

Building Stronger Communities Together

Our strategy 2023-2026

When people come together in Manchester, good things happen



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:

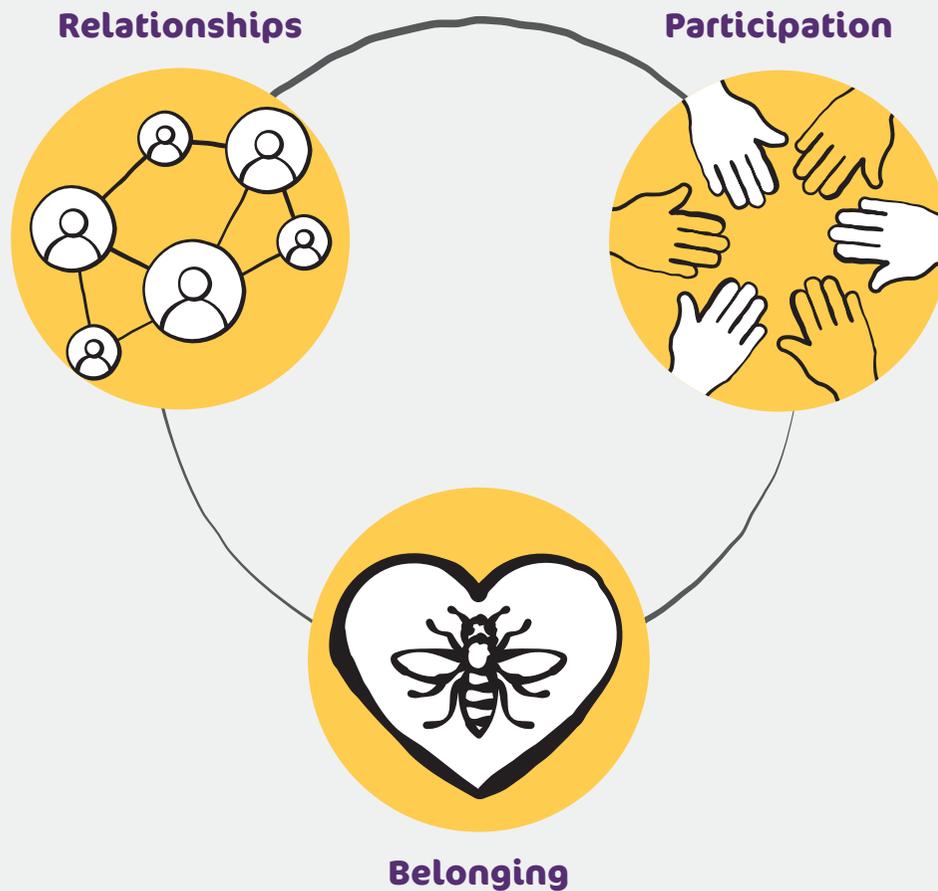
- Build an understanding of the impact of change in these neighbourhoods and communities
- Test different ways to work, and design activities with these communities
- Consider how to celebrate what everyone has in common in ways that respect difference and include everyone
- See, learn and share what 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

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.



