Spirit of Manchester 2026

Manchester Community Central
Voluntary, community and social enterprise sector

Spirit of Manchester Awards 2026

Thursday 1 October 2026, 7pm - 10:30pm

The Sheridan, Manchester



Spirit of Manchester 2026

For our 14th event, we hosted our biggest Spirit of Manchester Awards yet, with over 3000 people joining us to celebrate the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in the city of Manchester!

Our annual ceremony was hosted by Mike Wild (Chief Executive, Manchester Community Central), joined on stage by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Shaukat Ali) and Martin Preston (Deputy Chief Executive, Manchester Community Central).

Our awards, held at **The Sheridan** (Miles Platting), had the biggest in-person audience we've had so far with 365 individuals joining us on the night! The event was also livestreamed to thousands via YouTube allowing those unable to make it in the room to celebrate and participate in our interactive voting for each category.

As with previous Spirit of Manchester Awards, we ran the event as a hybrid celebration with the interactive option to vote online for the winner of each category (excluding outright winners - Climate Action, Social Economy Champion, Young Volunteer of the Year and Dr Sylvia Sham Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Sector). Using Slido to capture the winner for each category, we received over 3700 online votes for the shortlist.

Click here to watch the livestream

Click here to watch the films

Click or scan the QR code to access the 2026 brochure

Spaces of Hope and Connection - Table names

For this year's annual table name tradition, we named the 37 tables after local community spaces as part of the Live Well work taking place in Manchester.

Community spaces are at the heart of thriving communities. They are places where people come together– to connect, create, learn, celebrate and support one another. Across Manchester, community-led spaces are the lifeblood of our sector. Yet many are underfunded, overstretched and kept going by just a handful of dedicated individuals fighting to keep the lights on — and too many people still have no communal space to call their own.

Click or scan the QR code to read about the table names



Lord Mayor Councillor Shaukat Ali

Thank you to the Lord Mayor for joining the evening of celebration, delivering an opening speech to the night, acknowledging the impact the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, volunteers and organisations play in society and the life of the city.

The Lord Mayor presented each shortlisted nominee and winner with a certificate and/or a trophy, photographed alongside of the individual/organisation.

We thank the Lord Mayor for joining the evening of celebration!



Your evening on social media

Birthday Stars Project · Following
2 October at 10:50 ·

What a fantastic evening we had last night.
Thank you to the organisers
Manchester Community Central for an amazing Spirit of Manchester Awards 2026

We are very proud to have won in the category of Volunteering Team.
It has always been a Volunteer effort - from Jess to fellow volunteers - thank you for all you do.
#spiritofmcr26

Congratulations to our fellow finalists
Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian School in Manchester - well deserved achievement.

FareShare Greater Manchester · Following
2 October at 11:51 ·

Such a wonderful evening last night at the Manchester Community Central Spirit of Manchester Awards! We were thrilled to be shortlisted in two categories and come away with a share in one award!

Congratulations to all of the shortlisted organisations, the work being done across our city is truly inspirational and we were thrilled to have been in a room with so many people doing such wonderful work.

Huge thanks to Deloitte's Manchester team for your brilliant support, we're thrilled that our partnership with you was recognised in the Community and Business Collaboration category. And thank you to MACC for putting on such a positive night of celebration!

EMERGE Touch Wood · Following
2 October at 13:33 ·

We were thrilled to attend the Spirit of Manchester Awards last night along with our colleagues and volunteers from Touch Wood & FareShare Greater Manchester.

It was a truly inspirational evening of celebration arranged by @Manchester Community Central to recognise the amazing work being doing in the VCFSE sector across our city.

Huge congratulations to all the winners and those shortlisted for awards (we were finalists in the Volunteer Involving Organisation alongside our FareShare Greater Manchester colleagues).

Thank you to MACC for a wonderful evening celebrating all the good things which are happening at a grass roots level in our city!

#SpiritOfManchesterAwards2026 #SpiritOfMCRAwards2026 #TouchWood See less

Mums for Lungs
@mumsforlungs.bsky.social
✓ Following

We had a fantastic night celebrating so many great organisations. Huge congrats to @cashforkids.bsky.social Manchester for winning the Most Inspiring Campaign award! And a big shout-out to @dianneoxberrytrust.bsky.social, who were nominated alongside us. @mcrcommcentral.bsky.social #SpiritofMcr26 3/3

Home-Start Manchester · Following
7 October at 17:23 ·

Two awards. Three powerful stories. One very proud Home-Start Manchester team

Last week, we were honoured to win Service User Involving Organisation and Trustee and Committee Member of the Year, awarded to our Chair, Emile Pinel.

We were also incredibly proud finalists for Volunteer Involving Organisation.

We used each film as an opportunity to share stories from within Home-Start Manchester and let our families, volunteers and trustees show people who we really are.

Watch all three films here: https://www.youtube.com/@GMHomeStarts/playlists

As we look towards 2027, we would love to hear from individuals and organisations that want to support our award-winning charity and help us reach more Manchester families. Get in touch today! See less

Isabella Xenopoulos, BA Hons, FCMgr · 2nd
GM - Regional Manager & Speaker | JCI Director | FED Learner's Council | Awa...
1w ·

WE WON!

Last night, One Million Mentors won the Community Cohesion Award at the Spirit of Manchester Awards by Manchester Community Central!

This was super exciting! As Regional Manager for GM, I get to see first-hand just how many people it takes to make this work happen and this award is a brilliant recognition of the community we're building together.

Deloitte
22,958,117 followers
1w ·

An award for collaboration. An impact that goes much further.

We're proud to share that our work with FareShare Greater Manchester has won the Community & Business Collaboration award at the Manchester Community Central Spirit of Manchester Awards.

Over the past year, colleagues in our Manchester office have raised more than £38,000 and volunteered their time and skills to support FareShare's essential work.

Together, we're making a tangible difference, helping FareShare rescue vital surplus food and redistribute it to over 280 charities, schools and community groups across Greater Manchester. This collaboration not only tackles food waste but also supports those most in need in our community.

A huge thank you to everyone at FareShare Greater Manchester and all our incredible colleagues who have made this possible.

#DeloitteUKSocialImpact #FareShare #DeloitteUK




Mark B. · 2nd
Helping Businesses to thrive through strategic business and employee solutio...
1w ·

Josephine B. and I were incredibly proud to represent Cash for Kids Greater Manchester and accept the award for Most Inspiring Campaign at last nights Manchester Community Central #spiritofmcr26 Awards.

It was inspiring to hear so many stories about the positive impact that Cash for Kids has had on community groups and individuals across the wider #Manchester community. The competition was strong, with so many fantastic charities and organisations doing their very best to bring Manchester together during challenging times. I am immensely proud to call Manchester my home and to be part of a city filled with such passion, resilience and community spirit.

Congratulations to all the nominees and winners, and thank you to everyone who supports the incredible work being done across our city.

Darren Knight · 2nd
Chief Executive Officer at George House Trust
1w ·
Connect

It was a proper delight to join hundreds of legends at Manchester Community Central's 'Spirit of Manchester' Awards this evening! It's been a few years since George House Trust stomped home with the Volunteer Involving Organisation Award, but that trophy sits proudly in our cabinet!

It's such a wonderful event and fills you with joy. All very much needed right now!

Well done to Mike Wild for keeping the energy up and the awards flowing and to the whole team for a smashing event.




Your night in photos

















Your night in photos















Nominations and shortlisting

This year's Spirit of Manchester Awards had 15 categories, our largest amount of award categories yet! 4 of these categories had the winners decided in advance by the judges, these being the Climate Action (our newest category), Social Economy Champion, Young Volunteer of the Year and Dr Sylvia Sham for Outstanding Contribution to the Voluntary Sector.

Nominations opened at the beginning of March 2026 and remained open for 2 months until May 2026 in which all votes were counted, checked and collated into a judges booklet.

This year, we received 288 nominations for organisations, individuals and partnerships across Manchester, all doing amazing work for the local community.

The judges met in June 2026 to deliberate their decisions and scores. Once decided and agreed upon, their final choices are handed back to Manchester Community Central to reach out to the shortlist and winners to inform them of the good news.

The shortlist were invited to a celebratory 'Get Together' event to learn more about the Spirit of Manchester Awards, find out what's next and what is needed from their 1 minute video to be shown on the night.

Click or scan the QR code to watch the one minute videos

Our 2026 judges



Kieron McGlasson



Jez Myers



Atiha Chaudry



Deborah Walker



Rana Holland



Sarah Broad

The shortlisted was determined by an independent panel of judges, Chaired by Jez Myers. Each judge kindly volunteered to read through all nominations made, select the shortlist and determine the outright winners for the appropriate categories.

Click or scan the QR code to read the judges biographies

Shortlist and winners

Community Cohesion (Supported by The Flowhesion Foundation)

Winner: One Million Mentors

Shortlisted: Building Bridges Project / Gerry Flanagan from Caritas Shrewsbury, Qaisra Shahraz MBE FRSA (MACFEST) Muslim Arts and Culture Festival & Simran Whitham

Tackling Inequalities (Supported by Manchester City Council: Equity & Engagement Team)

Winner: Equal Education Chances

Shortlisted: Community Thriving Together CIC & Maggy Moyo

Volunteering Team

Winner: Birthday Stars Project

Shortlisted: MadLab Volunteering Team (WEA) & The Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian School





Shortlist and winners

Young Volunteer of the Year (Supported by Clyde & Co)

Winner: Demi Murch

Inspiring Campaign (Supported by Manchester City Council: Our Manchester Funds Team)

Winner: Cash for Kids Greater Manchester

Shortlist: The Dianne Oxberry Trust & Liz Godfrey, Manchester Mums for Lungs





Creative Community Spirit (Supported by One Manchester)

Winner: Max Trax – Kerrie Rimmer

Shortlisted: 53two & Silver Screen Community Film Studios

Climate Action

Winner: Manchester Urban Diggers CIC

Social Economy Champion (Supported by BAM)

Winner: Manchester Urban Diggers CIC

Shortlist and winners

Partnership and Collaboration (Supported by Manchester Metropolitan University)

Winner: Manchester Central Foodbank, Manchester South Central Foodbank, Burnage Foodbank, Chorlton & Didsbury Foodbank, Fallowfield & Withington Foodbank, Wythenshawe Foodbank

Shortlisted: Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, Clyde & Co LLP, Dechert, Linklaters and Squire Patton Boggs & Greater Manchester Living Income Campaign

Community and Business Collaboration

Winner: Deloitte (North-West) & FareShare Greater Manchester

Shortlisted: BAM – Victoria North Project & EMPOWER Youth Zones & BNY



Shortlist and winners

Volunteer Involving Organisation

Winner: Westcroft Community Centre

Shortlisted: EMERGE & Home-Start Manchester



Service User Involving Organisation

Winner: Home-Start Manchester

Shortlisted: Caritas Salford & Mahtsen CIC

Trustee/Committee Member of the Year

Winner: Emile Pinel

Shortlisted: Andre Baron & Sally Carr MBE



Volunteer of the Year (Supported by Wythenshawe Community Housing Group)

Winner: Jeff Seneviratne

Shortlisted: Dave Crowe & Les Cowell

Special Recognition
Elaine Unegbu



The Dr Sylvia Sham Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Voluntary Sector

Winner: Christie Spurling, MBA, FRSA

Our award supporters

Young Volunteer of the Year

Partnership & Collaboration

Community Cohesion

Volunteer of the Year

Creative Community Spirit

Tackling Inequalities

Inspiring Campaign

Social Economy Champion

Drinks supporter

We'd like to thank Living Things for donating a large proportion of their canned drinks towards our event.

Due to the sum of their donation, we were able to also support the following:

Manchester Scouts Group, Greater Manchester Ethnic Communities Network / Manchester BME Network, FareShare & Salford Lads and Girls Club.

Trophies

ELLA McINTOSH

Thank you to the talented Ella McIntosh for designing and creating 15 of our trophies for this year's Spirit of Manchester Awards.

Ella McIntosh is based in the Manchester Craft and Design Centre and specialises in contemporary pewter metal work.



www.ellamcintosh.co.uk

ella@ellamcintosh.co.uk

GRACE SHARP GLASS

Thank you to Grace Sharp for designing and creating a glassblown trophy for Elaine Unegbu's Special Recongition Award.



Grace Sharp is a craft practitioner specialising in hot glass based in the North West.

www.gracesharpglass.com

@g_e_glass

Raffle and auction

To raise money for our Spirit of Manchester Fund, we held a raffle and auction on the night of the awards. With over 30 generous donations from local businesses and individuals, we managed to raise...

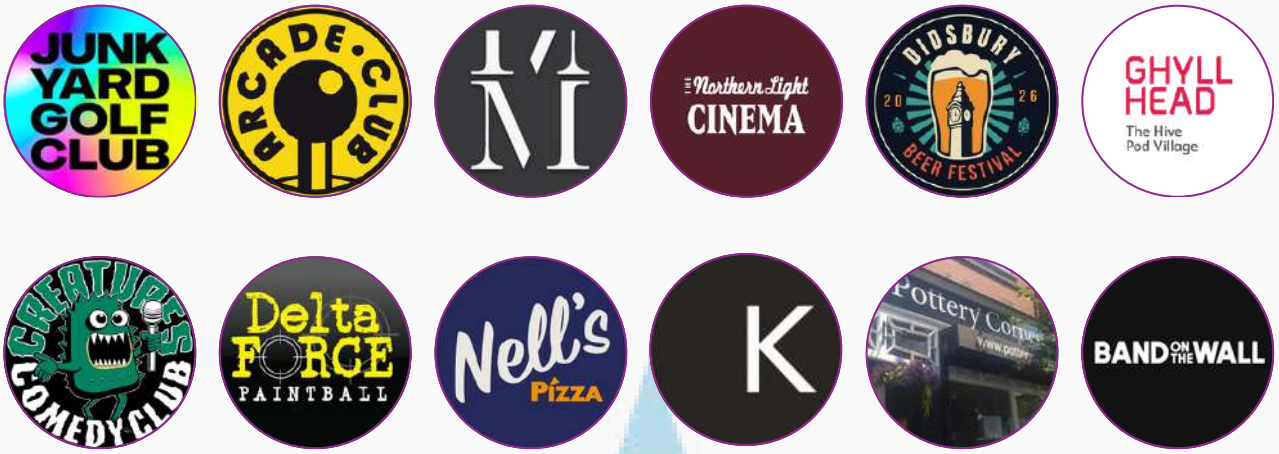
£2000.00!

All monies raised for our Fund go directly back into the community through mini-grants for grassroots organisations in the city of Manchester. We believe the wealth of talent, skills and energy in Manchester can be unleashed for the common good with even small amounts of funding.

Organisations can apply for mini-grants through an annual programme. Find out more about our Fund here.



Raffle supporters





Could you donate to our raffle/auction in 2027?

If so, please get in contact with jo@macc.org.uk

Media support

Photographer: Anthony Owaeghianye

Thank you to our photographer, Anthony Owaeghianye, who has joined for taking the time on the evening with his colleague to capture the buzz and excitement of the room.

Instagram: @villa5_photography LinkedIn: owae
Email: info@v5s.co.uk

Photographer: Alex Burgess

Thank you to Alex Burgess for offering her photography expertise and skills to capture the night.

www.alexburgessphoto.com

Graphics & video content

Thank you to Mika Taki for volunteering their graphic design skills for creating promotional content for our awards.

kigatron.artstation.com/pages/home

Thank you to Aidan Bennett for helping to edit videos for organisations shortlisted at this year's awards.

Livestream

Thank you to **Anson Avents** for their kind support in livestreaming our event to thousands across Manchester.

Spirit of Manchester 2027

Thank you to everyone who made our 14th Spirit of Manchester Awards possible. Next year marks an exciting occasion, the 15th Spirit of Manchester Awards! We can't wait to invite you back and celebrate all over again.

Make sure to stay connected with us for announcements regarding our 15th celebration by following us on the below.

Spirit of Manchester 2027

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Support us in 2027

Help support one of our Spirit of Manchester Awards! Get in contact with jo@macc.org.uk for more information.

Click or scan the QR code to find out more about supporting our awards