



Whalley Range Community Forum Worker Report June 2025

Funding updates

WRCF receives core funding from Manchester City Council, and for the past 3 years the funding focused on ‘Supporting Communities’ - helping people through the rising cost of living and to build support networks and resilience.

The grant ends in March 2026 – and will be replaced by the previous grant – OMVCS – Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector funding. The grant application has opened this week for applications and will be the Forum’s focus during the school holidays – as applications need to be submitted by September.

Also submitted was a NIF grant application from Age-friendly Whalley Range for the post-festival Celebrate exhibition and hessian bench information folders as part of a project called ‘Pause Communicate Collaborate Decorate.’

MSE Poverty Fund application submitted: see below.

Age-friendly work

The Whalley Range & Chorlton Network have been meeting each month and participated in a walk during the GM Walking Festival in May. I was interviewed on the Mike Sweeney Radio show to talk about our walks and the group!

A funding application for Nordic Walking training will be submitted in September.

Chair exercise and craft groups are popular – and of course the music group.

We were delighted to welcome the Royal Exchange Elders group: Dominoes & Dahlias – a group of African and African Caribbean older people to celebrate Age Without Limits – with a fantastic performance called ‘Reunion’ reminiscing about their experiences in the clubs of Moss Side and Hulme e.g. the Nile and the Reno. We just needed a dance floor to join in!

Cost of Living and health advice, support, and signposting

NIF funded one-to-one budgeting support has moved to Wednesdays - as some leg up club attendees struggle with a variety of issues, including health, benefits, and digital navigation. This one-to-one grant supports an average of four people each week - but the funding is short term - so we have applied to MSE grant funding to continue and increase the support when the NIF grant runs out. The service is becoming increasingly popular - and benefits-related issues can become safeguarding issues in some cases where we to access personal records etc. – so referrals to Citizens Advice and occasionally bringing in a CA or welfare rights worker would be a helpful addition.

Some of the people we are working with are digitally challenged - in addition to living in poverty/struggling with unmanageable debts.

A result has just come in from Lynn’s support work with an older man who attends some of our groups. He had a huge United Utilities water bill and was too scared to use the water in his house. He was ignoring letters from UU. Today - after a few weeks of discussions -UU Trust have paid off the bill of over £2000 - and this fresh start means he can start to manage all his bills with guidance from CA. Lynn had previously helped with his energy bills too.

Most services are online e.g., benefits, housing, GP results etc. - and this creates more problems for people seeking help as it's difficult to join queues on the phone. In addition, literacy issues/language barriers etc. make it difficult for people to fill in their DWP journal, contact housing etc.

The Foodbank picked up a little in June - as some supported clients struggled to feed extended families during Eid. This also happens during school holidays when children are home and need to be fed more often.

Approaching school holidays also means purchasing school uniforms - a stressful time for families with children entering high school. Partnership work with Manchester south Central Foodbank means we are preparing to refer clients for school uniform items.

There is a voluntary pre-loved scheme in Chorlton Park where good quality uniforms can be passed on via referral.

JNR8 weekly groups have met weekly welcomed new attendees. Time to Change are working on a Food and Mood project - and a community recipe Zine is in progress – details will be on our website soon!

Most of our regular social, support and fitness groups participated in pre-festival activities - and a performance from the music group in the lead up to Celebrate.

Our Leg Up club – which is approaching its second year – (party coming soon!) - has benefitted many people with lots of positive outcomes. A report is in progress. We are going to continue to meet during the summer – in Montessori House – the nursery next door, as they are away for the summer. We will also continue to run the community hub on Fridays from 10-12 before the playscheme – as people like to meet up for tea and toast, to socialise, pick up essentials e.g., toiletries - and maybe a foodbank voucher.

The Celebrate Festival – with the theme Cooperate – Build a Better World - was a great success: pre-festival workshops: music, poetry, art, performance. The festival day was well attended with lots going on – and a bike ride to start the day! The following weekend was our Celebrate Community Street Parties across the ward - with free games, activity packs, live music and bubbles – and the exhibition is coming next.

You'll be able to read all about the event and participants soon in the Celebrate 2025 Report from our festival coordinator – Jess Coulson.

Chris Ricard June 2025

