MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday, 10 October 2023
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, Level 2, Town Hall Extension

This is a **Supplementary Agenda** containing additional information about the business of the meeting that was not available when the agenda was published

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Access to the Council Chamber

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Membership of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Councillors - Hitchen (Chair), Azra Ali, Appleby, Doswell, Good, Ogunbambo, H Priest, Rawson, Sheikh, Whiston and Wills

Supplementary Agenda

Further Information

For help, advice and information about this meeting please contact the Committee Officer:

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This supplementary agenda was issued on **Tuesday, 3 October 2023** by the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit, Manchester City Council, Level 2, Town Hall Extension (Library Walk Elevation), Manchester M60 2LA

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Manchester City Council
Report for Information

Report to:	Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee - 10 October 2023
	Executive – 19 October 2023
Subject:	Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy 2023 - 2026
Report of:	Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

Summary

This report introduces the Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy 2023-26 for Manchester City Council and highlights the key priorities for the next three years.

Recommendations

The Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee recommended to:-

(1) Consider and comment on the information contained in this report.
(2) Endorse the Strategy for approval by the Executive.

The Executive is recommended to approve the Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy 2023-26

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
None

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments
The Building Stronger Communities Together strategy will foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
The impact of this strategy on protected groups has been considered through an Equality Impact Assessment

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The wider work through the Our Manchester strategy delivery plans will link the priorities from this strategy focused on people and building social cohesion to supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The strategy aims to build social cohesion through recognising the importance of and harnessing the talents and skills of our local communities; attracting talent and diversity and so contributing to the city's economic success.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The strategy aims to build social cohesion through recognising the importance of and harnessing the talents and skills of our local communities; increasing participation and unlocking the potential of our communities.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	This report and the strategy highlights how the work to build stronger communities contributes towards this outcome by ensuring our diverse neighbourhoods and communities are welcoming and cohesive and therefore a destination of choice for people to live, visit and work.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Building social cohesion across the city will help to connect people with one another and local services. The work through the strategy to promote inclusion will create equal access to the growth, opportunities and resources regardless of background.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0   Introduction

1.1   This report introduces the Building Stronger Communities Together strategy for 2023-26. It provides a synopsis of the consultation carried out in the development of the strategy. It also details the strategic priorities for the next three years and an overview of pilot activities that will be tested and delivered in localities across the city over the next 12 months. A copy of the strategy can be found in Appendix 1 with a summary in Appendix 2.

2.0   Background

2.1   We have talked for many years about the values that all Manchester residents share whatever their individual identities and how at times of challenge and difficulty we all come together. We focus on what we have in common and how we will contribute to Manchester – those who are newly arrived as well as those who have always lived here. We have mutual respect – Manchester people respect themselves, their neighbours and their neighbourhood, and the communities of Manchester.

2.2   Over the last three years, we have seen several challenges, both locally and nationally that have tested our understanding of and approach to building integrated and cohesive communities. At a time of economic crisis and global instability, we need more than ever to invest in strengthening our communities and social relationships particularly across difference. Social cohesion is a dynamic and complex set of relationships that can be profoundly influenced by local, national and international events and politics. Bad actors and influencers (whether they are local or international) seeking to sow division and breed hatred between different groups and communities are nothing new. However, an increase in segregated and disconnected communities together with the impact of social media can mean that misinformation and rumours can rapidly inflame community tensions. This in turn can have a profound and long-lasting impact on trust and relations between different local communities.

2.3   Research carried out since May 2020 (Belong Network and University of Kent)[1] into the impact of COVID-19 on our social relations tells us that investment in activities and programmes that foster stronger communities and community relations can provide a bulwark of trust, social connections and strong community relations that are able to resist the pull of division. Furthermore, we know that more socially connected, cohesive local areas can bring individual and community level benefits; these include resilience against crisis, shock and change, higher levels of individual subjective wellbeing and increased levels of volunteering and active social engagement. As such an investment in our social relations can be far reaching, bringing a range of other benefits for communities, for example on health and socio-economic outcomes that are expressed in the Our Manchester vision and strategy.

2.4   Building the resilience of our local communities and social cohesion is the foundation for achieving the Our Manchester vision and is everyone's

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[1] Beyond Us and Them; Societal Cohesion in the context of Covid 19, Belong, University of Kent, 2021

business. All of us can play a role. It is everyone's responsibility, in schools, colleges and universities, in workplaces, business and in local communities and neighbourhoods to foster stronger relationships between different groups and communities. From the evidence nationally we know that the best schemes for building social cohesion and community resilience are place based, locally designed and locally led by well networked local partnerships which includes leaders within faith, civic and business networks working together with public services to foster stronger communities, building trust and legitimacy.

2.5 We recognise that we cannot do this alone, so we have been engaging with our partners from across the public, private voluntary, faith and community sectors to better understand the issues that are of most importance to everyone and the things that will help us to strengthen the bridging[2] between and bonding[3] within communities.

2.6 Levels of social cohesion are different in different places. Put simply it is about how well people from different backgrounds meet, mix and get along together. It also relates to levels of trust both *between* different groups and communities and, *between* individual, groups and communities, *and* the institutions and services that serve them.

2.7 The work of social cohesion is about developing neighbourhoods, workplaces, institutions and social spaces where difference is welcomed and celebrated and where empathy and curiosity about people 'not like me' is encouraged and embedded. When this happens, we can move beyond narratives of 'us' and 'them' towards ideas of kindness, trust, good relations between different groups and communities, and a sense of belonging for all.[4]

2.8 Manchester has not had a separate social cohesion strategy for the city. The challenge of ensuring that Manchester people live in diverse but stable and cohesive communities is a core element of our vision for Manchester as a world class City. The Our Manchester Strategy has therefore been our strategy for social cohesion. The reset of the Our Manchester Strategy provided an important opportunity for us to review our approach and ensure that integration and social cohesion is explicitly embedded into the delivery of the strategy and its work streams going forward.

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[2] Creating new relationships beyond own current social circle and building connections that link people across different ethnic, religious or occupational groups through shared interests or goals. To bridge '*between'* communities, groups, or organisations.

[3] Deepening the relationships formed or those you already have between people who share common characteristics or interests – Bonding exists between 'people like us' who are 'in it together' and who typically have strong close relationships

[4] Successive governments have introduced and implemented policy agendas to build social cohesion, which as in the past been referred to as 'community cohesion', 'cohesion', 'integration' etc. We are using the term 'social cohesion' because we think it best describes how essential strong social relations are, particularly across differences of race, geography and class for fostering stronger, kinder and more resilient local places.

2.9   The Building Stronger Communities Together strategy is distinct and complimentary of the priorities set out in the Our Manchester Strategy. However, its focus is on people and relationships and how these can help to build and harness the skills and abilities of residents and utilise the assets in neighbourhoods to foster greater contact and participation within and between communities and local services, building trust and a sense of belonging to local areas and the city.

3.0   Building Stronger Communities Together – Consultation and Key Priorities

3.1   The Building Stronger Communities Together strategy reflects the things that people told us were important to them and sets out how we plan to strengthen and share the great things that come out of Manchester's shared identity – things that boost communities, community relations and social relationships and come into play when things become difficult.

3.2   We think the best ways to build stronger communities in the city are through the ideas, actions and activities that are generated, designed and delivered locally. The ones which are everyone's responsibility – not just the Council and its partners in voluntary, faith and community organisations. It's also the responsibility of each of us – in school, college and university, at work, in business, in communities and in neighbourhoods – anywhere and everywhere.

3.3   Throughout March to June 2022, we consulted with Manchester's communities on matters relating to integration and cohesion, to understand the things that help us to connect and get along with one another. We know that Manchester is a diverse city, so to capture views we ran a 12-week online consultation.

3.4   The online consultation was promoted though our social media channels, teams working in the neighbourhoods and our partners across the public, voluntary and community sectors so that we could reach as many people as possible.

3.5   The online survey included questions asking Manchester residents about how well they thought people from different backgrounds got on together in their local area, what things they believed were important in making it easier for communities to get along, what challenges they felt prevented people from getting on with one another and what things build a sense of pride and belonging in communities.

3.6   Where possible we used community networks and organisations to promote the consultation process and the ways to get involved.

3.7   The online consultation was completed by **441 people**. The respondents reported to identify with 27 different ethnic groups. 57.4% of the consultation respondents identified as female, 14.1% of respondents reported to be under the age of 18, 3.2% reported to be aged between 18-25, 15.6% between 26-39, 21.1% between 40 – 49, 29.3% between 50 -64,12.2% 65+ and 4.5%

prefer not to say. All wards were represented in the response to the online consultation. Of the 32 wards, Hulme engaged more than any other ward with 32 surveys completed and Harpurhey had the least participation, with only 3 surveys completed.

3.8　The findings identified that 45% of respondents felt that people from different backgrounds in their area got on well or extremely well together. 37% felt that people from different backgrounds in their area neither got on well nor got on poorly.

3.9　The findings also identified the following things to be important in helping people to get on well together:

- Respect between all, whatever age, faith, sexual orientation, gender or ethnicity
- Being able to trust local services such as the Council, police, health providers and schools to be fair and open
- Living in a community where people feel safe, and that is doing well
- Having places for communities to come together, such as parks, open spaces, schools, places of worship and online.

3.10　The findings showed that people wanted to:

- Get to know and help their neighbours more
- Hold more inter-faith events, celebrating different cultures together
- Understand where they can find out about volunteering opportunities
- Get involved in community events and celebrations
- Feel a sense of pride in their area and tackle littering and fly tipping
- Have safe neighbourhoods where people feel confident in letting their children out to play.

3.11　Alongside the online survey, we also wanted to have conversations and listen to communities about their experiences: what they would like to see more of and some of the issues they felt prevented them, or acted as a barrier to building relationships where they live. We did this through a series of 23 face to face or virtual focus groups and 1-2-1 interviews with communities (including our communities of identity) from across Manchester. These focus groups and 1-2-1 sessions enabled us to engage with a total of **241 people**. These focus groups were important as they helped us to access and engage with communities and residents who might not be able to access through the online survey and those who would prefer to have a face-to-face conversation. This approach encouraged open and honest feedback and helped participants think about the role they could play in creating stronger communities.

3.12　The focus groups included sessions with schools, youth clubs, mosques, the Manchester BME Network, elected members, South Asian women groups, disabled people organisations and other community focused groups.

3.13 We have continued dialogue with groups, such as the Disabled People's Engagement Group Sounding Board, CHEM group, faith and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic organisations after the formal consultation process was closed to reflect and sense check our findings and adapt the content of the strategy. This has particularly helped to make sure that the priorities identified in the strategy resonate with communities.

3.14 **Strategy Priorities**

3.15 The analysis of the online consultation and the outcomes of the focus groups identified three key areas of priority for the Building Stronger Communities Together strategy. These are explained below:

1) Relationships ... It's about all of us	
A little trust goes a long way. That's why relationships and trust go hand in hand with one another. Relationships are not just about mixing with people who are like us and those we would normally mix with. They are also and importantly about speaking with our neighbours and people who are from different backgrounds. Following through on commitments; doing what you say you are going to do, being clear, having frequent communications with communities and identifying opportunities to come together and problem-solve leads to greater trust between communities and organisations and/or systems – so that no matter what might go wrong, there is a trust that organisations will act in the best interest of communities.	
Personally: speaking with our neighbours and people who are from different backgrounds. Learning to trust and be trusted.	**How:** - Choose to get to know others, be confident to reach out to neighbours. - Talk, listen, think and learn with each other. - Show respect. - Tackle hate and intolerance and bias together – educate and accept one other. - Build trust in local services to be fair and open.
For organisations: developing trust by providing equity in public services. Earning trust by doing what we promise, lots of clear communication, and creating ways to come together and problem-solve.	
Because: a little trust goes a long way and so that no matter what might go wrong, communities trust organisations to do the right thing.	

2) Participation…. We get involved to make a difference
Bringing people together to get involved in meaningful activities, for a shared purpose and to engage in decisions about things that affect their lives. Greater participation and engagement with others builds trust between and

within communities and between communities and institutions. The more trust people feel in others and in the institutions that serve them the more likely they are to get involved. Participation can lead to greater trust – which can lead to greater participation. It is about enabling and supporting communities and services to come together; valuing the importance of working together to make a difference and taking ownership of the things that matter most to us where we live.

Personally: taking ownership of what matters to us where we live. Taking part.	**How:** • Community events and activities. • Create ways to get involved, improve and influence. • Bring groups together. • Turn up and get things done. • Communicate what's going on, promote involvement. • Ensure that our services are equitable.
For organisations: bringing people together for shared aims that affect their lives. Support to act.	
Because: working together has value: participation builds trust and the more we trust each other and our services, the more involved we get.	

3) Belonging….. Making an effort

Relationships, trust and participation help to bond and bridge within and between communities and build social capital. This in turn helps to create a sense of belonging for communities.

Being part of something bigger than just yourself provides a sense of belonging and purpose along with a feeling of acceptance and support that can help fend off loneliness and help to make you feel more connected to those around you.

Belonging is fundamental to our sense of happiness and well-being. A sense of belonging means that we have respect for the traditions, cultures and diverse communities of a particular place whilst at the same time being willing to invest and contribute a shared vision of what that place can become.

Belonging in Manchester is about being included, respected, and welcomed. It is a sense of feeling valued and accepted whatever your background.

Personally: Contributing to the shared idea of what your area can become. Respecting traditions, cultures and communities around you.	**How:** • Make the effort to connect to and welcome others. • Create safe, shared places. • Develop a shared sense of purpose. • Share experiences. • Be proud and keep up your neighbourhood.
For organisations: bonding communities together and building bridges between them.	

Because: being part of something bigger gives you purpose, fights loneliness and connects you to those around you. Belonging is fundamental to happiness and being well.	• Celebrate diverse communities and what we have in common.

3.16 Based on the feedback from the consultation, the strategy sets out 10 basic behaviours and principles to support us all to play our part in the way that we think and behave towards others, the way we live and how we view and interact with others, especially those we do not know or those who might be different from us.

4.0   Measuring Progress

4.1 Understanding and measuring levels of social cohesion is not easy and there is no national framework for doing this. Therefore, we will use the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's "Policing and Community Safety Survey", which includes the qualitative measures set out below, to measure overall social cohesion in Manchester. This is in addition to each pilot area also defining its own measures, activities and outcomes which reflect the three priorities of Relationships, Participation and Belonging in this "Building Stronger Communities Together" strategy.

4.2 Support for designing a set of more detailed indicators of social cohesion will be sought from the Belong Network, drawing on their work to develop a national framework of measurement indicators and recent research and evidence gathering they have been carrying out to support place-based approaches to measuring social cohesion.

4.3 The Greater Manchester Combined Authority conducts a survey every quarter across Greater Manchester, which includes measures of residents' views of their local area and how safe residents feel in their day-to-day life in their area. The table below sets out the results for Manchester against the Greater Manchester average for the period from July 2021 to June 2022.

4.4 The latest cumulative results show that Manchester was the same or better than the GM average for six measures. These headline indicators will be used to frame our approach to measuring social cohesion alongside additional qualitative and quantitative measures to be identified through the three pilot area work programmes.

Measure	Manchester	GM Average	GLA Average
1) How safe do you feel in your local area	88%	88%	-
2) How safe do you currently feel when out and about anywhere in	81%	81%	-

Measure	Manchester	GM Average	GLA Average
your district, away from your local area?			
3) My area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (Relationships)	77%	73%	94%
4) My local area is a place where people look out for each other	68%	72%	-
5) I feel a strong sense of belonging to my local area (Belonging)	71%	71%	59%
6) I have a say in what happens in my local area (Participation)	40%	35%	30%
7) I am proud of my local area	71%	71%	-

5.0 Pilot Activities – Delivery over next 12 months

5.1 Alongside the strategy, a pilot action plan will be established to prioritise and test activities aimed at achieving the three priorities in the first year of the strategy. These activities will be developed and delivered in key neighbourhoods in north, central and south and will be focused on bridging and bonding.

- Bridging activities will help to create new relationships beyond existing social circles and build connections that link people across different ethnic, religious or occupational groups through shared interests or goals. These activities bridge 'between' communities, groups, or organisations.

- Bonding activities will deepen relationships between people who share common characteristics or interests. Bonding takes place between 'people like us' who are 'in it together' and who typically have strong close relationships.

5.2 This is because we know this is a complex area of work and we do not want to set out actions that we know we will not be able to achieve or set expectations high and then not be able to match them. We really want to start by building our understanding about the impact of change in neighbourhoods and on our communities. We also want to test ways of working and codesigning activities with communities to identify what is successful in bringing people together and getting them involved in local activities. We want to consider how we better celebrate what everyone has in common in an inclusive way and respect difference.

5.3 Manchester and its residents have a great sense of pride so we also want to capture this, but also build and strengthen the sense of belonging people have to their area and the city where this is not the case. To help achieve this, we are working with each of the neighbourhood teams to develop pilot actions plans. This activity includes:

- Identifying small areas to pilot Year 1 activities with a clear rationale and story of place for each
- Identify key activities that will build relationships, increase participation and build a sense of belonging (start small and think about bonding and bridging)
- The activities should build on what is already in existence (people, assets, and opportunities through existing plans and those planned), but can also start from scratch if that is what is needed
- Measuring change will be important – each pilot will need identify ways in which change will be measured including learning on what worked well and what did not work so well (so we can transfer this into the Years 2 and 3 plan / roll out in different areas)
- The pilot activities will encourage people to come together to volunteer in their community, celebrate different cultures as well as the things we have in common with one another, and codesign with local services to address local concerns.

5.4 A number of workshops are planned over the next couple of weeks, led by the national Belong Network to bring together key services and partners to help design and develop the pilot action plans and achieve the objectives above. The action plans will be ready by end of November 2023 ahead of the launch of the strategy in December 2023.

5.5 Discussions are currently taking place about the date and format of the launch of the Building Stronger Communities strategy in December and it is hoped that alongside a citywide event we also launch the strategy in the localities where the pilot action plans will be delivered as a means of kick starting the work.

5.6 The strategy and progress against the pilot action plans will form part of the Communities and Power workstream of Making Manchester Fairer, reporting into the quarterly Communities and Power Forum.

6.0   Recommendations

6.1 The Executive are invited to approve the Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy 2023-26

7.0   Appendices

Appendix 1: Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy 2023-26
Appendix 2: Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy Summary

Building Stronger Communities Together
Our Strategy 2023–2026

When people come together in Manchester,
good things happen

MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Our Manchester

Page 18

Foreword

Manchester is one of the most diverse, resilient, and welcoming cities in the world and we are proud of this. Mancunians are known for being friendly, getting things done and never complaining about the rain. Manchester has a history and reputation for being radical and campaigning for equality and the city's diversity and changes in population are testament to this.

The past three years have been especially challenging, as we have all had to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our daily lives. Everyone has been affected by the pandemic. The impact of physical distancing restrictions has led to a reduction in social interaction and increases to the number of people feeling isolated or lonely. In Manchester, during the pandemic and through our work on community recovery we have been able to identify so many positive stories and examples about how communities and groups have come together and supported and looked after those who were struggling or needed help. This included food banks, students keeping in touch by phone with vulnerable and isolated residents, Covid connectors within communities, places of worship distributing food, advice on fuel poverty and getting people connected online.

Manchester has a long history of supporting those in need and welcoming people from troubled nations into our communities. The Russian-Ukraine war has instigated Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II and Manchester as a city has come together to offer support to all those affected. Through the Afghan Resettlement Programme, Manchester has also been supporting Afghan refugees who fled the takeover by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

At a time when the world around us can feel divided and disconnected, we know that across Manchester there is a determination to stay connected and continue to support one another to build stronger communities that are engaged and making a positive difference to the lives of others.

I am proud to be introducing our first Building Stronger Communities strategy. I strongly believe that by bringing people together to get to know and understand one another better, celebrate our rich cultures and diversity and, importantly, what we all have in common leads to increased social interaction, trust, mutual respect and a city that feels more like home for everyone as they feel like they belong, are safe and included.

It might start with a smile, but slowly when people start to come together, they feel happier, more connected and empowered to make changes and improvements where they live.

I hope this strategy helps you to take your first step to get to know your neighbours, build positive relationships in your neighbourhood and take part in building stronger communities in Manchester

Councillor Joanna Midgley
Deputy Leader for Manchester City Council
September 2023

Page 20

Contents

Page 22

Introduction

We have talked for many years about the values that all Manchester residents share whatever their individual identities and how at times of challenge and difficulty we all come together.

We focus on what we have in common and how we will contribute to Manchester – those who are newly arrived as well as those who have always lived here. We have mutual respect – Manchester people respect themselves, their neighbours and their neighbourhood, and the communities of Manchester.

Over the last three years, we have seen several challenges, both locally and nationally, that have tested our understanding of and approach to building integrated and cohesive communities.

The impact of international events and incidents, the unrest in Leicester, the protests and violence in Knowsley, Brexit, our changing communities and neighbourhoods, the Covid-19 pandemic, the Manchester Arena terrorist attack and subsequent inquiry have all reaffirmed that the work to build stronger communities cannot be taken for granted and we cannot become complacent.

At a time of economic crisis and global instability, we need more than ever to invest in strengthening our communities and social relationships particularly across difference. Social cohesion is a dynamic and complex set of relationships that can be profoundly influenced by local, national and international events and politics.

Bad actors and influencers (whether they are local or international) seeking to sow division and breed hatred between different British groups and communities are nothing new. However, an increase in segregated and disconnected communities together with the impact of social media can mean that misinformation and rumours can rapidly inflame community tensions.

This in turn can have a profound and long-lasting impact on trust and relations between different local communities.

Research carried out since May 2020 (Belong Network and University of Kent)[1] into the impact of Covid-19 on our social relations tells us that investment in activities and programmes that foster stronger communities and community relations can provide a bulwark of trust, social connections and strong community relations that are able to resist the pull of division.

Furthermore, we know that more socially connected, cohesive local areas can bring individual and community level benefits; these include resilience against crisis, shock and change, higher levels of individual subjective wellbeing and increased levels of volunteering and active social engagement.

As such an investment in our social relations can be far reaching, bringing a range of other benefits for communities, for example on health and socioeconomic outcomes that are expressed in the Our Manchester vision and strategy.

We believe that building the resilience of our local communities and social cohesion is the foundation for achieving the Our Manchester vision and is everyone's business. All of us can play a role. It is everyone's responsibility, in schools, colleges and universities, in workplaces, business and in local communities and neighbourhoods to foster stronger relationships between different groups and communities.

From the evidence nationally we know that the best schemes for building social cohesion and community resilience are place based, locally designed and locally led by well networked local partnerships which includes leaders within faith, civic and business networks working together with public services to foster stronger communities, building trust and legitimacy.

We recognise that we cannot do this alone, so we have been engaging with our partners from across the public, private voluntary, faith and community sectors to better understand the issues that are of most importance to everyone and the things that will help us to strengthen the bridging[2] between and bonding[3] within communities.

This strategy is distinct and complements the priorities set out in the Our Manchester Strategy. The focus of the Building Stronger Communities Together strategy is on people through building relationships, participation and a sense of belonging.

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1. Beyond Us and Them; Societal Cohesion in the context of Covid-19, Belong, University of Kent, 2021.

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2. Creating new relationships beyond own current social circle and building connections that link people across different ethnic, religious or occupational groups through shared interests or goals. To bridge 'between' communities, groups, or organisations.

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3. Deepening the relationships formed or those you already have between people who share common characteristics or interests – Bonding exists between 'people like us' who are 'in it together' and who typically have strong close relationships.

What do we mean by Social Cohesion?

Levels of social cohesion are different in different places. Put simply it is about how well people from different backgrounds meet, mix and get along together. It also relates to levels of trust both between different groups and communities and, between individual, groups and communities, and the institutions and services that serve them.

The work of social cohesion is about developing neighbourhoods, workplaces, institutions and social spaces where difference is welcomed and celebrated and where empathy and curiosity about people 'not like me' is encouraged and embedded. When this happens, we can move beyond narratives of 'us' and 'them' towards ideas of kindness, trust, good relations between different groups and communities, and a sense of belonging for all.[4]

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4. Successive governments have introduced and implemented policy agendas to build social cohesion, which in the past has been referred to as 'community cohesion', 'cohesion', 'integration' etc. We are using the term 'social cohesion' because we think it best describes how essential strong social relations are, particularly across differences of race, geography and class for fostering stronger, kinder and more resilient local places.

Page 26

Our communities, our story

Manchester has been attracting people to the city from abroad since its inception by the Romans in around 80AD, but it was the industrial revolution that kick-started large scale immigration, beginning with Irish migrants taking up work in the mills and followed by Jewish migrants fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe.

Moving ahead to the middle of the 20th century, migrants generally arrived in this country because of problems in their countries of birth such as indentured labour, rebuilding after the Second World War, and poverty, like the Irish migrants a century before. The main immigrants between 1951 and 1971 were the Irish, Caribbean (particularly Jamaicans), South-Africans, East African Asians from Kenya and people from India and Pakistan. Most of these migrants settled around the city centre, with the Irish and Asian migrants choosing north and east of the city centre in places like Cheetham and Ardwick, while the migrants from Black ethnic groups settled to the south, predominantly in Moss Side.

Across the country, conflict played a large part in international immigration from 1971 up to 2003, starting with an inflow of people from Bangladesh, followed by Ugandan-born Asians, Vietnamese, Iranians, Iraqis, Afghans, Rwandans, Zimbabweans, Somalians, Angolans, Bosnians, Kosovans and Albanians. People from Bangladesh and Somalia were particularly attracted to Manchester, with Bangladeshi people settling in Longsight and Somalians in Moss Side.

The beginning of 2004, however, marked a shift in reasons for immigration to Manchester; increasingly immigration was due to 'pull' factors such as employment and education rather than the 'push' factors relating to conflict, though there were some exceptions. Family ties and changes in legislation also started to have a greater effect on immigration to the UK, particularly resulting from countries joining the European Union (EU) in May 2004.
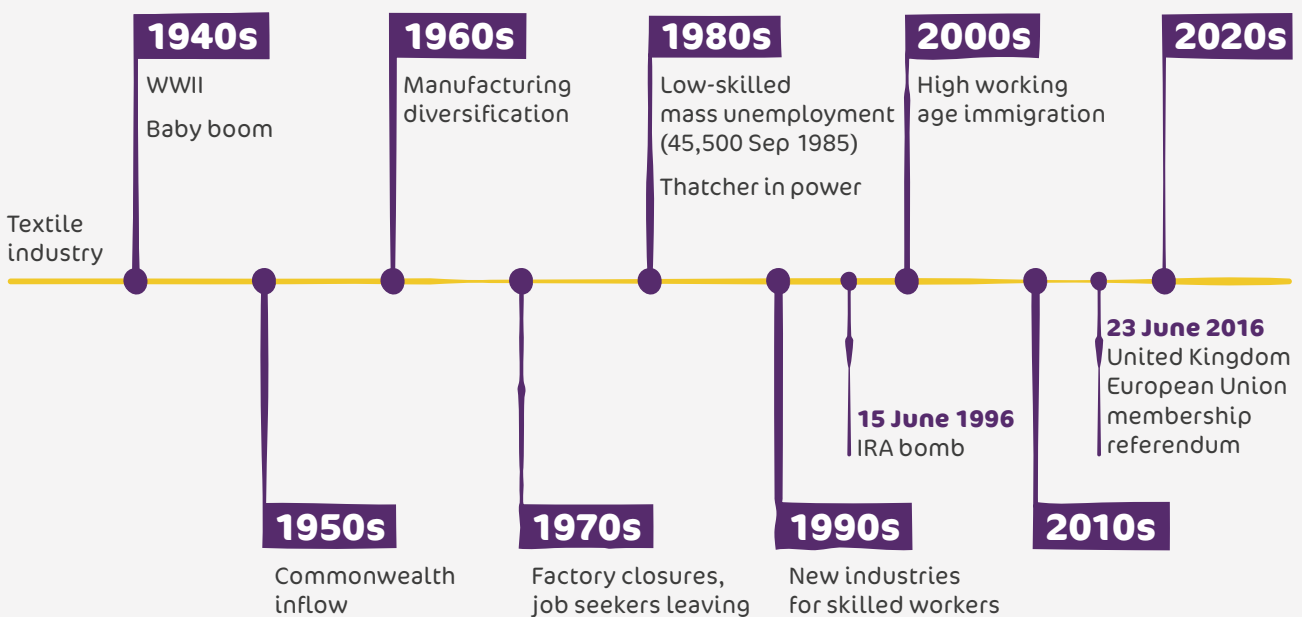
This new-found employment mobility led to migrants from eight of the new members, collectively known as the 'A8', arriving in the UK in their thousands from Europe (the 'A8' were: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia – plus Malta and Cyprus).

The UK was different from existing EU members in terms of its restrictions on A8 migrants' access to their labour markets and state support systems: the UK opened its borders, enhancing its attractiveness to new members. According to Office for National Statistics (ONS), in 2015, 80% of residents born in recent EU Accession countries arrived in the UK after 2001, with the largest increase from Polish-born residents.

In the years following 2004, some restrictions were placed on some new EU members (which were lifted in 2014).

Post-2010, there was a return to Manchester attracting higher numbers of migrants in Manchester from countries in economic crisis (eg Spain during 2007-2009).

Further new population trends, such as an increase (beginning 2010-2011) in the number of Chinese immigrants, were influenced by the 'pull' of Manchester's higher education institutions. Family ties and changes in legislation once again influenced change: when the 2012 changes to immigration rules were first discussed in 2010 and 2011, spikes in non-EEA immigration were seen.

1940s
WWII
Baby boom

1960s
Manufacturing
diversification

1980s
Low-skilled
mass unemployment
(45,500 Sep 1985)

Thatcher in power

2000s
High working
age immigration

2020s

Textile
industry

23 June 2016
United Kingdom
European Union
membership
referendum

15 June 1996
IRA bomb

1950s
Commonwealth
inflow

1970s
Factory closures,
job seekers leaving

1990s
New industries
for skilled workers

2010s

For much of the last decade (2012 onwards), 'pull' factors continued to dominate, though national policy changes (eg the UK European Union membership referendum, 'Brexit') precipitated changes in the nationality of migrants coming to Manchester. In recent years, however, 'push' factors begin to emerge with the creation of dedicated resettlement schemes focusing on those fleeing conflict in Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine, and a bespoke immigration route for people from Hong Kong.

In 2014 and 2015, Manchester continued to see high numbers of migrants coming from EU countries such as Spain, Italy, (both experiencing recession at the time), Poland and Romania. The announcement of the Brexit referendum may also have affected this movement. There was a smaller immediate impact from Brexit in the year prior to the referendum (2015), with increases in EU and non-EU international student numbers potentially attracted by a considerable fall in the sterling exchange rate between November 2015 and October 2016.

In Manchester, the post-Brexit period (2016 – 2019) aligned with wider national migration trends; though freedom of movement for EU citizens continued, post-Brexit uncertainty, the falling value of the pound against the euro, and improving economic prospects across mainland Europe, meant that the numbers of migrants coming from the EU declined sharply. This was, however, offset by considerable numbers of migrants coming from non-EU countries and particularly driven by those coming from Asia. Changes in immigration policy in 2018 to attract professionals from particular employment sectors (such as doctors and nurses) contributed to this movement.

As with all areas of life, the Covid-19 pandemic affected 'usual' patterns of migration as travel was restricted: changes in people's behaviour (such as students leaving the city to be with their families) and the disruption to standard monitoring surveys means that statistics produced during the Covid-19 period are subject to great uncertainty. The publication of Census 2021 data is starting to give us a greater understanding of how the city's population has changed though we know that Manchester was particularly affected by the fact that the Census was conducted during the pandemic and some of the impacts of this are detailed below.

Concurrently, students (undergraduates and postgraduates) continue to be an important contributor to the city's population; growth across economic sectors, our universities and higher education sector, the attractiveness of the city itself, and established communities influence not only students coming to the city but them choosing to remain as young professionals. Despite concerns that Brexit would reduce the number of EU undergraduate students, the opposite has happened in Manchester, with numbers rising year on year in the city's universities. The 2018/19 academic year saw an increase in EU undergraduates attending with similar increases in undergraduate numbers from the rest of the world. While there has been negligible growth in postgraduate students from the EU, growth in non-EU postgraduate students was significantly higher.

Established communities and family and friendship ties, and proximity to the city itself continue to influence where migrants and students choose to settle: there is clear preference for the inner city and its immediate suburbs and the upper and eastern Central wards (Deansgate, Piccadilly, Hulme, Ardwick, Moss Side, Cheetham, Levenshulme and Longsight).

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted migration behaviour 'as a whole' as those wishing to emigrate had to remain and immigration was prevented. These restrictions, ongoing changes in migration policy following Brexit, and disruption to the usual methods of migration surveillance mean that statistics covering this period are subject to greater uncertainty.

The 2021 Census is starting to provide a picture, though this too was affected by the pandemic; comparisons with internal forecasting models suggest a significant undercount of about 32,000 individuals, with those of working age and males most likely to be missing.

Initial findings reflect our migration history. Just under a third of residents were born outside the UK (GM's figure, and England's, is 17%). Our attraction to migrants is reflected too: 2% of residents lived outside the UK one year before the Census -- more than double GM and England.

Manchester's reputation and work over the last two decades to promote the city as welcoming and tolerant is evident through the people who choose to live here and call Manchester their home. Manchester is the most ethnically diverse district in Greater Manchester. In fact, Manchester is the only local authority outside of London with residents within each of the 90 detailed ethnic groups listed in the Census. This is a key strength of what the city has to offer and is celebrated.

Residents' view

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority conducts a survey every quarter across Greater Manchester, which includes measures of residents' views of their local area and how safe residents feel in their day-to-day life in their area. The table below sets out the results for Manchester against the Greater Manchester average for the period from July 2021 to June 2022.

The latest cumulative results show that Manchester was the same or better than the GM average for five-out-of-six measures.

Measure	Manchester	GM Average	GLA Average
1. Feeling safe or very safe in your local area	88%	88%	-
2. Feeling safe or very safe when out and about anywhere in your district, away from your local area?	81%	81%	-
3. My area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (Relationships)	77%	73%	94%
4. My local area is a place where people look out for each other	68%	72%	-
5. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my local area (Belonging)	71%	71%	59%
6. I have a say in what happens in my local area (Participation)	40%	35%	30%
7. I am proud of my local area	71%	71%	-

Page 32

Our vision

Building stronger communities is about everyone. The responsibility is not on particular communities to take action or do more but on everyone to get more involved in their community and make new connections or build on existing ones.

Our vision for the city is to support residents to build a stronger and more cohesive Manchester. The core of the Building Stronger Communities Together strategy is therefore, about:

Relationships

'It's about all of us' – getting to know one another and bridging differences between communities. More people doing things to help them and others to belong to their community; those who are newly arrived as well as those who have always lived here, engaging, being trusted and trusting others around them, including those from different social and ethnic backgrounds.

Participation

'We get involved to make a difference' - helping all communities to feel empowered to act to improve their neighbourhood and address shared challenges together building on the strengths and advantages of Manchester's rich diversity, cultures and histories.

Belonging

'Making an effort' to make ourselves and the people around us a part of our local neighbourhood and the city; valuing diversity and difference, and celebrating what we have in common. Being proud of the places we live. Knowing that all together we belong to Manchester. Whether a new arrival to the city or someone whose family goes back generations we celebrate what we have in common, the ties that bind us together, and the shared values of welcoming and inclusivity.

Page 34

Joining it together

Our Manchester

The Our Manchester Strategy – Forward to 2025 outlines the priorities that everyone in the city – our public, private, voluntary and community organisations, and our residents and communities – will work on together. The Our Manchester Strategy provides the overarching strategic framework that all other citywide strategies and action-plans work towards to put Manchester in the top-flight of world class cities by 2025 where all residents and communities can thrive.

The Our Manchester Strategy has five key thematic priorities for Manchester including building liveable neighbourhoods that are diverse, inclusive and equitable. The Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy will strengthen the work already taking place to ensure that Manchester has thriving and sustainable communities based upon mutual understanding, respect and tolerance.

As part of the development of The Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy, an Our Manchester themed cohesion workshop was chaired by the Belong Network to help Manchester's leaders to embed community cohesion priorities issues into their existing delivery plans. As such, The Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy will bring together all existing strategies and action-plans with a focus on building understanding and relationships between the city's diverse communities.

Making Manchester Fairer (MMF)

As a city, we're committed to making Manchester fairer through tackling health, poverty and other inequalities. The Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy will build on the priorities set out in the Making Manchester Fairer Action Plan, aligning with its work on Tackling Systematic and Structural Discrimination and racism and Communities and Power, so that we prioritise what really matters to our communities and residents.

This part of MMF aims to understand and address challenges that prevent those less-heard to fully participate in their communities and to bring 'equity' – equality of outcome – through targeting and scaling up resources in proportion to the different needs of communities. The Making Manchester Fairer Plan and the Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy will work alongside each other to drive forward these ambitions.

We want to make sure that Manchester residents feel confident in building relationships in their local area and across the city, feel heard and can influence what we do as a Council, as well as feeling that they belong in Manchester.

Equalities

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are a crucial priority for Manchester City Council. As a city, we are committed to ensuring we understand equalities and work in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a Council we must demonstrate the work we do for EDI and this has been captured and outlined in the Public Sector Equality report. Furthermore, EDI has several workstreams to tackle health inequalities, structural and systematic racism and workforce equality. In addition, MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL has the following EDI objectives: knowing Manchester better, improving life chances and celebrating diversity. These objectives are met through several workstreams including; scrutiny reports, specialist advice to public services, co-ordinating events that help celebrate residents' protected characteristics and equality impact assessments. while there is further work to be done to tackle the inequalities mentioned above, the key objectives are being met and will continue to be met. Manchester wants to remain one of the most diverse cities in the UK and through the above work we can achieve this.

Public Sector Equality Duty report | Manchester City Council

Child Friendly City

Manchester has an ambition to be a place where the Council and its partners have committed to advance children's rights and have worked with UNICEF UK to put them into practice. Manchester will be a place that has demonstrated how more children feel safe, heard and cared for, and are able to flourish as a result. This will be a whole-city approach, where we can empower communities to contribute towards making their neighbourhood, and Manchester, a better place for all.

To become a Child Friendly city, we want young people to feel a sense of belonging regardless of their background, culture, or ability and to have the same opportunities to grow, learn, explore and have fun, protected from discrimination. We also want young people's voices to drive everything we do – young people's futures are our priority and the Building Stronger Communities Together strategy focusing on relationships, participation and belonging builds on the work that we need to do in Manchester to achieve our ambition to become a Child Friendly city. This has been developed in line with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and [UNICEF UK's Child Friendly Cities and Communities programme](), which will work with Manchester to put children's rights into practice.

"If you give young people the tools for us to succeed now, then rest assured, the city will be in safe hands with the next generation. Let's make Manchester the best city we can for everyone living in it."

Virginia Collins
Manchester member of youth parliament

Youth and Play

Manchester has a fantastic range of youth, sports, leisure, arts, cultural and learning opportunities. These are, and always will be, part of the city's fabric and cultural identity, and are hugely important in increasing the quality of life for so many and in building social cohesion and strengthening relationships. Through these opportunities we must ensure that all young people can access our high-quality facilities, including our sport venues, art galleries, theatres, music venues and libraries.

Manchester Youth Council are part of the democratic voice of young people, and are the elected representatives of young people aged 11–17 in Manchester. The young people represent our amazing city and are passionate about their heritage and want young people to celebrate their culture and diversity. We believe our strengths lie within our communities and networks, and that by working together we can make Manchester the very best city for young people to have a future in.

We work with young people to find out the issues important to them and help them develop the skills for life to empower them to make a change. The young people use their voice to influence and make positive changes for their future, creating opportunities for them to make a difference and shape Manchester. We want to ensure that our future is a positive one, creating opportunities for young people to have their say and be heard, shaping our city into a place where they want to grow, work and enjoy life.

Manchester places great importance and emphasis on developing and growing an enriched youth offer outside of formal education: one that offers place, space and time for young people to have access to a variety of services and activities. The offer is underpinned by good-quality working practices and youth and play facilities for young people in both universal and targeted settings. These contribute powerfully to the development of young people's personal, social and economic development.

Young people will contribute to, and benefit from, supportive and dynamic neighbourhoods with access to a wide range of youth, leisure, cultural and recreational opportunities. Their voice and citizenship will continue to be placed at the heart of the city's current and future identity, recognising that our young people are the future of Manchester, economically, socially and culturally. They will come to define our city, and its relationship with the global communities.

Intergenerational practice contributes to giving people of all ages improved intergenerational relationships, it helps to increase trust and respect between generations and contributes to improving community cohesion and reducing isolation and loneliness. Across Manchester there are specific examples of projects and approaches that have increased meaningful interactions between people from different ages and backgrounds. These have brought about shared benefits of a vibrant, more cohesive community, and supporting young people's educational and skill development. These include mentoring programmes, intergenerational leisure activities, and focussed project work. Young and older people have increased their understanding of the other generation, improving social capital.

Rights to Respecting Schools Award

The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) puts the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of a school's ethos and curriculum, not just by teaching about children's rights, but also by modelling and promoting rights respecting relationships and behaviours both within the school and outside in the wider community. Manchester City Council recognises the positive and lasting impact of involvement in the RRSA. We have covered the costs of training for all Manchester schools wishing to participate in the award for several years and for 2022/23 and 2023/24 we are funding the full costs of accreditation from Bronze up to Gold.

The Rights Respecting Schools Award aligns closely with the Building Stronger Communities Strategy, promoting six key principles of equality, dignity, mutual respect, non-discrimination, education and participation, and placing them at the centre of school practice. Children within these schools learn about rights - that these are universal and should be protected and upheld regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs or cultural background – empowering them to look out for one another and to speak out when their rights or the rights of others are being breached. It also supports work around social cohesion and building better relationships, as these positive practices and understandings spread into the wider community through school communications, engagement activities, and through the words and actions of the young people themselves.

In addition to work with schools, Manchester City Council has also supported a number of supplementary schools (which work with children at evenings and weekends) to participate. There are over 150 supplementary schools in the city which are run by volunteers from the diverse range of BAME communities and focus on heritage language and culture, religious teaching and raising attainment.

Age Friendly Manchester Ageing Strategy

We want Manchester to be a place in which people in mid and later life are economically, physically, and socially active and where they are happier, safe, informed, influential, independent, and respected. The world has changed dramatically since the last Age Friendly Strategy was written, with the Covid-19 pandemic followed by a cost-of-living crisis. We need to better understand and respond to the needs, hopes and aspirations of our over 50s and older people right now and in the coming years.

Working with the Age Friendly Manchester (AFM) Older People's Board and AFM Assembly we know that older people in Manchester are still very focused on recovering from the pandemic, and the struggles faced by some to get out and about. Therefore, the refreshed strategy will provide some practical focus to further our collective ambition for more of parts of Manchester to be age friendly over the years to come.

The strategy has four priorities:

1. **Being Heard and Age Equality** – making sure the voice of people aged over 50 is heard and understood.

2. Creating **Age Friendly Neighbourhoods where we can all Age in Place** – by building on what is already good and creating a more equal spread of opportunities in each neighbourhood.

3. **Age Friendly Services that support us to Age Well** – by developing a stronger equalities approach in commissioning, service redesign and delivery. Adopting a prevention approach that supports a greater focus on reconditioning.

4. **Age Friendly Work, Skills and Money** – seeing more age friendly employers, and increasing the numbers of people claiming the benefits they are entitled to (e.g.) pension credit, and a skills offer).

The Age Friendly Manchester Ageing Strategy will closely align with the priorities set out in the Building Stronger Together Strategy. Together, both strategies will help to tackle social isolation and develop ways for us all to thrive and continue to participate as we grow older.

Digital Inclusion

Almost every aspect of everyday life is impacted by digital today – work, school, health, community, and more. Digital is fundamental to residents' lives, so supporting digital inclusion is necessary for everyone to benefit. We want everyone in Manchester to thrive in a digital world as confident online users who can use the internet to do the things that might make their lives better.

The pandemic shone a spotlight on the issues of loneliness and social isolation in our society. One of the few positive impacts was the rise of people using digital to communicate; and the benefits of these online communities mean that people from diverse backgrounds, who otherwise might not have socialised together, can find a common space. However, not everyone has access.

As more and more of our life takes place online, from chatting with friends and neighbours on social media, consuming culture, checking local events, to reading local and national news, for those offline the social isolation is exacerbated. We recognise that digital exclusion is social exclusion.

However, the increase in digital communication can increase the risk of polarisation, as hate speech and fake news lead to online conflicts that spill over into the real world. Therefore, it is vital that digital inclusion work also promotes online safety and media literacy.

The Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy action plan will be mindful of how digital exclusion can affect members of our communities, and seek to ameliorate it, as well as considering the needs of those who prefer to participate online only. By advocating for digital inclusion, we will support people to become confident and safe online users, therefore opening up opportunities to build relationships and participate in activities in our communities.

Tackling Hateful Extremism

Manchester is a diverse, multi racial and multi faith city. It is open and welcoming. However, we know, as in other cities across the country, some people feel less of a sense of belonging and are leading isolated lives, separated from the mainstream. This lack of integration can limit educational achievement, and access to employment, particularly for women and young people. Where opportunities are limited, division between people of different backgrounds can grow and be exploited by groups or individuals, who seek to stoke divisions and fuel hatred. Such isolated communities will be less resilient to the threat posed by hateful extremism.

Hateful extremism is focused on behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, or persistent hatred. It can equivocate about, and make the moral case for, violence; and it can draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist beliefs directed at an outgroup who are perceived as a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of an ingroup. Such behaviours can cause, or are likely to cause, harm to individuals, communities or wider society.

The city's work on tackling hateful extremism, preventing radicalisation, supporting those most vulnerable and building community resilience is key to identifying and co- designing activities and solutions with communities. The city's RADEQUAL campaign is a key example of a campaign specifically designed by communities for communities aimed at tackling hateful extremism. This campaign has been successful in building partnerships with community organisations, raising community awareness around the risks associated with hateful extremism and co-designing solutions that are led by communities to build resilience and safeguard the most vulnerable. All of this work will contribute towards building the right conditions and environment for communities to come together to build positive relationships and stronger, more united and resilient communities by preventing people from engaging in hateful extremism.

Hate Crime

The Greater Manchester Hate Crime plan 2020–23, recognises the importance of early intervention and its key priorities are focused on:

– Keeping people safe

– Reducing harm and offending

– Strengthening communities and places.

To do this, Manchester holds two hate crime awareness weeks per year – Greater Manchester in February and the national awareness day October. We have 40 plus Third-Party Reporting Centres (TPRCs), which are safe spaces for people to report a hate incident/crime. Other Voluntary, Community, Faith and Community Sector (VCFCS) groups hold awareness events for communities of different backgrounds to come together, understand their rights, learn how to report hate crimes/incidents and to find support. They also promote the message of peace and unity.

The TPRCs attend training and promoting the offer in their buildings and online. Manchester works closely with key partners to campaign, strategize and mobilise the plan, ensuring that when hate happens, victims have a clear pathway of justice and support. However, tackling hate 'upstream' is key to preventing hate incidents and crimes from taking place. Therefore, it is paramount for Manchester to work closely with our communities to monitor tensions and intervene at an early stage by completing direct work with the affected communities, with a multiagency approach exploring ways to challenging hate. Taking positive action with the offender is one way of preventing further offending behaviour, offering a community remedy where the victim has some say in the punitive action and restorative justice. Often, early intervention produces the most positive outcome. Hate crime is underreported, particularly among groups and we need to continue to work with communities to understand why and work towards rectifying this.

Page 44
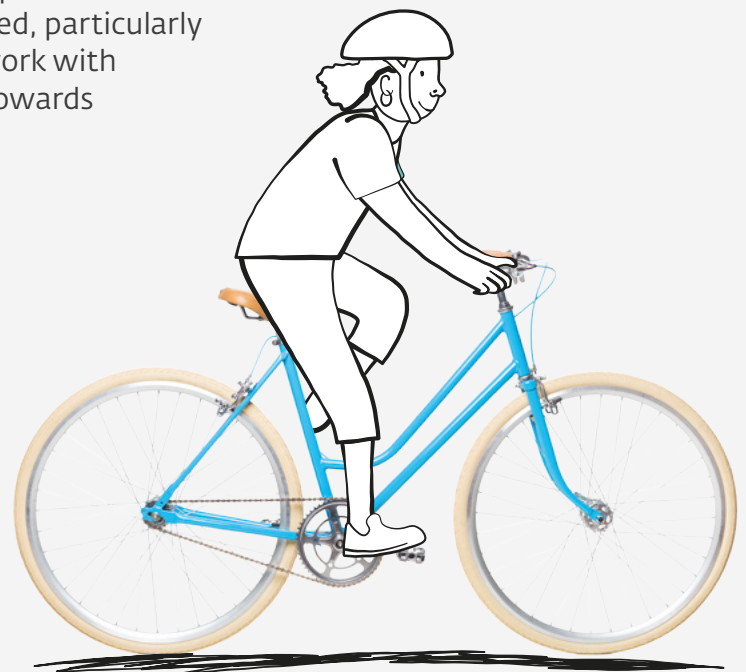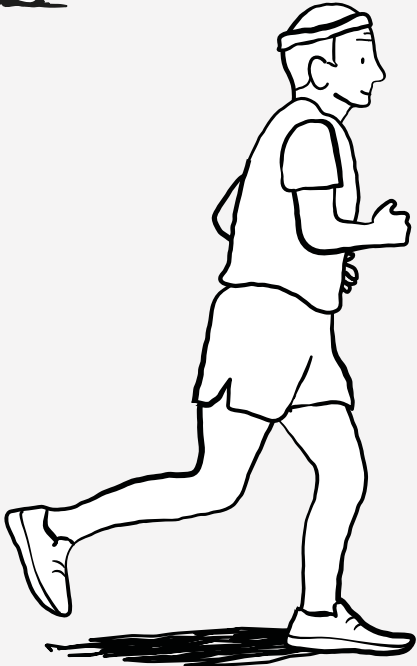
Establishing our priorities

Throughout March to June 2022, we consulted with Manchester's communities on matters relating to integration and cohesion, to understand the things that help us to connect and get along with one another. We know that Manchester is a diverse city, so to capture views we ran a 12-week online consultation. This was promoted through our social media channels, teams working in the neighbourhoods and our partners across the public, voluntary and community sectors so that we could reach as many people as possible.

Alongside the online survey, we also wanted to have conversations and hear from communities about their experiences: what they would like to see more of and some of the issues they felt prevented them, or acted as a barrier to building relationships where they live. We did this through a series of 23 focus groups with communities from across Manchester.

In total, 441 people responded to our online consultation, representing all 32 wards within the city.

The demographic of respondents compared with the Manchester Population is shown in the table below:

Ethnicity	% of Respondents	Manchester Population
Asian/Asian British	9.30%	20.86%
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	9.98%	11.94%
Middle Eastern and Central/ Western Asian British	1.59%	No data available
Mixed/ Multiple Ethnic Groups	3.63%	5.26%
Other	2.04%	5.12%
White/ White British	67.80%	56.82%
Not disclosed	5.67%	NA

Gender	% of Respondents	Manchester Population
Female	57.4%	50.3%
Male	36.5%	49.7%

Gender Identity	% of Respondents	Manchester Population
Same as registered at birth	NA	91.7%
Different from registered at birth but not specified	NA	0.5%
Non-Binary	0.45%	0.2%
Prefer not to say	5.44%	7.3%
Transgender	0.22%	0.4%

Age	% of Respondents	Manchester Population
Under 18	14.1%	23%
18–25	3.2%	17%
26–39	15.6%	24%
40–49	21.1%	12%
50–64	29.3%	14%
65+	12.2%	9%
Prefer not to say	4.5%	

As well as the online consultation, 23 focus groups were held with communities and local partners, as we wanted to hear the stories behind the issues and views shared though the online survey.

We also wanted to learn from best practice across the country, so we consulted Bradford City Council and the Greater London Authority to understand their approach to building community cohesion. We also sought advice and support from the national Belong Network.

The online survey asked Manchester residents about the following things:

– How well they thought people from different backgrounds got on together in their local area

– What things were important in making it easier for communities to get along

– Where people come together in their community

– What activities bring people together

– If there were any challenges that prevented people from getting on with one another

– How relationships could be strengthened in their community

– What things build a sense of pride and belonging in communities.

The key findings – what you told us

Online Survey

The findings of the online survey identified the following:

When asked how well people from different backgrounds got on together in their local area, you told us:

45% of respondents felt people from different backgrounds in their area got on well or extremely well together.

37% of respondents felt people from different backgrounds in their area neither got on well nor got on poorly.

Respondents aged **over 50 and under 18 years old** were more likely to say people from different backgrounds in their area got on well together, compared with people aged 19-49.

Respondents from **Asian or Asian British backgrounds** were most likely to say people from different backgrounds in their area did not get on well.

When asked to rate how important different factors are in making it easier for communities to get along, you told us:

People living in a community where they **feel safe, and that is doing well** scored highest.

Closely followed by people **being able to trust their local services** such as the Council, police, health providers, schools etc to be fair and open.

When asked what things are important to you and your family? you told us:

Respect: between all, whatever age, faith, sexual orientation, gender or ethnicity scored highest.

Followed by **tackling hate and intolerance:** cutting out the things that make us fear or get angry with one another.
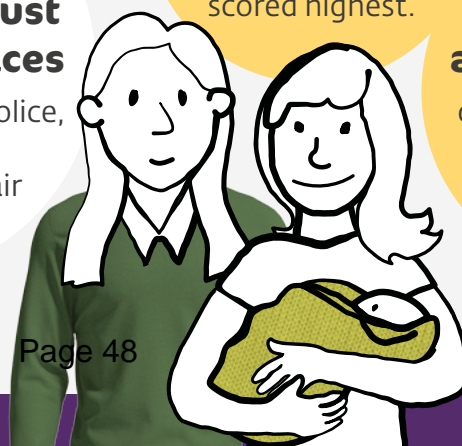
When asked if there are other things that help people get on well together, you told us:

20.4%
of respondents felt Council responsibility was important for: holding landlords to standards, having more youth workers, supporting educational groups, treating everyone equally, influencing media, tackling antisocial behaviour, dealing with issues in areas with high student populations, listening more and investing more into communities.

37.8%
said diversity helps people get on well, eg mixing between faiths, ethnicities and ages.

25.5%
of respondents felt community pride and mutual respect are important.

31.6%
of respondents felt education, communication, sharing community information and cultural understanding are important.

"[Education] from a young age about respect and it being modelled positively in society."

"The make up of our public services should reflect our communities [as] this encourages community involvement, trust and hopefully aspiration."

"Having a range of community development activities and workers to support people to get involved and feel they belong."

"Opportunities for people to socialise together, in a safe place and learn about each other's cultures while enriching their own lives."

When asked what happens in these spaces? you told us:

Litter picking, fitness classes, voluntary groups, parent and toddler groups, gardening groups, sporting activities and children's activities.

When asked where communities come together in your local area, you told us:

Parks and open spaces, schools, places of worship and online.

Page 49

When asked if there are any challenges that impact getting on with others, you told us:

Antisocial behaviour, the cost of living, language barriers, fly tipping, misuse of public spaces and feeling unsafe.

"Not knowing what opportunities to socialise are."

"Opportunities for people to socialise together, in a safe place and learn about each other's cultures while enriching their own lives."

"There should be initiatives like street parties, volunteering, bringing people together".

When asked how relationships could be improved in your community, you told us:

You want **more community events.**

You could reach out to **get to know your neighbours more.**

You could **act in your neighbourhood,** such as by joining local clean ups and volunteering in your community.

When asked what things help to build a sense of pride and belonging to Manchester? You told us:

Friendships are the most important thing.

The city's diverse communities, family, looking after the environment where you live and quality of life.

The Focus Groups

During May to July 2022, we delivered 23 focus groups, attracting 241 people from voluntary sector organisations, community groups, residents, and staff groups. To make sure we heard the voices of different communities within Manchester we engaged with people from all different backgrounds, ages and faiths, across different geographical areas.

The sessions took place either face to face or online, and lasted around 90 minutes, with a facilitator recording feedback. Participants were encouraged to speak freely and be open and honest in the discussions.

The focus groups asked participants to think about the following three questions:

What does a good neighbourhood, where people get on well together, look and feel like? You told us the key ingredients are:

– Communities coming together at events, activities and through volunteering

– Safe neighbourhoods, where people feel confident in letting their children play out

– Clean neighbourhoods, where people take a sense of pride in where they live, and fly tipping and litter are dealt with quickly

– Local parks and green spaces that are open to all

– Friendly people and neighbours who look out for one another

– Respecting one another's beliefs.

What things affect how good or nice a neighbourhood is, and how well people get on together? You told us:

– Feeling unsafe, crime, and drug use in communities

– Too few youth activities or groups in your area

– When people don't respect the environment, by fly-tipping and littering

– Poor housing standards, particularly in the private rented sector

– Racism and Islamophobia

– Lack of trust in public services.

What can you and others in your community do to help strengthen how well you get on with one another, and how you might come together to contribute towards improving your community? You told us:

– You want to get to know and help your neighbours more.

– You want to volunteer your time and understand where you can find out about volunteering opportunities.

– You want to get involved in community events and celebrations.

– You want to hold more inter-faith events, celebrating different cultures together.

We also found that some communities in Manchester had specific aspirations or challenges within their community.

Young people and youth groups told us that clean, green spaces and parks where young people can come together and feel safe, free from antisocial behaviour and intimidation, are particularly important. Young people felt there are not enough youth activities, groups or spaces in their areas, and they didn't know how to find out about things they could get involved in in their area.

"Our youth clubs are so good because they give us safe spaces when we can't be outside."

"We see detached youth workers on the streets who help us feel safe, it's nice for us to speak with adults who we know and to catch up with them."

"Every Muslim is not an extremist."

Mosques and BAME groups told us that stigma, racism, Islamophobia and hate crime is experienced within Muslim communities in Manchester. Participants felt more connections should be built between different faith groups and the community. Similarly, concerns with police stop and search and institutional racism were also highlighted.

"She's not just a Muslim women, there is more to her identity."

South Asian women told us that there should be more activities for men from South Asian backgrounds to get involved in and support conversations around wellbeing and mental health. Participants felt there should be more education in schools around different faiths and backgrounds, to encourage mutual respect and understanding. Participants wanted to know how they could influence local services and have their say on local issues.

"People who don't know you make a judgement on what you are wearing."

Older people told us that feeling safe and included, both socially and digitally, was important. Participants wanted more spaces where people can get together and build relationships, and local services that encourage people to meet up. Likewise, being understanding, accepting and welcoming of people from all backgrounds to encourage equality and inclusivity when designing events.

"Be able to trust and be heard."

LGBTQ+ communities told us that welcoming, inclusive spaces for everyone in the community to come together were important. They also told us that understanding and celebrating different cultures to highlight the things we have in common and welcoming people from all backgrounds was also important.

"Tolerance and understanding, and respecting each other's differences, as well as each other's similarities."

Listening to the Experts

Back in 2020, we launched the Listening to the Experts report, which aimed to get beyond the headlines to hear what young people in Manchester want and need to stay safe from violent crime and their views on current policy responses.

Working with excellent youth sector partners across the city, we promised the young people involved we'd be true to what they told us. We're glad they didn't pull their punches about what isn't working, as well as what they want more of. The two central themes of the report were:

– Young people feel that too much attention goes on surface-level issues that don't tackle deeper issues, such as racism, a lack of respect for young people and a lack of good-quality jobs.

– Young people in Manchester do not feel listened to by many professionals working in this space.

A follow-up report by RECLAIM and Collective Discovery, Bridging the Empathy Gap explores how to bridge the gap between professionals and young people and the obstacles to strengthening listening practice and empathy.

Page 54

Our priorities for the next three years

From listening to the views of residents, we recognise that the priorities for the next 12 months need to focus on people and how we co-design with our partners and communities activities and opportunities that build capacity and deliver stronger communities.

Relationships

Participation

Belonging
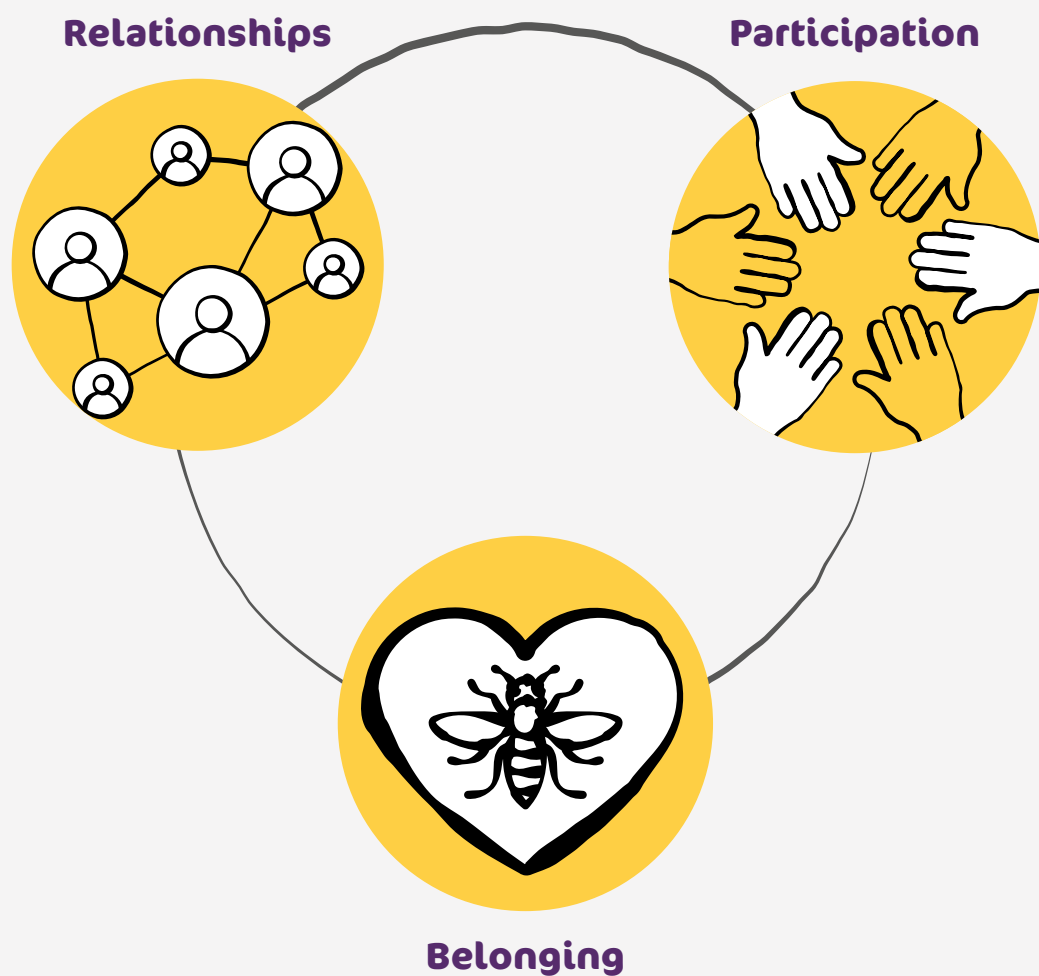
Relationships

A little trust goes a long way. That's why relationships and trust go hand in hand with one another. Relationships are not just about mixing with people who are like us and those we would normally mix with. They are also and importantly about speaking with our neighbours and people who are from different backgrounds.

Following through on commitments – doing what you say you are going to do, being clear, having frequent communications with communities and identifying opportunities to come together and problem-solve – leads to greater trust between communities and organisations and/or systems, so that no matter what might go wrong, there is a trust that organisations will act in the best interest of communities.

– Choosing to get to know others and being confident and empowered to reach out to get to know our neighbours more

– Talking and listening – reflecting and learning

– Showing respect for one another

– Tackling hate and intolerance by coming together, educating one another and promoting acceptance – addressing bias, hate and intolerance

– Building trust in local services such as the Council, police, health providers, housing, schools and others to be fair and open

– Using social media.

Participation

Participation is about bringing people together to get involved in meaningful activities, for a shared purpose and to engage in decisions about things that affect their lives. Greater participation and engagement with others builds trust between and within communities and between communities and institutions. The more trust people feel in others and in the institutions that serve them the more likely they are to get involved. Participation can lead to greater trust – which can lead to greater participation. It is about enabling and supporting communities and services to come together; valuing the importance of working together to make a difference and taking ownership of the things that matter most to us where we live.

- Bringing people together through community events and activities

- Identifying and creating opportunities for people to get involved to improve and influence things happening in their neighbourhood and the city

- Bringing different groups and communities together to improve their local area

- Taking ownership and showing up to get things done

- Communicating about what is going on and promoting opportunities for people to get involved.

Belonging

Relationships, trust and participation help to bond and bridge within and between communities and build social capital. This in turn helps to create a sense of belonging for communities.

Being part of something bigger than just yourself provides a sense of belonging and purpose along with a feeling of acceptance and support that can help avert loneliness and help to make you feel more connected to those around you.

Belonging is fundamental to our sense of happiness and wellbeing. A sense of belonging means that we have respect for the traditions, cultures and diverse communities of a particular place while at the same time being willing to invest and contribute a shared vision of what that place can become.

Belonging in Manchester is about being included, respected, and welcomed. It is a sense of feeling valued and accepted whatever your background.

- Choosing to make an effort to engage with others

- Being welcoming of others

- Creating inclusive and shared places for people to come together

- Developing a shared sense of purpose

- Sharing experiences

- Having a sense of pride in our neighbourhood – keeping it clean and tidy

- Celebrating the city's diverse communities and what we have in common.

Page 58

Our behaviours

To bring the contents of this strategy alive, we all need to play our part, and the way we think and behave towards others is a good starting point.

The way we live and how we view and interact with others, especially those we do not know or those who do not look like us or think the same things we do, is a good starting point. So, to help us to do this, we have used your feedback and come up with some basic behaviours and principles:

1. Being welcoming to others

2. Being open to, and comfortable with, making new connections and relationships

3. Respecting our differences and valuing what we have in common

4. Being willing to listen to others' views, including those that are not the same as our own

5. Embracing all, irrespective of age, race, gender, religion or belief, disability, or sexual orientation

6. Speaking up against discrimination and intolerance and promoting inclusion for all

7. Fostering pride and belonging

8. Cultivating a reputation for showing up and getting things done

9. Taking ownership by participating, helping others and getting together to bring positive changes in Manchester.

Page 60

What we are going to do

We recognise that this is a new strategy and that social cohesion, relationships within and between communities, trust, how we interact with one another and building a sense of belonging to where we live do not happen or change overnight. Understanding social cohesion can be complex and nuanced – not one neighbourhood or community is the same.

Therefore, over the next 12 months, we will identify and work in small pilot areas of the city to:

1. Build our understanding about the impact of change in neighbourhoods and on our communities

2. Test ways of working and co-designing activities with communities

3. Identify what is successful in bringing people together and getting them involved in local activities

4. Consider how we celebrate what everyone has in common in an inclusive way and respect difference

We will identify three small areas in north, central and south Manchester to achieve this. An action plan setting out a range of activities that will focus on 'bridging' and 'bonding' activities to build relationships and trust, increasing participation and a sense of belonging, will be agreed for these three localities. These action plans will be available on the Council's website.

Measuring the impact and changes achieved by these activities will be important and the next section provides further details.

Page 62

Measuring our impact

Understanding and measuring levels of social cohesion is not easy and there is no national framework for doing this. Therefore, we will use the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA) "Policing and Community Safety Survey", which includes the qualitative measures set out below, to measure overall social cohesion in Manchester. This is in addition to each pilot area also defining its own measures, activities and outcomes which reflect the three priorities of Relationships, Participation and Belonging in this "Building Stronger Communities Together" strategy.

Support for designing a set of more detailed indicators of social cohesion will be sought from the Belong Network, drawing on their work to develop a national framework of measurement indicators and recent research and evidence gathering they have been carrying out to support place-based approaches to measuring social cohesion.

GMCA survey measures

- How safe do you feel in your local area
- How safe do you currently feel when out and about anywhere in your district, away from your local area?
- My area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (Relationships)
- My local area is a place where people look out for one another
- I feel a strong sense of belonging to my local area (Belonging)
- I have a say in what happens in my local area (Participation)
- I am proud of my local area.

Page 64

Our governance and accountability

The Building Stronger Communities Together Strategy will sit under the overarching governance structures of Making Manchester Fairer.

The strategy will form part of the Communities and Power workstream of Making Manchester Fairer, reporting into the quarterly Communities and Power Steering Group.

The delivery of the strategy and its action plan will be led by those named in the action plan. This is a cross-cutting strategy that will work across Council services and neighbourhoods.

The Communities and Power Steering Group will hold the strategy to account, ensuring progress is made against the projects and activities outlined in the action plan.

The Making Manchester Fairer Framework

This strategy supports the Communities and Power theme.

Our Manchester – links to other strategies

There are several overarching strategies and plans that sit underneath the Our Manchester Strategy and social cohesion is foundational to achieving the broader set of outcomes and therefore the principles set out in this strategy and its three priority themes: Relationships, Participation and Belonging.

These include the following strategies, and work is taking place with the delivery leads for each strategy to make sure that the broader factors and prerequisites that determine the conditions for building stronger and cohesive communities are included in the appropriate plans for delivery:

– [Community Safety Strategy](#)

– [Manchester Housing Strategy Policies and strategies](#)

– [Making Manchester Fairer Action Plan Making Manchester Fairer](#)

– [Making Manchester Fairer Anti-Poverty Strategy](#)

– [Work and Skills Strategy](#)

– [Digital Strategy Manchester Digital Strategy 2021–2026](#)

– [Children and Young People's Plan Children and young people's plan](#)

– [Age Friendly Strategy Manchester: A Great Place to Grow Older 2017–2020](#)

– Trauma Informed Strategy – currently being refreshed.
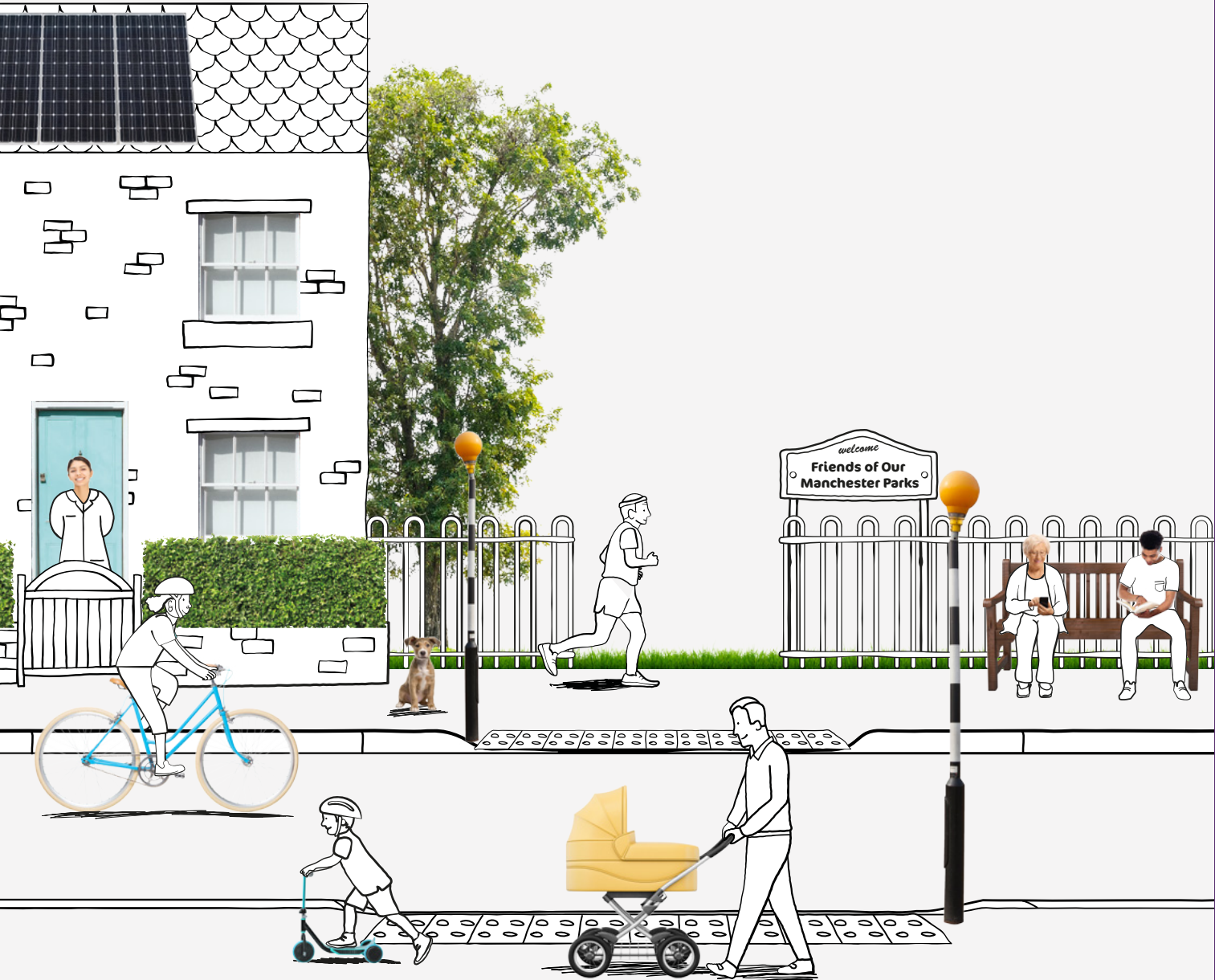
welcome
**Friends of Our
Manchester Parks**

Building Stronger Communities Together

Our strategy 2023-2026

When people come together in Manchester, good things happen

Our Manchester Community Hub

Friends of Our Manchester Parks

welcome

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Our Manchester

Manchester celebrates and understands the importance of relationships between individuals, families, friends, neighbours and our diverse communities. At a time when the world around us can feel divided and disconnected, Manchester wants more than ever to strengthen its communities and social relationships.

Manchester people – whether they're newly arrived, long-established or born-and-bred – have the biggest mix of 'identities' found in any UK city outside the capital. All 90 ethnic groups on the last census have a home here. We're proud of that, but every one of those diverse individuals shares another identity: being a Mancunian.

It's an identity based on what we have in common and how we contribute to Manchester. We think this identity helps us to respect ourselves, our neighbours and neighbourhoods, and our communities. We also think this brings all kinds of benefits we want in our city.

However, we can't take those good things for granted, as national and international challenges of the 2020s – from the COVID-19 upheaval to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis – have shown.

Levels of social cohesion vary in different places. Put simply, it is about how well people from different backgrounds meet, mix and get along together. It also relates to levels of trust between individuals, different groups and communities, as well as the institutions and services that serve them.
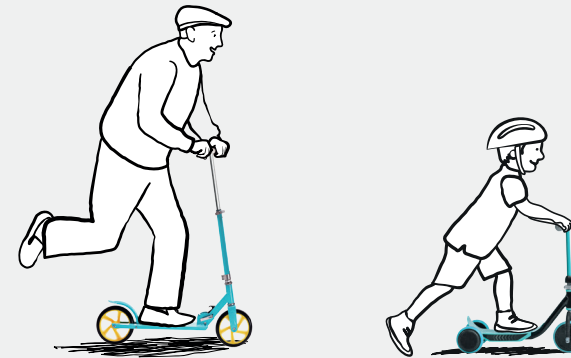
The work of social cohesion is about developing neighbourhoods, workplaces, institutions and social spaces where difference is welcomed and celebrated, and where empathy and curiosity about people 'not like me' are encouraged and embedded. When this happens, we can move beyond narratives of 'us' and 'them' towards ideas of kindness, trust, good relations between different groups and communities, and a sense of belonging for all.

Building Stronger Communities Together reflects the things that people told us were important to them and sets out how we plan to strengthen and share the great things that come out of Manchester's shared identity – things that boost communities, community relations and social relationships, and that come into play when things become difficult.

We think the best ways to build stronger communities in the city are through the ideas, actions and activities that are generated, designed and delivered locally. These are not just the responsibility of the Council and its partners in voluntary, faith and community organisations. They are also the responsibility of each of us – in school and college, at work, in business, in communities and in neighbourhoods – anywhere and everywhere.

Based on what matters

To create this plan and decide what to do next, we've used a wide set of consultations, surveys, conversations and research methods with a broad range of individuals and organisations.

Based on that, and led by what matters most to local people, we've started to develop a first set of pilot activities and actions, which will be delivered in neighbourhoods within the north, south and central parts of our city.

They will be based on and encourage:

– **Relationships** that help us to speak to our neighbours and people from different backgrounds

– **Taking part** in things and decisions that matter to us and our area

– Building a sense of **belonging and pride**.

The pilot activities will be designed to strengthen connections between and within communities in these three places. As part of this we will:

– Build an understanding of the impact of change in these neighbourhoods and communities

– Test different ways to work, and design activities with these communities

– Consider how to celebrate what everyone has in common in ways that respect difference and include everyone

– See, learn and share what works.

We will measure how much this builds relationships and trust, how it gets people involved, and how it boosts people's sense of belonging, so we can adapt and spread what works to other areas.

An action plan setting out a range of activities that will focus on 'bridging' and 'bonding' activities to build relationships and trust, increasing participation and a sense of belonging, will be agreed for these pilot localities. These action plans will be available on the Council's website.

Priorities of the pilot

Our consultation and research set priorities for action. The planned work with each community will determine local ways of putting these priorities into action – and what they mean locally:

Relationships

Participation

Belonging
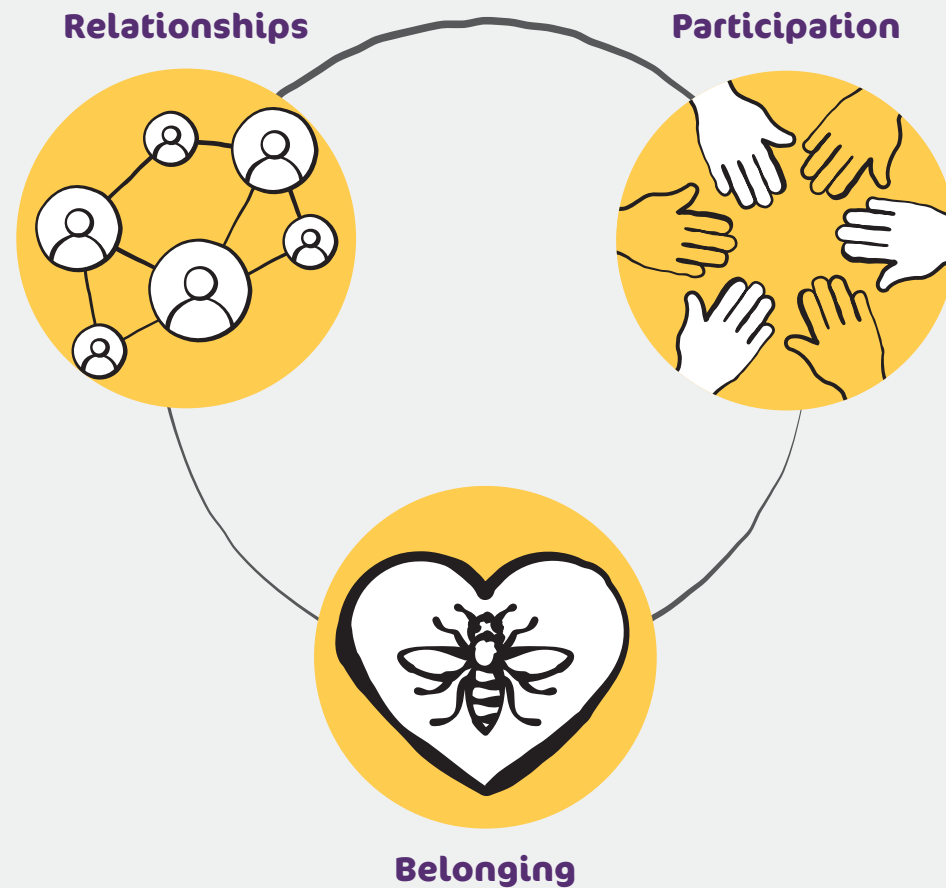
Relationships

Personally: speaking with our neighbours and people who are from different backgrounds. Learning to trust and be trusted.

For organisations: developing trust by providing equity in public services. Gaining trust by doing what we promise, giving lots of clear communication, and creating ways to come together and problem-solve.

Because: a little trust goes a long way; so no matter what might go wrong, communities trust organisations to do the right thing.

How:

– Choose to get to know others; be confident to reach out to neighbours

– Talk, listen, think and learn with each other

– Show respect

– Tackle hate, intolerance and bias together – educate and accept one other

– Build trust in local services to be fair and open.

Participation

Personally: taking ownership of what matters to us where we live. Taking part.

For organisations: bringing people together for shared aims that affect their lives. Support to act.

Because: working together has value; participation builds trust, and the more we trust one another and our services, the more involved we get.

How:

- Through community events and activities
- Create ways to get involved, improve and influence
- Bring groups together
- Turn up and get things done
- Communicate what's going on; promote involvement
- Ensure that our services are equitable.

Belonging

Personally: Contributing to the shared idea of what your area can become. Respecting traditions, cultures and communities around you.

For organisations: bonding communities together and building bridges between them.

Because: being part of something bigger gives you purpose, fights loneliness and connects you to those around you. Belonging is fundamental to happiness and wellbeing.

How:

- Make the effort to connect with and welcome others
- Create safe, shared places
- Develop a shared sense of purpose
- Share experiences
- Be proud and keep up to date with what's happening in your neighbourhood
- Celebrate diverse communities and what we have in common.

Start with your own behaviour

Our research and conversations revealed the **top ten things** Manchester people say you can do to show this city at its solid and united best – especially with someone who doesn't look like you, or think like you:

1. Welcome people who are different to you

2. Be open and happy, and make new connections

3. Respect your differences

4. Value what you have in common

5. Listen to the views of others

6. Embrace every age group, race, gender, religion or belief, disability and sexual orientation

7. Speak up against discrimination and intolerance, and promote inclusion

8. Foster pride and belonging

9. Gain a reputation for turning up and getting things done

10. Get involved together to bring positive changes to Manchester.

welcome
Friends of Our Manchester Parks

ESOL classes

Enrol NOW