being involved in shaping services and develop self confidence and enterprising behaviour by being involved in delivering provision at some level.

'I can remember very clearly parents coming in the early days and saying there is nothing for our children. So we started a play scheme up, got the parents involved in looking for funding, helping writing the applications and actually running the play schemes. One of those women is still running the playgroup and she has got an NVQ in child care level 3 now'

(VCS organisation, south district)

Empowerment approach: Being involved in activities where people's experiences, needs, wishes and desires are considered properly and given final weight in decision making builds up trust with service users and is truly empowering. An important distinction should be made here with statutory provision which although may employ an empowering style, will always be governed by its statutory responsibilities. These activities develop a sense of pride in the community and contribute to local neighbourhoods being people's neighbourhoods of choice.

Long term involvement: In many cases organisations provide support for children and young people which is a constant in their lives. It is the long-term involvement of the workers, in the lives of children and young people facing multiple risk factors, that allows far-reaching change to emerge. This can lead to improvements in school attendance and behaviour, reductions in the risks of early parenthood, offending behaviour and drug or alcohol use, amongst other things.

Working with parents: Voluntary sector organisations are key providers of parenting programmes in the city such as *Webster Stratton* and *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities*. This type of provision enables families to develop positive relationships with each other by addressing communication and listening skills, learning how to resolve conflict and how to set boundaries. Consequently family members feel more able to cope, less isolated and more able to deal with challenges in the home. In addition to structured parenting training courses informal support is offered such as young mums/dads groups, parent forums, breast feeding groups, training courses, activities, mentoring, home visits, housing support, one to one support, youth clubs and play sessions. All of these contribute towards improving relationships within the family, especially by building self-esteem and confidence. This in turn builds the resilience of individuals and families as a whole to deal with challenges.

> **14%** of organisations identified that they provide structured parenting training and **55%** of organisations identified that they provide informal support for parents

An further important outcome of this type of provision is that service users build informal support networks. Parents have more confidence when dealing with difficult situations when they are in contact with families in similar situations and lose their sense of isolation thereby building resilience and coping mechanisms.

Make a Positive Contribution: Barlow Moor Community Centre Youth Drop-In Case Study

Barlow Moor Community Centre provides a variety of support services including a drop-in for young people. The aims, objectives and outcomes of the youth drop-in are:

Aims
- prevent young people from being on the streets
- increase young people's awareness of different issues which may affect them
- enable young people to make more informed choices about their lives
- improve personal and social skills
- build confidence and self esteem

Objectives
- provide a safe and secure environment for young people to come
- run groups sessions which explore different issues
- offer one-to-one support for young people
- provide activities which build social skills
- provide information and signposting to different services

Outcomes
- Increased self confidence
- Improved self-esteem
- Calmer behaviour
- Improved communication skills
- Improved family relationships
- Improved interpersonal skills
- Better able to face up to consequences of actions
- More willing to take responsibility for actions
- More knowledgeable about different issues

Based on different personal and social skills categories a self assessment tool was designed to evaluate the **outcomes** for young people engaging with the drop-in service. The following data was collected using a questionnaire which young people completed once in November 2005 and again in March 2006.

48% questions answered showed an **improvement** in outcomes. **30%** questions answered showed **no change**, and only **22%** questions answered showed a **decline** in how the young person felt.

Softer outcomes are particularly difficult to measure. While the service will have an impact on these outcomes, external factors may also impact on how the young person responds to the questionnaire. Often no change (e.g. no deterioration) indicates a successful outcome.

For each question they graded themselves:

1 = Not very good at all;   2 = Could be better;   3 = Ok;   4 = Good;   5 = Really good

A   How good am I at making and keeping friends?
B   How good am I at feeling confident in myself?
C   How good am I at letting other people know what I mean?
D   How good am I at understanding that different people have different ways of thinking?
E   How good am I at give and take, or compromise?
F   How good am I at accepting my share of the blame when things go wrong?
G   How good am I at thinking through what will happen to me and other people before I do
     something?
H   How good am I at valuing my contribution/achievements?
I   How good do I feel about myself when I'm with other people?
J   How good am I at keeping my feelings under control in confrontational situations?
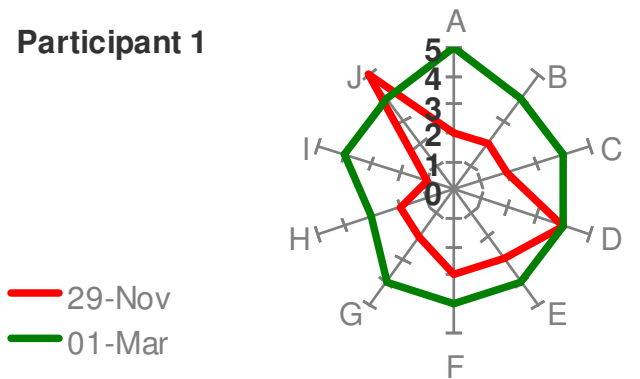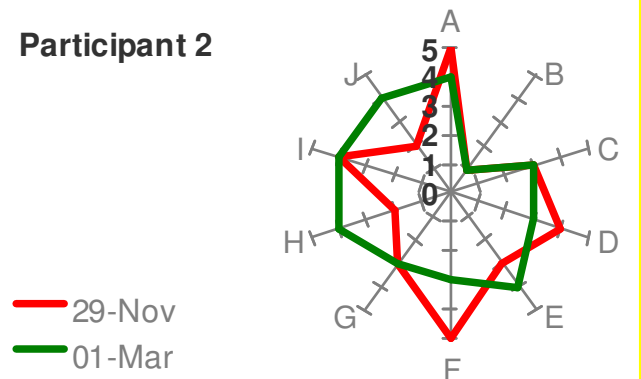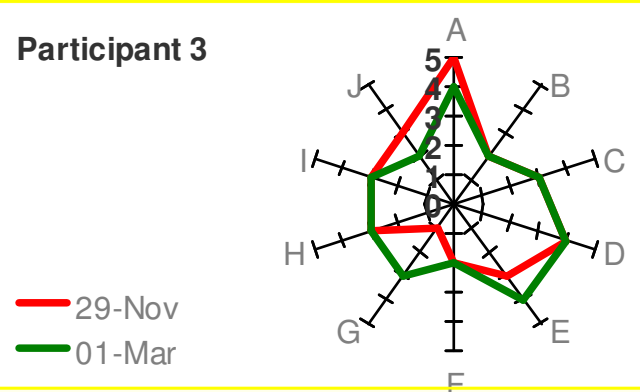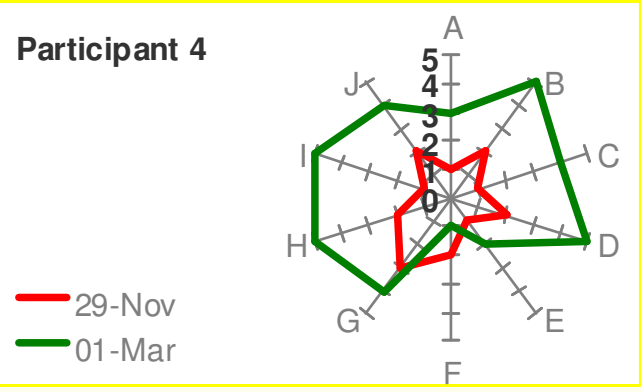
4.5 Achieve Economic Well-being
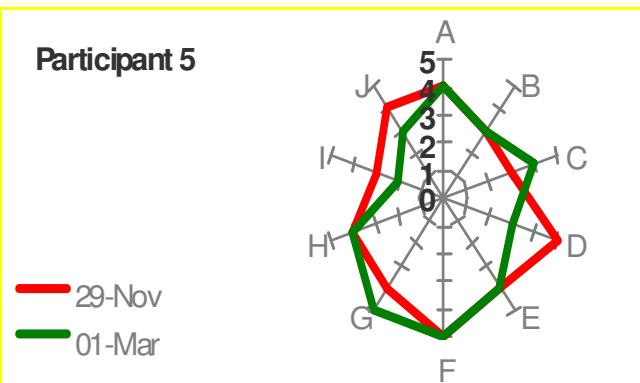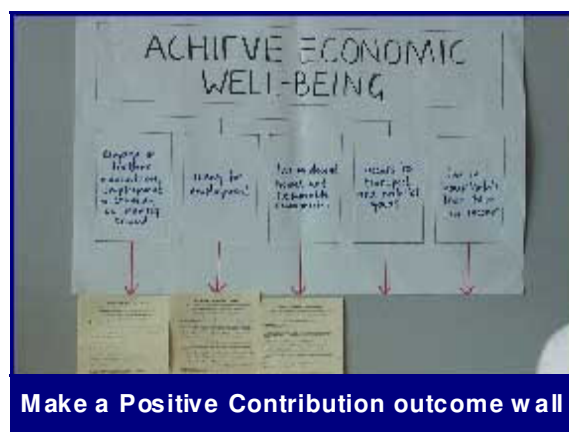
Education and training: By providing services such as one to one support, advice and signposting, courses, job clubs, adult literacy classes, diversionary activities and providing links to Connexions service users are supported to engage in further education, employment and training. Because of the strong relationship the voluntary and community sector has with the community they work in, they are often better placed because of their value-based systems of working, flexibility and non-stigmatising environment to work with young people, and offer alternative educational opportunities for those not in employment, education or training. The ability of many

Make a Positive Contribution outcome wall

voluntary sector organisations to work with young people and parents over a sustained period of time is an important factor in leading to positive outcomes in this area.

> **57%** of organisations identified an outcome of their work is that young people and parents learn about and engage in further education, employment and training opportunities

Holistic approach: People need to believe in themselves before there can be change and the voluntary and community sector plays a key role in building skills, confidence and self esteem to enable people to engage in

> **52%** of organisations identified that they work to break down barriers in terms of having low aspirations and expectations of what people think they can achieve

education and employment. By working with young people and parents in a holistic way, people learn how to become more positive about their future and self image in terms of education and prosperity. This has an impact on the extent to which individuals feel ready for employment.

Family-centred services: The way services are family-centred means they play a key role in breaking the intergenerational cycle around non-achievement. The role of parents is absolutely critical to achieving positive outcomes for children and young people and there is a real need to have a greater focus on parents and their relationship with their children. If young people are educated about issues soley through schools, it only targets the individual child and doesn't consider the conflicting messages the young person may get in the family home. Many voluntary and community sector organisations work to address parental experience of education and employment. If parents do not have sufficient self-esteem and confidence to gain further education and employment it is likely that this will be passed onto their children.

> **14%** of organisations identified they actively work to employ local people

Providing employment opportunities: There is a mismatch between job opportunities in Manchester and the capacity of local people to take advantage of these. The voluntary and community sector plays a key role in skilling up the local population both through paid and unpaid roles [6]. The voluntary and community sector provides a significant proportion of the volunteering opportunities within the city. This has a particular impact on improving outcomes for vulnerable groups.

---

6 Evidence from the UK Labour Force Survey indicates that the sector employed 608,000 people in 2004, an increase of 45,000 people since 2000.

> **23%** of organisations identified that providing crèche or childcare facilities was critical for parents to be able to go to work or seek work

Supporting employment: A lack of affordable childcare presents a serious barrier to parents taking up training and employment opportunities. There are many voluntary and community sector organisations who provide childcare, often in conjunction with adult learning courses. Service users may not feel confident to access more mainstream educational opportunities initially and these organisations give many people the opportunity to develop skills and build confidence in their abilities.   By being very much service-user led organisations are also able to be flexible to the changing needs and interests of their user groups.

Advice and support: Support in accessing advice and support in relation to debt relief and entitlement to benefits is an area of need which is identified by families to be of primary importance and is critical in terms of sustaining their level of well-being. It is especially important for young people as they do not access mainstream advice services. Meeting this need is of crucial importance in terms of preventing family breakdown and supporting lone parent families. Because of their independent position voluntary and community organisations are well placed to play the role of an advocate to ensure young people and parents receive all the support they are entitled to. This type of engagement is often used as way of developing a relationship and trust with the service user who may be suffering from multiple disadvantage which the organisation is then well placed to respond to.

> **23%** of organisations identified that they provide advice and support to ensure that individuals and families are receiving all types of benefits they are entitled to

5 Proving Outcomes

Difficult to prove: It is acknowledged in *Every Child Matters* that sharing data on outcomes and developing an integrated needs analysis can be a very good focus for initial work among a wide group of local partners from both statutory and voluntary sectors and lead to better joint working at many levels. All voluntary and community organisations are clear about the unique role they play in contributing to the five Every Child Matters outcomes. Much of their support is flexible, low level and preventative and may take place before, during or after a crisis while some contribute directly to meeting higher level need. Certainly the value of the knowledge held within the voluntary and community sector is crucial to ensuring a robust commissioning process. However, in practical terms many voluntary sector organisations do not have the capacity to carry out detailed needs assessments or producing evidence of what they do other than what is required from funders.

Lack of evidence: For many voluntary and community sector organisations, person centred working is a core value. Organisations are in a good position to spot and address emerging needs and gaps in provision. They are trusted and valued by local communities and are able to reach groups who may not find mainstream services accessible. Voluntary and community sector organisations know they are meeting local need through regular contact with service users. Because organisations (especially smaller organisations) are flexible and non-bureaucratic, their services can be shaped easily according to changing demands with many organisations responding to need before it may even be statistically recognised. However, currently few organisations collect adequate evidence to prove the outcomes of the services they provide and usually a lot of knowledge is locked in the head of the person who's gathered it. This may partly be to do with a perception that outcomes monitoring may appear to get in the way of the 'real' work.

This is something as a sector we need to get better at. However, current monitoring and evaluation requirements exert demands on the voluntary sector which are difficult to respond to, and the voluntary and community sector does not have the capacity to make the big leaps in terms of monitoring and evaluation requirements which may be asked of them.

Difficult to measure: The majority of organisations provide 'connected care' services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage with a range of complex needs. This makes it very difficult to pin services down to individual outcomes or to fit types of support into focused targets for funders. Many organisations feel that there is a real issue around measuring how a service directly contributes to an improvement in someone's life.

> *'It is really hard to say that because I did this, this is the outcome'*
>
> (VCS organisation, Wythenshawe district)
>
> *'There is an assumption that you can actually measure those outcomes, and some of them I don't think you can'*
>
> (VCS organisation, central west district)

It is very difficult to measure what actual difference a service has made when it is preventative work, and also to what extent a change in a person or family is down to a particular intervention. A service may be provided and the outcomes measured, but it may be difficult to measure the link between the two and attribute the change to that intervention. There is a particular problem for projects who try to measure outcomes for campaigning and advocacy work. The organisation can measure outputs, such as the level of participation in campaigning and there is often information publicly available about policy change. However, unless policy-makers are willing to admit that campaigning or advocacy work has influenced the change, it may be difficult or impossible to prove the link between the two.

> *It's really difficult to say that an improvement is actually down to you. How do you show that? Also proving that it's a prolonged outcome is even harder'*
>
> (VCS organisation, north east district)
>
> *'What we also do is a lot of work that is preventative - you can't prove that there would have been a crime – it is very hard'*
>
> (VCS organisation, central east district)

Being soley target driven can cause problems, because it detracts from looking at the longer term. Most monitoring cycles are for a year, but organisations may find that it takes longer than a year for change to be apparent for their clients. One year statistics can therefore show low rates of success.

Person-centred, or family-centred services will contribute to achieving different types of outcomes for different service users depending on their needs, and in a similar vein the same service will have a different impact on a service user depending on the other issues that person is currently dealing with. Consequently *when* you measure the outcome will have an impact on the results you get. Outcomes sometimes appear to worsen over time. Service users may report their views more accurately as their trust or awareness grows and this can lead to outcomes appearing to worsen.

Better relationship with funders: There needs to be an increased recognition that different agencies have a *shared* responsibility for outcomes. This is reflected in the fact that another service or agency will claim that they have achieved outcomes which are partially down to your organisation. Better relationships need to be developed between funders and service providers otherwise work could be threatened by a tendency for funding bodies to demand immeasurable outcomes. It is important to understand where there are limits on what can be reliably or usefully measured within the time and resources available. There needs to be a recognition that services are designed to meet a range of complex needs, which is something which is difficult to measure but must be given the weight it deserves when a decision is made to fund a project.

'I think there is a need for training. I think we should be thinking about outcomes more, but we need training about how to think carefully about what your outcomes are. So when funding does come along you are very clear on what your outcomes are and your not trying to match your outcomes to fit a fund'

(VCS organisation, south district)

Organisations need to be supported to build their capacity to be able to meet new requirements. For the voluntary and community sector to have confidence in evaluation, there needs to be clarity about how it can be used to build and develop organisational capacity.

6 Joint Working

Real partnership: All organisations interviewed cited positive examples of multi-agency working and viewed it as critical to the success of achieving positive outcomes for children and families. The position of voluntary and community sector organisations within the community and their ability to offer an independent voice means they are well trusted and well placed to compliment the work of statutory agencies. Because organisations work to build voluntary relationships over time, based on mutual trust and respect they often act a crucial link to 'harder to reach' groups of people.

> *'We do a lot of joint work. Say we've done a child protection referral to social services, we'll go out with the social worker on an initial visit. I think that works quite well because we've had the relationship with the family first'*
>
> (VCS organisation, NE district)
>
> *'I think there has always been that fear in certain communities of social services coming and taking your children off you. It's really important that workers from a voluntary sector project like ours don't go along with that. If we're negative about statutory services it's not going to be helpful. Our role should be about enabling access to those services. We've had to make families understand that this is our role, and that is their role and that we're working together to improve the lives of the children'*
>
> (VCS organisation, NE district)

Understanding local need: A strength of the voluntary and community sector in terms of multi-agency work is the knowledge it holds on local needs through its ability to ensure effective participation of local people in the development of its services. For many, especially smaller organisations, person-centred working is a core value. The larger and more bureaucratic an organisation becomes the harder this becomes to sustain. Many statutory workers share this value, however certain statutory responsibilities often act as a constraint. The level of understanding and expertise around the needs of the people of Manchester that is held within the voluntary and community sector workforce in Manchester is under-recognised. The voluntary and community sector are a source of intelligence about unmet need, about what works and what the felt impact is of new policy initiatives on the ground.

> *'I think that the key to success has been keeping it very local, keeping local people involved at all levels and keep talking to them'*
>
> (VCS organisation, north west district)
>
> *'There have been quite a lot of problems on the estate recently with gangs of young people and a couple of months ago we were saying to the police we could feel the beginnings of something. Had they listened to us at that point, perhaps we wouldn't have got to the stage where they were asking us to refer families to them. I was trying to say to them yesterday, statutory agencies come in, deliver things and go away. We remain here and trust us if we feel things are happening, trust us that we know what we're saying. Treat us as professionals and listen to what we're saying'*
>
> (VCS organisation, south district)

Cultural Barriers: In terms of barriers to achieving effective multi-agency working there continues to be a lack of understanding between agencies around ways of working. There are real differences in the way voluntary sector and statutory sector agencies work, which is compounded by the diversity of organisations within the voluntary and community sector with their own different structures, systems, skills, capacity and priorities. Because of culture differences between the voluntary sector and statutory sector, some organisations feel that that voluntary and community organisations are not perceived to be equal partners.

Although there are figureheads within the voluntary and community sector, the lack of a 'chief executive' of the voluntary and community sector, or clear traditional structure of accountability for the whole sector, means that the value of the sector as a *whole* is sometimes not given recognition in the same way as is possible for other sectors. The lack of written evidence to prove the value of the sector, is sometimes equated as a lack of professionalism. This needs to be addressed by focusing on developing learning and understanding within and between the sectors.

'I think it takes a long time for external organisations to understand that if they work with us it can actually benefit them, and help them meet their aims as well. That can be a barrier, and it is about people understanding and valuing what we do'

(VCS organisation, central west district)

'I do still feel that people view community and youth workers as 'do-gooders'. And I hope that we do good, but we're not 'do-gooders'. If someone says "I'm a social worker" people understand what that is and they know that there is a degree of professionalism, but when you say that you're a community worker or a play worker, I don't think that people understand what that is, and what is involved'

(VCS organisation, central west district)

'I was in a meeting yesterday with police and housing and youth contact team. They were talking about multi-agency working and how we can refer people to them, but they never at any point asked us at any point to be engaged in the whole process or to attend these multi-agency meetings'

(VCS organisation, south district)

Responsibility on both sides: Through the *Every Child Matters* agenda all types of agencies are under pressure to respond to fast paced change and to renegotiate their roles and relationships with each other. At a strategic level, differences in culture create a different reality for each person representing a different agency (or a whole sector) with a different set of problems or issues. With the growing involvement of the voluntary and community sector as a strategic partner within the city, care must be taken to ensure that no type of agency is devalued because of differences in ways of working. The voluntary and community sector must take on some responsibility for providing a better evidence base to prove the value of their work, while at the same time organisations must be equipped with adequate resources and the capacity to enable them to improve their ways of working and engage at a strategic level.

7 Conclusion

This piece of work has provided a snapshot of how the voluntary and community sector in Manchester plays a critical role in maintaining the well-being of children, young people and families. Some of these interventions have a preventative function and thereby reduce demand on statutory services. Some respond directly to higher level need. Most operate an empowerment model and most have grown as a response to unmet need. In many cases local people have developed their own services.

Commonly identified outcomes of voluntary and community sector provision include:

- Developing coping skills, resilience and strategies to deal with personal challenges
- Prevention of more serious needs developing
- Improving the quality of decision making in relation to risk–taking behaviour
- Prevention of self destructive behaviours developing
- Developing confidence and employability
- Promoting independence and self-help
- Reducing isolation and vulnerability
- Building trust and respect
- Enabling better choices
- Developing positive relationships within families
- Reducing stigma attached to receiving support
- Enabling individuals to reach their potential
- Enabling personal and social development
- Diversion of individuals into positive behaviour
- Changing attitudes to learning
- Developing individuals ability to express themselves
- Broadening horizons and aspirations
- Enabling meaningful participation
- Improving perception of self-image and developing self belief

---

7.1 Recommendations for other agencies and sectors

Shared agenda: Statutory agencies often find difficulty in delivering a preventative agenda even when the will is there to do so. There needs to be greater recognition that by supporting and working the with voluntary and community sector it can help them deliver this aspect of their remit.

Greater understanding: There needs to be a greater focus on developing awareness and understanding of the different, yet complementary, role of the voluntary and community sector within other agencies. Key things which need to be better understood are:

- The diversity of the sector
- The high quality of services provided by the sector
- The role of sector as a voice for the community as well as a service provider

Once an awareness and understanding of these factors has been developed, agencies need to work to find ways of engaging with organisations and work alongside them to meet shared goals.

Target setting: The knowledge held within the voluntary and community sector around local need and the impact of policies on the ground is under-recognised. Voluntary and community sector organisations need to have greater involvement in target setting and the development of strategic processes from the start.

Investment: Greater investment needs to take place around development and infrastructure funding for the voluntary and community sector. There needs to be recognition that engaging at a strategic level is just as much a part of providing a service as service delivery itself or meeting monitoring and evaluation requirements. Sufficient funding needs to be made available for the voluntary and community sector to carry out this activity.

7.2 Recommendations for the voluntary and community sector

Quality: Organisations need to take on a greater responsibility for measuring the impact and quality of their work with a focus on outcomes. Organisations need to invest capacity in setting up more robust monitoring and evaluation systems.

Collaboration: There needs to be greater collaborative working. Organisations need to work together to share good practice, resources and skills.

Better dialogue: The voluntary and community sector needs to get better at communicating the benefits to statutory agencies of collaborating at a strategic and service delivery level with the voluntary and community sector.

Growing awareness: Organisations need to recognise their growing role in shaping the strategic agenda in the city and be proactive in recognising and communicating their capacity/support needs to enable them to engage with this.

7.3 Recommendations for commissioners

Level Playing Field: There needs to be recognition that organisations within the voluntary and community sector are not participating on a level playing field. There is a need to build sustainable capacity within small to medium sized organisations to protect smaller projects from being lost.

Trust: Commissioners need to trust the rationale behind clearly thought out proposals from voluntary and community sector providers. Issues that might restrict an organisations ability to provide detailed needs analysis or comply with performance management requirements must be approached as capacity issues requiring support rather than a reason not to commission an organisation or suspend an effective service.

Local Need: Voluntary and community sector organisations operate closer to people and are therefore well placed to inform local needs analyses. Commissioners need to listen to the sector whether they buy from them or not.

Social Enterprise: Opportunities for organisations to transform into social enterprises should be explored.

7.4 Recommendations for all

Clearer links: Clearer links need to be made between statutory services and voluntary and community based programmes which work with children, young people and families.

Shared Workforce Development: There needs to be a better mutual understanding of the structures, working practices and priorities that apply to different organisations and agencies. All types of agencies would greatly benefit from more multi-agency training and shared workforce development opportunities.

Sustainability: There needs to be greater use of the Compact as a framework to strengthen the relationship between the voluntary and community sector and other agencies and make them sustainable.

7.5 Further research

We believe further research would be useful in a number of areas:

Service Partnerships: Additional qualitative research should recognise issues around the perception of working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector both on the ground.   It would be useful to look at perceptions of the sector amongst front line and managerial level workers from other sectors. This could result in a better understanding of barriers and motivations to work in a multi-agency way.

Strategic Partnerships: Voluntary and community sector organisations are increasingly being expected to participate at a strategic level.   Qualitative research would be of value to look at what the costs and benefits of this may be for the sector.

Workforce Development: Quantitative and qualitative research is needed to better understand who makes up the voluntary and community sector workforce in Manchester. This should identify the number and type of workers; the main skills shortages; the barriers to addressing skills gaps and how these can be overcome.

Commissioning: Finally, qualitative research is needed to look into the capacity of voluntary and community sector organisations to get involved in the commissioning culture. This should identify to what extent voluntary and community organisations are disadvantaged in this process and how this gap can be reduced.

Bibliography

Burns, S & Culpitt, S (2003) *'Managing outcomes: a guide for homelessness organisations'* Charity Evaluation Services: London.

Charities Evaluation Services (2000) *'Discussion Paper 7: Outcome monitoring'* Charity Evaluation Services: London.

Charities Evaluation Services (2002) *'First steps in monitoring and evaluation'* Charities Evaluation Services London.

Charities Evaluation Services (2005) '*Practical monitoring and evaluation: a guide for voluntary organisations'* Charity Evaluation Services: London

Culpitt, S & Ellis, J (2004) *'Your project and its outcomes'* Charities Evaluation Services: London.

DfES (2003) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications/

DfES (2004) *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications/ Dwyer, F; Flemming & Hamilton, A (2004) *'Improving our Skills: A Skills Strategy for the Voluntary and Community Sector'* NCVO Publications.

DfES (2004) *The Children Act* http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrenactreport/

HM Treasury (2002) *'The Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery – A Cross Cutting Review'* The Stationary Office Ltd: London.

Manchester Partnership (2005) *'The Manchester Partnership: Working together to improve the quality of life within Manchester. Annual Report 2004/2005'* Hudson and Pearson Ltd.

Marris, V (2004) *'From Playgroups to Prisoners Families: A study of voluntary sector children and families services in Manchester'* Manchester Metropolitan University.

NCVO (2006) *'The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2006: The State of the Sector'* NCVO Publications.

Wilding, K; Collis, B; Lacey, M and McCullough, G (2003) *'Future Skills 2003. A skills foresight research report on the voluntary sector paid workforce'* Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation.

Wythenshawe Regeneration (2006) *'Voluntary Sector Audit of Parenting and Family Support Services for District Collaboration'.*

Abbreviations

CFSF	Child & Family Support Forum	MACC	Manchester Alliance for Community Care
CN4M	Community Network for Manchester	PSA	Public Service Agreement
ECM	Every Child Matters	VAM	Voluntary Action Manchester
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership		

Appendix

Appendix 1 Research Flyer

CHILD & FAMILY SUPPORT FORUM — **Evaluation of Voluntary Sector Services** — **macc**

We know that the voluntary sector makes a unique contribution to children and family services in terms of value for money, innovation, flexibility and ability to reach the mast hard to reach groups of service users. What we also know is that due to capacity, groups rarely have time to provide documented evidence of this.

Central to the Government's shift towards the integration at Children's Services is the requirement for service providers to show how they contribute to city-wide targets underpinned by the five key outcomes outlined in Every Child Matters. The aim of this is to improve child outcomes by ensuring services are focused specifically around the needs of the child.

The Child and Family Support Forum is seeking to produce written evidence supporting the valuable contribution of the voluntary sector. We aim to do this by working with a number of groups and measuring the positive outcomes of their services over a period of ti me. By doing this we hope to strengthen the practical contribution of the voluntary and community sector in the redevelopment of services by:

- Identifying the unique contribution of the voluntary and community sector
- Demonstrating the value of joint working and planning with the voluntary sector
- Increase the capacity of the voluntary sector to evaluate and measure the outcomes of its work
- Feed this information back into the Children and Young People's Partnership and other planning structures

We are writing to invite you to get involved!

We need numerous voluntary and community organisations of all shapes and sizes to become involved - the more diversity we get, the better the results.
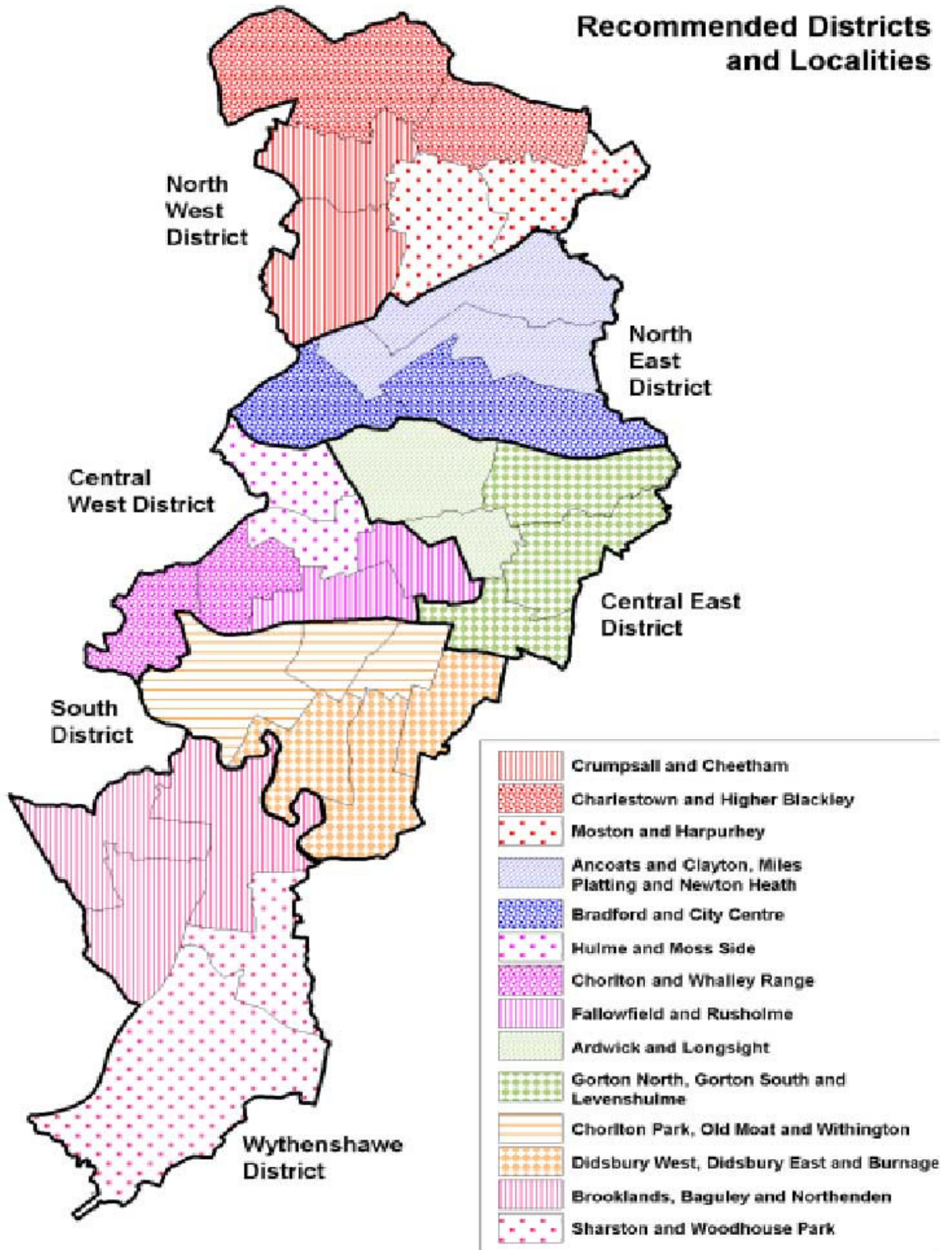
We recognise that we're asking for some commitment in terms of time - but we aim to keep this to a minimum - if you can spare the time to talk to us, we will do all of the writing up and collatinq information. We feel that by working collaboratively, we can share experience and expertise and make the effort a worthwhile investment. Furthermore, through being involved your organisation, will directly benefit in a number of ways:

- measuring outcomes will help you to plan and gain future funding
- you will build up evidence to prove that your services are demand-led
- you will have joint ownership over a piece of research that A il l be critical in
- strengthening the position of the voluntary sector in the provision of children's services.

If you would be interested in discussing this further and being involved, please contact

Ruth Craven
Child and Family Support Forum Project Worker
Manchester Alliance for Community Care (MACC)
Tel: 0161 834 9823   Email: ruth@macc.org.uk

Appendix 2 Map of Children's Services district boundaries

Recommended Districts and Localities

North West District

North East District

Central West District

Central East District

South District

Wythenshawe District

	Crumpsall and Cheetham
	Charlestown and Higher Blackley
	Moston and Harpurhey
	Ancoats and Clayton, Miles Platting and Newton Heath
	Bradford and City Centre
	Hulme and Moss Side
	Chorlton and Whalley Range
	Fallowfield and Rusholme
	Ardwick and Longsight
	Gorton North, Gorton South and Levenshulme
	Chorlton Park, Old Moat and Withington
	Didsbury West, Didsbury East and Burnage
	Brooklands, Baguley and Northenden
	Sharston and Woodhouse Park

Appendix 3 Range of interventions/activities carried out by participating organisations

- Accessible computer training
- Activities for disabled children and their families
- Adult education courses
- Advice and support to young people with mental health needs
- Advice and workshops for parents of disabled children
- Advocacy
- After school provision
- Aids and adaptations for visual impairment and training for staff
- Arts and crafts activities
- Awareness sessions around running away
- Befriending
- Benefits advice
- Bereavement counselling
- Breakfast club
- Breaks for young carers
- Breast feeding support groups
- Bullying sessions
- Careers advice
- Child contact centre
- Child protection policy and training
- Child support workers
- Community engagement of young people
- Consultations with young people
- Cooking club
- Counselling service
- Creché
- Credit Union
- Cultural visits to libraries, museums etc
- Culture education
- Dads awareness group
- Diversionary activities for young people
- Domestic violence sessions
- Drop in sessions in schools
- Drugs awareness session
- Drugs education for parents
- Early talk sessions
- Emotional literacy programme in schools
- Family support
- First aid training
- Free home safety equipment and safety advice
- Group sessions in schools
- Harm reduction with young people
- Health and fitness group
- Health sessions
- Healthy eating and cooking activities
- Healthy living project
- Help with general drug use ad overdose prevention
- Holiday schemes and trips
- Home visits

- Homework clubs
- Housing advice
- Independent living skills workshops
- Informal education sessions
- Information on training and education
- Internet access
- IT photography lessons
- Job club for those not in employment education or training
- Male/Female relationships workshops
- Management committee of local people
- Men and boys family fun days
- Mentoring service
- Midwife and health visitor drop in for homeless young people
- Music sessions
- Newsletters
- One to one support for parents and young people
- One-to-one support for families affected by HIV
- Outside adventure playgrounds
- Parent and toddler sessions
- Parenting courses
- Peer support groups
- Personal advisors
- Physical activities
- Play sessions
- Regular meetings for young carers
- Road awareness programme
- Self esteem and confidence sessions
- Sessions around resolving family conflict
- Sexual health advice
- Signposting to other agencies
- Street pastors
- Support on housekeeping and financial planning
- Support to return home
- Supported accommodation
- Supported play
- Swimming lessons
- Training in personal protection/threat protection/anger management
- Transition group for children starting school
- Translation services
- Violence and sexual abuse sessions
- Volunteering opportunities
- Work placements
- Young men's health project
- Young mums craft sessions
- Youth drop in
- Youth forums
- Youth groups
- Youth support before and after leaving school

Appendix 4 About MACC

Manchester Alliance for Community Care (MACC) is a voluntary and community sector development agency which works to reduce inequalities in health and social care and wellbeing across Manchester. We support themed networks of voluntary and community sector groups. MACC's staff team provides a policy and development unit for local groups, particularly small and medium sized groups whose capacity is limited. Here are examples of our work:

- Hold regular meetings to bring people together build consensus.
- Share examples of good and poor practice.
- Provide briefings on health and social care policy and planning. MACC views "health" in the widest sense and has a view across different areas of the local economy to share ideas and learning.
- Raise awareness of the needs of people who are disadvantaged by society and the role of the sector in supporting them.
- Enhance the voice of smaller groups, particularly those working with marginalised communities.
- Develop partnership working within the sector and with statutory agencies, including creating shared mechanisms to enable collaboration.
- Help groups gather evidence of the real experiences of people using services and feed it into planning.
- Undertake research to show how the voluntary sector already contributes to the health and social care economy and improving the quality of life of people in Manchester and how this can be developed further.
- Promote the skills of the voluntary and community sector to statutory partners.
- Work to increase sector's contribution to commissioning processes and practice. We collect information to contribute to identifying needs, planning and design and help build groups' capacity for meaningful and practical monitoring and evaluation.
- Provide an accountable structure for representation on commissioning panels.
- Inform groups about health and social care commissioning mechanisms and opportunities to develop and deliver services.

Appendix 5 About the Child & Family Support Forum

The Child & Family Support Forum is a network of voluntary and community sector organisations working with and for children and families in Manchester. The Forum works to strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sector as a provider of support and as a strategic partner in the city. The Forum aims to:

- Highlight the needs of a sustainable voluntary and community sector
- Promote the idea of commissioning services to voluntary and community groups
- Raise awareness of the needs and rights of children and families
- Support the work of Voluntary Youth Manchester, joining forces on issues we share with young people
- Prove how the voluntary and community sector contributes to improving quality of life
- Help voluntary and community sector organisations to understand the broader context in which they are working
- Gather views and experiences to feed into local planning
- Share good practice and recognise the need for partnership

We do this through:

- A regular newsletter
- Regular meetings to share information, give support and gather views on a range of issues
- City-wide and local networking events
- Supporting voluntary sector participation on different strategic groups
- Information e-bulletins and our Website www.macc.org.uk

Index

Manchester Alliance for Community Care
Swan Buildings
20, Swan Street
Ancoats
Manchester
M4 5JW

T : (0161) 834 9823
F : (0161) 832 2352

E : ruth@macc.org.uk