

Cheetham Park Involvement Project (CHIP) Event Report June 2012



North Manchester 5 Ways 2 Mental Health & Wellbeing Network

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1.0 Context

“Urban parks are priceless, environmental resources for health and wellbeing. Manchester does a great job, achieving Green flag status for many of its parks, equipping them with facilities and hosting exciting events. We feel even more can be achieved in these historical and yet farsighted endowments and the time is right to make the most of their genius. Neighbourhood services are tasked with supporting the development of Friends groups to improve local involvement in parks. The work we have been involved with demonstrates that successful community development and empowerment is the result of joint working (coproduction) and the right stimulus. Sometimes communities need reminders about what can be achieved. They may lack skills or confidence and need tapered support with higher levels of mentoring, advice and training at the outset. In the current climate, increased cooperation is fundamental to survival and creating the conditions for thriving communities. Bringing individuals together to imagine better times, develop a shared vision and begin to strive for that goal is essential”.

North Manchester, 5 Ways 2 Mental Health & Wellbeing Network Sept 2012

1.1 The North Manchester 5 Ways 2 Mental Health and Wellbeing Network

brings together people working in Nth Manchester with a remit to improve mental health and wellbeing for all local residents. Partners include: North GP Commissioning Care Group; Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust; Macc; Public Health Development Service; Manchester City Council, Directorate for Adults; Zest North Healthy Living Network; North Manchester Regeneration; MARIM and; Valuing Older People.

To find out more contact John Butler from Macc (see back page for contact details)

2.0 Background

The Cheetham Park event was part of a programme of local action research led by a network of organisations and people working or living in Cheetham hill.

The starting point was an “**Appreciative Inquiry**” organised by the 5 ways network and held at the Cheetwood Community Centre in March 2012, which developed and agreed the following:

- ❖ Vision
- ❖ Keys to Success
- ❖ Challenges and Action Points

2.1 Vision for 2016:

“Cheetham Hill will be the heartbeat of Manchester. People are powerfully working together; services co-operate. It is vibrant, and diverse, has a healthy and happy atmosphere, rich in heritage, this brings the best out of people to build a better future”.

2.2 Keys to Success:

Community Voice; Coming Together; Trust; Social Connections; People and Never Assume.

2.3 Challenges

The challenges identified were not necessarily things which the network could address directly but partners and other agencies could be better placed to help resolve them, if they were more aware.

- Cheetham is often, correctly, characterised as a diverse, vibrant community where everyone gets on well together. Discussion, however, also highlighted potential problems associated with ghettoisation of communities. In an area with deprivation indicators and a high (and growing) population density, this could lead to flash points in the future.
- Illegal drugs activity was cited as an employment choice for local young people and a reason why many people choose to leave the area, though there are some very positive localised initiatives which aim to address this.
- Cheetwood is an excellent venue with really helpful staff, but finding suitable accessible venues across the area is still a huge challenge.

2.4 Action Points:

- Building on the existing community spirit ,for instance by making connections between people who are organising community activities and supporting people to join in who might ,otherwise, be isolated.
- Developing of person-person and organisation-organisation timebanks to improve information sharing and availability of human and capital resources.
- Developing new methods to strengthen the voice and contribution of local residents in the planning and delivery of local services.
- Building The Network - as the single point of engagement which brings all the players together. This could strengthen collaboration, simplify local engagement, and maximise the impact of local resources and investments.
- Supporting aspirations and new ideas.

3.0 Local Community Research

The next part of the journey involved research into how local people viewed or perceived mental health and employment issues. This was carried out by a local voluntary group; **Cheetham Communities Together (CCT)** and sponsored by the **Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust (MMHSCT)** and **North Manchester Regeneration Team**.

A team of volunteers was trained and supported by the CCT Volunteer Coordinator and members of the **'5 Ways 2 Mental Health and Wellbeing Network (North)'** to interview local people about how they understood mental health and the links between mental health, employment and volunteering.

3.1 Key Messages:

What people think is important in maintaining good mental health:

“Company and good self worth”,
Healthy diet, exercise and good housing”
“Mental stimulation, friends and finding a hobby”.

Volunteering was cited as particularly important as it gave...

“A sense of belonging, company and inclusion- friendships;
accessing different perspectives and;
gave people less time to worry”.

What people see as causes of mental health problems:

“Stress - loneliness/isolation - pressure at work - no money - unhappy relationships - keeping your problems to yourself - not speaking to somebody”

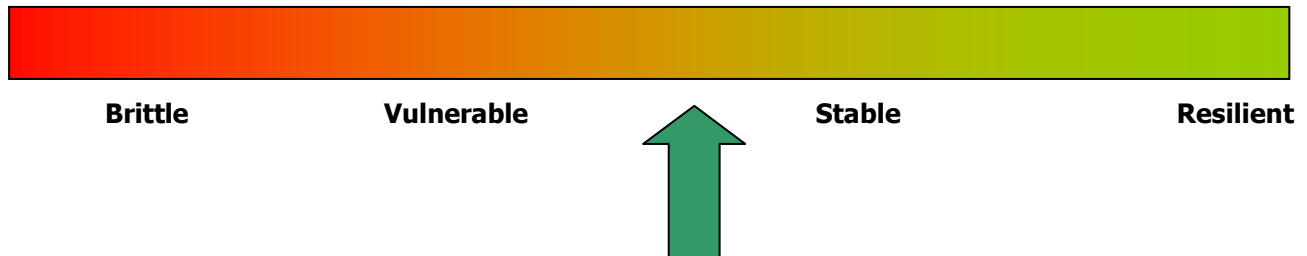
What people noted about services:

- Poor information about local services
- A lack of cohesion between services
- A lack of shared community space,
- Some tensions between different communities and;
- A need to strengthen the voice of the community and to increase awareness of the importance of involving local people in co-production of services and in promoting and protecting important local assets.

The findings were fed into another piece of local research carried out by the Centre for Local Economic Studies (CLES) and Urban Forum, designed to assess the strength of different networks between the “public, social and business sectors”, (community resilience) and make recommendations as to how these networks could be strengthened.

CLES found Cheetham to be:

Figure 1: Overall resilience assessment for Cheetham Hill



4.0 Action from research

CLES & Urban Forum led a workshop with local stakeholders to develop an action plan based on their recommendations, the findings from the “Appreciative Inquiry” and the C.C.T. research. One of the actions was for the [5 Ways 2 Mental Health and Wellbeing Network](#) to work with local residents and agencies to improve Cheetham Park (and surrounding areas).

4.1 Cheetham Park was chosen as it has been seen as being overlooked, underused and misused but nonetheless, fondly remembered by former and current residents as an important local asset. This kind of local asset takes on more importance in an area where the numbers of children are growing while resources for families and children, including school places, are shrinking. Network members agreed to carry out work focused at the park as a project with the following aims.

4.2 Aims

- Build on what people value about **Cheetham Park** and the surrounding area (an asset based approach) and;
- Strengthen the voice of local people to work as equal partners (co-production) with the social, public and business sectors.
- Connect up and maximise the value of all local resources public, social and commercial.
- Challenge the more traditional paternalistic/corporate approach where ‘professional experts’ know best and any challenge or criticism of the official view is frowned upon.

4.3 Process

A small subgroup met to consider how this work could be carried out and decided that a family event could begin to draw partners and residents together and highlight the asset and potential for the future. The Olympic torch relay presented an ideal opportunity to raise the profile of the event.

There was an implicit understanding that this event would be the start of the process, not an end in itself. Development of a "Friends Group" or similar would be a good outcome in terms of supporting more empowerment and an active role for local residents, partnership and local improvement (through increased ability to consult, involve, organise, fundraise and make choices).

*Organisations who contributed
their time and resources for the event*

#CCAN # CCT # **MACC** # **AWAAZ** #

ZEST # **GMP** New Testament Church # **Europa** #

Community & Cultural Services

MARIM # **Faith Network 4Manchester** #

Refugee Action # **Sure Start** # **2012 Olympic Event**

Organisers # **Sports Development Service** # **Temple**

School # **St Chad's School** # **Regeneration** # **Get Experienced**

The Fort Retail Centre # **Cravenwood Parents Group**

Neighbourhood Delivery Team #

Activities

Bouncy Castle, Face Painting, Crumpsall Brass Band, Crafts, Street Athletics, Question Quest, Olympic Torch Relay, Portrait Artist.

Stalls, Historical Photo's and articles, Cravenwood Parents Group, Zest, AWAAZ, New Testament Church, Get Experienced, CCAN, Private Girls School, Refugee Action, Europia, Free Bread, Cup cake seller



4.4 The Good News (Outcomes)

- The Olympic relay was a great draw
“..the historic moment was celebrated with an afternoon of fun activities at **Cheetham Hill park**... the loudest and biggest crowds gathered here to see the flame go by...”.(M.E.N. 25.06.12)
“It’s amazing to see so many people out on the streets and it’s such a good thing for the area.”(Lorraine Campbell 72 in M.E.N. 25.06.12)
- From eyewitness accounts over 1000 people attended, accurately reflecting the incredible local diversity.
- Some of the fastest sprint times were recorded at the Street Athletics races in the park and some previously unknown, youth talent was spotted! Eight went on to participate in Manchester wide heats; four of these took part in the national finals and; one under 20yr old won his race.
- The Facebook page set up by Rev. Gray gathered over 400 members and is helping stir old memories and bring new interest.
- There were over 25 partners from all sectors involved in the event – stimulating further appetite for joint working.
- Opportunities for new relationships and developments emerged and are being followed up.
- 12 people signed up with interest in a ‘Park Friends Group’ and the first meeting date was set in September to follow summer holidays and Ramadan.

4.5 Feedback and Suggestions from questionnaires

*“Loved the event – can we have more and especially bazaar style”
(Cravenwood school)*

- ✚ *More activities*
- ✚ *More exercise/ fitness classes and cycling*
- ✚ *Bike skateboard ramp / track*
- ✚ *Football Girls sports Games for kids*
- ✚ *Health walks - seasonal - combined with themed activity*
- ✚ *More benches*
- ✚ *Sports coaching*
- ✚ *Friends group*
- ✚ *Children's centre - more activities for holidays and weekends play areas*
- ✚ *Events including music*
- ✚ *CCTV (possibly disguised as an urban fox watch)*
- ✚ *More flowers /Community garden /vegetable growing*
- ✚ *Fenced off area for dog walking*



5.0 The Future

5.1 Lessons for Good Practice

Any projects or activities must be supported by a wider programme –
There is no point putting a one off walking group into an empty park.
There is a strong need to ensure regular, well publicised, reliable activity and possibly develop initiatives like ‘The Volunteer Park Guardian rota’ – especially in lieu of a warden or accessible building.

5.2 Project Ideas

- More benches might be funded through encouraging people/business to donate with special messages on and/or via an arts grant to provide unusual benches and resting areas.
- Arts funded projects may offer potential for development– especially if connecting local people via memories, plants or images from home countries etc.
- A stone circle with each local school contributing its own symbol or motto was suggested – which would engage all local children/ schools and families.
- Tiny herb garden – offering local people the chance to get free herbs (Donated from B&Q)– learn about growing and cooking, chopping off when they need them – as part of an exchange scheme

5.3 Key Messages

- The massive turn out, people’s comments at the event and on the Facebook page; show that **Cheetham Park** can be and has been: an important, well loved and well used community asset.
- The local community although having some indicators of deprivation and poor health and showing patchy engagement and empowerment has an untapped potential for dynamism
- Cheetham needs a supportive / co-production process, rather than the – *‘just wait and see what develops’* approach at one end of the scale to the – *‘do what we (services) think is right’* approach at the other.

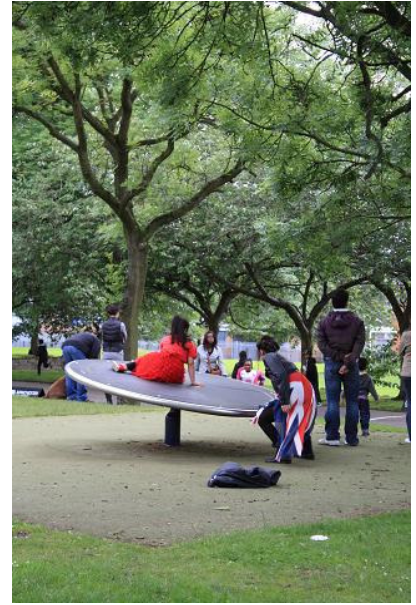


6.0 Next Steps

We held an initial meeting to establish a friends group, on 6 September 2012 at Manchester Fort offices, Cheetham Hill. We had leafleted the area and emailed all participants and those who had signed up at the event. The meeting was attended by six local residents, a Councillor and a parks representative. We also had a number of apologies. There were lots of positive stories shared about the area and some ambitious suggestions made about what active involvement in the park might be able to achieve.

It was agreed to hold a weekend 'community picnic' by the end of September to keep up momentum and encourage others to join in.





This report is now being circulated as widely as we possible as a way of informing people about the process and outcome and to get feedback. We welcome any questions, comments or proposals.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this event.

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