

# Whalley Range Community Forum



## Annual Report 2015



# WHALLEY RANGE COMMUNITY FORUM



## ANNUAL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT [2015]

On behalf of Whalley Range Community Forum I must express my sincere gratitude to our councillors, the police, Manchester City Council, the regeneration team, our officers, and other agencies that have worked in partnership with us throughout the year.

The reduction of funding from Manchester City Council and lack of funding from other sources has had a drastic impact on delivery of services by the Forum.

Our Forum worker has worked very hard to seek funding from any source in order to provide services such as a Job club, ESOL classes, Age Friendly Whalley Range project, and Hate crime reporting facility, Advice, information, and guidance.

Whalley Range Community Forum has to extend their role to become service providers because of the national economic condition, hence the demand by the residents with assistance for seeking job opportunities.

The Age-friendly Whalley Range steering group was set up to promote Age friendly projects in Whalley Range. Members of the steering group include older residents, a councillor, and representatives from Manchester University Gerontology department.

Events were held at various locations in the Ward.

Steering group members were trained as researchers to make direct contact with older residents and record their needs and concerns. Valuable information was recorded by the researchers and will be used to prevent isolation among elderly residents of Whalley Range and Chorlton. Steering group members were involved in the regeneration of Alexandra Park and they ensured that the park became the first Age Friendly Park in Manchester.

A business charter has been developed with a set of criteria for all businesses in Whalley Range and Chorlton that will make them more Age friendly.

The Forum had to embark on generating financial resources because of limited funding to support increasing demand to provide services for the residents. We have to include cost of facilitating activities, venue costs and general administrative costs in all funding searches.

I am very concerned about the future of the Forum if there is any further reduction of funding from Manchester City Council, and other sources of funding.

Whalley Range Community Forum needs financial support to be able to meet increasing demands from the residents.

**BILL WILLIAMS.**



## **Report from the Whalley Range Community Forum Worker**

Once again the Forum has had a busy year, extending activities at the JNR8 Centre and partnerships across the Ward, holding a variety of community events, offering the provision of learning programmes and activities - and supporting and meeting the priorities of our residents. There has been an increase in local community-led activity in terms of groups coming together to address local issues and to take action, including the Friends of Nello James (now known as CLR James Community Foundation), the Withington Road First Steps initiative and a Whalley Range Cohousing group. The Forum continues to support, promote and manage community grants for local unconstituted projects on request.

The main source of funding for our projects has come from MCC - including Cash/NIF grants.

### **An overview of projects facilitated by WRCF**

**Generating Opportunities:** Work club to improve employability/promote opportunities around work, training and volunteering, basic computing classes, ESOL community classes including ESOL for Employability and practical sessions with the Bread Project baking and ESOL, (women only and mixed) and a dedicated website page featuring current vacancies, training, and volunteering opportunities.

**Wellbeing @ JNR8:** Fitness classes including Women's Keep Fit, Tai Chi for all ages/abilities and a chair-based exercise pilot for residents with reduced mobility, Whalley Range Mental Wellbeing Group website page on [www.whalleyrange.org](http://www.whalleyrange.org)

**Age-friendly Whalley Range:** AFWR Steering Group meetings, social events, newsletters, weekly social group, website page and Twitter, partnership work with Alexandra Park, University of Manchester and MICRA.

**Promotion and Social Media:** WRCF website with dedicated sections for various groups and initiatives, including recycling, Hate Crime Awareness, jobs, Age-friendly news and local events, WRCF & AFWR Twitter accounts, Newsletters, bulletins and new Facebook page.

**Third-party Hate Crime Reporting:** JNR8 is a listed Reporting Centre, offering support and information share to victims of hate crimes and incidents – with a display board in the JNR8 Centre/community events, and a dedicated page on the website promoting other local reporting centres/initiatives and community safety.

A Hate Crime Awareness Week event is taking place on February 13<sup>th</sup> from 12-3pm at JNR8 - and we will promote all citywide HCAW events.

**Eat well, Stay Well:** Food project partnership work WRCF/AFWR and Foodwiser.

Consultation with cook and taste sessions for older people to address winter nutrition.

**Miscellaneous:** Drop in support and advice/signposting for residents, including contacting benefits agency, housing department, advice services, local information share and refugee and asylum seekers support.





## **Whalley Range 'Generating Opportunities' ESOL and Learning**

Over the past year we have focused on raising the profile of the Forum and building a track record for our work club provision, meeting the needs of residents based on feedback at events. This includes classes for residents to build confidence and improve English speaking and to learn basic computing and internet skills to improve employability and volunteering prospects. We continue to work in partnership with Manchester Adult Education Services (MAES) to run weekly Talk English classes for low-level English students; current classes are extremely busy with 10 people on the waiting list. 15 people attend these mixed classes each week.

Our ongoing ESOL class for local isolated women is packed to capacity: these classes look at everyday English using practical sessions such as recycling and safety in the home, with Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service safety team and follow up sessions.

A Cash Grant was submitted to continue the women's classes as the funding had come to an end. Initially the application was turned down as it was thought that there was sufficient ESOL provision at JNR8 - but there is no other provision specifically for women in the area who cannot attend mixed groups for cultural reasons.

Around 15 women signed an appeal letter and went along to the Councillor's surgery to explain the importance of the class. The funding application was reviewed and part funded.

Our range of ESOL classes help to reduce isolation, offer support, encourage participation and improve confidence and self esteem. The classes empower the students to take control, improve confidence in their own abilities e.g. contacting school if their child is unwell/calling a service engineer to repair household appliances etc., raise awareness of recycling and safety and improve employability prospects. The diversity of the groups also enables friendships across cultures.

We held a Basic Computing course in partnership with Creating Sustainable Organisations CIC early in the year: this class followed the Tuesday women only ESOL sessions - and some of the ESOL women were joined by their husbands to learn basic computing.

The course was attended by a diverse range of students of all ages and cultures.

We also ran Positivity for Employability and Speak up with Confidence courses to support residents with low confidence levels to improve confidence and work prospects. The classes were aimed at residents who were moving towards employability and training: some referrals were from the job centre for ESA claimants (Employment Support Allowance).

We continue to support residents to access work opportunities, practice online tests and advice for Life in the UK/Citizenship, registering for benefits, housing issues, asylum seeker support (referral to services) and access to services online etc.

The Forum Worker continues to facilitate the daytime use of the building with activities based on the priorities of residents identified through feedback forms, suggestion boxes at events and newsletter feedback/website comments.

The JNR8 community rooms are leased from Manley Park Methodist Church and Church User group meetings are facilitated by the Forum worker, bringing building users together to report back on activities and to address any issues.

The Forum supports groups to use the JNR8 space for meetings by arrangement, including the regular Age-friendly Steering group and Whalley Range Mental Health and Wellbeing group meetings, User group meetings etc. The Forum shares the office space with Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association - who manages the Whiz Youth Project in the evenings and holiday provision for younger children during school breaks.

The building is let by the Church to another local youth project on Saturdays.

WRCF will be expanding daytime work club/community learning with long term sustainable funding - and has updated policies to reflect the wider range of activities on offer.

We will offer volunteering opportunities and work experience to residents who access the work club initiative: funding applications are in progress, supported by MACC. [www.macc.org.uk](http://www.macc.org.uk)  
We continue to promote the current vacancies, volunteering and training opportunities for residents circulated by the Manchester learning hubs, job centres and local businesses on the [www.whalleyrange.org](http://www.whalleyrange.org) website, via Twitter and JNR8 noticeboards.

### **Term time classes and activities at JNR8**

**MAES Talk English** Monday 10 -12:30 pm Male/female residents with low-level English

**Tai Chi** Monday 1:30-2:30 for men/women

**Women's ESOL** Tuesday 10-11am for women with low-level English skills

**Keep Fit for Women only** Wednesday 10-11am (female instructor)

**Afternoon Tea** Wednesday 2-3pm for older residents

**Work Club** Thursday 10-1pm Local jobseekers/CV updates

**Rhythm & Rhyme** Friday 10-12pm 2 groups: Under 5's/babies for parents/carers

### **Miscellaneous**

**For the evening youth club call JNR8 after 6 or leave a message on 0161 881 3744**

**Time to Change** Fridays 6-8pm Whalley Range self help wellbeing group social drop-in

**Hate Crime 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Reporting** - call 0161 881 3744

We will continue to run and increase our current activities and support for established, new and emerging groups in Whalley Range, encouraging groups to promote their activities on the website, in the News & Events newsletters and at the Celebrate festival.

We will expand our work club/learning hub activities and continue to assist residents with issues such as housing, benefits etc – signposting where appropriate to local organisations who offer specific services, i.e. Community on Solid Ground, Whalley Range Wellbeing Group, Pakistani Resource Centre, Chorlton Good Neighbours, local food banks.

We will produce Resource files with contact details of organisations and referral forms to signpost residents to services, e.g. Asylum support, Food banks, Health and Wellbeing.



## Health & Wellbeing @ JNR8

We hold weekly fitness classes for women of all cultures, ages and abilities to get fitter bringing isolated women local together in a supportive and barrier free environment and promoting the benefits of exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Many women living in our area are on low incomes and cannot afford to attend the gym: many are not able to attend public gyms for cultural reasons.

Our Tai Chi classes are suitable for people of all ages and abilities and encourage men and women to get together to exercise in a friendly, warm and comfortable environment: although the age range is mixed, these gentle sessions are particularly suitable for older people and some of the attendees suffer from health issues and find the stretching beneficial to their health..

## Partnership Working:

- **Food Project for Older People:** with Foodwiser
- **Talk English:** weekly ESOL sessions in partnership with MAES
- **Celebrate festival:** WRCF in partnership with Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association: the Forum worker co-ordinated the event in a freelance capacity.
- **Hate Crime Awareness/Community Safety/promotion of interfaith group:** GMP
- **Age-friendly Whalley Range and Women's ESOL:** Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS) Chorlton Library
- **Winter Safety event:** Anchor's Trafalgar Court, local service providers
- **Age-friendly Manchester, MICRA:** Co-researchers training, Ageing Communities film and book launch at JNR8/MPMC
- **Manley Park Methodist Church:** Resources/funding support, Church presentations
- **British Muslim Heritage Centre:** Staff member on WRCF committee, hosts meetings
- **MMU:** Students on placement facilitating community audits, etc.



## Some of our Highlights of the year:

- June: 18<sup>th</sup> Celebrate Festival hosted by St Margaret's Centre & Playing fields
- June: Making a Difference: University of Manchester Award presented to Ageing Study
- August 2015: 'Researching Age-Friendly Cities' Film launch @ JNR8
- December 2015: Festive Feast guests pose with the Lord Mayor of Manchester!
- January 2016: Our ESOL learners on BBC News at the Art Gallery with Talk English!



## Age-friendly Whalley Range (and beyond!)



During the past year we have sustained and increased our engagement with the older local community with eight events supported by the Forum and partnerships with Alexandra Park, Alexandra Arts, GMFRS and Chorlton Library, to encourage people to socialise, get together with neighbours and friends - and to make new friends. We invite relevant service providers and local groups to share information about their organisations and encourage feedback to identify priorities. Events took place at accessible venues with food and entertainment. The group are in the planning stages of becoming a constituted group and expanding to cover Chorlton and Chorlton Park: check the website for updates: [www.whalleyrange.org](http://www.whalleyrange.org)

- **March 2015:** Manley Park Community Health Day: AFWR provided food and chair-based/active older adults exercise. Ageing study Co-researchers interviewed at event
- **April 2015:** Cromwell Community Cuppa launch, Chair-based exercise and a Community Audit from an MMU student supporting older people to identify priorities and increase participation with other local people by planning relevant group activities
- **May 2015:** Well Pharmacy awarded the group with a £200 donation and offered free health checks at JNR8, a photo shoot and giant cheque presentation!
- **September 2015:** AFWR: 'Takeover of the Alexandra Park Lodge' with 50 visitors
- **October 2015:** International Older People's Day - Notice board at Chorlton Library promoting services, activities and contacts for older residents
- **October 2015:** Winter health food consultation with Foodwiser and older people across the Ward - followed by evaluation to date and future planning for the project. 10 people attended.
- **October 2015:** 'Love your Community' AFWR partnership with Chorlton Library over 55's computer classes and GMFRS with CPR training. Around 40 people attended
- **November 2015:** Whalley Range Co-researchers interviewed at the MICRA event 'What makes an age-friendly city?'
- **November 2015:** Trafalgar Court Winter Warm & Safety: a community event to prepare for the winter and to introduce the new scheme manager. 40 people attended.
- **December 2015:** Festive Feast: sit down meal and entertainment for older residents: a great success with lots of new faces who have since got involved with other activities... Around 60 people attended. Including the Lord Mayor of Manchester!

# Celebrate Festival 2015



The annual Celebrate festival is a partnership project between Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association and Whalley Range Community Forum. The 18<sup>th</sup> Celebrate Festival on Saturday June 27<sup>th</sup> was coordinated by the WRCF worker on a freelance basis and hosted by the St Margaret's Centre on Brantingham Road with the theme 'Light up Your Life' in recognition of the global 'International Year of Light Festival 2015'. The original Festival plan was scaled down when we hit a few problems in terms of low funding and unavoidable changes to the original date. A crowd funding project was part of the funding for the main aspects of the Festival, members of the community and local businesses donated towards costs for large marquees and stage for workshops, information and performance.

The project was a success and a fantastic £2326.00 was pledged: <http://tinyurl.com/h8gvkru> Local Housing Associations contributed to the costs of the event along with an MCC NIF grant approved by Manchester City Council.

Community on Solid Ground and the WHIZ project ran traditional sports activities and girls and boys Thai Boxing displays - and we had good weather for once!

Unfortunately, the revised event date fell during Ramadan and attendance was affected in terms of availability of some of our group and visitors.

The Celebrate team is already planning the next Festival and hope to revert to the traditional May bank holiday to ensure schools and members of the community can participate and attend.



Find out how to get involved and read the Celebrate report: <http://tinyurl.com/pv4oxef>

## Whalley Range Community Forum Contact details:

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**Christine Ricard, Community Development Worker, Whalley Range Community Forum**

## Thanks to our Funders and partners 2015:

