



FESTIVAL REPORT 2025

Compiled by Jess Coulson

Photos by David Lim, Dosinda Laranjeira and members of the local community

WRYOA & WRCF Presents

Celebrate Festival

Whalley Range

Cooperate

Build a better world

Saturday June 14th 2025, 12-6 pm
Manley Park M16 0AN

Music, Installations & Performances,
Stalls, Food & Drink, Inflatables,
Arts & Crafts, Age-friendly and Health & Wellbeing activities
Big Bike Revival repair & ride area

Full programme here -
<https://www.whalleyrange.org/whalley-range-celebrate/>
email: celebratewhalleyrange@gmail.com // phone: 0161 881 3744
whalleyrange.org // wryoa.org

[facebook.com/celebratefestivalwhalleyrange](https://www.facebook.com/celebratefestivalwhalleyrange)

Please leave your pets and alcohol at home and your bike at the park gates

Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association
Charity No. 52265

msv
moscote st. vincent's

WRY
Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association

Age-friendly
Whalley Range
a charity

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION



The annual Celebrate Festival 2025 returned to Manley Park – its regular home in the heart of the Whalley Range community, on Saturday 14th June between 12 noon and 6pm - celebrating its 28th anniversary! As so often we followed the UN and this year they chose to observe an International Day of Cooperatives, which took place on July 5th. We interpreted this as ‘Cooperate’ and explored not only what this word means to us and our communities, but also how we can all cooperate together to create a better future.

Manley Park once again provided an excellent home for the festival, with the layout and facilities perfect for the festival's needs, enabling us to programme two stages of live music each based in a corner of the park. Support came from Manley Park Primary School who offered their playground to run the ‘Big Bike Revival’ and site the portable toilets - and Community on Solid Ground who provided access to necessary electricity points and their kitchen for volunteers’ refreshments, prepared and served by Celebrate volunteers and the Hare Krishna temple, and our First Aid point. Two local residents also offered access to their domestic electricity supplies to power the stages.

After speaking to the various stall holders and interested parties, this year we had the two usual large marquees hosting Age Friendly / Health and Wellbeing, and Arts & Crafts, as well a new ‘Activism/sustainability’ area under a smaller marquee.

The main stage was positioned in the Northeast corner of the park, with the raised hill used as a viewing area for attendees, and the smaller stage, the Jo Rose stage, was again located Southeast close to the entrance on Clarendon Road.

Inflatables were positioned next to the Play Centre and there was a Climbing Wall on the grass next to the kick pitch. Community information stalls, arts and craft sellers and food traders were positioned along the main diagonal path through the park. This year we had

two new food vendors - Kaana Canteen and Jam On The Rox. Kaana are a new local restaurant based on Upper Chorlton Road, offering South Asian food cooked healthily. They were positioned next to Youth on Solid Ground just north of the inflatables. Jam In On The Rox do Caribbean food based in Old Trafford.

The Information point was located in a small marquee by the Clarendon Road entrance, while volunteer food and First Aid were based in the Play Centre. We had an energy advice service MAC van from YES energy solutions by the York Avenue entrance to the park.

With this year's theme being 'Cooperate' we had two community projects running instead of having a large art commission. The first was the recipe zine which was created by Georgina Fox, who had a stall at the festival and worked with community groups to make their own zine. The second was the street parties which were put on by local arts producer Erin Dixon. Erin also had a stall to encourage and support local people to put on street parties afterwards.

Visitors received their free copy of the festival programme on the way into the event at both gates, where they were also able to purchase raffle tickets and make donations towards the festival - with some fantastic prizes donated by local businesses.



ABOUT CELEBRATE FESTIVAL

To enable community capacity-building, local people are recruited to provide art, music, and workshops as well as showcasing work at Celebrate, which is run by volunteers from the community, members of Whalley Range Community Forum, Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association, both based at the JNR8 Youth & Community Centre.



Celebrate aims are:

- **To celebrate the talent, diversity, and resources of Whalley Range**
- **To promote a positive image and improve the quality of life in Whalley Range**
- **To encourage participation of different communities within the area and work from an anti-discriminatory framework**

THANK YOU!

Special thanks to everyone who made the Celebrate Festival possible this year.

A huge 'thank you' to our team of dedicated volunteers old and new - without whom the festival would not happen.

Many thanks to all the musicians and artists, Manchester City Council, Community on Solid Ground, Alexandra Medical Practice, Whiz Youth Project staff and volunteers, Whalley Range Community Forum, Age Friendly Whalley Range, Manley Park Primary School with special mention to Darren (the caretaker for multiple schools), the Whalley Rangers and the Hare Krishna team.

Thanks to all the local businesses and supporters who took out adverts in the festival programme, and those who donated raffle prizes:

Funding for the event was generously provided by National Lottery Community Fund, Manchester City Council (via WRFC) MSV and MCC Neighbourhood Investment Fund (Whalley Range Ward), and the Big Bike Revival.

The Festival Committee are hugely grateful for the professional assistance of our project coordinators and artists. The Festival Coordinator was Jess Coulson, who was supported by last year's Coordinator, Verity Gardner, who this year took the role of Music Coordinator.



Celebrate – pre-festival activities:

Celebrate worked with a number of local artists who provided pre-festival activities for a range of groups and local primary schools. After feedback from last year around attendance we decided this year to programme some of the arts and crafts workshops with the half term holidays and advertise them on local parenting activity groups as 'free kid-friendly activities for the half term'. This worked very well and most of our workshops were attended at capacity by local families.



As part of the half term programme, we had Hollie from Jive Prints doing a collage making workshop, Karim Mbaye from Krin doing a percussion workshop, and then two workshops with Bird Box CIC building and rewilding a city. Percussion and Bird Box CIC workshops were fully booked up, and Jive Prints was well attended by local families.



We also had sessions available to the general public including a singing workshop with Carrie Williams at Chit Chat Chai, textile appliqué with Aysha Yilmaz at JNR8 - one session with the Whalley Range Women's Group and one session as part of Creative Conversations at JNR8 - flower making with Gulnaz Fatima at St Margaret's Community Cafe and a performance from the Happy Tuesdays musical group at JNR8. We also had a few sessions of bike fixing with Big Bike Revival at JNR8.

As part of the theme 'Cooperate' we also ran a successful pop-up open jam session at Nip and Tiddle on Upper Chorlton Road with local musicians and encouraged others to come and join in.

We had a pop-up performance from the Vibe Bombers in Manley Park. This was timed to begin just as the infant school was letting out and was a big success with many of the children joining in. We took the opportunity to flyer to spread the word about the main festival celebration. Many different parents approached us asking if we could do it again. We got very lucky with the weather and it was a beautiful day.



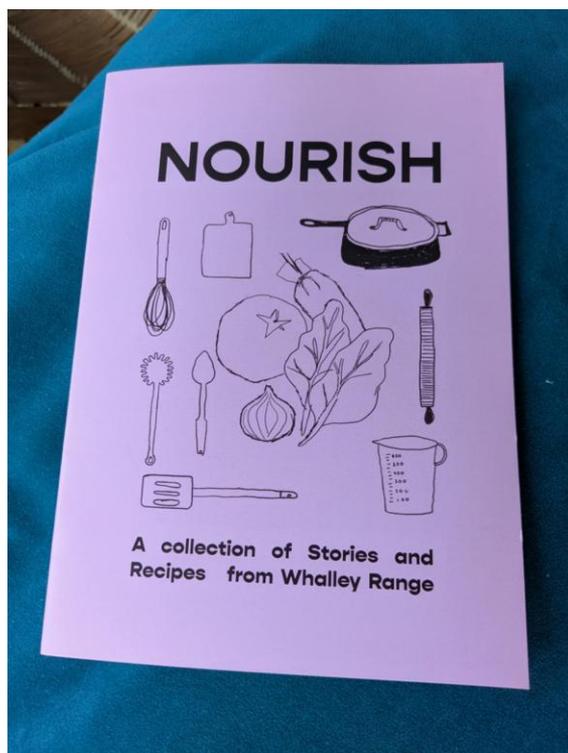
We also worked with some of the residential homes in the area. After discussions with the manager at Polonia Residential home we decided to provide some local musicians to perform for their residents and had great feedback from this. We went into Hibiscus Court to speak to the residents there about what kind of activity they would like to do and we decided on a cooperative poetry session. Tony Curry worked with them on this and we had great engagement. It was then decided to perform the piece of work on the day of the festival itself.



After calling out for expressions of interest from artists to produce work around the theme 'Cooperate', we decided for the primary schools' piece to go with Nayna Lad's suggestion of a woven textile piece. Each pupil wove a small rug which was then stitched in with others from their class, and each class's piece was sewn together to create one large work made by all three schools.

Nourish

As part of showcasing the creative diversity of Whalley Range we decided to shine a spotlight on the many different food cultures that we have in the area. We decided to explore this by creating a community cookbook in the form of a recipe zine. We reached out to Georgina Fox, a mental health creative practitioner who has a lot of experience working on similar projects from her time at 42nd Street / Horsfall Gallery. She did a call out to local groups to see who would be interested in her going in and speaking to them, as well as doing a general call out for recipes and stories from the area. She visited Time to Change, Chit Chat Chai, Whalley Range Women's Group and St Margaret's Community Cafe and spent time with participants during their sessions. Throughout conversations there were some key themes that came up, which were: The Power of Eating Together, Sustainability, Food Waste, Barriers to Healthy Eating and Creating Balance.



"In Whalley Range food is interwoven into how the community comes together, which I found very inspiring. It's a very rich and diverse topic which could be explored further - I feel like I only scratched at the surface of it. It's so connected to other themes, I hope the zine continues to be added to and grows!" - Georgina Fox

We also had recipes sent in, including from Contact Hostel who said that cooking is one of the main ways their residents bond with each other. Contact is a Whalley Range based hostel that provides accommodation for homeless teenage girls. This was their first year being involved in Celebrate Festival.

We are hoping to expand the zine and recipes with future iterations of the festival.

You can find the zine attached to the back of this report, or follow this [link](#), or pick up a physical copy from JNR8 or St Margaret's Centre.

Neighbourhood Parties



As part of the theme cooperate it was decided that a good way of fostering cooperation between neighbourhoods would be to support neighbourhood street parties happening after the event itself. Jess did not have capacity to produce this so Carol recruited an events freelancer. Erin Dixon was a great choice, local to Whalley Range, young and part of the queer community. Carol managed Erin, and Jess checked in with them regularly to see how

she could assist. It was decided that Erin would spread the word to different people locally and then also have a stall at the festival to encourage people to have a party and also to give them advice on how to achieve it. We decided that Celebrate would provide performers to visit the parties, and that Jess would support Erin by booking the performers.



Although we had tried to get bubble performers for the actual festival date itself, because it was the same day as Parklife and Moovin Festival Jess was unable to secure bubble performers for that date. However we did book them for the street parties and they went down very well.

Garden planting and dyeing

Local artist Mobius Jo worked with a neighbourhood gardening group and children to sow seeds in some of the planters next to JNR8. Jo wants to develop sustainable crafting materials made here in Whalley Range. She explained through her workshop how communities can cooperate to develop these resources hyper locally and some of her locally grown dyes were then used in the Bird Box CIC crafting sessions.

Site & Security:

Securivision security returned to the festival again as our preferred, local security service provider. Noor was very co-operative both in our pre festival communication and on the day. He arrived on site for a walk around with the coordinator at 7am.

We went through the site plan, risk assessment and production plan including radio policy. Noor introduced the coordinator to the team there and plans were made for regular check ins with security.

Most vehicles were offsite by the 11am cutoff, however, there were a few additional vehicles who arrived later than expected. Communication between the coordinator and security meant that every vehicle was offsite by the 12pm public access deadline. Getting the MAC van sited was a combined effort between security, coordinator and site manager and was



done safely. Most of the security team were already familiar with the festival. One of them struggled using his radio and was given additional radio training by the coordinator at the time.

Generally the security team were helpful and efficient.

The closing of the event is strictly 6pm to allow time for stallholders, vehicles and production crew to access the site unencumbered for public safety reasons. Vehicles exited quickly and efficiently, there didn't seem to be the same issue as in previous years with the public lingering after the event which could partly be because of the weather. Also because we were prepared for it we had already started directing people to the closed off play area of the park.

Access:

The festival had two public gates, with the main entrance located on Clarendon Road and a secondary entrance on York Avenue near Manley Park Primary School.

The gate near the corner of York Ave & Clarendon Road, was kept open, although this wasn't used much partly because of the building works happening at Youth on Solid Ground.

The gates were opened for traders and other service providers who were checked in by security staff to unload goods and equipment between 7am and 11am, with restricted access after this time. The festival gates were opened to the public at 12 noon: at least 3 volunteers were on duty at both public gates along with security. Stallholders and performers were encouraged to use the northern York Avenue entrance to avoid a buildup of traffic on Clarendon Road. The information point and main entrance for the public was on Clarendon Road, which included sign in sheets for artists, crew, and volunteers. Programmes and raffle tickets were available at each public gate.

Stages:

Both live music stages were provided and managed by Songsmith Solar Sound System. This year's festival coordinator is a live music promoter so we decided that she could programme both the stages instead of having separate music programmers. It is important to the steering committee to have a very local line up, we wanted to be respectful of the heritage of the event and make sure we included people who had previously played, but also to be conscious of including people who might be new to the area.

With this in mind we first of all consulted with stakeholders to see who they would like to see perform, then we did an open call out using social media to try and engage with new performers including posting on industry specific WhatsApp groups.

Once again we had the curved top stage as the Main Stage, located in the Southeast corner of the park. Once again, Des Basterfield from Songsmith took on the role of engineer and MC for the Main Stage, with Dan Fern from Do It Ourselves acting as stage manager for the day. He was also able to help Des source missing backline by borrowing equipment from his studio.

The Main Stage performers line up had old favourites including St Margaret's School Choir, Rock Out School performers and a demonstration from the JNR8 Thai Boxing Group. We also had Poppycock and the Celebrate Jam group from last year consisting of Yemi Bolatiwa, Ben Price and John Diver. Newcomers to the Celebrate main stage were Room 107 (local jazz group of 17-18 year olds), Krin (Senegalese Afro-Tech who live in Whalley Range) and Man.Lyk.Ess (Mitchell who works at JNR8).



We worked with Tony Curry on the Jo Rose acoustic stage and programmed that to have solo / duo music performers interspersed with poets. Programmed as an acoustic / spoken word area, this stage provided a more relaxed space for music and easy listening, with deck chairs provided, and was popular all day. Verity provided artist liaison at the Jo Rose stage. Once again we made sure to include people who had played the festival before as well as new talent.



The programming was slightly harder than it may otherwise have been because this year Celebrate Festival took place on the same day as the two biggest festivals in the Manchester calendar - Parklife and Moovin Festival. This meant that some of the artists and players initially approached were already booked.

As always, Songsmith Solar were a pleasure to work with, being punctual, professional, and highly proficient. Power for the stages was kindly provided by two residents, one being a member of the WRYOA committee, for which we extend our thanks.



Stage line ups:

Main Stage

- 12:00 12:50 Chorlton Rock Out School - music showcase from local youngsters
- 13:00 13:15 St Margaret's Primary School Choir - angelic voices from local primary school
- 13:25 13:50 Room 107 - unique interpretations of jazz standards
- 13:50 14:20 Thai Boxing Demo WRYOA / WHIZ Youth Project
- 14:30 14:50 Man.Lyk.Ess - hip hop and garage
- 15:10 15:40 Poppycock - cocky pop, haunting funny and deadly serious
- 15:45 16:40 Celebrate Jam - local musical heroes come together for a unique jam
- 16:35 16:45 RAFFLE Lots of amazing prizes
- 17:00 18:00 Krin - Senegalese percussion with electronic sounds

Jo Rose Stage

- 12:30-12:45 Paul Stevens - local poet
- 12:50-13:10 Jennifer Dala - a blend of soul, alternative indie, folk and jazz
- 13:05-13:15 Anna Percy - local poet
- 13:20-13:45 What Skarlet Sees - Jazzy vocals, soft rock singer songwriter

13:50-14:05 Lynn Walton - local poet

14:10-14:40 Matt Bierrum - psychedelic stories from an unreal city

14:45-15:00 Rosa Wright - local poet

15:00-15:30 Shelli Le Fay - Ethereal folk from a woodland mystic

15:30-15:45 Dominic Berry - local poet

15:45-16:15 Chia Kali - Jazzy soulful sounds

16:15-16:30 Tony Curry - Poet - presenting fresh local talent

16:45-17:10 Cave Man - Hiphop Storytime combines live beatmaking, rap and poetry together into a journey through space and time.

“ All went as planned on the mainstage. Wide range of quality acts so a thumbs up from my side of things in terms of programming. Good to work with you both. Thanks for the clear and concise info along the way Jess. Dan and Verity were spot on too. Overall, looked like a whole bunch of happy festival-goers sharing time together in a beautiful location, a success!”
Des, Songsmith Solar

Marquees:

The marquees and other structures were provided by Matt from Festival Marquees, who delivered and installed the Health and Wellbeing/ Age Friendly and the Arts & Crafts marquees. They also delivered furniture, including round and trestle tables, folding chairs, deckchairs and pedestrian barriers that were distributed across the site efficiently on the festival day.

Radios:

Radios this year came from Sync Production and were booked by Verity who assisted the coordinator in advance for the event and on the day itself. Sync Production communicated well in the run up and the radios were a fair price. Everyone given a radio was checked that they knew how to use it. In hindsight it would have been useful for another member of the Celebrate Team to have a radio as well, but obviously security needed to be prioritised. One member of the security team was not using his radio correctly and was given training.

Health & Safety:

An Event Management Plan was created and sent to the council before the event. Communication took place between the council's representative and Rick Walker, Chair of the Festival Committee, in the days before the event, when all event procedures and principles were run through.

The predictions for the weather in the run up ranged from raining to storms so wet weather preparation was put in. Rick kept in close communication with the inflatables people and Jess spoke to Des about different preparation and policies depending on how the weather went. We briefed our site manager Josh Richards to keep an eye out for hazards that could be made worse by rain including electrics and slipping. We also made sure that both Des and the coordinator brought towels in case the stages or equipment needed drying.

In the event, although there were showers, the weather was nowhere near as apocalyptic as forecast.

First Aiders from Ambutech were present on site all day, which was detailed in the programme. All staff, security and volunteers were briefed on how to contact them via the radios.



Publicity:

The festival's flyer and poster were designed by Lotte Karlsen and the programme was designed by Alison Chisholm. A5 Flyers and A4 & A3 posters were printed and distributed ahead of the event, and programmes were distributed on the day.

Printed publicity was distributed via the local primary schools: St Margaret's Primary School, Manley Park and Our Lady's primary schools all had flyers delivered, for distribution to all pupils.

The posters were put in shop windows and on trees in the area by committee members and volunteers - who also distributed the flyers to local businesses, households, and schools.



The previous year's PVC banners were repurposed using vinyl date stickers and located at strategic points around Whalley Range, along with banners from previous years which were adapted and positioned at entrances to the park for a week prior to the event.

Taking on the feedback from last year around advertising our programme for the event sooner this year we utilised the Celebrate Instagram to connect with local groups and share information ahead of time. By using it regularly we managed to increase our followers from 160 to 240.

This year we also produced our own marketing materials and distributed them through local community groups and WhatsApp groups.

Jess Coulson and Chris Ricard coordinated together to make sure information went out on the Celebrate Account and also the Whalley Range Community Forum Facebook pages and the Forum's

website. Chris also produced regular posts and distributed information locally and put up posters in and around JNR8.

We also messaged local artists and musicians to share our social media posts and distribute information. There is room for improvement here but overall we built significantly on our work from last year.

Local Community groups and artists shared social media posts and digital posters. Information was sent out to the 40+ Mutual Aid WhatsApp groups that were started during the pandemic to support residents. All of this provided a significant increase in engagement and had an impact in reaching a wider audience.

We can infer the success of our increased publicity efforts from quantitative data from our social media accounts and also from the fact that our pre festival activities were particularly well attended with several of the sessions fully booked up.



Accessibility:

Manley Park and Manley Park Primary School playground are fully accessible. Toilets were situated in the playground for the public and included a wheelchair accessible toilet. We recognised that we needed a mixture of chairs and deck chairs at the stages to help all levels of ability.

Information:

At each public gate, as visitors arrived, they were given a programme with details of the aims of Celebrate, our supporters, and a schedule of what would be happening where, as well as being given the opportunity to buy raffle tickets. Volunteers were signed in at the information desk and issued with a voucher for a free meal and drink. Local groups displayed noticeboards, leaflets and newsletters about news and activities in the area - and the opportunity to join our mailing lists to receive regular local news and information.

Volunteers:

As always, a dedicated and tireless team of volunteers old and new worked hard all day to ensure the smooth running of the event. Volunteers are given the opportunity to help in several areas of the festival throughout the day, with specific tasks including greeting attendees at the entrances, handing out programmes/selling raffle tickets, setting up and clearing away tables, serving food to performers, managing the inflatables, and giving out information to the community.

An increased number of volunteers attended on the morning for set up. Unfortunately, the Duke of Edinburgh award project was not running from the WHIZ project this year, so we missed the young people's general help and particularly with getting evaluation forms completed. This was undertaken by volunteers at the gate and information point. We hope that young people will be involved as volunteers e.g. from the new Girls Project In 2026.



--- FESTIVAL ATTRACTIONS ---

Arts & Crafts Marquee:

The Arts & Crafts marquee featured a range of free workshops for the whole community with sessions run by local artists including zine making with Georgina Fox as part of the Nourish project. There was also textile weaving with Nayna Lad, crafting flowers of the world with Gulnaz Fatima, Ann Knowles from Rainbows doing clay sculpting, cooperate badge making with Lotte Karlsen, making with nature with Thea Luckcock and face painting and henna with Sunita. Montessori House were also in the arts and crafts marquee with plenty of activities. The Clean Air Group were meant to go into the new sustainability/activism area but because of the weather predictions we all agreed that it was safer for their puppets to be under the largest marquee possible. We acted on feedback from last year and made sure to allocate enough tables and chairs and I don't think we had any problems.



Sustainability / Activism

Many of the groups that wanted to be involved this year had themes of sustainability and activism. This seemed particularly in line with our theme so we created a zone for them and allocated them a tent. The tent was not big enough for all of the groups, which included Friends of Alex Park, Clean Air Group (unfortunately had to be moved due to weather) Woodcraft Folk and Cooperation Manchester. The groups offered different activities for the community to take part in, aimed at both adults and children.

Kick Pitch:

In initial meetings it was discussed that we could do more to encourage teenagers to be part of the event. After the Coordinator debriefed with the artists and Manley Park PTA members that used the kick pitch we learned that young people had kept trying to use the space for sports, and they actually felt that that would have been better use of the space. With this in mind we decided to leave the kick pitch open for free play. We originally thought about getting someone in there to run games and even spoke to Youth on Solid Ground about hiring one of their team to do this but it didn't happen. That was a blessing in disguise because the space was used consistently throughout the whole event for different activities by groups of young people.



Inflatables:

The inflatables were provided this year by Manchester Bouncy Castles. We ordered three attractions – a 42ft obstacle course, a large slide and the Rainbow Activity Bounce – a smaller inflatable. Unfortunately the high wind and the bleak weather forecast meant the large slide could not be erected safely, but MBC offered some outdoor games including Connect 4 by way of compensation. We were provided with an instrument for measuring wind speed on the understanding that both remaining inflatables would have to be dropped if a certain speed was reached. In the event the weather was not as bad as expected and we kept running all afternoon, taking care to point out to children and parents that any child going on the inflatables, and running between them, was at the very least going to have wet feet. By mid afternoon there were large queues as usual, with 30 children being admitted to the fenced off area for 10 minute sessions. The fact that the inflatables were free again this year meant that some children paid repeat visits. If we reinstated the £1 charge it would keep the queues down but to the disadvantage of large families.

The inflatables were managed by festival volunteers, assisted this year by Charlie Garson who was paid as overall supervisor. We usually take power from the Community on Solid Ground building, the play centre, but because of the building work the sockets we usually have access to were not available. The inflatables were therefore powered by generators supplied by MBC, and the one safety issue we faced was the tendency of one generator to cut out, necessitating a swift evacuation of the small inflatable when this occurred. We had the usual issues with children blocking the obstacle course, trying to go the wrong way, refusing to get off and so on.

Other than that, a good time was had by all!

Climbing Wall

A free climbing wall was set up and managed once again by Just Climb, and proved very popular all afternoon, giving local children the chance to try a new experience and learn a new skill. The climbing wall staff managed the long queue.



Site Art:

This year we had a site assistant Josh Richards who helped us on the day. The weather was forecast to be stormy, to the point where we had to alter our plans around which inflatables would be brought on. With this in mind we decided to have art present in the tents but not outside exposed to the elements. This year we were not able to get the flags from Travelling Light Circus as their poles were being used at another event. We were also unable to use decor from Visual Architects for the same reason. Having the festival on the same day as Parklife and Moovin Festival limited us on what we could bring in.



Health and wellbeing and Age-friendly marquee

The Health and Wellbeing and Age-friendly marquee for the 28th Celebrate Festival was well attended by residents, with the opportunity to discuss their health and find out what's on locally.

Noticeboards featuring details about the Whalley Range Community Forum and the Age-friendly Whalley Range & Chorlton network were displayed in the marquee, with advice and signposting to mental health support, information about the exercise, health and social groups meeting weekly at JNR8, information and volunteering opportunities from local community groups - and healthy living information to take away.

Stalls and activities included:

- Hand and arm massage for wellbeing and relaxation
- Intergenerational Arts & Crafts with Aysha: Textile appliqué squares
- PCSO stall – advice and free home security and safety resources
- Chorlton & Whalley Range Dementia Action Group: advice/leaflets produced by the group
- BHA Answer Cancer: information share about TB and cancer
- KPS pharmacy gave blood pressure/inhaler checks and health information
- Smoking Cessation
- Glaucoma UK
- Tai Chi, Mindful Yoga, Chair exercise – and more

Information displayed in the marquee included cost of living advice and support for people struggling with food and bills, and a partnership visit from Clare from The Hygiene Bank – who supply us with free donated toiletries for residents and details of our foodbank referral service/emergency food and debt support information.

Check out the Whalley Range Community Forum website at <https://whalleyrange.org> and Facebook page for news about social activities, support services and regular events at the JNR8 Youth & Community Centre

Call Chris/Kate on 0161 8813744 or email communityforumwhalleyrange@gmail.com

To find out about our activities for older people and Age-friendly Whalley Range & Chorlton Network email

agefriendlywhalleyrange@gmail.com

Thanks to the MSV Kindness fund for supporting us!

Chris Ricard, Whalley Range Community Forum



The Big Bike Revival:



The popular bicycle repair and information service returned to run Fix and Learn to Fix bike sessions at JNR8, and for the festival day returned to the Manley Park Primary School playground. Coordinated by Liam Packham from Time to Change, working with the Bike Hive, the team of volunteers, trained mechanics and activity staff ran 'push, pedal, scoot' sessions, repaired bikes, gave bike related advice, and gave out safety equipment. New riders could try out bikes and have a ride in a trishaw.

For the first time this year, working on the theme of cooperation, Time to Change joined with members of the St. Margaret Centre, Chorlton Bike Deliveries and Bike Hive for a Bike Parade through the streets of Whalley Range, to the bike area at the Festival site.

Catering: Food, ice-cream, and coffee:

There were two large food vendors in the park. Jam in the Rox were located by the Manley Park Infants school end. We also had Kaana Canteen, a new local south Indian restaurant that pride themselves on how healthy their food is. Coffee Cranks and Exclusive Scoop ice-cream were located by the sports pitch with other stall holders.



Whalley Rangers stall hire:

For 2025 the Celebrate team worked in partnership with the Whalley Rangers, who hold regular monthly markets in Whalley Range. We hired 10 of their gazebos for stall holders, which they transported, installed, and dismantled at the end of the day.

We had a good mix of information stalls that included

- Second hand book stall
- LGBT Foundation: information share about the LGBT+ Extra Care housing scheme in Whalley Range
- Friends of Alexandra Park
- Clean Air Group
- Contact Hostel
- Bird Box
- Congo Children Trust



Treasurer's Report

This was 28 years since our first festival in 1998 and we were pleased to be back in Manley Park and school grounds. The community, supporters and volunteers were keen to be involved, as Celebrate is a great way of networking, information sharing and having fun.

Whalley Range Youth Opportunities and the W/R Community Forum work jointly to raise funds from grants, as well as carrying out local fundraising from local businesses and on the day fees and donations. Both organizations contributed worker time, and volunteers. A substantial donation allowed us to have two weeks of activities leading up to the festival day, with local groups, schools, including 'pop up' music activities.

We received core costs from the Lottery Awards for All, a small grant from the Neighbourhood Investment Fund, and Big Bike Revival funding for mechanics for the bike area, and pre-festival workshops at JNR8. Part of the Community Forum's City Council Supporting Communities grant for 'cost of living' work provided free pre-festival workshops, and the activities in the Health and Well-being marquee.

In line with our aim of providing a low-cost accessible festival we kept all activities free, not charging for entry, workshop activities, information stalls, face painting, inflatables or climbing wall. Again, we have tried to reduce costs, by using recycled materials e.g. for the banner props, adapting banners from previous years, and being able to get waste managed by neighbourhood services.

We were appreciative of the free use of Manley Park for the festival site, Manley Park School for use of the playground for portable toilets and Fix and Ride bike area, neighbours' power supplies for the inflatables, health tent, stages etc. and the Cooperative for donating food for the volunteers' area.

Once again we worked with our partners Community on Solid Ground who let us use their building for the volunteers and first aid hub, and power supplies; the Whalley Rangers for gazebo hire and erection etc.; the Hare Krishna temple, ISKCON, for volunteers' hot food; and the Bike Hive for delivering the Big Bike Revival activities. We worked with local schools who provided performers, art works etc; the Climate Action Group who ran Clean Air puppet making workshops; and the local pharmacy giving health advice and checkups.

Gate donations and raffle receipts were £410 (2024 £597). Payments for adverts in the festival programme totalled £320 (2024 £420). 'Pitch' fees from the commercial stalls raised £270. The income contributes towards our running costs, and the production of the programme.

Musicians performing at pop up gigs in the run up to the festival and on the day were paid modest fees. Workshop leaders, the coordinators, and the stage managers were paid according to our sessional and day rates.

We thank volunteers with a system of food vouchers, for a meal etc. in the volunteers food area, which provides a welcoming space for volunteers to socialize. Our own fundraising is not sufficient to cover the costs of the festival day and if we want to hold another event the core costs and those for workshops must be obtained again through grants etc.

The festival would not be possible without the teams of volunteers who help with stalls, setting up and clearing away, staff the gates and sell raffle tickets and collect gate donations, and of course the steering group. Many thanks to all.

Carol Packham (Treasurer).

Celebrate 2025 Exhibition

This year we had an exhibition and also launched our Nourish Zine on Friday 19th September (1pm - 7pm) and on Saturday 20th (12pm - 5pm). There were refreshments provided by Time to Change on Friday. We displayed some of the work presented at the festival and some of the pieces made for previous events.



Festival Exhibition

featuring art, photos and
our cookery zine launch

with contributions from Time to Change,
Whalley Range Women's Group, Clean
Air Group, St Margaret's School, Manley
Park Primary School, Our Lady's Primary
School, JNR8, St Margaret's Centre

Dates and times

Friday 19th September
1pm - 7pm (refreshments from
5:30pm)

Saturday 20th September
12pm - 5pm

Location
JNR8
82 CROMWELL AVENUE
M16 0BG
more info contact jess
07429578193



We introduced the zine to all the people there and invited them to contribute recipes.



On the Saturday we were open and had a few visitors but the weather was awful which I think played a large part in that. We were visited by local councillors and went round the different works and explained about them.

Evaluation

The evaluation consisted of the distribution of a short questionnaire which was completed on behalf of 88 people attending the festival. We held an evaluation meeting following the festival and a debrief session with the Festival Coordinator.

How Did People Travel to Celebrate

Transport	2025	2024
Walked	58%	63%
Bicycle	20%	12%
Car	22%	21%
Public Transport	0%	5%
Total	100%	100%

Age Range

Age Range	2025
U16	26%
16 - 25	3%
26 - 39	24%
40 - 64	27%
65 - 74	16%
75 - 90	2%
no answer	1%
Total	

Where People Live

Ward	2025	2024
Whalley Range	55%	68%
Chorlton	20%	9%
Chorlton Park	6%	0%
Old Moat	5%	0%
Out of Manchester	12%	13%
Moss side	1%	4%
Didsbury East	1%	0%
Withington	0%	2%
Sharston	0%	2%
Ardwick	0%	2%
Total	100%	100%

How Did You Hear About Celebrate?

Answer	2025	2024
Word of Mouth/Local Group	36%	53%
Leaflet/Poster	30%	11%

Friends/Family	18%	21%
Social Media	13%	11%
no answer	3%	2%
Total	100%	100%

As in previous years the highlight of Celebrate for most people is the Atmosphere and Community Spirit of Celebrate.

Keywords – Suggestions for Improvement

Keyword	2025
Nothing	50%
Food/Drink Stalls/Water Fountain	13%
Weather	6%
Activities On Day incl Organisation	20%
Organisation of Celebrate incl publicity	2%
Total	100%

The forms show us that we have a lot of local visitors to the festival, and that there are consistencies year on year. In terms of what can be improved I think the festival has done very well to have 50% of respondents with no suggestions. We can see from the figures we have around ethnicity that we need to improve our evaluation feedback process as this does not seem to seem the same as our assessment of the day.

We also asked stall holders and groups for feedback in person and over email, overwhelmingly we had positive feedback - including comments about our provision of tables and chairs for all of the groups after an issue last year.

In particular we had positive feedback from a new addition to Celebrate Festival, Contact Hostel.

“Dear Jess, Verity, and the Celebrate Festival Team,

All of us here at **Contact Hostel** would like to send a huge thank you for inviting us to be part of **Celebrate Festival 2025**. We were so happy to take part in such a fantastic community event.

Community events like these are incredibly important for small charities like ours, working locally to support young women and girls facing homelessness in Manchester. They give us a chance not only to raise vital funds but also to connect with the community around us.

Our bake sale was a huge hit, we completely sold out and raised around **£100**, which will go directly towards our essential work. More importantly, we had so many meaningful conversations throughout the day. It was brilliant to share our story, raise awareness, and even gain new supporters. Jess, we are especially grateful that you made sure we had the chance to speak with our local MP, it was a wonderful opportunity.

The event itself ran so smoothly. The atmosphere was welcoming, lively, and full of energy, and everything was so well organised, even with the changeable weather, the organisers made sure no one was left wet in the rain and had everything in place to make sure we were dry! Both Jess and Verity were incredibly supportive and helpful throughout the day, which made such a difference to us, and we could see how busy they were keeping the ship running all day.

Overall, it was a truly successful and uplifting day. Everyone loved the baking, but more than that, we came away feeling more connected, supported, and hopeful about the work we're doing.

Community events like Celebrate Festival are needed now more than ever, and we are so grateful to be part of it.

Thank you once again, we're already looking forward to next year!"

For a full breakdown of the evaluation forms check [here](#).

Looking at the recommendations from last year we can see that we achieved a lot of the areas we set ourselves for improvement, including power requirements being communicated, utilising social media more effectively and having more affordable food options. As with any project there are areas for improvement. Some recommendations from last year are still in our recommendations for next year, these being around long-term volunteers and improving monitoring and feedback.

I do think it is useful to acknowledge that monitoring and feedback are areas that organisations struggle to do well across the arts and community sector, and this is not a problem unique to Celebrate Festival. Other organisations do appear to have more success with recruiting and retaining volunteers over long periods of time, so this is something we can definitely work on and potentially learn from other organisations.

Key partners WRCF, WRYOA, Bike Hive, Manley Park Methodist Church, WR Climate Action Group, Ward Officers, GPs practices etc. all carried out separate evaluation discussions at their groups meetings and fed back to the Celebrate steering group. All were positive about their involvement and wanted to be involved again in 2026.

Recommendations for 2026:

- Be mindful of the date clashing with other large events in Manchester
- More volunteers to be recruited throughout the year to support long-standing volunteers e.g. on Steering group. This is key to the longevity of the festival.
- Improve monitoring/feedback in order to:
- Better reflect the diversity of attendees at the festival itself and at pre- and post-festival workshops and events, including by ensuring that some volunteers collecting data are fluent in community languages.
- Collect feedback from artists, performers, partners and exhibitors as soon as possible after the event
- Find low effort ways of maintaining connections with other community groups across the year
- Improve on giving creative briefs and being mindful of how we are using freelancers time
- As far as possible try to have some continuity between festival coordinators. This year was a lot smoother because the previous year's coordinator stayed on to help and support this year's coordinator

::: GET INVOLVED :::

We are always looking for people to get involved in our volunteer-led festival: we also run Celebrate activities and events throughout the year.

If you would like to get involved in our Celebrate projects and the planning of Celebrate 2026 – please get in touch.

Call JNR8 on 0161 881 3744 | Email celebratewhalleyrange@gmail.com

or pop into JNR8 at 82 Cromwell Avenue, M16 0BG

Facebook: Celebrate Festival Whalley Range

Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association is a registered charity established in 1982 to widen opportunities for young people in Whalley Range. We provide facilities and resources in and around JNR8 on Cromwell Avenue, including JNR8 under 12's Playscheme, Celebrate, Whiz

Youth Project for 12-25's with cookery, Thai boxing, group discussions, job/training support and volunteering opportunities. Girls Group runs on Monday evenings.

The main aims of the project are as follows:

- To reduce the risk of youth nuisance, antisocial behaviour and drug misuse
- To create community cohesion and active citizenship
- To raise the aspirations, motivation, and confidence of young people
- For the project to be as reflective as possible of the young people we serve and their needs.

The Whalley Range Community Forum (WRCF) is a voluntary representative residents group formed in 1995 to facilitate and improve communication between members of the community and those who serve/represent Whalley Range. The Forum acts as an umbrella organisation, bringing residents and local services together to address local issues through promoting consultation and community cohesion – and encouraging participation. WRCF supports new community groups to access funding to set up their own groups.

WRCF is a foodbank referral service and hate crime reporting centre - and addresses resident's priorities by facilitating health & wellbeing classes/courses at JNR8 in term times.

Celebrate, c/o JNR8 Youth & Community Centre, 82 Cromwell Avenue,

Whalley Range, Manchester, M16 0BG

Tel: 0161 881 3744// <https://www.whalleyrange.org> // Email

communityforumwhalleyrange@gmail.com <https://www.wryoa.org> // Email: info@wryoa.org