



## **AGMA Statutory Functions Committee**

Date: 27 January 2026

Subject: Greater Manchester County Record Office and Greater Manchester Archives & Local Studies Partnership

Report of: Neil MacInnes, Head of Libraries, Galleries, Culture, Manchester City Council  
Sam Elliott, Head of Service, Bolton Council  
Philip Cooke, Libraries and Archives Lead, Manchester City Council

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### **Purpose of Report:**

The Committee is asked to consider the progress of Archives+ and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership.

### **Recommendation:**

The Committee is requested to:

Note the progress of the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership and Archives+ Partnership.

### **Contact Officers**

Neil MacInnes, Head of Libraries, Galleries, Culture, Manchester City Council

[neil.macinnes@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:neil.macinnes@manchester.gov.uk)

Sam Elliott, Head of Service, Bolton Council

[samantha.elliott@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.elliott@bolton.gov.uk)

Philip Cooke, Libraries and Archives Lead, Manchester City Council

[philip.cooke@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:philip.cooke@manchester.gov.uk)

## **Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:**

### **Risk Management**

No risks identified in the report – the report is an update for noting

### **Legal Considerations**

There are no legal implications contained within this report.

### **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

No consequences relating to Revenue Finances – the report is an update, for noting

### **Financial Consequences – Capital**

No consequences relating to Capital Finances – the report is an update, for noting

### **Number of attachments to the report: 1**

### **Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Not appropriate

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Tracking/ Process**

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

### **Exemption from call in**

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

### **GM Transport Committee**

Not appropriate

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Not appropriate

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Greater Manchester County Record Office (GMCRO) is operated by Manchester City Council (MCC) on behalf of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA). GMCRO was opened by the former Greater Manchester Council (GMC) in 1976. Since 1986 GMCRO has since been supported by all AGMA districts and other joint AGMA authorities. GMCRO houses 4 miles of archives and seeks to identify, collect, preserve, and promote the widest possible public access to the documentary heritage of Greater Manchester in accordance with the statutory requirement of the Public Records Act 1958 and 1967, the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and the Local Government Act 1972.
- 1.2 GMCRO was previously based at Marshall Street in Manchester City Centre, and move to Manchester Central Library in early 2014 as part of a wider archive partnership called Archives+. Archives+ had made archives more accessible by creating exciting interpretive exhibition spaces to provide new ways for more people to discover the richness and relevance of archives, share their own stories and have a personalised experience of the City Region's history. Manchester's iconic Central Library reopened after a four-year closure in 2014, £50m transformation programme. Eleven years later it is again the most visited public library in the United Kingdom. GMCRO is a National Archives accredited Place of Deposit, and had its accreditation extended in 2023, being commended for its excellent facilities and its approach to engagement and partnership work.
- 1.3 The Archives+ partners are the North West Film Archive (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre and Trust (The University of Manchester), the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society and Manchester Histories.
- 1.4 In 2012 a feasibility study commissioned by AGMA recommended the creation of a formal Partnership to provide an overarching strategy and development. The Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership was established by Statutory Functions Committee in June 2012, with the Committee agreed to provide governance. It also agreed to create an officer group to lead the work of the Partnership and report to the AGMA Statutory Functions Committee. The Partnership consists of each local authority archive and local studies services in Greater Manchester, with the aim of

achieving significant benefits through collaborating on service improvement and future sustainability. GMCRO provides strategic leadership to the partnership.

1.5 The Archives+ Partnership and GM Archives and Local Studies Partnerships (GMALSP) are held in high regard nationally as a model of best practice. Officers from our partnerships regularly speak at national archives conferences, particularly this year around the subject of digital preservation.

## **2.0 GMCRO and Archives+**

### **2.1 Our Partnership**

The Archives+ Partnership consists of the following organisations, which are located at Manchester Central Library

- + Manchester City Council – Libraries and Archives
- + Greater Manchester County Record Office
- + North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University (NWFA)
- + Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (The University of Manchester)
- + Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society
- + Manchester Histories

### **2.2 Archives + for everyone**

Archives+ has pushed the boundaries of what archive services can do and how to engage. Each partner has their own knowledge and skills and working together, this enables us to offer an excellent service to Greater Manchester residents.

It is now over ten years since Central Library re-opened following significant transformation. In the last 12 months, over 1.5 million people visited the library.

As a focal point of the library, Archives+ has gone from strength to strength. Prior to the initiation of Archives+, each partner, not based at Central Library, reached only 15,000 people annually.

### **2.3 A sense of ownership**

Archives+ is something people want to be part of. Community groups are constantly depositing their archive collections, and holding exhibitions in Central Library. The

Ahmed Iqbal Ullah's Heritage Lottery Funded project 'Community-Led Collecting: Fit for the Future' has increased engagement with community groups relating to global majority communities, and increasing diversity of collections is an ongoing priority for all Local Authorities archives.

### **3. Greater Manchester and Local Studies Partnership over the last 12 months**

#### **3.1 GMALSP Action Plan 2023-26**

GMALSP partners have continued to work effectively together, for the benefit of all 10 GM authorities.

##### **3.1.1 Digital Preservation**

The GMCRO Digital Preservation Archivist supported all partners to ensure they are approaching digital preservation in an effective manner. The significant progress made last year has continued, reflecting our commitment to strengthening Digital Preservation practices in Greater Manchester. Our project created three travelling 'Greater Manchester Digital Preservation Toolkits,' funded by The National Archives Resilience Fund, officially ended in March 2025, with all 10 authorities having access to the toolkits during this time. The kits are currently on their second round of visits, and we've introduced a simple booking system that allows each kit to be reserved for a three-month period. It has become clear that this approach is considered a model of best practice and the approach has been promoted across a range of sector events and networks including at the Archives and Records Association Conference held in Bristol, online meetings of DigiPres North and the London Archives Partnership, and at History Day North in Durham and History Day London at Senate House. The project was also featured as a case study in *A Year in Archives*, published by The National Archives, further raising its profile. Our next steps are to continue using the kits to process the backlog of digital accessions already held in our archives, and then to explore options for providing access to these materials. The GMCRO Digital Preservation Archivist is now working towards updating the GMALSP Digital Preservation Policy, as well as working with Manchester City Council's Records Manager to find a reliable way of transferring born digital council records to the archive, these will then be shared with all authorities.

### 3.1.2 Sound Archives

In 2023 we purchased a kiosk which displays audio-visual clips from our archives to be used in each authority. It has been travelling between each authority, with relevant content to that area loaded on each time it moves. By the end of 2026, customers of every authority will have benefitted from a few months with the kiosk. Feedback has been excellent with residents fascinated by clips of Greater Manchester and their specific authority. In 2025 the Greater Manchester County Record Office received several significant oral history collections: Lipservice Theatre Company, Protest! LGBTQ+ heritage project and Andrew Davies's interviews on everyday life in Salford and Manchester before the Second World War. These and other collections such as the NW Jazz gig collection and the LGBT Foundation oral history collection have been added to Manchester Central Library's Sound + Vision pods. Several large digitisation jobs for clients including National Museums Liverpool, the International Anthony Burgess Museum and the University of Manchester Rylands Research Institute have raised income and demonstrate the value of GMCRO to the heritage sector. GMCRO has continued its sound archives support role for the NW region by giving advice and making training visits to Preston, Liverpool and Carlisle.

### 3.1.3 Piccadilly Radio Archives

Throughout 2025 the Greater Manchester County Record Office hosted a 12-month £103k project to digitise and transform access to the Piccadilly Radio Archive thanks to support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Manchester Libraries Trust. The project made over 1,800 independent radio shows (the equivalent of over five weeks of non-stop audio) available at Manchester Central Library. The shows feature content from across Manchester. Project partners including the Greater Manchester Hip Hop Archive, ALL FM and the Manchester Digital Music Archive. The project involved workshops and skilled up 53 volunteers to spend over 800 hours help digitising, indexing and curating the archive. Over 1,000 archive tapes were saved from 25 attics around the country and added to the Manchester Central Library strong rooms, 10 oral history interviews with Piccadilly Radio staff were conducted and 15 new radio and podcast pieces have been created to introduce the collection to a new generation.



#### 3.1.4 Increasing the diversity of our collections

Diversifying our collections so they closer match our current populations has been a long standing priority of each Greater Manchester Authority. To enable this to happen effectively, this would involve engagement with community groups in each authority. We have submitted a bid to The National Archives Archives Revealed Consortium which, if successful, would involve recruiting a Project Manager and community engagement in each authority. The result would be some collections being taken in by each authority and catalogued, as well as the benefits of community engagement with under-represented communities. The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre and Educational Trust will provide support to the project, as they have done to organisations across the region and country. The ability for our Archives services to support our communities to tell their stories is more important than ever with the need for social cohesion and community pride.

#### 3.1.5 Preservation and conservation

The Greater Manchester County Record Office employ a Conservation Officer whose expertise is used by all 10 Local Authorities. This year the Conservation Officer has provided advice to all authorities on their local storage facilities, and ensured the storage conditions at Manchester Central Library are excellent. The Officer has also repaired items from different authorities and delivered training session for Greater Manchester staff on subjects such as dealing with red rot, and box making for vulnerable items.

### 3.1.6 Assheton Collection

In 2023, we raised £100k to purchase the Assheton of Middleton manorial document collection and to run engagement sessions using the material. We have run a range of activities through the year aimed at widening public knowledge and understanding of this outstanding archive collection now secured permanently for Greater Manchester. Events included collaborating with local community archery clubs to deliver hands-on history and archery sessions for around 170 pupils and teachers from Matthew Moss High School in Rochdale and St Augustine's and St Brigids primary schools in Manchester, local history talks to Middleton Library, events open to the public such as Armed Forces Day, displays of original archives, medieval archery equipment, field visits to historic Middleton buildings, palaeography and conservation workshops for volunteers to help us widen our knowledge of reading, researching and preserving this historic collection of documents. Feedback from schools and volunteers has been excellent – one teacher commented that "the children haven't stopped talking about the archery!" The project has been extended and will continue until Spring 2026. A video describing the collection and its importance is here: <https://youtu.be/IVLrYIF5SY4>.



### 3.1.7 Marcus Rashford Archives

We received £20,000 from Arts Council England Digital Libraries programme to develop a free educational resource for schools and the public on the Marcus Rashford archive. This collection of messages of support and anti-racism was created mostly by children following the Rashford mural in Withington being defaced with racist graffiti after the Euros in 2021. The collection highlights local lad Marcus Rashford as a role model due to his campaigning work relates to children and food poverty. The website is launched in January 2026 and offers a free and engaging interactive resource which will be accessible to everyone. Featuring themes that can be explored by the collection include empathy, anti-racist action,



using your voice, contemporary history, preserving community heritage, its mixed media style includes film and audio recordings along with lesson resources which promote diverse voices. The resource includes a video introduction from Carl Anka who co-writes Marcus Rashford's children's books. This will enable us to continue engagement with the collection which has already happened with many schools including Beaver Road.

### 3.1.8 Manchester Local Images Website

Funded through the National Lottery Heritage fund, the new Manchester Local Images website went live from early 2025 and has now fully met its project and development targets. This free new resource is now available for use by everyone and is a unique historic record of the city, with over 100,000 photographs of buildings, people, places and events from the 1880s right up to the 2000s. We worked with a dedicated group of volunteers to digitise and repackage batches of prints from the Town Hall Photographers department to ensure their long term survival and access. He also worked with contributors such as Manchester blogger Skyliner to create blog content for the new website and exhibition content to draw out the amazing and colourful stories behind some of the photographs.



To publicise the new resource, a variety of education activities and events were delivered including two popular volunteer-curated exhibitions at Central Library, , a Local Images Week from 24 February to 1 March dedicated to celebrating the new website. The website features AI search features and allows people to submit memories to help us enrich the stories behind the images. The volunteers continue to support it by digitising and cataloguing images. <https://images.manchester.gov.uk/>

### 3.1.9 Titanic exhibition

The Titanic Manchester Exhibition was held in Manchester Central in August. It was a major tourist attraction with over 35,000 people visiting. Manchester Archives and the North West Film Archive showcased our own Titanic stories alongside this outstanding exhibition. Our mini-exhibition, located at the entrance to the main exhibition displayed a collection of archives that we hold including family photographs, film and documents related to the stories around the Titanic. This includes correspondence relating to Chorlton Library whose plans were lost because of the sinking of the Titanic.



20<sup>th</sup> March 1912

*Of purchases made from the Robert Hall  
Widow for year ending 1<sup>st</sup> February 1912  
Yours faithfully  
(signed) Walter P. Broune*

*Chester's Library,  
Beecham's Bank, Manchester*

*List of purchases from the Robert Hall  
Fund, as per list dated 27<sup>th</sup> October 1881 of  
Mr Robert Hall*

Date	Title of Book	£	s	d
July 13	Victoria County History, Lancashire	1	11	6
18	William Hall Arch. Socy, sub 1911	1	1	0
Oct 12	Boysington's History of the Manors	5	5	0
13	Victoria County History, Lancashire	3	3	0
13	Gilberts, Sir P. & Co. of ancient Records of Dublin, Vol 15	1	1	0
Jan 12	Victoria County History, Lancashire, Vol 1	3	3	0
12	" " " Lancashire - 5	1	11	6
20	" " " Middlesex - 2	16	16	0
	(signed) Walter P. Broune Acting Librarian 27 <sup>th</sup> February 1912			

*New Carnegie Library,  
Chorlton cum Hardly.*

*Read following report:-*

PROPOSED CARNEGIE LIBRARY, CHORLTON-CUM-HARDY.

The City Architect submits herewith plans of the Carnegie Library proposed to be erected on the site at the corner of Manchester Road and Longford Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy.

The plan is arranged with the entrance at the corner of Longford Road and Manchester Road where the land forms a triangle. The staff enclosure is in the centre of an

## 3.2 Here are highlights of each individual authority's archives services:

### 3.2.1 Bolton

Bolton Library & Archive service is flourishing in the refurbished and transformed Bolton Central Library which opened in January 2024. Highlights of this year include

- The return of volunteers to the service, which stopped during Covid
- Beginning the implementation of the Spydus Archives collection management system
- Work has recommenced digitising Bolton's Rate Books for Find My Past with so far approximately half of the available material complete.

- Receiving donations, with an average of two new accessions a month since December 2024 from individuals and external bodies.
- The archives has been (and will be) involved in providing support for several funding bids, including (in partnership with GMALSP) a Consortium Bid regarding collections from diverse and under-represented communities.
- Began drafting a new Collections Development Policy and Forward Plan as part of the re-accreditation process.

### 3.2.2 Bury

There has been a 25% increase in visitor numbers and a 5% rise in enquiries this year. This surge in public interaction, alongside the successful completion of digitisation and art projects, underscores both the intrinsic value of Bury Archives' collections and the dedication of the team to making local history accessible.

In March 2025, Bury Archives successfully completed a project funded by a £5,000 Research and Innovation Grant awarded by The National Archives. This grant enabled two local artists to create a substantial collection of digital artwork inspired by the archives' diverse holdings. The finished works were made freely accessible to the public via the BorrowBox library app, offering a fresh and visually engaging way to experience historical records. The initiative demonstrated how creative interpretation can revitalise archives and spark public interest by giving them a contemporary, pictorial presence.

Building on this success, the archives secured UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) for the "Radcliffe Through Time" project, which focused on digitising the Radcliffe Newspaper microfilm collection spanning 1887–2015. To make this resource more engaging, the team curated compelling articles from different years to produce a free public booklet and hosted well-attended workshops at Radcliffe Library, and the resources were used in local care homes. This success was further reinforced by strong public demand for similar booklets created for the 80th Anniversary of VE/VJ Day using other local Bury newspapers.

### 3.2.3 Manchester – see sections 3.1.1–3.1.9 and 4.1-4.2

### 3.2.4 Oldham

Oldham Archives has opened in a new building in September 2025, working from a temporary location in Central Library for most of the year. We moved 425 cubic metres of collections from temporary off site storage into the new archives store between August and October. This is the first time in 51 years that all the collections

have been stored in one, purpose-built store. The new Oldham Archives in the Spindles redevelopment was officially opened by the Worshipful Mayor of Oldham, Councillor Eddie Moores, at an Open Day on Saturday 27 September, and opened its doors to researchers on Monday 29 September. We had 78 visitors to the Open Day and offered behind the scenes tours, which proved popular. Since re-opening to the public, we have welcomed more than 200 visitors and provided access to 144 collection items.

The annual Oldham Histories Festival was held in September, with 29 events put on by 23 partners. Confirmed attendance at ticketed events was 141 people, with other events, mostly open days, estimated at around 1000 people.

In April, we were successful in our application to the Archives Revealed Scoping Grant fund for our Hold the Front Page: Chronicling Oldham Life project. The report gives valuable insight into how Oldham residents and community groups view the Oldham Chronicle and how they would like Oldham Archives to make the archive collection more accessible. The report recommendations will contribute to an Archives Revealed Cataloguing Grant application in Spring 2026.

In November, Oldham Archives provided a training day for the Heritage Champions working on the current National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project at Northern Roots, to support the Heritage Champions in researching the history of the Northern Roots site.

Over the next 12 months, Oldham Archives will continue to develop the service in its new location. Key aims are restarting our volunteer and school visits programmes, developing our collections-related talks and group visits offer, and developing a cataloguing programme to improve documentation of the archives and local studies collections.

### 3.2.5 Rochdale

Rochdale Local Studies Centre has had a busy 12 months. Whilst settling into our temporary home and signposting members of the public to the building, we have provided help for the Town Hall volunteers who have been busy researching the magistrates court and various offenders who appeared there. The Police Mugshot book that we hold in the archive collection, has been a fabulous starting point for all of the volunteers, whilst providing the nature of offences committed, the book also provides a 'mugshot' of the felons along with a concise physical description. Tours of the magistrates court are now available to the public.

In August, Local Studies participated in the Side By Side Festival which is a festival for the people of Rochdale. Working with the community and various community groups a number of activities took place over the course of a fortnight, plays, show and tell, workshops, dog day to name a few, proved very popular. A 'Back to the 80's Day' celebrating the local community and encouraging former community centre members to relive the past. The day was a great success attracting over 200 participants young and old who enjoyed looking through photograph albums from the 1980's and 1990's, many recognising themselves and other family members. It was a very happy day with free refreshments, a bouncy castle, sports day races, music, dancing and zine making.

We have been successful in securing funding for a project working alongside the Co-operative Heritage Trust. 'Unlocking Collections' will help us to document, digitise and preserve archives in both of our collections. The funding from the Arts Council will enable the teams to recruit volunteers from our diverse community who will all help to create greater access to our rich archives and help to tell the Rochdale story. The project runs from September 2025-September 2026.

### 3.2.6 Salford

These past 12 months we have been working and supporting the many projects and events related to the Salford 100 programme. This is a programme of events next year celebrating 100 years since Salford was raised to City status. These include the museum exhibitions that will allow members of the public to select items from the museum collection, as well as the library image collection, for display.

During this time, we have been working with partner organisations to increase our volunteer programme, with three new volunteer opportunities with Project Inc. (Pinc) College. These have been transcribing paper catalogues from the archive, and assisting in creating a basic handlist of Bridgewater Canal maps.

Our Digital Salford volunteers also continue to do an excellent job, scanning and transcribing information on images from our photograph collection.

### 3.2.7 Stockport

Stockroom, the new creative and cultural space situated in the heart of the Merseyway shopping centre opened in May. The Heritage Library and Archive service form a key part of the complex and have a brand-new search room, which is highly visible as visitors ascend to the first floor. Visitors can access items

themselves using the 'self-help' sections of the Heritage Library. This area has seen a huge increase in footfall as compared to the venue at Stockport Central Library. Written enquiries to the service have also surged significantly, since the service has become more visible.

During the opening weekend, lots of activities took place through the building, including a talk in the Local Heritage Library area, discussing the Author's photographs of residents taken whilst shopping in Stockport market in the 1970s.

The searchroom operates on an appointment system to ensure customers are served effectively and because not all collections are yet stored at Stockroom. The team are currently preparing for 'Phase 2' of the relocation, which involves moving all the archives to a brand-new storage facility, currently being constructed on site at Stockroom.

Outside the room are two brand new display cabinets, which are used to highlight different parts of the collections; so far including a display of illuminated manuscripts, Railway plans to tie in with 'Railway 200' and toy related ephemera and catalogues for the Christmas display. They were also used by a local individual to display some of his own material relating to the VJ day anniversary in August.

Since opening, several authorities have visited to gain insight into their own plans for similar venues and advice has been given as to what they may need to consider.

A 'Meet the Funder' event was held in November attended by 17 attendees, who gained first hand advice from the Heritage lottery fund team about their potential bids.

Stockport is currently hosting the Sound kiosk, which has been circulating around all the GM authorities, and had some Black History Month materials loaded on for BHM month.

### 3.2.8 Tameside

During the first half of 2025 Tameside Local Studies and Archives hosted two artists in residencies, Christine Anderson and Martha Distin Webster. Christine spent several weeks exploring the collections held onsite, speaking to our volunteers and from this created a vinyl artwork for our windows, a quilted tapestry and series of soft textile sculptures based on the collections and work conducted by staff and volunteers. Volunteers and council officers were invited by staff to a special preview

of the work in September. VE and VJ day were commemorated at Local Studies with Martha Distin Webster who explored how Tameside has commemorated those days in the borough over the years. From this research, Martha attended the Armed Forces Day in Victoria Park, Denton to work with families and children to write letters reflecting on the last 85 years and created clay cakes which were used later at the family VE/VJ day celebrations in Ashton to recreate the feel of a street party.

We have also worked alongside Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council's Adult Services to provide a series of weekly sessions for carers on how to research their family history. The sessions are led by our family history volunteers with support from staff. These have been a great success, and we look forward to welcoming our second cohort in January 2026. Our volunteers have contributed 1220 hours over the last year helping to list collections, clean and repackage documents, and helping with family history enquiries.

In November, the service was re-awarded archive accreditation which has been held since 2018. The archive accreditation scheme defines good practice and agreed standards for archive services across the UK. Achieving accredited status demonstrates that Tameside Local Studies and Archives has met clearly defined national standards relating to management and resourcing; the care of its unique collections and what the service offers to its entire range of users.

Priorities for 2026 include working on the recommendations for improvement as outlined in our feedback from accreditation particularly regarding digital preservation and continue to develop our programme of outreach and engagement.

### 3.2.9 Trafford

Trafford Local Studies has benefitted from the refurbishment of Sale Library in Autumn 2026, due to a Libraries Improvement Funding. The library, including Local Studies reopened following a 3 week closure on 7<sup>th</sup> November. New researchers, community groups, families, and local history societies visited Trafford Local Studies & Archives have visited since, enjoying our facilities, resources and exhibitions, with visitor numbers increasing significantly. This refurbishment has seen images and artwork from the archive utilised across the library and made Trafford Local Studies more visible to visitors. Additionally, in partnership with the Cosgrove Hall Films Archive (CHFA), managed by Waterside Arts, a new permanent exhibition from the CHFA collection will open in January 2026 which builds on Postman Pat's sorting office already exhibited within Sale Library.

Our Frank Sidebottom themed exhibition, *Frank's World*, displayed original drawings, archival footage, records and rare ephemera, attracting over 1,066 new visitors to the centre which included visitors from all over the UK in addition to Turkey and USA. Regional and national press covered the exhibition which included the BBC, Manchester Evening News and more.

Trafford completed major project work by cataloguing historic building plans (c.1850-1989) from the borough. A Project Archivist, funded by The National Archives, help deliver the project which involved recruiting 32 volunteers and cataloguing over 17,316 plans. Historic plans catalogued during the project were displayed as part of a 4 month exhibition at the Local Studies & Archive centre, in addition to a 27 article online exhibition entitled [Brick by Brick](#) on [Exploring Trafford's Heritage](#). The cataloguing project continues as we push to catalogue all of the 100,000 item collection.

Trafford's x2 Local Studies and Archive Interns completed their 12-month internships in September 2025 and have successfully gained employment within the archive, gallery and museum sector. The volunteer base grew again in 2025 which resulted in the successful delivery of multiple research and cataloguing projects. Pulling together a committed and diverse group of volunteers with a range of different ages, genders, ethnicities and backgrounds.

Engagement work included family history help day events, school workshops, blue plaque unveilings, heritage open days, archive tours, displays and much more. Digital engagement on social media has continued to grow with Trafford Local Studies proudly reporting over 1,100 new followers on Facebook alone in the last 12 months, a growth rate of 25%.

### 3.2.10 Wigan

In 2025, Archives: Wigan & Leigh benefitted from 2,739 volunteer hours and hosted 21 work experience placements. We delivered 36 school workshops, engaging with over 1,100 pupils across the borough. Additionally, the service responded to 1,658 enquiries and supported 15 internal Council teams with their work.

A National Archives Engagement Grant-funded project enabled us to deliver a summer holiday club targeted at HAF-eligible children, in which participants created digital responses to archival collections using Lego robotics, Minecraft and stop-motion animation. This was attended by 112 children. A further grant from Historic England is allowing us to continue to develop this work in 2026.



*Past Forward*, the Archives' local history magazine, celebrated its 100th issue. It features the writing and photography of local historians and was first published in 1991.

We have hosted and toured a pop-up exhibition entitled 'Migration Stories North West' which features stories of migration to and from the area from Roman times to the present day, alongside archives and artefacts from Wigan residents. Oral histories with migrant communities were also recorded and made publicly available.

Reminiscence workshops with care home residents continue to be popular, and we have delivered talks to the sector (via The National Archives, ALISS and the Archives & Records Association) advising others on running similar programmes.

Our collection of Persian calligraphies have been loaned to Blackburn Museum for their *Nature of Gothic* exhibition.

Priorities for 2026 are shaped by the Council's Strategy, *Progress with Unity*. We will continue to collaborate with local charities that supports people with autism and learning difficulties, with structured engagement sessions for these audiences. Our catalogue will be hosted online, for the first time allowing anyone to search our holdings from one place. We will continue to support major regeneration projects in the borough with our collections, including Ashton-in-Makerfield and Haigh Hall.

#### 4. **Archives+ over the last 12 months.**

4.1 This has been another very successful 18 months for the Archives+ partners who are based at Manchester Central Library, individually and as a partnership. The partnership have worked together for several events and exhibitions, including the Titanic exhibition and a national event to celebrate 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Public Libraries Act, which included Baroness Twycross, the Minister for Museums, Heritage and Gambling, looking at some of the highlights of our archives.

4.2 This has been a particularly rich year for Archives+ exhibitions.

- Highlights have included Piccadilly Radio archives exhibition, the George House Trust exhibition, the LGBT Foundation archives exhibition, Remembering Oxford Mills – an exhibition about the mill in Ashton-Under-Lyne, Architecture for the People, Manchester City Architect's Department 1902-2003 and Libraries 175: Celebrating 175 years of the Public Libraries Act 1850 which was produced by Manchester Archives. The most recent exhibition is from the acclaimed

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- Manchester-based Lipservice Theatre company. Founder Sue Ryding has been busy with her group of volunteers digitising and cataloguing this 40 year collection of theatre scripts, photographs and props including a life-sized sheep and a comic Victorian murder victim called the Major. These and other materials from this fascinating archive will form part of the Funny Stuff exhibition launching in early January 2026. Volunteers are currently hard at work creating Ken and Barbie-style Action dolls featuring characters from the 23 Lipservice shows which toured across the UK.

4.3 The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre and Education Trust's work was more important than ever with the need to fight racism and promote community cohesion. The introduction of a Young People and Schools Officer in the 2024–25 academic year expanded educational reach, working with 1,220 young people across 16 schools and youth organisations, training 19 PGCE History trainees, and producing 10 collection-based resources.

Throughout 2025, the 80th anniversary of the 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester provided the focus for much of our public engagement work. We collaborated with cultural partners throughout the year on numerous events, engagement sessions and exhibitions, and the programme culminated with an event on Black histories and the 1945 Pan-African Congress, featuring Gary Younge, exploring how this history informs contemporary anti-racism and anti-fascism work.

Work continues on the National Lottery Heritage Fund project (Community-Led Collecting: Fit for the Future) to improve digital resilience and collection accessibility, which concludes in March 2026.

Consultancy work with the Association of Independent Museums continued, supporting an organisational review through an anti-racist lens. Additional consultancy work included advising Museum Development North's Directors Advisory Group and providing specialist mentoring for the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The Education Trust (AIUET) became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, strengthening governance and legal compliance, and welcomed new Trustees.

4.4 Over the last year, the North West Film Archive has been busy with a number of initiatives funded by the BFI National Lottery Screen Heritage Fund, looking at how the NWFA collection reflects the diversity of the NW region, and working with local

communities to improve representation in, and access to, moving image heritage for under-represented groups.

A full audit of all NWFA holdings was completed, identifying collections that address under-representation and have the potential for wider public engagement. Work to make these available has begun, with inspection, acquisition and/or cataloguing and reinterpretation undertaken where necessary.

NWFA Accessibility Officer has continued looking at how the collection reflects the lives and experiences of disabled people, and developing ways of improving access for disabled and neuro-divergent users to their moving image heritage. A good relationship with the Disabled People's Archive has been developed, and we have worked together on a number of disability-focussed events in Central Library, including an event for Disability Pride in July, and Disabled JOY! for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December.

Access work in the year included public screenings of a 1970s documentary about the Nello James Centre in Whalley Range at Contact Theatre and the Kath Locke Centre; we had a stall promoting the Archive at a number of events celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Pan-African Congress in Manchester; and we screened a selection of NWFA content at 'Community Policing: All Things to All People?', as part of the Manchester International Crime and Justice Film Festival in June.

Finally, NWFA staff were regular visitors to the BBC Breakfast sofa this year, discussing and showing content from the collection in relation to the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries of both VE and VJ Day.

- 4.5 The Manchester and Lancashire Family History run a Monday-Friday family history helpdesk at Manchester Central Library. During the last year the Helpdesk welcomed 2,140 visitors in total. This included 839 short enquiries, and 1,301 longer enquiries, where visitors were given extended assistance, often including computer access and supported research time. In August, when Central Library was closed, the society offered support at 8 other libraries.

In addition to running the helpdesk at Manchester Central Library, the Society delivered a full programme of public engagement at Manchester Central Library: the annual Family History Fair attracted visitors from across Greater Manchester; the programme of talks brought regular audiences of members and non-members into the building; and volunteers supported research, digital skills activity, guidance and Archives visibility throughout the year.

The Society continued to work with Archives+ and local bodies to make more records available. The society's experience of handling large projects has made several large projects possible. This year the society completed the transcription of 11 Roman Catholic baptism registers for the Salford diocese, now available as downloads in the Society shop.

Notable among other projects completed are: 10,833 records of Manchester City Transport Staff in an ongoing project in partnership with Manchester Transport Museum; 2,909 Names appearing in 19th century Manchester Newspapers; 4,516 records of employee records for Prestwich Asylum; 5,735 records of children admitted to Manchester & Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges in a new project in partnership with the Together Trust; 227 teachers of the deaf & dumb in partnership with the Seashell Trust; 3,914 newspaper announcements relating to cremations pre-1941 at Manchester Crematorium and 3,199 names of streets appearing on the Godfrey editions of Ordnance Survey maps for Greater Manchester. The large project of indexing Mother's maiden names for births registered at Manchester Register Office was completed with the updating of a final 138,339 birth registration records.

Current large projects include the continuing project in partnership with the Manchester Museum of Transport to transcribe records of an estimated 30,000 employees, the transcription of announcements from early Manchester newspapers and the records of Manchester Court Leet. Ongoing projects also include the indexing of prisoners committed to Belle Vue Prison 1871-72, indexing of Staff Obligations for Prestwich Asylum (currently suspended pending clarification of record closure periods) and indexing nurses' records for Crumpsall Hospital (for which permission is still awaited).

- 4.6 Manchester Histories has continued to broaden its impact through heritage, community engagement, and collaborative cultural projects. The Queer Up North Project is progressing strongly, with its archive now in the process of being digitised. Forty oral histories are being recorded, all of which will feature on a new public platform launching in 2026, preserving an important chapter of Manchester's LGBTQ+ cultural history.

The Rocket: All Aboard programme has now established a clear framework that will guide the creation of a new living archive. Additional funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Manchester City Council has further strengthened This Is Us, which investigates whose stories are represented and absent in public spaces across Greater Manchester.

The Crafting Connections: Heritage & Wellbeing programme, developed from the Archives+ partnership, has proven highly effective. Over the past year it has been delivered to six community groups across Greater Manchester, using archival materials as a catalyst for creativity, confidence-building, and social connection. Manchester Histories is also supporting the Champs Camp Archive Project, working with the Hulme boxing club founded by Phil Martin in response to the Moss Side Riots to preserve its important community history.

Community-led activity continues to grow through the Time Traveler's Tea Room, where members of the public bring personal objects and memories to spark conversations about their own histories and heritage. Volunteer development remains central to our mission, with 15 volunteers trained this year in archiving, digital preservation, and oral history methods.

The Manchester Histories Hub at Central Library has maintained a strong programme of heritage and wellbeing-focused activity, including workshops, community group collaborations, and public exhibitions. The Hub has welcomed hundreds of visitors from across GM and continues to act as a gathering place for exploring Greater Manchester's diverse histories. Upcoming activity includes the Love, Loss & Life exhibition sharing real stories from the AIDS pandemic, and the River Irk multimedia exhibition created with Many Hands Community Group.

- 4.7 The Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People were successful in their bid to the Wellcome Trust in 2021, in partnership with Archives+, to catalogue, digitise and make accessible their Disabled People's Archive. The cataloguing of the collection is now complete. with highlights available at: <https://disabledpeoplesarchive.com/in-the-archive/>. GMCDP were successful in two bids in 2025, both of which are being run in partnership with Archives+. The first, from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, will support a 20-month project entitled "Accessing Our Hidden History-The Disabled People's Archive". This project aims to connect disabled people to their heritage, as well as to promote the existence of the Disabled People's Archive. The

second, from The National Archives' Cataloguing Grant, will fund the 'Choice and Control' project. This project provides an opportunity to open up and catalogue previously restricted parts of the Disabled People's Archive, and is a chance to develop our understanding of the history of the Independent Living Movement and its influence on the Disabled People's Movement.

- 4.8 Archives+ have supported several partner organisations with successful National Lottery Heritage Fund Bids. The George House Trust received £151k to celebrate 40 years of HIV activism in Greater Manchester. The project resulted in their archive being preserved, a magnificent exhibition in the Archives+ area of Manchester Central Library, archives made accessible with engagement activities. Manchester Histories & Queer Up North were awarded £248,500 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. This funding, with additional support from the Granada Foundation, will preserve and celebrate the Queer Up North (QUN) festivals held between 1992 and 2002.

## **5. Future Priorities**

### **5.1 Future Priorities for joint projects for GMALSP**

- 5.1.1 A workshop was held with all GM authorities in February 2023 to decide on the priorities for the 2023-26. The current action plan is included as Appendix 2. The priorities for the next 12 months include the items below.

- **Diversity and Inclusion and contemporary collecting.** Ensure we make our archives more representative of the diverse populations within Greater Manchester. If the consortium bid to The National Archives, Archives Revealed funding stream is successful, implement the large scale engagement, collection and cataloguing project to increase the amount of material relating to diverse populations. Diversify our volunteer base and increase the diversity of audiences. Develop approaches to contemporary collecting, working together on certain collections for example Local Authority records, Health Records etc.
- **Digital by Design.** We will continue to work with partners to digitise our collections and make them available online, and assess options relating to a replacement GM Archives catalogue, to replace GMLives.
- **Digital Preservation.** GMCRO is supporting each of the 10 authorities to reduce the risks to their archives, continuing to expand options following the TNA funded project. We also plan to update documentation regarding digital preservation, including preserving Council records.

- **Engagement, Advocacy and Events.** Ensure archives services use local, regional, national and international commemorations, celebrations and events to increase the profile of archives and increase audiences.

## 5.2 Future Priorities for Archives+

- Archives+ partners will continue to work together, coming together particularly for resident engagements, events and exhibitions.
- Engagement plans involve widening access to archives and heritage with more popular projects which will curate, catalogue, digitise and display their collections. We will continue to maintain our popular Exhibition facilities in a cost-effective but exciting way to ensure high quality public heritage access and engagement. We will also continue to be a major partner supporting many external heritage projects in curating, digitising, exhibiting and celebrating many archive collections throughout 2026. These include Polonia Northern England to help preserve and promote Polish heritage groups in Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire; Gorton Central community archive project, partnering Manchester Together Archive and Manchester Art Gallery in developing trauma-informed best practice in collecting and working with disaster collections; Wallpaper Manufacturers project with the Whitworth Gallery and universities in New Zealand; Club Cheoil Irish music archive, homeless support project The Road South to find True North, and collecting and creative projects with care-experienced young people and Rosetta Life/Carers UK art installation.
- The Greater Manchester County Record Office will continue to use its fully equipped sound recordings digitisation studio, that enables us to deliver digitisation projects and raise income from engagement and digitisation projects. We will continue to share Greater Manchester's neglected and fragile sound recordings more widely online and using exhibition kiosks across Greater Manchester. Bids for funding to the NLHF and The National Archives will focus on this.
- The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (AIURC) priorities for 2026 include securing funding to sustain and grow capacity after the end of our NLHF funding from March 2026. We plan to build relationships in North and East Manchester and other Greater Manchester boroughs to fill engage new audiences, and increase reach and impact with schools, producing more resources for educators. We also plan to refine our organisational strategy, vision and mission to consider how we can work best to address rising racism and adapt to a changing environment.

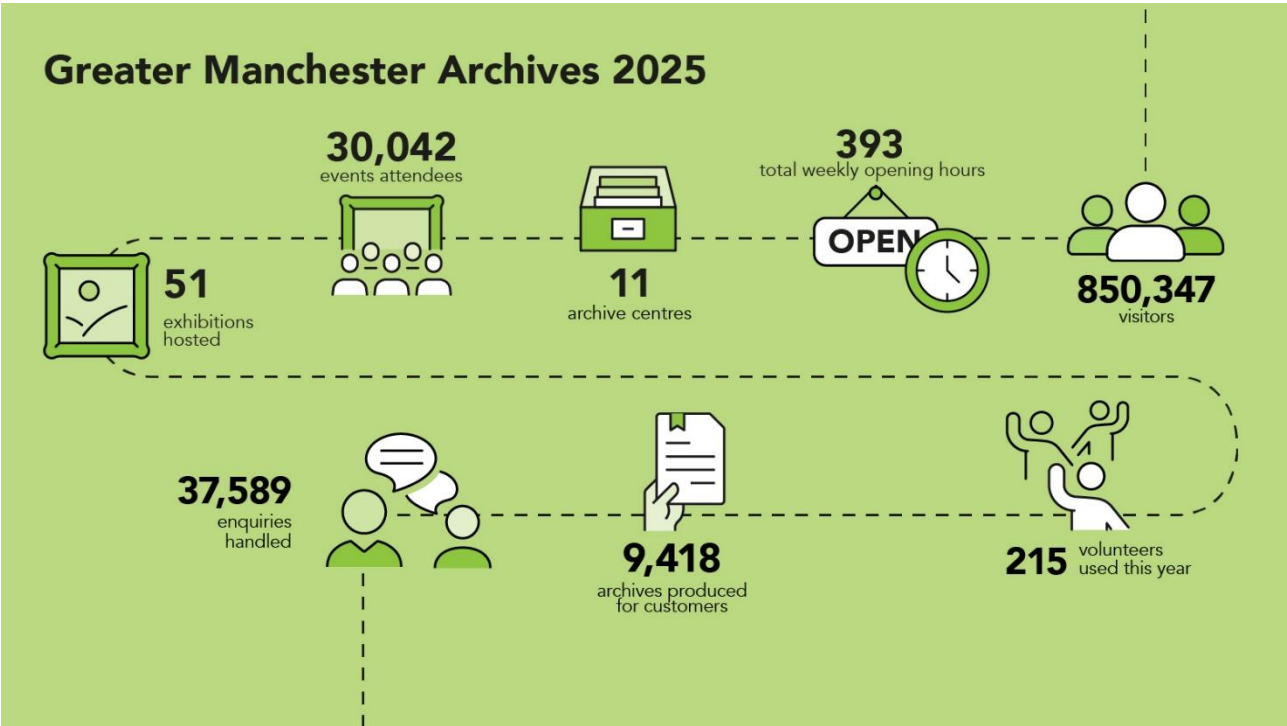
- NWFA is continuing its BFI National Lottery Screen Heritage project. This is designed to improve accessibility to moving image heritage, working directly with disabled and neuro-diverse people and increasing fully accessible content for all users.
- The Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society will continue to operate the family history helpdesk in Manchester Central Library and work with Archives+ Partners and other local bodies to preserve records. The projects to digitise the employment records held by the Transport Museum and of children who passed through the children's refuges held by Together Trust continue to be cornerstones of the society's project programme.
- Manchester Histories will continue to use the histories and heritage hub at Central Library to host exhibition, hold events and deliver a series of workshops. Projects that will continue to be delivered include Rocket: All Aboard, 'Queer Up North 1992-2002: Celebrating Manchester's LGBTQ+ Heritage and This is Us. Manchester Histories Festival in June 2026 will be delivered from Manchester Central Library. The theme is Civic pride, in the run up to Manchester Town Hall opening in 2027.
- The Disabled People's Archive will continue to deliver its 2 Greater Manchester wide projects, in conjunction with GM Archives and Local Studies Partnership – "Accessing Our Hidden History-The Disabled People's Archive" and "Choice and Control"

## **6.0 Recommendation**

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to Note the progress of the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership and Archives+ partnership



Appendix 1: Infographic relating to GMALSP in 2025



## **Appendix 2: GMALSP Action Plan 2023-26: Joint Projects**

Action no.	Workstream Priority	Action	When	Who	Status
1	Digital	Use the Digital Preservation server space set up by Manchester		MO / ALL	Complete: Space able to be used
2	Digital	Submit bid to TNA Resilience Fund to create digital server space to help with digital preservation in each authority	Jan 24	MO	Complete: Bid successful
3	Digital	Implement the TNA Resilience Fund Digital Preservation project	Mar 25	MO / All	Complete: Each authority is now able to use the kit
4	Contemporary collecting / Digital	Produce and implement guidance / process for collecting Council Records		MO	In progress
5	Contemporary collecting / Digital	Progress TNA Pilot project to transfer relevant records from NHS to Places of Deposit in GM		AG / HK / MO / PC / TNA rep	Pilot complete. Awaiting resulting guidance from TNA
6	Contemporary collecting / Digital	Take forward Newspaper audit and project – liaising with Ancestry.com		DG / MW / AC / JB / DM	Awaiting progress from NW Heads of Archives

7	Diversity in workforce	TNA apprentices project. Support TNA with bid, and host 2 apprentices if successful	Jun 23	PC / HK / JH	Bid not successful
8	Events and Advocacy / Contemporary collecting / Digital	Submit joint bids and maximise income when opportunities arise – e.g. TNA Resilience Fund, Archives Revealed  Submitted £150k consortium bid to Archives Revealed fund in 2025 – around diverse collections		ALL / PC / AG	Bid submitted. Awaiting response in January 2026
9	Contemporary collecting	If bid is successful, deliver 18 month project that will involve engagement in each authority, to diversify collections		ALL / Project Manager	Awaiting outcome of the bid
10	Contemporary collecting	Work in partnership with GM Coalition for Disabled People on their “Accessing Our Hidden History -The Disabled People’s Archive” project	Until Spring 2027	All	GMCDP visiting each authority
11	Events and advocacy	Joint celebrations – linking with partners  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BBC Archives</li> <li>○ Ongoing Libraries / Museums events</li> </ul>		PC / AG / JH / DM	BBC 100 completed
12		Benchmark archives fees and charges of the 10 authorities		ALL / TL	In progress