



**Community Media
for Greater
Manchester:
An ambition for
connected later life**

**A report by
Social Spider CIC
May 2018**

SocialSpider



Contributors

This report has been produced by Social Spider CIC, with contributions from:

- David Floyd
- Mark Brown
- Jason Bergen
- Shirley Ayres
- Anna Merryfield
- Ffion Plant

Social Spider CIC

The Mill
1-11 Coppermill Lane
Walthamstow
E17 7HA

Phone: 02085217956

Email: hello@socialspider.com



Contents

Contributors	3
Contents.....	5
Forward.....	7
Making community media happen.....	8
Imagining a community media for older people in Greater Manchester	8
The purpose of this document.....	9
A vision for community media that ends isolation for older people in Greater Manchester	10
The emotional landscape of ageing and isolation.....	12
The promise for community media to create connection and reduce isolation	12
Defining community media	14
The conditions required for community media	16
The three building blocks of community media: distribution; people; and production and producers.....	17
1. Distribution	17
2. People as partners in community media.....	20
3. Production and Producers	21
Issues, expectations and considerations for community media and older people in Greater Manchester.....	24
1. Community buy in.....	24
2. Radio versus print versus online.....	25
Broadcast radio	26
Internet radio	26
Internet television / video recording.....	27
Written online media	28
Printed media –	29
3. Business models and Sustainability	30
What does community media look like? Community media case studies	32
Radio Stations.....	33
Written community media (online):.....	35
Written community media (print).....	36
Community television	38

What's it like to do community media projects? Social Spider's own experience	39
Current conditions for community media in Greater Manchester	42
The current potential for distribution and dissemination of community media products	44
The current potential for partnering with older people to make media	46
The current condition of community media practice	47
How far away is the community media future for older people in Greater Manchester?	48
What could community media for older people in Greater Manchester look like?	49
Making community media for older people real	51



Forward

Nobody knows what it is like to be a member of a community or group better than those who belong to it. A Greater Manchester where older people define their own vision of what ageing means and create a vibrant cross-pollinating media community is a future many may find attractive.

Greater Manchester has made media history repeatedly and there is no reason to think that it will not continue to do so in future. A vision of a Greater Manchester with a tapestry of different community media addressing a variety of needs, desires, wishes and identities of people aged 50 and above is an engaging one, and perfectly captures the ambition of *Ambition for Ageing*. A landscape of community media would include a variety of forms of media, a variety of forms of distribution and a variety of audiences and producers.

Community media is a form of media which is accountable first and foremost to the community it serves, its content is usually produced by the community with the aim of responding to that community's needs, concerns and interests. Community media is both a process and the product of that process. People come together to make media which will be consumed by a circle far wider than those involved in its production. Some of that media might focus primarily on voice and visibility, some might focus on service and equality of access, some might focus on culture or the arts or commentary or criticism.

Globally, the media landscape is continuing to evolve and to come to terms with changing economic, cultural, technological and political realities. Organisations like The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard are actively trying to map future models and mediums for journalism and storytelling. Their <http://www.niemanlab.org/> is an excellent resource for understanding how news making is changing.

Media organisations old and new are trying to answer the question of how high quality, fact based content will reach people in ways that work for them with a business model that allows them to be created. The venerable Manchester Guardian may return to its birthplace, having shrunk as a paper newspaper while growing as an online one which still struggles to make ends meet. Other publications are disappearing behind paywalls, taking up online subscription models. Newspapers both national and local have gone to free distribution as a way of ensuring advertising sales. Public service broadcasters national and local are under pressure to cut costs, which often impacts first on local content. The promise of internet radio and internet TV reduced broadcast costs but has not necessarily driven up viewer or listenership. Quality media increasingly requires subscription while the quality of content in non-subscription services and publications seems to have dropped in inverse proportion to its ability to bring in advertising revenue. Making media that matters to people to the extent that they become a loyal audience is difficult. Balancing a business model that must address both quality and sustainability is not easy.

Making community media happen

The community media activity with which this document is concerned was conceived as one of a number of project ideas¹ developed from workshops which were then presented at a consultation event. Greater Manchester residents aged over 50 discussed the project ideas and shared their thoughts and comments. People wanted to know more about what is going on where they live and what activities and things are going on across Greater Manchester that interest them. It was suggested that the way in which this information is available is not easy to find. Too much information is just added onto websites. Many people over 50 would like to have information provided to them using different methods, other than printed media.

The key to unlocking potential for community media is first giving people license to believe it is possible. The second stage is finding the right combination of elements and people to set the ball rolling. The third is making the contract with the community either as producers or as audience: we are here for you and we care about what you care about. The fourth is keeping that contract by producing media that consistently surprises, interests and delights. The fifth is finding a way of getting enough money to keep the wheels turning.

There are three things that community media needs

- **People (the community that will make and consume it)**
- **Product (the actual media itself)**
- **Distribution (how it gets to people who weren't involved in making it)**

These are the building blocks of community media. Of the three distribution, the means by which the media reaches the audience it is intended for, is the hardest to replace or to build from scratch.

In shaping a call for community media to be brought into being that will help older people in Greater Manchester be more connected to opportunities, community and civic life, Ambition for Ageing will be providing a catalyst.

Imagining a community media for older people in Greater Manchester

Individuals and groups have always produced media, ranging from the pamphlets and broadsides of the early days of the printing press through to the evolution of journals, periodicals, newspapers, magazines as publishing and journalism matured into a trade. Alongside professional publications there have always been publications created by people with a desire to do so, from fanzines to parish newsletters to hyperlocal websites to niche publications produced by enthusiasts for enthusiasts. Commercial radio was born in the UK with the advent of pirate radio. Local television such as Granada was once truly local.

Truly local media was media that was embedded and was serving the interests of defined communities. In the past, local professional media has played this role through the paid employment of journalists and broadcasters. A business model where local communities paid for local newspapers and local business paid for advertising was at one point viable. The proliferation of media, from the increase in available television channels, the widespread availability of Video Recorders, through to the increasing democratisation of access to the web through low-cost internet-enabled devices eroded the direct local business model of such media.



¹ <https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/sites/default/files/Community%20Media.pdf>

Community media in many ways is a response to the ever accelerating media landscape leaving behind the creation of media as a social good. Ideas of democratisation of access have married with social purpose to create the idea of returning ownership and guardianship of media back to local communities. A common thread is the idea of supporting less-heard voices likely to be lost in the free-for-all of the media landscape and amplifying them to create media that speaks with a unique voice.

Producing media that is purely driven by profit is difficult enough. Producing media where content and business practices are shaped by social mission is even harder. Producing media where the main people creating the content are not professionals is harder still. Producing social media with an expressed social goal of motivating action adds further difficulty. Despite this people still make community media and the promise of community media continues to grow.

At its best, community media is the process by which the lived experience and insight of people rooted in communities is turned into media that reflects and understands the realities, challenges, opportunities and character of that community.

Imagine a Greater Manchester where older people make their own media on their own terms.



The purpose of this document

In November 2017 Ambition for Ageing Greater Manchester engaged Social Spider CIC as a partner to explore the viability of stimulating community media activity to reduce isolation and increase connection in people over 50 either at risk of or experiencing loneliness.

The initial impetus for the proposed funding of community media was older people's expressed desire to know what was going on around them in which they could take part or of which they could feel a part. The idea behind this was that existing mechanisms for disseminating information and creating inclusivity were not hitting their target of people at risk or experiencing isolation therefore helping communities guide or produce their own media would create products more likely to connect with the intended audiences.

Social Spider was asked to examine the existing landscape of communities, organisations and community media organisations with the intention of assessing the potential for the reduction of isolation and then the shaping of the community media funding opportunity to stimulate or develop activity.

Social Spider spoke to a number of organisations and individuals across Greater Manchester to build a picture of the possibilities for community media to reduce isolation for those over the age of 50.

This document outlines what community media is, the current conditions for making it happen in Greater Manchester, examples of community media from other places and explores some of the possibilities for the ways community media might change conditions that lead to older people being isolated within our communities.

A vision for community media that ends isolation for older people in Greater Manchester

Many of us are, by nature, social animals. We are programmed to need to feel part of something - a community, a network, a part of something bigger than ourselves. People can become socially isolated for a variety of reasons: getting older; family moving away; leaving the workplace; the deaths of spouses and friends; or through disability or illness; or at other points of transition or displacement.²

The value of effective and timely communication is a vital aspect of older people's everyday lives. Particular transitions associated with later life, if they are to be managed properly, depend on the provision of reliable and effective information and communication.

On a practical level, timely and good quality information allows older people to access basic resources, facilities, entitlements and benefits, gain access to the 'right' help and resources at the right time."^{3 45}

The review of evidence conducted to inform Ambition for Ageing identification of programmes⁶ stated that very little evidence had been submitted that enabled conclusions about what specifically makes information more age-friendly.

The Old Moat Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Report investigated the 'age-friendliness' of the Old Moat ward in Manchester. The research set out to test the model of an 'Age-friendly City' developed by the World Health Organisation. Whilst many organisations are moving towards 'digital by default' the report notes the importance of traditional

"There is no such thing as a hard to reach community in Greater Manchester. There is poor engagement and poor access but that is our responsibility"

Jon Rouse Chief Officer Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership.

"How well you communicate with your senior audience contributes to how well you meet their needs. Whether you provide services related to health, financial planning, travel and leisure, housing, or other services, keeping communication approaches and messages current is vital especially in this era of rapidly changing technology and information overload."²

It is important to develop platforms which enable older people to become partners in the decision-making processes in Greater Manchester, ensuring accountability and sensitivity to older peoples' concerns, results-based management of actions taken and oversight of initiatives through monitoring, evaluation, and reporting."

Making Greater Manchester Great for Older People: Ageing Actions for the Mayor's First 100 Days Dr. Elaine Dewhurst⁵

"All too often older people are treated as passive, dependent, vulnerable and in need of assistance. Taking a more proactive approach allows us to view older people as "leaders and transmitters of knowledge, culture, skills, and crafts" who "contribute greatly to the well-being of their families and communities"

(IINHCR 2011)⁴

² [Age-Friendly Communication: Facts, Tips and Ideas](#)

³ http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/micra/A%20Research%20and%20Evaluation%20Framework%20for%20Age-friendly%20Cities_web%20version.pdf

⁴ <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/women/4e7757449/unhcr-age-gender-diversity-policy-working-people-communities-equality-protection.html>

⁵ <http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/posts/2017/05/making-greater-manchester-great-for-older-people-ageing-actions-for-the-mayors-first-100-days/>

⁶ <https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/sites/default/files/Ambition%20for%20Ageing%20Review%20of%20Submitted%20Evidence.pdf>

information formats, such as noticeboards, leaflets and newsletters, alongside one to-one communications. As the report states: “There is a need to recognise that a large number of older people neither have nor want to use a computer, but at the same time provide support to those who are willing to give IT a try.”

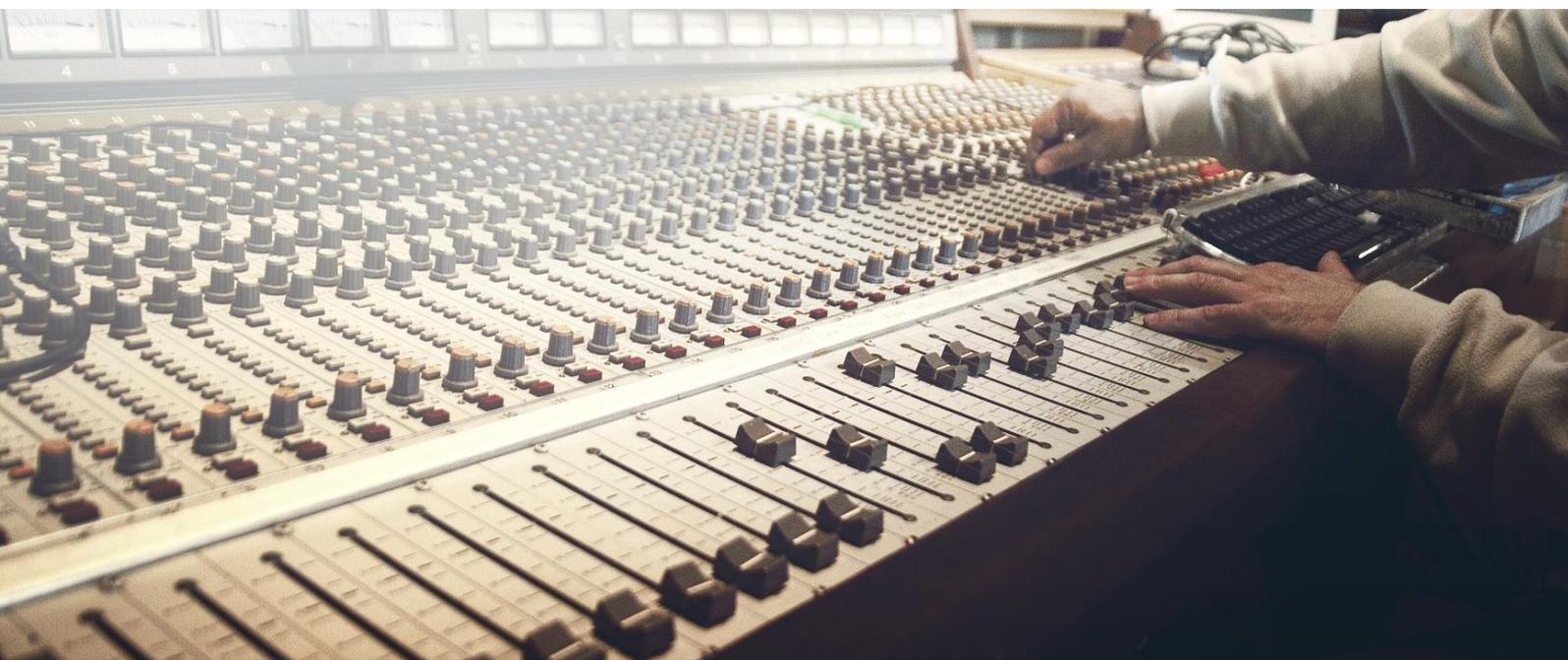
The review discussed the challenge of providing information to older people: “Ambition for Ageing Bolton reports that consultations with older people identified that their preferred format for receiving information is hard copy. Rochdale Circle made connections with local pharmacies to advertise its provision in a particular neighbourhood, where the pharmacies were provided with leaflets to include along with the prescriptions. Nevertheless, older people consulted by the Bolton project did note the need for supporting older people to get online. However, it is also pointed out that once older people have managed to get online, there is then a need to make webpages, particularly those from the local authority, more age-friendly.”

Further to that, the review notes that “there is no single set of activities that older people want to participate in. Moreover, there is evidence that many people do not identify themselves as ‘older’ and feel repelled by services aimed at older people.”

Community media could contribute to some of the communication challenges raised in the Research & Evaluation Framework for Age-friendly Cities published in 2014 by the UK Urban Ageing Consortium which states that “Communication and information is a vital part of an Age-friendly city. It is the key mechanism through which older people gain access to advice, are signposted to key services, become aware of social and leisure opportunities, as well as access emotional support through formal and informal social networks.

“Moreover, for an Age-friendly City, communication and information can be seen as one of the principal vehicles upon which the different domains depends. Social and Civic Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion like Housing and Transportation are each, in their own way, reliant on effective and timely communication and information, whether that communication is delivered through formal, structured channels or gained informally through personal social networks and interactions whereas studies have shown, there is a heavy reliance on others within networks for the provision and dissemination of information.

These general findings were confirmed by the Ambition for Ageing Local Development Leads and older people we interviewed as well as public sector officers and other stakeholders like Housing Associations.



The emotional landscape of ageing and isolation

Reaching people through community media will involve both the physical work of distributing or publicising the media, and creating media which informs, inspires, comforts or creates action in that person's life. The audience must get to the media, but the media must get to the audience. Poor, irrelevant, unattractive or alienating content and presentation will not bring about action in the lives of people even if it is regularly delivered to them. Good media that will inspire action will have to know and speak to its audience.

Older people told us that there are strong emotional drivers that interact with isolation as an experience. Pride and shame are flip sides of the same coin. To be proud of your self-sufficiency is often to be at risk when that self-sufficiency is compromised. Ageing itself can bring uncomfortable transitions between roles, between ways of living and between situations which can erode connections or prevent the creation of the new ones required as change happens. The older people we spoke to did not like being patronised but also accepted that help is often needed as we age. They observed that isolation can go hand in hand with feeling that you do not have a role or a purpose. Furthermore, they observed that having limited options in the present can limit your horizons leading to a further narrowing of those options in future. Some suggested that the idea of not being a burden was not necessarily an act of altruism but a way of escaping from shame at being more in need of support.

The target for the proposed funding is people aged fifty and over who experience, or at risk of experiencing, social isolation. This wide age range creates a broad palette of possible projects. Someone in their fifties will have a very different life and set of experiences to someone who is twenty or thirty years their senior and therefore the range of projects should reflect this.

Due to the level of stigma attached to the experience of isolation, community media may struggle to reach those who are already at risk of isolation since it is likely that they will not be a visible group. This is why a bid from a community media producer will be strengthened by gaining support or partnering with a community organisation or a group of organisations.

Those who are experiencing other forms of marginalisation, are at an increased risk of being unable to access opportunities and becoming further isolated.

The promise for community media to create connection and reduce isolation

“The main message... was that it is impossible to identify one ‘magic’ intervention for all lonely adults. The states of loneliness and isolation may be context-specific, so while an intervention in one setting works for one person, in another it might fail them completely. Also, individuals often respond differently depending on their circumstances. A ‘holistic approach’ is required when designing and commissioning services focused on individuals. Solutions need to be flexible enough to respond to individual preferences, expectations and aspirations.”⁷



Elements of the experience of loneliness and isolation that community media activity must address

⁷ <https://www.scie.org.uk/prevention/connecting/loneliness-social-isolation/#help>

If community media activity is funded in future in an effort to reduce isolation and increase connection for people over the age of 50 in greater Manchester, this community media activity must reflect, or assist in the delivery of, the following values:

- Community media must make explicit the opportunities that exist for meeting others and being involved with things happening that may bring opportunities for forging new relationships and strengthening existing relationships
- Community media must appeal directly to the hopes, fears, desires and aspirations of older people
- Community media must 'bake in' to the media produced a nuanced and true understanding both of the experience of ageing and the variety, range and diversity of the experiences of people in the communities it serves.
- Community media must do more than publicise opportunities: it must personalise opportunities by understanding why someone may feel constrained in their desire or ability to take them up
- The value of community media must lie in the ability of community media to understand and respond to the realities of the lives of those that it serves. However, in the context of any funded activity to reduce isolation and increase connection the media must also directly address this purpose
- Telling people what is happening around them is a building block of reducing isolation but activity funded through this particular undertaking must focus strongly on something beyond providing information

The promise of community media is that it can help people to 'get out of the door' by understanding and empathising with all of the reasons that might prevent them from doing so.

The value of community media is that the makers and doers of this media are also people who belong to the community which the media seeks to reach. As such, looking at community media as a form of media coproduction may be helpful.

To successfully create community media that might reduce isolation in those over 50, any project will need:

- Expertise in supporting the production of high quality media content
- Expertise in supporting and managing processes by which non-professional, unwaged members of the community can contribute, shape and influence high quality media content
- Ability and expertise in understanding the needs, wishes, desires, hopes, insecurities, fears and practical challenges of a group or groups of people over the age of 50 in greater Manchester and ability to tailor content to directly address these factors
- Expertise, capacity and knowledge to marry collection of information with creation, curation and co-creation with the aim of reducing isolation and increasing connection
- A clear mechanism of distribution for getting the community media to the people it is intended to reach.

Activities that would be funded would have to show they had a clear hypothesis that they were testing in the activity they were intending to carry out.



Defining community media

Community media is a broad term which encompasses great breadth of different organisations and activities, divisible into two rough categories: community media as a process and community media as product.

The first defines community media foremost as a participatory activity where the aim is to involve a wide cross section of the community in making media. In this vision, the activity of making media is the primary objective and authenticity, spontaneity and personal expression and exploration are considered to be the most valuable outputs. This aligns community media with other forms of community arts or community development and can produce excellent projects. In this version of community media consideration of audience can be supplementary to the development of participants' skills or interests.

The second definition of community media is more closely rooted in the traditions of community journalism and public service. The intention is to involve participants in producing media that services an audience within the community and hopes to meet their needs and reflect their interests. This form of community media may be more likely to focus on technical skills development of participants rather than the creative facilitation of participants.

Several organisations have been set up with the aim of representing and coordinating the sector, however they all have different focuses and varying interpretations of 'community media'.

The Community Media Association (CMA) was set up in 1983, however their work has largely focused on the network of community radios with less attention on online sites, print publications and TV (although it doesn't exclude these forms from its definition).

The CMA states that it was initially created to support community radio though its 'remit has expanded to include community television and community-based Internet projects.' The CMA 'represents the community media sector to Government, industry and regulatory bodies.'⁸ It also provides advice and runs events for those interested in or working in the sector.

When speaking to Lucinda Guy, chair of the Community Media Association, she stated that 'Community media is a way of explaining our lives'. This quote highlights the social importance of community media; for many it is not just about the end product, but the process of creating the product with the community involved and in mind.

⁸ <http://www.commedia.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/>

On the other hand, the Centre for Community Journalism plays a similar role but states a slightly different motivation. Their website describes their role as 'Creating and supporting hyperlocal, independent news'⁹. In their case there is also a social underpinning to their work, though in this instance their focus takes a more political stance, citing the importance of independent local journalism.

Increasingly, the role of local news and community-oriented media has become more entwined, resulting in organisations such as the Bureau for Investigative Journalism setting up the Bureau Local. The aim of the Bureau Local is to 'build an unprecedented network of journalists and tech experts across the country who will work together to find and tell stories that matter to local communities.'¹⁰

The Bureau Local is a good example of the increasing public awareness around the importance of locally focused media, resulting in more attention being paid to its socio-political function and the infrastructural issues faced by the sector.

Existing models for Community Media broadly fall into radio stations and podcasts, print and online publications, online forums and television stations.

Each organisation has its own focus, with some being purely focused on developing a product for local consumption and others placing greater importance of the process of production and community involvement in that process.

The kinds of business models adopted are varied, with some organisations functioning purely as trading companies and others registered as charities and social enterprises.

Funding streams range from commercial trading activities (mainly selling advertising space) to grant funding and membership schemes, to community media cross subsidised from other community activities.



⁹ <https://medium.com/@C4CJ>

¹⁰ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/explainers/about-the-project>

The conditions required for community media

Community media needs these conditions to get started:

1. A defined community to serve
2. A defined community to be involved with its production
3. A defined means of reaching both community to be served and community to produce
4. A catalyst that can answer the question 'why, if we haven't had a community media project before, do we think that one should happen now?'
5. Sufficient resource to continue community media production for a planned period of time
6. A means of distribution that can reach the community it serves
7. A means of publicity that can reach the community it serves and/or the community that creates it
8. A strong and clear mission statement against which the media can be judged
9. A support based amongst wider community as well as within specific community
10. Actual media production skills to be injected either at beginning or as continued support or management

Social Spider knows that community media needs the following to continue:

1. To actually matter to people in a way that is measurable and verifiable
2. Awareness of the rate that people drop out, get bored, get fed up or find better things to do. Sufficient momentum that initial enthusiasts in production can be replaced with newcomers at a rate that allows the media to still be produced
3. A good product (focus on consumer outcomes) OR a good process of production (focus on community involvement outcomes) or ideally both
4. Access to revenue and the means to create it for continuation of project
5. A firm hand on the production management
6. A clear sense of what is needed and desired by target community, and strategic thinking to make that work within existing landscape
7. A strong relationship between reach and revenue
8. A way of knowing that it is meeting its aims as set out in its mission statement
9. A realistic business plan that evaluates the possibility of advertising and other revenue and does not over-sell it or under cost the process of securing this revenue
10. A knowledge of whether the community media is anticipated to be operating in an area of market failure and setting of realistic expectations for sustainability based upon this
11. A plan for either full community ownership, part community ownership or continued maintenance by a party not connected in an organic way to the community in question
12. Good risk management for potential scenarios and costs, including changes in fixed costs, loss of distribution network, loss of local partner
13. A means of bringing through and developing talent
14. An evaluation methodology commensurate with the scale of the project and its aims. How will it measure penetration into those over 50 at risk of isolation and how will it know if they have become more connected?
15. Fidelity over time to social purpose; and mechanisms to ensure this.

It is useful to consider one of the founding principles of most modern-day marketing and advertising. AIDA stands for Awareness (Attention), Interest, Desire (or Decision), and Action; it is often said that if marketing or advertising is missing just one of the four AIDA steps, it will fail. This has implications for how community media is positioned in an increasingly crowded media landscape.

In the context of what we are proposing, community media is the mechanism and the product but it is not the ultimate intended outcome. The intended outcome is an increase in connection for people over the age of 50 with other people and with activities happening in their community or more broadly across Greater Manchester.



The three building blocks of community media: distribution; people; and production and producers

There are three building blocks that any community media project requires to work. These are:

- **Distribution (how it gets to people who weren't involved in making it)**
- **People (the community that will make and consume it)**
- **Production and producers (the actual media itself and the expertise that exists to make it)**

Any community media project that is working toward an intended goal require a balance of these elements to make media that is interesting, useful and which reaches the people it is intended to reach. Community media projects tend to be intensely idiosyncratic, but all that work have in common finding a balance between these three building blocks that work for their audience and work for the people in involved in creating the media itself.

In Greater Manchester the greatest potential for community media success is in partnerships between communities, organisations that know those communities well and producers that can make sure that community media works both for those involved in making it and those in the wider community consuming it.

Each of these partners holds something that is vital to making community media that means something to people and which finds people to consume and to make it that are passionate, committed and open to being challenged by the innovation that community media can create.

1. Distribution

Distribution is one of the most difficult elements to get right on a cost limited community media project and is also the element of community media activity least easily created from a standing start. Both producers and communities often underestimate the resources needed to distribute media effectively, despite this being the bedrock of any successful media operation. As such, it is worth discussing in depth the means by which media reaches consumers.

The physical act of getting materials in front of people is the key to successful community media reach, but it is seldom easy or simple. Any successful community media project will need a strong and costed plan for how people will actually find and consume the community media itself.

Physical media will require a physical distribution plan to get copies of what is produced in front of those currently experiencing or at risk of isolation. Online media, while in theory accessible to all, will also require a strong plan for ways that people who are not actively seeking it will become aware of it. Both broadcast and online radio or television will require robust plans for promotion, which will require similar practical planning to the work of distribution of physical copies.

Getting community media to the people who may benefit from it within the limitations of available funds will take clever partnership between producers, community and other existing bodies.

Traditional models of media distribution

The traditional media model for newspapers involved printing an agreed number of copies and distributing them to shops on a sale or return model where people who wanted to purchase them purchased them and where unsold copies were registered with the publisher. In this model there were always more copies printed than sold, but cover price and advertising revenue covered this cost. Advertising in other mediums would seek to make more of the public aware of the publication.

The traditional model for book publishing was publishers issued a print run estimating how many copies could be sold; booksellers bought copies at a sale price then sold them at a market price. Unsold copies, unless there was a sale or return agreement, remained the problem of the seller to liquidate. Unsold copies for the publishers were remaindered and sold off cheaply or pulped. The publisher took the initial financial risk of commissioning the book and creating the physical copies. The bookseller then took the financial risk of purchasing copies based on their estimation of whether these would be purchased by the public. Advertising and media coverage would be sought to make the public aware of the existence of the book and to convince them it was in their interest to purchase it.



Similar models existed for everything from DVDs to sheet music to 7" singles. All were based on selling through intermediaries or directly to consumers who had been drawn to the product based upon their own direct desire to own or consume it.

Magazine publishing traditionally worked in ways similar to newspaper publishing while also operating direct subscription models where a member of the public contracted with the publisher to directly purchase a period of the magazine in advance.

Public and subscription lending and reference libraries served as repositories of media for those who could not, or did not wish to, own the physical media but wished to consume it. Film media for the first half of the century was consumed in cinemas, then through television and portable home players.

Radio and television broadcasting initially reached its audiences in conditions of near monopoly. When commercial television and commercial radio arrived advertising became

important to draw listeners and views to one channel over another. The proliferation of channels made available first through satellite and cable then through digital radio and television broadcasting reduced market share available but also reduced barriers to entry for broadcasters and increased potential markets for producers. Advertising became increasingly important in making viewers aware of a growing number of channels.

Common to all of these pre-digital mechanisms of distribution is the interaction between physical space and consumers. Browsing and choosing from what was physically available was possible, even when browsing was a turn of the dial on the radio or series of presses on the remote control. While consumers sought out media from a variety of place, there was always a contained physical place of common availability whether newsagents, bookshop, record store or on the limited bandwidth of a radio dial. Browsing threw up alternatives that the consumer may not have otherwise sought directly.

Post-web mechanisms of distribution



Much has been written about the ways in which the web has revolutionised the delivery of information and the mechanisms by which individuals can communicate with each other, communities and the world. The initial promise of the web was that all information could be available to anyone, anywhere, at any time as long as they had a connection to the internet and the technology to access the web and the knowledge or how to use it.

The advent of ubiquitous computing and the mobile internet connections has created notional conditions where it is possible for anyone with a smartphone to seek out any information they wish at any time and where information can be automatically tailored and delivered to people without them even needing to think about it. The interaction between online services and physical devices continues to blur with the arrival of voice activated services such as Amazon Alexa and Google home. Natural language processing and voice recognition married to machine learning are opening a future where devices understand questions and commands and make response based upon what they already know of the user and the tastes, location and desires.

The current reality is that this future is arriving unevenly, with some early adopters completely sold upon its convenience and flexibility while others have yet to find a place in the older paradigm of websites, email and computer screens.

The consumer of content is in the driving seat of their consumption; controlling what they see and when. While this promised an amazing future for on demand or niche content; the reality of it has in many ways proven to be different.

In thinking about using media that conveys advice or information to address social problems, the complexity of what is possible using web enabled devices runs into a number of significant challenges.

The first challenge is that searching is a different activity to browsing. Many web users find it difficult to find exactly the information they wish to find when using search engines and other search aides. While search engines have become increasingly sophisticated; they still rely upon the individual having a fair idea of the thing for which they are searching. Searching for things about which you do not already have a degree of knowledge often leads to frustration.

Browsing the web is not the same experience as browsing a newspaper or browsing in a shop. For many people the probability of chancing across information or advice which they have not already sought out is minimal.

While social media has to an extent linked people into networks united by interest and provided a mechanism that allows content producers to deliver content or notification of content direct to interested consumers it has also created an ecosystem where the most shared content is considered to be the most interesting and where the most interesting are the most likely to be shared. This has created the ecosystem of 'clickbait' headlines which focuses upon the maximum number of people seeing a page so that advertising revenues can be maximised.

There has often been a mistake in assuming that the ease with which it is possible to access online information and other content will translate into a target audience finding it easy to find a particular piece of information or set of resources. Just because something is easy to find if you know exactly where to look does not mean that it is easy to find if you are not quite sure what you are seeking. The combination of these two factors and infinite choice has meant that there is no guarantee that anyone will a) ever see a particular piece of online content and b) that anyone who would find it interesting or useful will ever find it.



The accessibility of online as a medium for distributing media has vastly reduced the costs of disseminating information in two ways: reducing by removing the cost of raw physical materials and transit and by increasing the persistence of information by allowing infinite amounts of it to be available on demand.

Neither of these reductions in cost, however, solve the problem of viable business models and audiences. Infinite choice, married to the consumer being active rather than passive as recipient, means that any individual content will probably need to be promoted in other ways for it to reach the attention of its intended audience.

Often the best way of publicising something online is to find ways of publicising it offline, which requires having a means to distribute physical publicity.

Any community media project must answer the question:

Within our budget, how can we guarantee that our media will reach the audience for which it is intended?

2. People as partners in community media

People who wish to be involved in the production of community media are only a tiny subsection of any potential community audience. Those who wish to be involved in the production of such media on a sustained basis will often be even smaller in number.

Given the resources potentially available to fund community media activity and the time constraints, it seems likely that existing organisations and communities will have the most ready access to those who may be interested in contributing to the production of community media in Greater Manchester. Community media projects have a high attrition rate for volunteers and participants, so the recruitment and engagement of volunteers will have often have to be a consistent and continuous process of outreach.

In a basic model for bootstrapping a community media project, community media producers (those with the knowledge of how to work with people to produce media) might approach a community organisation and offer their services in return for the services of the community organisation in assisting them in reaching potential participants or partners from amongst the people whom the community organisation either serves or coordinates. They may also ask for support in finding venues to host meetings, hold events or with publicity of the product of the media. In this model the community media producers have the knowledge of media production but lack the relationship with potential participants. It is also possible that the organisation might also provide the means to distribute the media or invitations to consume to potential audiences.

In the case of a community media project that is already producing content, a community partner will again be needed to recruit older people as participants in a sustained and methodical fashion to avoid problems caused by a high attrition rate of amongst those carrying out voluntary activity. It is possible that a number of community organisations might provide partnership in this context. It is important that any projects which use this model of recruitment can be certain of their relationship with community organisations beyond 'we will ask for community organisations to promote our opportunity' as it is often difficult to recruit a large enough base of initial participants to form a strong basis for taking a community media project forwards.

Any community media project must answer the questions:

How will we make sure that our intended community can be involved in our media product and how will we reach them with news of that opportunity?

How will we make sure that involvement of our community in our media project does not wither over its lifespan and how can we keep renewing and extending ownership and involvement to new people while also retaining the involvement of those already taking part?

3. Production and Producers

Community media producers are the individuals and organisations that are experienced in media production and in working with individuals to make media.

Community media production differs from traditional media production in that it must, by definition, involve the community not only as subjects but also actors. The extent to which 'the community' is carrying out all of the activity required to make media will differ from project to project.

Community media production is the easiest of the three building blocks of community media in that the specialist expertise to assist people in making community media can be 'bought in' where the other two building blocks are present. A local organisation, for example, who are certain that they can secure a strong distribution mechanism and has a track record of ability to engage and support older people in projects could approach a third party experienced in media production to enable the actual making of the media. Similarly, a community that is

already carrying out other community activity could jointly bid for money with an existing community media producer to work jointly on creating community media with existing groups within the community.

A publication serving a particular community where all of the material is written by a professional journalist and edited and designed by professional editors and designers would not, by most definitions, be regarded as community media. Similarly, an online radio station that featured interviews with local people but which did not involve local people in either decisions about programming or in its production would not be recognised as community media by most definitions.

Greater Manchester certainly has enough potential community media producers -journalists, radio producers- who would be willing and able to work with people and distributors to help people make high quality media. It's too soon to say whether there's a viable business model. The funding for existing community media, mostly small, project-by-project grants, has not been designed to test this possibility.

Greater Manchester is an area unusually well served by organisations that deliver community radio. These community radio stations are divided between stations which are owned by the community and represent a model where members of the community can take broadcast slots; radio stations that are closer to commercial radio with primarily music based programming; and; stations that present a range of programming to a range of audiences.

A number of local community radio stations are maintained by a mixture of grant funding, often on a project-by-project model with varying amounts of revenue raised by advertising. Within these stations there is flexibility to meet the demands of funders for particular forms of information based content.

Greater Manchester has not seen a complete loss of local newspapers as has happened in some areas of the UK. It remains a vibrant, media-savvy region where local pride goes hand in hand with local content. There are community media publications created by local people, for local people but these are, in the main, online and few cater to a large general interest audience.

It has been problematic for older people to 'connect' with what is happening in their community in areas where local newspapers have closed or where council or housing associations have moved the information online.



From 2006-2010 Age Friendly Manchester published a quarterly newspaper that included activities, services and events. The editorial board included older people and much of the distribution was done by older people. It was not able to continue publication during austerity even though officers felt it was a good product and relatively cost-effective. A few years ago the Manchester Evening News offered Age Friendly Manchester a monthly full page but the Council Media Team was not able to support editing content.

What do community media producers bring?

Community media producers as practitioners bring additional skills and knowledge to the creation of media. While communications professionals within organisations are paid for their skills in utilising existing media channels to communicate messages; community media producers bring the skill of creating or part creating the channel for communication and then helping to shape and oversee the creation of the media that will be disseminated through that channel.

At present there is nothing to stop a group of older people in greater Manchester who are currently involved with a not for profit or charitable organisation from applying to the National Lottery Awards for All Programme for grants of up to £10,000 to buy in community media producers to support them in developing community media and to help develop print, online or other media focused on reducing isolation.

That this has not currently happened, and that the existing community media organisations have not approached organisations or communities towards this end does not mean that such activity is not possible. Rather it suggests that producers, communities and organisations have not recognised that a model of community media is a potentially portable one where community media producers bring a quantifiable additional resource to managing and creating community media products.

Community media producers will be good with people, good at managing and developing talent, good at planning and shaping the shape of projects to produce media and good at shaping that media into forms that may best fit an audience. This is a specific skill set that exists to move community media projects along to agreed objectives; even when the initial content of the media may be determined by those taking part. Community media producers may have their own existing channels for disseminating media such as a website, a radio station or a print publication but they should also be elements that can be 'plugged into' nascent communities or organisations interested in creating media. They are the leaders of the actual generation of community media.

Any community media project must answer the questions:

What media productions skills do we have that can be deployed strategically to make the best media possible for our intended audience?

Can we use our knowledge of media production to help communities make media that really reflects them and their interests?

Can we work well with communities and organisations as partners to make media that belongs to them; which reflects them; and which uses new formats, new approaches and new techniques to create something that is unique and which truly reflects their community?

Issues, expectations and considerations for community media and older people in Greater Manchester

The initial impetus for the proposed funding of community media was people's expressed desire to know what was going on around them in which they could take part or of which they could feel a part. The idea behind this was that existing mechanisms for disseminating information and creating inclusivity were not hitting their target of people at risk or experiencing isolation therefore helping communities guide or produce their own media would create products more likely to connect with the intended audiences.

While this is an elegant solution conceptually, and one where there are significant gains to be made if it is executed successfully, it is not a solution that is without its risks to a funder.

Within this section we discuss some of the tensions within this idea as elements that Ambition for Ageing and community media projects will need to consider in putting together projects and in managing or funding them.



1. Community buy in

For community media to function as community media a community must feel that the media 'belongs' to them. In a perfect situation, community media would spring spontaneously from the wishes and desires of people in a community, who would then assemble the pieces needed to make that media happen and would be welcomed and celebrated by their fellow citizens for taking their reality and their interests, capturing them and then creating media that served and furthered those interests whilst reflecting their reality of the world in which they were situated. In practice, initial startup of community media projects specifically looking to target isolation through content will be the result of the artificial catalyst of funding being made available.

For community media to be sustainable it must be loved, even if it was initially created through artificial funding stimulus. To be loved the media will need an audience. It will also need people to be involved in its production. It will also need people to feel that they can belong to both audience and production team. If the community media lacks community ownership it will just be some media producers doing some media and will not seem any different to the forms of communication that have failed so far to reach older people in Greater Manchester.

What does ownership consist of? The first dimension of this ownership is through content. The media must feel as if it really reflects the character, aspirations and experiences of its audience. While not community media, commercial local newspapers give the feeling to readers of being rooted in their community and of understanding what matters to them. The tone and sense of local knowledge must be an element discussed explicitly by any potential funded project; even when the intention is that the community itself will steer the media

produced. If the content doesn't 'feel right' it will not execute its purpose. What 'feels right' will differ from community to community.

The second dimension of ownership is through involvement and sense of place or community. Differing models of community media suggest different levels of community ownership. At one end of the spectrum would be a magazine set up by a small group of local people to serve their community. While those people are members of the community themselves, they may not wish to involve any other members of the community as partners, volunteers or advisors. The other end of the scale would be a publication where members of the community sat on the editorial board, carried out all of the production tasks; organised the distribution and did all of the writing and set all future directions.

Important in developing or extending community media activity will be the question: how much does this media actually belong to the community it hopes to serve and how will the project look to increase that ownership over time?

2. Radio versus print versus online

There is no 'magic formula' for successful community media. Many of the factors that define successful or sustainable community media activity are idiosyncratic and local. As we have set out, all successful community media involves a mixture of distribution, community and production in a way that works for the communities and people involved.

For the majority of people the proof of the pudding will be in the eating when it comes to community media. The potential audience should be far larger than the circle of people involved in production. Most people will consume the media product on its own and will never see the process by which it is constructed.

Each of the major potential forms of community media product have pros and cons. In an ideal world we might choose the medium best suited to our intended audience. In practice, many projects will be looking to best deploy their skills and contacts and will be best placed to deliver one form of media over any other.

The following section sets out the pros and cons of various forms of media product and considers their implications for community media projects.

Broadcast radio

Easiest to involve community in, most difficult to use for specific targeted information

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential to reach new audiences during broadcast times• Potential to reach new audiences if promoted correctly to new audiences (see distribution section above)• Potential to involve members of the community without much prior training through formats like drop-ins, phone-ins and on the spot broadcasts• Can use audio material produced by other community projects• Talk radio format excellent for local voices, events and opportunities• Possibility for advertising and sponsorship within business model• Existing activity within Greater Manchester• Potential to 'franchise' content to other stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unless already running, set up costs for live over the air broadcast licences and equipment may be prohibitive• Likely to have to produce a large volume of content as a means to convey information that might impact loneliness• Difficulty in quantifying listenership• Process of engaging and involving community may prove an additional activity to the production of the radio itself• Requires a physical base• Unlikely to grow listenership without specific plans to do so• Material produced that is purely community media may not fit well with other broadcast material if station is already a going concern

Internet radio

Most accessible for creators, least likely to be accessed by audience without strong promotion plans

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower costs than broadcast radio• Production costs for broadcast standard audio relatively low• Potential to utilise already trained people in the community and to train more• Audio editing can be used to create more listener friendly material• Audio editing and post production can create formats of programme more difficult to produce when broadcasting live to air• Radio streams can be aired live and also archived as podcasts / YouTube videos which can be deployed on other websites and shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low likelihood of casual listeners discovering material by chance• Access to, and confidence with, digital technology required for listening• Possible that internet radio is created and used as a substitute for broadcast, aping live broadcast without potential for reaching new listeners: same costs as live broadcast radio minus broadcast licence• Similar concerns as broadcast radio regarding additional programming as part of an ongoing concern

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On the spot audio easier to record ● High potential for maximising opportunities for people to be involved directly in media creation ● Production accessible with fewer barriers to entry for beginners ● Possible to assemble audio for hyperlocal, local and Greater Manchester Wide audiences ● Potential to produce 'polished' media of a standard possible to use in non-community media ● Easy to quantify listenership through collection of online statistics ● Community media practitioners likely to mobile and able to work across areas 	
---	--

Internet television / video recording

Possibly the future, but not quite there yet

<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visual media can give a sense of place and of events occurring ● Visual media can be engaging in ways that audio is not ● Hosting online can be done for free through sites such as YouTube and deployed on other sites and resources ● Modern mobile devices can create high quality audio and video if used correctly ● Video editing can be a collaborative process ● Seeing people 'like yourself' creating media can be empowering ● Able to quantify viewership via views ● Well organised media projects can involve lots of people in different capacities 	<p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can be challenging to produce engaging video content ● Low likelihood of casual viewers finding content by chance ● Largest gap between what is achievable as a beginner and a standard which conforms to what a viewer may be expecting from the format ● Editing and post production likely to be more time consuming ● Likely to only involve those already confident in production ● Hosting in spaces like YouTube may lead to unwelcome comments ● Can foreground the individual in roles such as presenter which may not be appealing to potential volunteers ● Did not come through as a theme in our research and is not represented strongly in our case studies
--	--

Written online media

Advantages of cost and format, disadvantages of guaranteeing reaching audience

Pros

- Relatively easy to set up
- Can be targeted and focused - could be hyperlocal through to niche-focused
- Written community media can be created in a variety of ways
- May work well with drive to help older people online
- Editing and supervising content does not have to happen 'in real time'
- Publication of content can be staggered across the calendar meaning that production time does not have to focus on intense burst of activity and upon deadlines
- Can be associated with printed media production for relatively low cost
- Likely to engage certain potential volunteers due to low embarrassment threshold
- Can build up a repository of content over time
- Can be used to build mailing list of potential contributors / readers
- Single online destination can host content on different timescales: immediate news, news of forthcoming events, retrospective accounts and reviews alongside none calendar specific content.
- If successful in engaging an engaged community of people to write, can continue sustainably without much financial support if voluntary
- The relationship between 'column inches' and cost does not exist online. People differ as to whether they prefer short reads online or long ones

Cons

- Unlikely that casual readers will find site without promotion
- Requires a constant flow of new content to make it a destination worth returning to
- Ongoing professional leadership of project may be difficult to secure without ongoing funds
- Will require strong and sustained offline promotion to intended target audiences
- May be difficult to focus contributors initially as there will be nothing on the site
- Requires a strong and focused leadership and mission to really focus on objective of reducing isolation
- Online was not the impetus for the creation of this potential source of funding
- It may be more difficult to engage a community in a website as solid, graspable thing, especially if that community does not regard themselves as online natives
- Effective offline promotion will require much the same work as the actual distribution of printed material - if it's possible to get a pile of fliers to a group of people it's possible to get a pile of newsletters or magazines to them as well

Printed media

The most like people are expecting, the most in requirement of strong planning and financial control

Pros

- Well produced media if distributed to people is an advert for itself, carry information and also making people aware that it exists
- Printed media in shared spaces can be browsed or picked up on a whim
- Printed media is closest to what people picture when thinking about a place to receive community information - thinking about local newspapers
- Having a physical printed media object can focus projects upon having constraints and keeping to an audience expectation of community content
- Printed media can be delivered to a specific location or area without specific pinpoint targeting - possible to deliver to an entire estate for example, or to post to a full list of residents
- Printed media has fixed schedules which can focus involvement activity
- Printed media can carry advertising and sponsorship in a more tangible way than online media
- Print runs benefit from economies of scale
- Print publications can build readerships
- The visual scan of printed material is different from the experience of browsing a website
- Not all printed media has to be professional and glossy

Cons

- Without strict cost control and planning production costs can be prohibitive
- Distribution costs can be prohibitive if not pre-planned or carefully costed. Individual postage is the most expensive distribution option. Bulk distribution is cheaper the few drops you have to make. Individual delivery can be carried out by volunteers.
- Print publications require a fixed core team to ensure that content is commissioned, edited, designed and checked for libel and other legals before being sent to print
- Print publications require work beyond writing and require a strong coordination beyond the creation of content to hit deadlines, coordinate logistics, control costs
- It can be easy to quantify distribution but harder to quantify readership
- Printed material can go stale quickly given required lead-in time for publication, the extent to which 'news' can be carried depends on the regularity of the publication and how quickly it can get to readers
- Print publications are most susceptible of the existing media forms to being 'taken over' by comms teams of organisations, as they most overlap their functions.
- Writing for an audience is a skill that can be learned and honed, but it is not always a given that individuals most enthusiastic about taking part have the strongest skills initially
- Print publications can have a strong rate of volunteer attrition; often because there are ebbs and flows in

	<p>the involvement needed across a production cycle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fixed deadlines can create a temptation for community media producers to carry out many of the writing tasks themselves when volunteer writers do not hit their deadlines ● Fixed page counts (necessary for printing cost control) can mean that there may not be enough content to fill the publication, requiring flexibility from the community media practitioners ● With printed publications there is a delicate balancing act between meeting the expectations of an audience, creating high quality media and keeping volunteers engaged. Too glossy or corporate will turn off some people, too low-fi and rough and ready will turn off others
--	---

3. Business models and Sustainability

There are three dimensions to the sustainability of community media activity:

- Can communities sustain enthusiasm for a community media project?
- How are existing community media projects sustained in Greater Manchester already?
- What are the potential avenues for continuation of a project beyond any ambition for aging funding?

Creating a media business is difficult. It involves creating media that others will love either in large enough numbers that advertising can form the primary source of revenue or with such intense passion that cover price or subscription will form the primary revenue stream.

Creating a media project working with the community toward a social goal is also difficult. While it is true that volunteers are cheaper than paid staff, they require development, supervision and support.

Within the spectrum of organisations which identify as community media, focus tends to fall broadly on either the process of production as a participatory experience or the creation of a professional product for local consumption. Some organisations attempt to balance both outcomes but this often proves to be a challenging undertaking for organisations who are typically small and frequently rely upon volunteers.

The Hackney Citizen (see [‘What does community media look like? community media case studies’](#)) is a good example of community media whose focus lies primarily on creating a high quality product with little local participation in the production process. In this example the community element of their work is defined by the publication’s ability to create a much needed source of independent local news for people living in the area, therefore allowing people to become better informed about their area and the activities and developments which affect them. Within this model there is less scope for active local participation in the creation of content, however their work is defined by their ability to assess and respond to the needs of the community within the content of the publication.



Within the world of community radio there tends to be more of an emphasis placed on radio’s ability to draw in different people from the community into the production and skill up individuals in the process. Community radio stations tend to boast a diversity of voices and often place participant experience as being of equal or more importance than the end product. Radio is generally considered to be a more accessible form for people who are not trained and are engaging as an amateur - if someone can gather the confidence to have their voices broadcast, they have overcome the most significant barrier. Written community publications require participants to be comfortable writing articles for fit for publication and public consumption, a task which can be quite intimidating. On top of this writing is generally a solitary experience, whereas creating community radio is necessarily a social activity as it generally requires a team of people to create a show.

Online community media, such as online news sites and forums, tend to have even less community involvement in the production. The likelihood that these sites can function while being managed by only one or two people is high. Therefore if their function is to provide local news or cultural updates, or to write for a community of interest about shared passions, then this outcome can be met without engaging local people in the content production (which does not necessarily diminish their role as community media, it just means that their focus is on the community benefits of their end product.)

The approach that each organisation takes defines the kind of funding options which may be available to them, which in term affects their financial sustainability.

Broadly speaking, community media will fit into one of the following income models:

- Funded purely through grants and donations (this funding is often awarded for specific projects or outcomes and can then be used to cross-subsidize operational and production costs)
- Mixed funding streams composed of grant funding and commercial revenue
- Purely commercial revenue (usually achieved through selling advertising)

If an organisation is primarily focused on achieving high levels of participation in its production, then it’s likely to seek grant funding to support that activity. This is because a) it’s unlikely to have the time on top of those activities to seek advertising or other commercial income, b) it is likely to frame its work in terms of its social outcomes which mean it is more likely to be successful in winning funding bids and c) there is a chance that with less focus on the end product it is less able to produce the kind of professional product desired by advertisers.

The type of media organisations which are most likely to fall into this category are radio stations, since the scope for participation is much higher. Community newspapers which run training and writing workshops and outreach may also be able to win some grant funding for those activities.

Though grant funding is not generally considered the most sustainable model, it may be the case that high levels of participation and an injection of grant funding will allow the community media product to develop more rapidly than one which is desperately seeking commercial income. Therefore if it is able to develop into a locally engaged and more professional service then the chances are it will be able to move onto a mixed funding model, with commercial income through advertising becoming more of a likely possibility as the product is developed through community input.

Mixed funding streams are the most common model for community media. Since many community media organisations straddle the line between a public service, a charitable venture and a professional product it is likely that they will not be able to rely on funding for just one of these services. The aims of community media are generally very ambitious, and a range of options have to be explored to fund those ambitions. Generally, a community media organisation with a mixed funding stream will be the most sustainable - with grant funding supporting social and community outcomes and activities and commercial income being generated due to the quality of the product.

Out of all the models it is most likely that a print publication may sustain itself through advertising sales alone. They will most likely require initial funding to allow them to develop a reputation with advertisers, and if they do not have dedicated sales staff they are unlikely to be able to continuously bring in enough advertising to cover their costs.

However, if they can get funding to employ a sales person, then it is possible that they could eventually become commercially sustainable through advertising. However, these organisations should ensure that they remain true to their community by ensuring that their content reflects and responds to the needs, concerns and interests of the community and that the desires of advertisers does not tamper with this. A good solution to this is for organisations to draw up ethical advertising charters outlining their advertising requirements.



What does community media look like? Community media case studies

The following section contains case studies of community media projects from across the UK, divided by medium. They indicate what community media can look like and how it works.

Main Challenges

- Community radio stations are currently legally restricted to receiving only 50% of their income from advertising sales.¹¹
- They generally require listeners to know about their existence and to actively seek them out rather than being able to rely upon listeners stumbling across them, therefore they require additional promotion or must be able to wait for their listenership to grow organically over time.
- They are reliant upon people having resources to access station (either online, or through broadcast).
- Maintaining high quality content on a regular basis requires a lot of work which requires a large team of contributors.
- The landscape for grant funding for community radio is challenging, unless the organisation is willing to incorporate lots of community activities into their work (which requires additional capacity).

Main Benefits

- The content can cover a broad range of topics and areas of interest (especially good when creating something to engage 'older people' who won't all have same interests).
- The content can be created and consumed by the same target audience, means that content can be tailored to local interest and needs.
- Content is accessible and generally easy to consume (does not require reading or writing abilities which may exclude some people).
- Participation in production is a social activity and pre-recorded shows mean that production can be tailored to individual requirements.
- Can be informative and fun.
- Phone-ins can facilitate interaction between station and wider public, allowing a greater sense of involvement with the listenership.

The community radio sector is well supported by the Community Media Association, a network which offers advocacy, advice, training and events.

Within the world of community radio there are many stations which cater to a specific geographic area, as well as (though slightly less common) catering to particular demographics within a geographic area.

Ujima Radio

Ujima Radio is a Bristol based radio station, which operates with a particular focus on reaching African and Caribbean residents in Bristol. Their content is made by and for their community and they also offer training and support, with the intention of engaging people from deprived communities. They broadcast on both FM and online. They are registered as a Community Interest Company (a form of social enterprise) and they work heavily with volunteers. Their website states that they provide support and training for over 150 volunteers each year.

¹¹ Department for Culture, Media and Sport - Community Radio Consultation -13 February 2014

Ujima Radio are a well-established station, which has been broadcasting for 10 years and works with a range of sponsors and partners including Arts Council England and the University of Bristol. In addition to sponsorship and partner funding, they also sell advertising to generate income. They have recently advertised a vacancy for a Sales and Revenue Manager to develop the commercial strength the station.

Bradford Community Broadcasting

A radio station which covers all of Bradford, this station aims specifically to engage members who are 'encountering disadvantage and exclusion' as a means of creating a more unified and engaged community. They place their focus on accessibility and diversity, in terms of the people they engage and represent. They conduct training to ensure that anyone who is interested can become actively involved in the station and have won multiple awards and have been widely recognised for their engagement with their local community.

At the 2017 Community Media Association conference, a representative from the organisation stated that in the past that they struggled to get funding for their work as a radio station, however they were able to get funding if they framed their work in terms of its social outcomes. This indicates that the funding climate for radio stations who are only focused on broadcasting output is difficult, a challenge which is exasperated when coupled with the 50% advertising income limitation. Moreover, it shows that there is funding available for organisations who incorporate a broader social purpose, usually through community participation in the production process. This however requires the organisation to find the capacity to support those further activities plus their basic production - meaning that stations may find themselves juggling a lot of work and expectations.

Vectis Radio

Age Friendly Island (a project funded by The Big Lottery Fund) and Vectis Radio are working in partnership to produce a regular show, 'Older and Wiser'.

Vectis Radio is the Isle of Wight's community radio station, 'for the people, by the people' and is manned by local volunteers. The Age Friendly Island project aims to create a community that is 'happy, healthy and connected'. It strives to make the Island a place where older people age well in every way, every day.

The Older and Wiser programme informs Islanders about projects and initiatives that are taking place across the Island, together with Age Friendly Island, to enhance the lives of older residents.

The programmes are broadcast on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 3pm. Older and Wiser is available on Vectis Radio on 104.6 FM or www.vectisradio.com

All FM

One of the longest running community radio stations in the UK broadcasting south, central and east Manchester 24 hours a day for the past ten years.

The output is 25% chat / 75% music with content ranging from live bands to comedy to daily community news. The station provides people in the local community with an opportunity to volunteer and train in a media environment while also viewing itself as a medium of expression for those whose voices are not usually heard.

It is run by All Arts & Media - <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/05286405> - , a registered charity, with a turnover in 2015/16 of £97,569, of which £82,312 was grant funding from 9 different sources including Manchester City Council and Big Lottery Fund for funded training. <https://allfm.org>

Some useful community radio links

Associated Broadcast Consultants Community Media Map: <http://a-bc.co.uk/community-radio-station-map/>

Community media map: <http://www.commedia.org.uk/map/>

Ofcom map - Community Radio in the UK:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/36423/community-map.pdf

Written community media (online):

Main Challenges:

- It may be difficult to develop readership at the beginning unless they can afford to run a PR campaign or have high volunteer engagement.
- May be difficult to overcome tech literacy barriers to develop high readership among particular demographics.
- May present difficulty for those with limitations in literacy.
- They may struggle with their financial sustainability, although the production is less expensive than print, it is generally difficult to sell online advertising for small local sites.

Main Benefits:

- Can be accessed at any time, by anyone.
- Can be interactive through use of forums and comment sections.
- The scope for participation is high as there is no page limit - content can be endless and if they are willing to allow people to contribute they could, in theory, have numerous contributors.
- Can be innovative in format to be more engaging
- Content can cover a broad range of topics.
- Can be produced and consumed by same community and reflect that community's interests and needs

SE1

SE1 represents a geographical area in the south east of London. It covers local news, events and culture.

It is a family run business which has been active for 20 years. They have high levels of engagement, an active local audience and a prominent presence on social media.

As well as functioning as an online site, they disseminate an email bulletin which readers can choose to receive daily, weekly or monthly.

They are funded through advertising and a membership scheme. The membership donation features a 'sponsor an hour' option, allowing donors to cover the costs of the reporters on an hourly wage (calculated using London Living Wage).

Join now

We offer two payment options: Direct Debit with GoCardless or credit/debit card with PayPal.

Set up a Direct Debit with GoCardless

- Basic monthly subscription: £5.00
- Hour of London Living Wage monthly: £10.20
- Business membership: £50.00
- Third sector membership: £25.00

Use a credit/debit card with PayPal

Basic monthly subscription : £5.00 GBP - monthly

Subscribe

We are Chester

This site takes the form of a blog, focusing mainly on cultural activities taking place in Chester. Set up with support from We are Cardiff this site takes a blog format and mainly looks at culture, lifestyle and the arts in the area of Chester as well as aiming to produce positive representation of Chester as an area.

<https://wearechester.co.uk/theatre/about/>

Written community media (print)

Main challenges

- This form of media has high overhead costs (print, distribution, design fees etc.) and therefore although there is more scope for acquiring advertising in print publications than online, there are also higher costs to cover which can make it difficult for publications to become financially sustainable.
- They can be exclusionary for those who have difficulty reading through sight loss or low literacy.
- Distribution is a big challenge - unless door to door distribution can be funded, it is difficult to guarantee that everyone in a geographical area can access the publication (this can be counteracted by ensuring copies can be picked up from distribution points which are easy to access and well publicised).
- Participation in production will not necessarily be a social activity as content is limited to the pagination the organisation can afford to print. Furthermore, the process of compiling and designing a print publication requires a lot of technical skills and is time intensive, therefore the scope for community participation beyond developing the content itself is limited.
- Writing is generally a solitary activity so there is little scope for social activities to be incorporated into production.

Main benefits

- Print publications do not necessarily have to be actively sought - they can be stumbled upon in your local shop or library if the distribution is successfully managed.
- Print publications are generally respected in public opinion, and are sought after as trusted sources of news.
- People are used to checking print publications for information about local events and services

- They can be produced and consumed by people from the same area. Therefore, content can reflect community.
- Local people can be involved in writing content, this community activity can be developed to incorporate writing workshops and drop-ins to make the publication more accessible to the community (these activities may also be eligible for other forms of funding.)

Hackney Citizen

The Hackney Citizen is an independent, free monthly newspaper for the borough of Hackney. Their content is created by a team of paid journalists and is funded through advertising, which is managed by a full time advertising manager.

They function as a trusted local newspaper which serves its local community by reporting on news, cultural activities and community projects which matter to them. However, they do not currently undertake any explicitly community focused activities and their focus appears to be on creating a quality local newspaper, not on generating community activity through their publication.

Bristol Cable

The Bristol Cable produce a free quarterly magazine, as well as running publications on their website and hosting media training workshops and local events. They were set up with the aim of bringing media ownership back into the hands of the local community, and to challenge the current media landscape. Their main source of income comes from their membership scheme which currently boasts around 1850 people paying an average of £2.50 to fund their work.

Members are shareholders in the Bristol Cable, which operates as a co-operative on a one person, one vote basis. Anyone is welcome to join for a minimum donation of £1 per month. The Bristol Cable's website states that they have introduced a budget to pay all coordinators and that they are working towards paying all contributors. They also receive some income through advertising which is monitored through an ethical advertising charter which was devised and agreed upon by their members. Finally they have also generated income through grant funding and crowdfunding.

Caring 4 Sussex magazine

Caring 4 Sussex is a free full colour quarterly magazine with features, book reviews, a letters page and local news and information for everyone who cares about Sussex and its people. The winter issue highlighted the chronic shortage of carers in Sussex and a collaboration with West Sussex County Council to recruit more carers. The magazine covers Worthing, Chichester, Horsham, Crawley, Haywards Heath, Brighton, Hove, Bognor Regis and surrounding towns and villages.

Whilst Caring4Sussex may not be considered community media in the accepted sense the owner and editor is a journalist who lives in the area and who has a particular interest in health, wellbeing and care. The magazine is funded primarily through advertising which includes local authorities and care providers.

The distribution manager delivers bulk copies of the magazine to a wide range of outlets including supermarkets, hospitals, health centres, sheltered housing and retirement villages, libraries, leisure centres, train stations, bars and village shops. In-house distribution ensures a carefully targeted readership of older people and carers.

Over 16,000 copies are distributed and there are online page-turners of the current edition and back copies on the recently revamped website.

Website: <http://caring4sussex.co.uk>

SE20 magazine

SE20 Community Magazine was launched in 2005 by a local resident who has lived in the area all her life. The editor now runs the magazine with her daughter. Over the years, they have also built a strong presence on both Facebook and Twitter. The magazine is funded primarily through advertising and editorial features.

Distributed in-house over 3000 copies of the magazine are delivered to local residents and businesses each month. 2500 directly to homes and 500 through local businesses, community groups, churches, pubs, clinics, adult education centres and clinics.

Website: <http://www.se20mag.co.uk>

Whitstable Community Magazine published by Community Ad Web Ltd

Community Ad has been developed to provide for the individual needs of each community, bringing them together to recognise the important role of the local business. There are over 30 publication titles covering Kent, Essex, Sussex, and Hampshire.

They publish local CommunityAd and parish magazines and content features local and council news, local events, clubs, classes, and articles of community interest. CommunityAd also offer online local business directories.

Website: <https://www.communityad.co.uk>

Salford Star

An independent magazine written and produced by people in Salford. It aims to give the community a voice, make public bodies more accountable and inform, campaign and entertain.

When available as a print publication, the Star distributed 20,000 copies - a mixture of door-to-door distribution in some areas of Salford and wider distribution in community venues across the city.

The magazine had some initial support from social enterprise funders such as Unltd and generated income through advertising and donations however in recent years it has operated mainly online with occasional print publication when sufficient funds are available.

The magazine's parent company runs one-off magazine and media projects in Salford and elsewhere in the North West, with income going towards funding the magazine.

<http://www.salfordstar.com>

Community television

Main challenges

- This is generally a high cost model - the costs for establishing a community television station are likely to be very high, from licensing to production to promotion.
- Its production requires a skilled workforce made up of people who can operate the equipment. It is unlikely to be able to rely on volunteers too heavily.
- Programme ideas may vary in their production costs which could limit the variety of content available.

- The programming will require high levels of upkeep to ensure it remains engaging and topical.

Main benefits

- TV is generally seen as a very accessible form of media, if the funds are there to support it financially, then this could be an incredibly engaging form of community media.
- There is a broad choice of forms the content could take - from documentary, to entertainment, to talk shows.
- Watching TV is a common activity in most households (just over 90% of households have TVs whereas just over 50% have radios¹²), so if community TV can be made engaging, the scope for viewers is very high.

Around 2010/2011 there was a big push from the government to facilitate more local TV stations led by the department for culture, media and sport. This resulted in reports such as Local TV: Making the Vision Happen¹³ and other consultations. However, post-2012 there is little evidence that this movement was pushed any further.

Swindon Viewpoint

Swindon Viewpoint is the first public-access television service in Britain, beginning in 1973. They place a huge emphasis on public engagement and offer the opportunity to create programmes to all those who are interested from the local community. They pride themselves on maintaining a dedicated emphasis on responding to their community throughout the years and see their role as documenting, informing and engaging their local community.

It is operated as a public service by Viewpoint Community Media (a registered charity)¹⁴.

What's it like to do community media projects? Social Spider's own experience

Over the past 15 years, Social Spider CIC has developed and delivered a range of community media projects and products.

Successful community media projects will measure their success in whether they continue to make the media that they intended to make with the level of resources they are able to secure. The object is, mainly, to keep going. And in the case of Social Spider carrying out projects, the goal has either been not to bankrupt ourselves or exhaust our staff resources or, if commissioned or funded directly, to meet our deliverables in terms of outputs and outcomes so that we didn't breach the terms of our funding and have to give the money back.

Exposure, the Haringey-based award winning participatory youth media project that Social Spider CIC's managing director David Floyd cut his teeth on in the early 2000s began by making a good magazine with young people, then got funding from a variety of sources for a variety of projects which to a lesser or greater extent contributed to the objective of putting out a regular magazine that young people had the opportunity to work on in a variety of capacities. It always required premises and a paid staff to do all of the work that wasn't writing or making

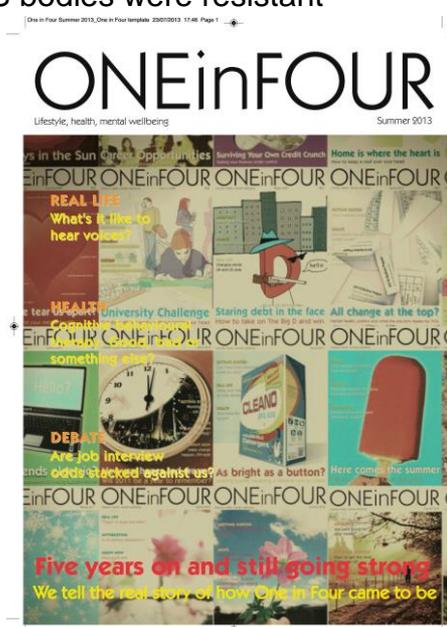
¹² <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/facts>

¹³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/86566/local-tv_making-the-vision-happen.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.swindonviewpoint.com/about>

the challenge of getting the community to trust us to deliver a newspaper that would fit their needs. However, due to Tottenham Community Press covering a significantly smaller geographical area to the Waltham Forest Echo, we have been able to foster and sustain connections with the community more easily. We recently ran a crowdfunding campaign as a way of raising the profile of the publication, during which we were supported by various local community figures and civic dignitaries and were able to generate a significant amount of interest in the publication. We have managed to develop a community around the paper very quickly and have more connections to local people in Tottenham than in Waltham Forest because it's a smaller geographical area and thus it has been easier to develop and maintain this.

One in Four, the national magazine written by people with mental health difficulties for people with mental health difficulties which we ran for seven years was never a community project in that it served a notional national audience and did not 'belong' to a community. We had an advisory board, but this was never a decision-making body. Despite being designed with the NHS and GP surgeries in mind it was never distributed consistently through those avenues. This was in part because the business model was based upon subscriptions and the magazine launched at the beginning of the financial crash but partly because NHS bodies were resistant to outside organisations distributing information via them as they did not have full control over the complete magazine and the mechanisms within NHS estates did not actually exist for such distribution. We had many meetings with the communications teams of public sector and third sector organisations but these were often not fruitful because while in the abstract our aims were aligned, in practice our publication was a competitor to their own comms activity. We had small successes with public libraries and third sector organisations as avenues for distribution. Our best distribution avenue was a deal with the distribution centre for Mind's network of charity shops who got packages of the magazine out to shops across the country regularly. Our aims were to make life for people with mental health difficulties better, which did not always fit well with aims of organisations that ostensibly had the same intention. Commissioning and editing from non-professional journalists and writers took a lot of paid time as did the attempt to sustain and develop a business model.



Social Spider carried out an experiment in true coproduced community media with More Hackney, a folded A3 newsletter created to spread mental health information in Hackney. Despite working with an existing centre providing support to people with mental health difficulties it was extremely difficult to find volunteers and, ultimately, the small group of volunteers wanted us as professionals to have a larger role in managing, editing, designing and distributing rather than a smaller one. Beginning the project we did not have a set of deliverables apart from the aim of publishing a set number of issues. We did manage to get the publication distributed via various venues in Hackney, though whether they ever got to people who would have been able to make use of the information they contained we could not discern based on the low budget of the project overall. It did not continue after we ended our involvement and required a lot of work to manage expectation and differing of opinion amongst volunteers. The managing of group dynamics and of the democracy of shared ownership was an interesting challenge. As part of the project we also trained volunteers in journalism skills but this again did not always mean the content submitted matched the intention of the publication.

Current conditions for community media in Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester possesses a rich, varied fabric of communities and opportunities. The challenge is to connect people who are aged 50 and over to ways of fulfilling their desire and need for social connection and social purpose. There are numerous networks and active community organisations already at work. What is needed is a bridge between them and people who are over 50 and at risk of isolation or loneliness. Community media may be one such bridge.

The Ambition for Ageing programme itself may present an opportunity to share and distribute community media products through its network. It may also present a way of engaging older people in the production of community media projects.

There are many Age Friendly Neighbourhoods within Greater Manchester (including many in the Ambition for Ageing Programme) as Greater Manchester has become the first Age Friendly city region with three of the ten cities already officially Age Friendly and the others working towards this.

Older adults are not just one homogenous group but a diverse section of the population influenced by their life experiences, personal circumstances and stage of life. Rather than focusing on age or ability we believe stronger and more sustainable connections would be made if there was a focus on developing communities of interest across Greater Manchester rather than just geographical locality.

Ambition for Ageing has recognised particularly challenging groups around social isolation and connectedness (older men, BME groups and those with recent disability as well as older carers) and tailored bespoke 'scaled' programmes for them. This is also a priority across Greater Manchester as 'navigator' type social prescribing programmes are developing at scale aimed at vulnerable people (including those who are isolated).

The Greater Manchester Ageing Hub narrative emphasises a life course understanding of ageing, highlighting significant transition points, setting the foundations for people, places and policies to start early, plan and prepare for ageing, making clear ageing is not an "older person" thing, but an "every person" thing. It is important to consider how community media can encourage and empower older people themselves to contribute to changing the narrative.

The Equalities Board has highlighted that whilst marginalised older people may have specific equalities characteristics they also tend to have very similar types of needs and experiences in relation to key issues such as transport, social care, stigma/discrimination, communication support/interpretation and safety.

Many Local Development Leads (LDLs) commented on the need to produce a variety of a forms of media as many older people did not use internet. This was echoed by Older Persons Networks and Equalities Board members who felt that one of the hardest groups to reach were adults over 80 who are often reluctant to use complicated technology or the internet. Providing tapes, CDs and DVDs was suggested as a good alternative to internet radio or regular radio stations, as well as taping programmes or podcasts from the internet.

Housing Associations are uniquely positioned to identify and reach many older people at risk of social isolation, furthermore they work across many local communities including the most deprived neighbourhoods. One in every five homes in the City Region is owned or managed by Greater Manchester Housing Providers, housing over half a million residents. The Housing

Associations produce a range of content for printed and online publications and some encourage older residents to contribute. For example Rochdale Borough Housing in collaboration with their local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), is working to identify and engage older people at risk of social isolation. We understand that many Housing Associations have done similar targeting projects. Another avenue for delivering information to older people and engaging them in the development of services is through piggybacking on pre-existing social activities.

There is an emerging Faith Network for Greater Manchester¹⁵ which is developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership. The recent Faith and Health Audit identified 85 faith based organisations providing community services and a recognition that alongside these services providing a gateway to service providers to enhance access and participation there was also a need for development and capacity building to tailor make services for the future. Faith groups wanted to retain their individuality but also wanted to understand other faiths and the wider intentions and activities of public bodies and civil society organisations in order to break down barriers. The public sector, especially health, has recognised the value of faith communities as a means to target and disseminate information.

Greater Manchester has a long history of interest and action in arts and health. Engaging in arts activity can help people to make social connections, enable self-expression, create the conditions for social action and enable people to have more power over their lives. Manchester has developed good practice around arts and culture and ageing through museums, clubs and galleries working together with Age Friendly Manchester. It also boasts a strong Cultural Champions programme that is now spreading to the other areas. Culture is among the Greater Manchester Ageing Strategic priorities. This together with the 2018 Festival of Ageing may provide some opportunities to include or build elements of community media.

Greater Manchester has existing advocacy networks for older persons including the Culture Champions, the Greater Manchester level Equalities Forum and the Older Persons Forum as well as having evolving networks of older people in other areas. They all play an important role

in engaging and distributing information and should be considered as a potential channel for community media.

Good community media vehicles and products could support Greater Manchester priorities, especially health and public health, social prescribing and



¹⁵ <http://www.gmeccscn.nhs.uk/attachments/article/609/Health%20Faith%20Sector%20Conference%20report.pdf>

Ambition for Ageing projects such as the Community Navigators. A number of networks have expressed a desire to share and distribute information, suggesting that there are potential income streams if community media can demonstrate they have a targeted audience, reach and distribution.

Many LDL areas and their partners are producing case studies, videos, blogs, films, community reporting and other content which could be useful to community media producers. Some have worked with community radio and/or have expressed a desire to do so. Finally, many LDL partners are also working towards supporting older people's capacity around digital inclusion in different ways that open up more opportunities around audience and distribution over time.

There is potential that community media projects supported or stimulated by Ambition for Ageing will provide the seedbed for continuing community media work around ageing after the end of the Ambition for Ageing programme. Such projects may fit well with the priorities of Greater Manchester's ongoing Health and Social Care integration, with public health work and may find a home within the developing activities of the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub.

Despite having painted an optimistic picture of the organisations, community media producers and communities across Greater Manchester, it is important not to assume that all of these elements will automatically assemble themselves into viable community media projects targeted at reducing isolation for people who are fifty and over.

The current potential for distribution and dissemination of community media products

Any community media project looking to help older people feel more connected to their community within Greater Manchester will need to answer two separate but interrelated questions:

- **How does the media get to the people for whom it is intended?**
- **How can the project be sure that the mechanism of distribution chosen will reach the people whom it is intended to reach?**

Physical media will require a physical distribution plan to get copies of what is produced in front of those currently experiencing or at risk of isolation. Online media, while in theory accessible to all, will also require a strong plan for ways that people who are not actively seeking it will become aware of it. Both broadcast and online radio or television will require robust plans for promotion, which will require similar practical planning to the work of distribution of physical copies.

Getting community media to the people who may benefit from it within the limitations of available funds will take clever partnership between producers, community and other existing bodies. There is room for local innovation in this distribution, but we feel that the requirement to express a detailed plan will be required of any bids for funding.

Greater Manchester has existing community media such as community radio, online media and local publications (though much reduced).

The Local Development Leads for Ambition for Ageing have recognised some of the challenges in communicating with older people at risk of isolation and have worked on events calendars and newsletters. They all mentioned word of mouth and one-to-one distribution as the most effective way in engaging people. They also recognised the challenges of this in terms of resources and the need to engage more people. They have learned to piggyback onto

existing networks as well as build their own. Many have found different ways of distributing via community venues including: doctors' surgeries, supermarkets, faith communities, sheltered housing schemes and housing associations, community centres, political parties, voluntary sector organisations and council services. Some have found innovative ways of distributing content (mainly case studies) via media fora related to the above and in some cases even into mainstream media. Many spoke of framing projects around connectedness and 'Age Friendly' as a way to get others involved in distribution.

Many of the LDLs and stakeholders also saw potential to scale media distribution through existing networks like Housing Associations, Home Care providers and through Social Prescribing initiatives currently gaining traction.

Our conversations with Housing Associations confirmed that they have established distribution systems to communicate with their residents either through newsletters, quarterly printed magazines and or neighbourhood activities. All of the Housing Associations provide either a print and/or online magazine/newsletter distributed to all the residents via post, dropped off in bundles or distributed via volunteers in some areas. One in every five homes in the City Region is owned or managed by Greater Manchester Housing Providers, housing over half a million residents. Housing Associations hold data on the number of residents aged over 50. As an example of distribution, Bolton at Home send a quarterly newsletter to approximately 18,000 households and they have a minimum of 10,000 tenants aged over 50. Housing Associations like many organisations are under pressure to reduce the costs of printing and distribution. A clear message was that many people prefer a printed magazine because it's easier to read and keep.

Whilst the Housing Associations we spoke to have ways of distributing information none of them specifically target people at risk of isolation although some do target vulnerable customers that likely would include some isolated as well, and questioned whether doing this on its own would have the hoped-for impact. They were generally interested in community media and including more of their customers in production of media. Some saw this as helping build community and wellbeing and potentially even providing or matching funding to support such initiatives.



The current potential for partnering with older people to make media

Greater Manchester has many organisations that serve the needs of older people, many organisations that overlap the lives of older people, many communities of geography, faith or interest of which older people are part.

At present, it is not clear that any of these communities are directly looking to engage community media producers to work with them to engage and support older people in community media production. This is not to say that were the offer to be extended by a community media producer the offer would be rebuffed, but that the role of brokering or supporting older people's engagement is not without cost or time implications. There has been a limited experience in the LDLs with community media mainly around community reporting, oral history story gathering and case study content. As mentioned elsewhere, LDLs were not averse to being involved in community media but did not feel they had the expertise or capacity in this area.

Greater Manchester has greater potential to engage older people in community media than other areas might have due to its experience in working towards, and gaining, Age Friendly status and that of the Ambition for Ageing programme itself.

Building capacity and opportunity of older people means there is a bigger cohort of people to potentially engage with though the danger is the same people doing more rather than getting new people involved. Some older people have been involved in distribution of newsletters or events publications and others in terms of content production via case studies, community reporting, community representation and oral history activities in Ambition for Ageing areas. LDLs thought they could encourage older people to be involved but did not feel particularly keen on brokering new partnerships around community media even though they were positive about its potential.

A few LDLs are directly involved in 'navigator' type social prescribing, and all were aware of new programmes in their areas, and expressed hope in better communications/media for better outcomes for these evolving programmes as well as public health, with an interest in isolation and loneliness.

Public sector officers in health, communities and ageing also saw potential as well as possible vehicles for their public facing messages and work. Working more closely with Housing Associations and domiciliary care and/or reablement were also seen as spaces where important overlaps occur and services have responsibility to link their communities to information and activities.

The Housing Associations we spoke to all provide activities which bring older people together whether that is through residents associations or forums. Examples offered included: sheltered housing schemes; community centres; activities coordinators. They saw the potential of community media to engage and understand their residents better.

The Housing Associations we met all had some activities related to older residents and communications. Southway Housing Trust has a strong commitment to co-production with residents and their regular newsletters include contributions from older residents. They are actively involved in the Age Friendly initiatives including supporting community reporters, film making and Cultural Champions and as partners with Ambition for Ageing Manchester managing a Navigator programme for older men. One Manchester has a 'Priorities Service Register' to identify vulnerable potentially isolated residents and they ran a Tower Block project with the Royal Exchange Theatre to address social isolation for older men titled 'Can

You Hear Me From Up Here'. They have been involved with producing reminiscences programmes in collaboration with Sonder Radio with Ambition for Ageing funding. First Choice Homes Oldham collaborate with Oldham Community Radio including with their older persons programme. Wythenshawe Community Housing Group are involved with the Age Friendly programme and Wythenshawe FM's older person's programme. Recognising the importance of older residents having a voice, Bolton at Home ExtraCare schemes have supported residents to become more involved in their community. They are also partners in the Bolton Ambition for Ageing programme.

Given our discussions with community organisations, partnerships between community media producers and community organisations will require some allocation of funds to the community organisation to help resource the recruitment and project working of supporting older people's involvement in the community media production as well as to the community media producers.

It is possible that some organisations may consider putting together bids to extend their own media products further in the direction of community media. In this situation we would suggest that community media partners should be sought who have experience of enabling participatory media making.

The current condition of community media practice

Looking at the overall status of the landscape of community media production across Greater Manchester there is a concentration of community radio projects and this is by far the most visible of the sectors.

These organisations work with older people as volunteers, including as presenters of shows and, in some cases, have received funding in the past to significantly target and train older people to become involved in the running of their stations.

An exception is Vintage Radio; an ongoing Manchester community media initiative of older people for older people developed out of partnership with older people including the Culture Champions, Manchester Museums, Age Friendly Manchester and a community radio station All FM. All FM received a grant of £20k from the Barings Foundation for initial engagement and training.

This model has also been used in training others such as older Chinese people with Radio Sheung Lok; Wireless Radio on Oldham Radio and the new older persons programming of Wythenshawe Radio. There have been other community media programmes for older people by older people, or related such as carers, but this has not been regular or sustained.

Sonder Radio is a Manchester-based online radio station specifically focused on promoting wellbeing, reducing isolation and digital inclusion. They have so far operated on a project-by-project basis working with a range of groups older people included those living in a care environment. They have been funded by Ambition for Ageing in Manchester and Salford. Sonder have an aspiration to eventually gain a licence to broadcast on Freeview as a digital radio station.

We have talked to the production teams working on several community newspapers and magazines based in the region including Salford Star, Manchester Meteor and Now Then magazine.

None of these publications currently publishes a print edition on a regular basis, primarily due to funding challenges. There is interest in publishing content to tackle isolation amongst older

people - either within existing publications or as standalone publication - but this is not currently a specific focus of their activities.

How far away is the community media future for older people in Greater Manchester?

Greater Manchester has a landscape of organisations, communities and individuals who, if they are not already, might begin to form an emerging community media landscape for older people. Greater Manchester Councils in the past provided much more information about events and services in their areas and often included community members in their production via community development and community regeneration initiatives. Since 2010 and the onset of austerity these have been reduced significantly. Similarly, many community radio stations and some other community media initiatives were supported or set up in Greater Manchester in the 2000s with support from Councils and via grant funded initiatives, however while still existing, for financial reasons they are somewhat reduced or did not achieve the potential envisaged.

At present, as this report sets out, the pieces that may make up the jigsaw of a vibrant community media focused on older people as an audience have not yet quite assembled themselves into forms entirely suited to the creation of high impact community media. Different organisations, communities and individuals each may have vital pieces of the jigsaw but, to date, they have not assembled themselves into robust forms.

These forms may be based on serving a geographical community, but they may also serve a community of interest. Greater Manchester is a huge area and even at city/borough levels people may or may not identify with their borough. This is challenging in terms of affinity but also content related to activities and events. Community of interest is also not without its challenges but may be easier to target efficiently

It can be seductive to assume that community media itself has a magical power to involve, to create audiences and to execute social aims. In this report we have focused on community media that might act upon isolation directly rather than upon community media as an end in itself. As this report and our recommendations show, the need to catalyse this development in pursuit of this broader, brighter future is required. The path toward this future is not without tensions and trade-offs.

People have to really want community media to work for it to seem real enough that people can feel safe in being involved. Community media must reach audiences for it to change things. Organisations, communities and community media producers will have to find new ways to work together for community media to really take root in communities. The best community media is media that producers, audiences and communities feel belongs to them equally.



What could community media for older people in Greater Manchester look like?

Given funds to experiment and explore, organisations, older people and community media producers could choose to produce anything they wanted if they felt it might better connect older people in Greater Manchester.

Formats in which information is conveyed can be anything imaginable as long as they make contact with their intended audiences and bring them something not available elsewhere.

Community media isn't just information. Community media can choose new formats, new approaches, and new possibilities.

Instead of newsletters or in studio radio discussions, community media could be:

- An ongoing weekly magazine radio series on a community broadcast station where older people focus on different area of civic or community life. Each episode, using a mixture of recorded and live segments, explores how older people are excluded or included and how any exclusion might be overcome. The station would also be exploring ways that the format might attract sponsorship or advertising or might be part funded by local charity or public sector bodies.
- A recorded podcast and digital radio broadcast series focusing on first times and trying new things. It will explore how ageing affects our sense of self and of possibility while also providing associated information and guidance. The provider might be exploring the possibility for syndication of the programme, sponsorship and national and global markets as well as exploring local ways to drive up listenership.
- A local newspaper for distribution to tenants of a housing association using news as a carrier mechanism for other information and guidance looking to see whether the model could be offered on a commercial basis to other housing associations and whether it could become sustainable through local advertising and public sector message dissemination.
- An online magazine, including signed video reports for older Deaf people and those who are losing their hearing focusing on issues and reportage around deaf issues exploring access, opportunities and local events from a Deaf and hearing loss perspective. Looking for ways of reaching those who are Deaf or experiencing hearing loss and monetising this through becoming a conduit for public sector messaging.
- A Manchester vlog channel hosted upon its own website and on video sharing websites with a variety of local older people regularly sharing their thoughts and receiving technical and presentation support with dropped in adverts and sponsorship information, aiming to eventually become self-sustaining. This would also be a case study in trying to publicise online content to interested people at risk of isolation.
- A music nostalgia magazine aimed at men over fifty which also carried health messages and community notices distributed in pubs.

- A faith community wishing to further develop an existing newsletter into a better reflection of the community in which it is based by providing local news from the perspective of their community.
- An organisation developing a simple smartphone app that pushed community written reviews of local events and opportunities to older people living in a particular area of Greater Manchester.
- A blog or online publication where older LGBTQ people write about the realities of growing older whilst also presenting from their perspective ways to be involved in the community that would also explore how to publicise the blog to older people who might be closeted or isolated in older people's housing.
- A housing association working with a community media producer to make their existing newsletter or magazine into a fully functioning magazine written by residents for residents with a view to eventually spinning it off into full resident control.

Partnerships between communities, organisations and media producers could make anything as long as they can find each other and work out what they want to do.



Making community media for older people real

For community media to be successful in reducing isolation or increasing connection for anyone it must focus on creating media that makes it more likely that an individual who consumes it will take actions that will reduce their lack of connection or mitigate their isolation.

There is no best practice for community media. There is what works in a particular area for a particular purpose and what doesn't.

'Telling people what's happening' is the basic building block for this, but increasing connection will require more. An idea of what is happening must get in front of people, so it must have a mechanism for distribution and also be delivered in a form that makes contact with an individual's desires, aspirations and worries. An idea of what is happening must do more than list opportunities; it must understand from the perspective of its audience what opportunities they may find attractive and what may stop them from taking them. To do this community media must do all of these things and do these things consistently and over time if it is to become a conduit for what is available in Greater Manchester to reach those for whom it might be most beneficial.

Community media exists in an increasingly crowded media marketplace as an attempt to place social value above profit. Some community media organisations are lucky enough to find the right mix of ingredients to serve their public well. Many live hand to mouth. Some are entirely voluntary. Some are charities or social enterprise. Some may be entirely for what small profit it is possible to make while meeting a social aim.

Some community media organisations view the development of a community voice as paramount; a space where people can share their views and opinions. Others see that fulfilling the needs of a particular audience as the ultimate goal. Others champion an issue or community of interest who are under-represented in mass media. Others still regard their role as a springboard for aspiring creators, producers, technicians or designers to gain experience.

All need their community to feel that the media 'belongs' to them, either directly through ownership or participation or through reflecting their lives, concerns and aspirations in ways that other media does not.

Ambition for Ageing has the opportunity through funding community media for older people to bring this community media future closer. Communities, organisations, older people and media producers have the chance to really make media that reaches people and reduces isolation.

Seeing Greater Manchester through older people's eyes will help to widen the Greater Manchester view of what being older means and how to make it one of the best places in the country for anyone as they grow older.

Making good community media that reaches people may not solve isolation for older people in Manchester but it has the potential to help people to find ways of becoming more connected to their community and those around them.

Community media survives where it is loved but only when it can continue to secure the resources to exist. While different community media organisations may have a family resemblance to each other or a share lineage intellectually, ultimately those that continue and thrive each have qualities unique to themselves.

What they all share is people who really want to make them happen.

