



Step Up MCR



**Step Up MCR
Impact Report
2025 / 2026**

Together Every Step Of The Way

Welcome

With Thanks From Our Director

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has stepped up to make a difference across Ancoats & Beswick and Clayton & Openshaw over the past year.

For every listening ear, every cup of tea shared, every volunteer day taken as unpaid leave, every "How are you today?" and every "Can I give you a hand with that?". These everyday acts of kindness are what community spirit is truly about.

At Step Up MCR, we've built a community of people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and support one another when it matters most. Seeing local people grow in confidence, equipped with the skills, knowledge and opportunities to create positive change, continues to fill me with immense pride and hope for the future.

This year, we have supported local changemakers to create meaningful impact across our communities. Through our Trauma Informed Communities Fund, we have helped place trauma awareness at the heart of neighbourhoods across Manchester. Our Step Forward Fund empowered 100 residents to decide how local funding should be invested, putting decision-making directly into the hands of those most affected.



– With solidarity,
Nicole Hope
Director, Step Up MCR

We also celebrated our fifth anniversary, bringing together projects, partners and businesses to reflect on our shared achievements and future ambitions. Alongside this, we enabled 300 young people and their families to enjoy a free night at the theatre, and connected business volunteers with grassroots organisations through our Giving Back Days programme, strengthening Manchester relationships and creating visible change.

We saw the launch of Max Trax, a community-led cycle track, café and bike repair hub in Openshaw. The project that sits close to our hearts as one of Step Up MCR's first supported campaigns. We've worked with resident Kerrie and the Max Trax team to raise £336,000 and build a special movement in memory of her son, Max Rimmer-Chambers. A legacy that will now live on inspiring a generation of young people and families.

None of this would have been possible without the generosity, commitment and belief of the people who make up the Step Up MCR family. Whether you have been with us since the beginning or joined us more recently, thank you for being part of this journey.

With you by our side, we're building something very special: A place-based giving movement that puts local people, local relationships and local action at the heart of Manchester's future.

Words From Our Community

"A great deal of what we have been able to achieve so far simply would not have been possible without Step Up MCR's backing and belief in the project. It has been genuinely transformational for us and the community we work with" ... "I have been involved in criminality and drugs all my life and never knew such people existed, Step Up MCR is amazing."

– Sean Chaplin, Rehab Fitness

"We want social value to be something our people can actively participate in, not simply something we talk about. The Giving Back Day reflects the growing partnership between Informed Solutions and Step Up MCR, alongside a shared commitment to supporting local communities and protecting the green spaces that bring people together."

– Matthew Rix, Informed Solutions

"Thank you for your commitment, kindness, and belief in community groups like ours. Your funding, training, and encouragement have helped us grow and better serve our community."

– Bola Olayemi
CeeBee Gold Foundation

Step Up MCR is an incredible asset supporting local decision making, helping to direct resources to where they are needed, and most importantly enables us to not just listen, but to come together in true collaborative action, making the most of all of our assets, whatever they may be."

– Angela Beacon,
Manchester Local Care Organisation

"Unlike any other service I've been referred to, The Resonance Centre allows me to be who I am. It's easy in other services to feel as though I'm failing, TRC appreciates me for arriving and makes me feel accepted."

– Project Participant,
The Resonance Centre

Introduction

Step Up MCR connects Manchester to invest in local communities, unlock local potential, and build local pride.

We're on a mission to make Manchester a city that steps up for each other. Where what you give today, makes a difference tomorrow.

Since 2020, we've been supporting local people to catalyse exciting resident-led projects hyper-locally in Ancoats & Beswick and Clayton & Openshaw. We've worked with more than 100 grassroots groups to build health and wellbeing initiatives, develop organisations and connect into Manchester giving.

Our work offers a step up – whether a first step, or next step – for local people with something to give back.

By local people, we don't just mean those living here. We mean anyone with a connection to the places where we're building stronger communities.

That could be a young person going to school here, a Greater Manchester business wanting to grow a more equitable city region, or a local health partner with an ambition to support locally-led change.



Vision: Step Up MCR's vision is a Manchester with local giving at its heart, where all communities feel happy, healthy and in control.

Mission: Our mission is to get Manchester giving. By sharing our time, money, resources and skills, we can support local projects making a real difference in communities.

Values: Our core values of **Trust**, **Collaboration** and **Power Shifting** give us the framework to enable anyone to make a positive difference and be proud of the places they live and work.



Trust

Our communities have long felt neglected and ignored. To make meaningful change, people need to trust that we'll do what we say we'll do. Strong and trusted relationships come with listening to what people want, championing communities and involving everyone who cares about their place.



Collaboration

We connect people who know places best. By bringing together the public, private and voluntary sector with those in neighbourhoods, we aim to shape systems-change through collective vision, voice and action.



Power Shifting

Traditional power structures aren't working for the people who rely on them most. We put communities at the centre of decisions that affect them, and lobby for centrally-held power to be devolved to a local level. In shifting power and resources to communities most affected by inequalities, we transform each person's sense of belonging and ownership.

What is Place-based Giving?

We bring people together to connect, collaborate and take action on what matters to our city and our communities..

Based on the notion that we all have something to give – whether that be time, skills, expertise or money – place-based giving brings communities together to channel resources into aligned action and build a better Manchester for everyone.

Place-based giving schemes are a means of increasing investment in local communities and supporting the development of local places. They bring together residents, community groups, corporate donors and public sector organisations to raise money and address local priorities. The schemes put local people at the heart of funding decisions, engaging residents as donors and volunteers to help set priorities and choose projects to fund.

Where The Money Comes From

Since becoming an independent charity in 2020, Step Up MCR has secured over £970k of investment. Funding has come from a diverse mix of sources, including £449k from foundations and trusts (including National Lottery Community Fund), £172k from health partners (including long-time supporter Manchester Local Care Organisation), £151k from individual donors, £132k from businesses and housing-sector partners, and £21k from local authority funding.

Funding Source	Key Funders
Local Authority	Manchester City Council, Public Health
Business	One Manchester, MSV Housing Group, Great Places Housing Group, Co-op Live Arena, GLL, Informed Solutions
Health Partners	Manchester Local Care Organisation (MLCO), Manchester Active/MCR Active, North Manchester General Hospital
Foundations & Trusts incl. Lottery	National Lottery Community Fund, We Love MCR, Active Communities Network and other grant-making trusts/foundations
Individual Donors	Crowdfunder campaigns, public donations and Gift Aid

Thank you to our funders for their belief in our work, and their continued support and commitment to Step Up MCR's communities.

Impact To Date

Since 2020, Step Up MCR has:

- Grown more than 100 hyper-local grassroots projects by connecting to local giving, skills, funding and opportunities.
- Reached 11,300 households and community venues (and around 33,000 residents) up to four times per year with every newspaper distribution, keeping neighbours informed about local activities and exciting initiatives.
- Invested £611,000 in community grants, local giving, and Crowdfunder support.
- Brought more than 1,000 people together at arts-led community events.
- Upskilled over 50 local grant makers.
- Grown the capacity, skills and confidence of almost 500 community champions and volunteers through our Peer Support Network.

2025–2026 Highlights

£22,400 distributed in
Community Grants.

16 grassroots projects funded.

100% of community projects
rated our support as excellent.

100% would recommend Step Up
MCR to a friend

196 community leaders, staff and
volunteers came together to gain
new skills, share and collaborate
at our Peer Support Network
sessions.

£338,000 in social return
on investment from Trauma
Informed Communities Fund.

Who we funded:

1. The Inspirational Women
2. Lingua GM
3. Infinity Yoga
4. Manchester Settlement
5. Rehab Fitness
6. The Art of Joy Project
7. Neighbours Nest Hub
8. Malandra Jacks
9. Clayton Scouts
10. Mum's in Recovery
11. Community Thriving Together
12. St. Clement's Church
13. ABCO Multi-Lingual Choir
14. Rise & Flourish
15. The Resonance Centre
16. Calm Minds Collective

Every Step Invested

Community Grants 2025–26

Step Up MCR's Community Grants include
three programmes:

Community Grants

Step Forward Fund

Neighbourhood Health Fund

Thank you to our funders

We're grateful for the contribution of the local partners who have made our Community Grants possible. Thank you to Manchester Local Care Organisation, Public Health, Manchester City Council, and Great Places.



Every Step Connected

Step Up MCR works with businesses to
make giving back in Manchester easy,
meaningful, and impactful.



We have worked with businesses including Great Places, Menzies LLP, GGMS, Informed Solutions, GLL, Treehouse Hotels, and PwC to create tangible benefits for local communities by connecting opportunities to give funding, time, resources, and skills.

Through local giving initiatives, businesses have contributed more than £30,000 in funding and resources, including:

£7,000 from Great Places towards our Step Forward Fund Community Grants programme and community event

300 pantomime tickets donated by PwC for local children and families

20 laptops donated by Menzies LLP to help tackle digital exclusion

125 items of office furniture and emergency supplies donated by GGMS to support community organisations

Skills-sharing support from Informed Solutions through our Peer Support Network sessions

In November 2025, we celebrated our journey at our Five Years On event, bringing together businesses and partners to share our vision for a Manchester with local giving at its heart. The event secured the continued support of Menzies LLP, Informed Solutions, and GLL, and we look forward to working together to strengthen communities and increase opportunities for local giving across the city.



Community Grants

Our Community Grants is a fund for community health and wellbeing initiatives, open on a rolling basis for ideas throughout the year. Priorities include Mental Health, Social Isolation, Digital Inclusion, Getting People Moving More, and Our Environment.

Grants and support are allocated by our Advisory Panel, a team of community grant-makers living and working in our neighbourhoods. The Advisory Panel is made up of 20 dedicated members meeting bi-monthly to align local giving and support.

Funding was generously supported by Manchester Local Care Organisation.

Who we funded:

- **Malandra Jacks (£1,600)**
- **St. Clement's Church (£656)**
- **Clayton Scouts (£1,000)**
- **Mum's in Recovery (£150)**

Malandra Jacks: Getting to Know Ancoats

Malandra Jacks received £1,600 for Getting to Know Ancoats, an arts-based social connection project. The project worked with local communities to collect stories and anecdotes of Ancoats, old and new. The youngest person interviewed was 6 years old, and the oldest in their late 80s. This project has provided opportunities for community groups to link up with each other, connect, and share their stories and memories of the neighbourhood. Miniature statues of current local legends were placed around Ancoats, with the trail taking you over cobbled streets, around historical buildings, and through parts of Ancoats you've maybe never seen before. Chloe and Josh, the brilliant North Manchester duo behind Malandra Jacks, have interviewed 15 residents who shared stories of Ancoats from the 1950s–2026.



St. Clements Church: Money Coaching Project

St. Clement's Church Manchester is a lively, diverse church in Higher Openshaw. The group received funding of £656 to deliver its first Money Coaching course over 4 weeks.

The course supported participants with personal skills and practical tools to help with budgeting, setting personal goals and priorities, managing debt, awareness of credit opportunities and savings. The sessions are completely confidential and despite the big topics, they are light-hearted and everyone learns something. Once registered, everyone has access to their own online budgeting tool, which they can use for however long they want to, together with a benefits checker. Participants said the course was "thought provoking" and helping in encouraging money planning.



Clayton Scouts

Clayton Scouts received £1,000 for a trip to Blackpool Zoo. The trip took place in the summer holidays, with 81 young people and their families benefiting from a free day out. 90% of the young people who attended have physical, emotional or social additional needs, making the trip inaccessible for families ordinarily.

Mum's in Recovery

Mum's in Recovery received a micro grant of £150 to purchase mobile phones, enabling their great work supporting mums in recovery from addiction to remain private and confidential.

Step Forward Fund

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Step Up MCR's Step Forward Fund puts decision-making into the hands of the community, inviting residents to vote on which projects should receive funding to make a positive difference in the neighbourhood.

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The Step Forward Fund shifts power to local people, and gives neighbours a chance to **Step Forward to pitch**, **Step Forward to vote**, and **Step Forward** to take action in the community.

In December 2025, we came together with neighbours for an inspiring evening at The Resonance Centre in Clayton to celebrate our community and those making a difference.

Thanks to the support of Great Places, we had £5,000 available for community-led ideas in Ancoats & Beswick and Clayton & Openshaw.

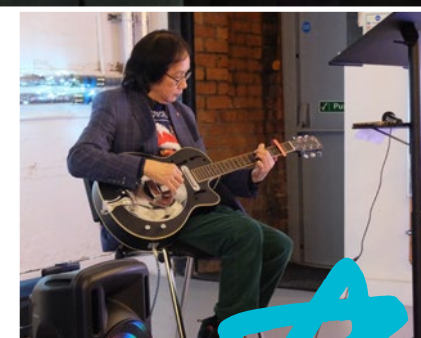


Community Pitching and Celebration

The evening saw pitches from eight brilliant local groups, and following the anticipated community voting, four projects were awarded funding to boost health and wellbeing across exciting activities.

Our winners included:

- The Resonance Centre, who received £2,000 towards its holistic health and wellbeing timetable.
- Rise & Flourish, who were awarded £2,000 for a new ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) cooking and movement programme.
- Calm Minds Collective, who received £500 to support neurodivergent young people in the local community.
- The Multilingual Choir, who were awarded £200 to support ESOL music sessions, bringing people together through song and language.





Case Studies

Rise & Flourish: COOK, CONNECT & MOVE

Rise & Flourish used its £2,000 Step Forward Fund grant to run COOK, CONNECT & MOVE, a free ESOL cooking project at The Beacon Centre in Clayton.

The sessions supported migrants and refugees to build English skills, confidence and friendships while cooking dishes from their home countries.

Learners of all English levels took part, preparing food such as Faiza's Afghan Bolani and Gashin's Kurdish Dolma. Former participants even returned as workshop leaders, with cooks and teachers from Syria, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Libya, Iraq, Ukraine, Hong Kong, Iran, Pakistan and Morocco sharing their skills.

As Hanane said,
"Cooking together reminded us how deeply food and family are connected, and how recipes carry memory, identity and love across generations and borders".



Case Studies

The Resonance Centre: Walk: Talk: Walk

The Resonance Centre used its £2,000 Step Forward Fund grant to launch Walk: Talk: Walk, a 12 week creative walking project designed to support whole person wellbeing. With the funding, they brought in Creative Walk Leader Matt Berry, who turned each session into far more than a stroll through Phillips Park, Clayton Vale and along the River Medlock.

Participants shared memories, from the Old School House to the Manchester Blitz, while enjoying poetry, scavenger hunts, nature activities, foraging lessons and relaxation techniques. Carefully planned accessible routes meant everyone, from pram pushers to 84 year olds and mobility scooter users, could join in.

One participant said:
"This has really got me walking and being active again. I now go out more often and really enjoy it".



Neighbourhood Health Fund: Trauma Informed Communities

Step Up MCR's Neighbourhood Health Fund offers communities the opportunity to lead projects targeting health priorities in Ancoats & Beswick and Clayton & Openshaw.

The Trauma Informed Communities fund was kindly supported by Manchester Local Care Organisation, Public Health, and Manchester City Council.

The Trauma Informed Communities Fund was established to support Manchester's ambition to become an ACE-aware (Adverse Childhood Experiences), trauma informed and trauma responsive city.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) describe a wide range of stressful or traumatic experiences that can occur from conception to the age of 18 – they include abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction.

The funding aimed to support, train and upskill practitioners working with residents to prevent or mitigate the consequences of trauma; helping children, families, and communities to build resilience; and improve outcomes for residents by working in a trauma responsive way.

The Trauma Informed Communities fund received £26,330 investment from Manchester Local Care Organisation, Public Health and Manchester City Council to develop community-led approaches to trauma responsive support.



Safety

The physical, psychological and emotional safety of service users and staff is prioritised.

Trustworthiness

Transparency exists in an organisation's policies and procedures, with the objective of building trust among staff, service users and the wider community.

Choice

Service users are supported in shared decision-making, choice and goal setting to determine the plan of action they need to heal and move forward.

Collaboration

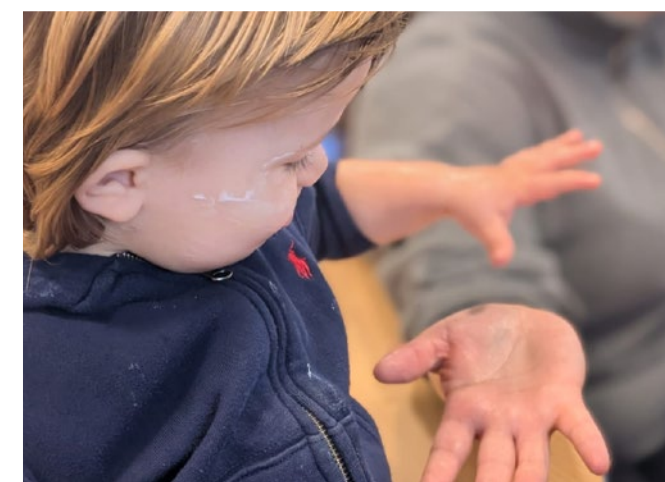
The value of staff and service user experience is recognised in overcoming challenges and improving the system as a whole.

Empowerment

Efforts are made to share power and give service users and staff a strong voice in decision-making, at both individual and organisational level.

Cultural consideration

Cultural consideration – Move past cultural stereotypes and biases based on, for example, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, geography, race or ethnicity.



Trauma Informed Play at Manchester Settlement

Case Studies

Playful Connections Helping Families Thrive in Openshaw

Manchester Settlement is a community and Family Hub in Openshaw supporting children, adults and families through a wide range of activities and services.

Manchester Settlement's Trauma Informed Play Project gave families simple, playful ways to strengthen relationships. Inspired by trauma training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (also known as ACEs), the project offered a positive, hands on approach rather than focusing solely on the challenges trauma creates.

Working with a creative therapist from One Education, volunteers and staff learnt Thera-play techniques, offering fun, structured activities that help children feel safe, connected and supported. These activities can soothe overwhelmed children and build trust through shared moments of joy.

Examples included:

Tin foil robots – wrapping a hand or foot to create a shiny "robot"

Back weather reports – gently tracing shapes to describe "sunshine", "rain" or "clouds"

Balloon keep up – working together to keep a balloon in the air

Staff modelled the activities in sessions and shared play cards so families could continue at home. The project boosted staff confidence and gave families more opportunities to build warm, nurturing relationships.



"Step Up MCR has always provided us with funding that has enabled us to support and empower women in our community, and continue building something truly meaningful. But one thing that stood out for me is the visibility, confidence and the strength to grow."

– Chizzy, The Inspirational Women

"I love this place and I am so grateful to have found it, it feels like home."

– Participant, The Resonance Centre

"I started the Freedom Programme with Sanam last year, and it changed my life and how I understood my past relationships. I have been able to rebuild my life. I have finally stopped blaming myself, and I now know the red flags to avoid in the future. Services like this should be available to women as soon as abuse is raised. It could save a life, and I know it gave me the purpose I needed to move forward."

– Participant, The Art of Joy Project

Peer Support Network

Step Up MCR convenes a Peer Support Network of local community groups and organisations. The network comes together to work through challenges, share positive news and updates from the neighbourhood, and help one another by signposting and sharing resources, knowledge, skills and time.

Each month, we host bring the network together to upskill local leaders, staff, volunteers and residents. Sessions are intended to build the capacity and skills of people making a difference in our communities. Every session is built around what groups tell us they need support with.

This year, we've supported groups with sessions like:

- Prioritise You: A Workshop on Boundaries & Self-care in Challenging Roles
- Book-keeping Support
- Funding Support
- Mental Health First Aid Level 3
- ACEs and Trauma Informed Practice
- Domestic Abuse Informed Practice
- Opening a Bank Account
- Application Support Drop-in
- An Introduction to AI

The network currently includes 60 groups and organisations, each supporting one another in our active WhatsApp channel and at workshops. Since the Peer Support Network started in 2023, we've supported around 300 community learners.

100% of people supported said they would recommend Step Up MCR to a friend with an idea for a new community project.

Kay, The Beacon Centre: "The Peer Support Network is a really great way of keeping in touch with other groups and finding out what's going on in the local area. The funded training is also always extremely helpful".

This work is supported by Manchester City Council's Adult Skills Network and UNESCO City of Lifelong Learning. Thank you to Nuffield Health for the on-going in-kind support and use of space to run our sessions.



www.stepupmcr.org

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Thank you to our key funders:



**Step Up
MCR**