

Change

Makers

Communities Organised for the
Common Good of Manchester

BACKGROUND

Changemakers is an organisation which is being built by local people for local people - and for the common good of Manchester. It is a response to the experience that many people have of feeling powerless to influence the decisions which impact upon their lives. It is also a response to, and from, the significant numbers of people in Manchester who are marginalised from the mainstream by poverty and disadvantage.

In recent years both local and national government have worked to develop structures which enable real citizen participation. While some of these are to be applauded, others have not been sufficiently funded to be sustainable, or they are not genuinely focused on the view from the grassroots and so become simply a sounding board for public service providers. There is little widespread public trust in many of these initiatives.

Often overlooked is the fact that our towns and cities are influenced far more by the private sector than by anyone else. So as well as engaging with political representatives and public servants, citizens also need spaces in which they can hold to account the private interests which increasingly shape the public domain.

THE ORGANISATION

Changemakers is a growing coalition of local organisations and concerned individuals. It brings together people from the great diversity of people which make up Manchester – community groups, tenants and residents, faith-based organisations, minority ethnic groups, refugees and asylum seekers, members of trades unions, and many more. The key aim of the organisation is train and

develop people in these organisations to be confident and effective in taking part in public life around agreed issues.

The organisation is independent and non-partisan. It is run by local people from groups of good standing in the community. Each member groups elects delegates onto the central governing and strategic planning groups of Changemakers. The organisation aims to open up new channels of participation and communication with power holders and service providers from all sectors.

HOW IT WORKS

Most of the funds which support Changemakers are from charitable trusts, but member groups are also asked to pay an annual subscription depending upon the size of the group and its ability to pay.

Group membership of Changemakers provides these benefits:

- The right to bring issues to the organisation to be considered for action
- The right to vote on which issues the organisation will work on
- A number of free places on annual training programmes

Membership also involves commitment to:

- Supporting the action which members have voted to conduct
- Attending meetings of the organisation
- Sending people from your group on training
- Paying an annual negotiated subscription
- Working to bring others into the organisation

Changemakers will hold regular 'listening campaigns' to surface the issues which are affecting the lives of people in local communities. It will then conduct detailed research to identify how those issues might be taken forward, and then seek to build alliances with other stakeholders to come to agreement as to how such issues might be creatively resolved.

WHY GET INVOLVED WITH CHANGEMAKERS

Changemakers will become the largest citizens organisation in the Manchester area with the ability to mobilise thousands of people, and to work on a large agenda of issues at any one time.

Changemakers will bring together the most diverse membership to act responsibly to shape the common good. It will be a powerful force for social cohesion, aimed at complementing other initiatives.

Changemakers will act on peoples' values: humanitarian, social, democratic, and religious – it will have a soul.

Changemakers will do what public structures are by definition unable to do - create a political space for people to act from their own integrity.