



CVS



Annual Report to Macclesfield Town Council February 2025



Annual Partnership Report Macclesfield Town Council

1st February 2024 to 31st January 2025

Since January 2022, CVS Cheshire East has been contracted by Macclesfield Town Council to support the VCFSE (Voluntary, Community, Faith, Social Enterprise) sector in the town and civil parish. This partnership aims to foster a robust voluntary and community service that effectively meets the needs of local residents.

Community groups and organisations play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for local residents. They provide essential services, such as support for those facing social isolation, food insecurity, and other challenges. These groups foster a sense of belonging and community, creating opportunities for social interaction and mutual support. Additionally, they often collaborate with the Town Council to organise inclusive events and activities, enriching the cultural and social fabric of the area. By addressing specific needs and promoting community engagement, these organisations help build a stronger, more resilient community where residents feel supported and connected.

Macclesfield has a vibrant and diverse voluntary sector, ranging from tiny community-based organisations dedicated to reducing social isolation and loneliness on local estates, foodbanks offering comprehensive support to those facing food insecurity, and a thriving cultural sector that partners with the Council to create inclusive events for the community throughout the year. CVS supports these organisations in conjunction with the Council, helping them remain viable and sustainable so that they can continue to serve their communities effectively.

The Service Level Agreement priorities for CVS are to:

- Support Macclesfield groups with their development and income generation and income diversification
- Support the Town Council Grants programmes to organisations that deliver services in Macclesfield and provide assistance to those organisations
- Assist VCF organisations to become more environmentally sustainable
- Create an online Community for Macclesfield, both for volunteers and for Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCFS) organisations
- Create a bank of Volunteers to work with the Town Council and associated groups in the community

Supporting Macclesfield Groups With Their Development

Over the past year, CVS has supported eighteen organisations with the governance, funding, training, and volunteering aspects of their work, contributing to a stronger and more resilient community. CVS's mission is to build a robust and sustainable voluntary sector by helping organisations develop growth strategies. A defined roadmap for future progress enables both large and small organisations to plan effectively and create greater stability for themselves and the communities they serve. In the current climate, with shrinking funding pots and increased competition, there is a recognised need for collaboration and co-production among organisations, to share costs and maximize funding opportunities. CVS fosters these relationships to create stronger initiatives and empowers organisations to diversify their income sources, reducing reliance on grants.

A significant example of CVS's support in the past twelve months has been the assistance provided to the Disability Information Bureau (DIB) since July 2024. The charity faced potential closure due to rising costs, an expensive IT support contract, and insufficient fundraising, which led to the depletion of its reserves. Staff received redundancy notices, but the EGM to vote for closure was not quorate. This gave CVS the opportunity to meet with the Board and offer its services to restructure the organisation and save both DIB and Shopmobility from closure. We reprofiled an existing National Lottery grant, saving five jobs and keeping Shopmobility, a vital mobility service for Macclesfield residents, operational.

CVS has been contracted to manage DIB and Shopmobility until the end of March 2025. During this period, we have also introduced a donations scheme, which, together with additional grant funding, has secured £45,000 in additional income for the year. We also replaced the IT provider with a more cost-effective service. The charity's administration has been streamlined, becoming more environmentally sustainable in terms of paper use and overhead costs. The Board is also being strengthened to oversee the charity more effectively. CVS will continue to work with DIB until July, with the aim then of recruiting a part-time CEO to run the charity. In the meantime, other income generation avenues, including grant funding, will be explored.



Governance Support

Good governance is the backbone of a charitable organisation's success, helping it to navigate challenges, maintain credibility, and achieve its mission in a sustainable manner. Having robust rules and processes in place for the day to day running of and overall wellbeing of an organisation, is vital for the longevity of an organisation. CVS supported seven additional organisations this year with their governance, ranging from a review of policies in general (Gawsworth Community Hub) to the development of a trustee recruitment policy (Macclesfield Community Artspace). Save Danes Moss became a Charitable Incorporation Organisation and Elov became a Community Interest Company after meeting with CVS to discuss options for their applications. The One Project has yet to make its CIO application but will be supported by CVS. Make it Macclesfield is using its feasibility grant to explore building usage of the old M&S building in the town centre and CVS offered support with community consultation as well as signposting MIM to Cheshire Community Action for building advice. Speaking Up Speaking Out met up with CVS to investigate ways of streamlining its services and maximising its finances in the wake of its unsuccessful application to the National Lottery Fund. Unfortunately, the charity has had to close but CVS continues to support it with its plans to run activities on a voluntary basis for its former members.

Funding Support

The funding landscape in Cheshire East, like every other region, is experiencing a number of challenges now. The cost of living crisis and previous government funding cuts have reduced funding pots available and increased overhead costs for charities. The demand for charitable services has concurrently increased, partly due to those economic challenges faced by many individuals and communities and is putting additional pressure on already stretched resources. Exploring diverse income streams, strengthening community engagement and closer collaborative and partnership working is becoming more and more important and CVS is working with the sector to try and strengthen these areas in order to create more opportunities to attract funds.

CVS provided different levels of fundraising advice through the year to a number of organisations. Some organisations were simply signposted e.g. Cre8, who were successful in their application to Macclesfield Town Council for their foodbank project and a funding search for MyCWA to continue its operations in Macclesfield. A readthrough with commentary of application drafts was provided by CVS for Citizens Advice Cheshire North and SUSO and Macclesfield Community Artspace was put forward for a £10k grant from Cheshire East Council cultural economy department. SUSO was also exploring different forms of income generation as it realised it could not rely solely on grants.

CVS also reviewed the grant applications to Macclesfield Town Council funding throughout the year, commenting on them and where requested, and offering additional support where needed e.g. Tytherington FC in terms of governance as they want to expand their organisation. In total eighteen grant applications were reviewed.



VCFSE project development in Macclesfield – Supporting the wider community

Working collaboratively offers numerous benefits for charitable organisations, enhancing their ability to achieve their missions and serve their communities effectively. By pooling resources, sharing expertise, and coordinating efforts, organisations can tackle complex challenges more efficiently and create a greater impact. Collaboration fosters innovation, as diverse perspectives lead to creative solutions and new opportunities.

Whilst also supporting organisations to secure funding, we have provided more practical support to those in need in Macclesfield. St John's Ambulance and SUSO have been offered space in the DIB and Shopmobility to run sessions, and Cheshire, Halton & Warrington Race Equality Centre runs their ESOL classes from Shopmobility, supporting refugees in Macclesfield to improve their English. YMCA Cheshire has also been talking with CVS as they look to expand their operations into Macclesfield and are searching for accommodation for young people. They are also exploring the opportunity of creating a community hub with CVS and DIB and any other interested charities, for closer networking opportunities.

Overall, collaborative efforts not only enhance the effectiveness of individual organisations but also strengthen the entire community, making it more resilient and better equipped to address future challenges.

Volunteering and VCFS Hub

CVS Cheshire East's Macclesfield Hub page has details of groups and charities operating in the Macclesfield area, along with the volunteering roles available with those organisations. The Town Council has a link to the hub on their website. CVS promotes the hub and encourages organisations and individuals to register their interest on the site to access opportunities. In the past year, 302 volunteer registrations were from people living in Macclesfield. Macclesfield District General Hospital is the single largest recruiter of Macclesfield residents, responsible for recruiting approximately 85% of that figure. Volunteering rates have still not yet reached pre-pandemic levels although they are increasing, and the average number of hours spent volunteering has decreased. The cost of living and increased demand for services has put additional pressure on volunteering services.



VCFSE Sector And The Environment

Macclesfield continues to have a strong environmental ethos, with numerous organisations and initiatives dedicated to sustainability and environmental protection. Groups like Macctastic, One Project, Scoop & Scales, and The Repair Cafe are actively involved in various projects around the town. These organisations focus on reducing carbon emissions, promoting zero-waste practices, and encouraging community involvement in environmental activities. Macclesfield Town Council also plays a significant role in supporting these efforts, working alongside local groups to foster a greener community. Initiatives such as the Macclesfield Town Centre Recovery Group (now renamed Macclesfield Town Council Regeneration Group) and the annual Environmental Summit highlight the town's commitment to sustainability. CVS remains a member of the Regeneration Group and contributes when possible, to aid the development and promotion of Macclesfield. This includes being part of the town centre community consultation being held later in the year.

Macclesfield boasts a strong community spirit and a commitment to enhancing the town and parish in areas such as the environment, culture, and community support. This dedication is evident in the wide range of community projects and the support provided by Macclesfield Town Council, which understands the power of community collaboration. CVS enjoys a very positive relationship with the Council, and it has been as usual, a pleasure working with the Clerk, Laura and her colleagues Helena, Abi, Rachel, Nicola and Amanda.

