



MANCHESTER CARES

# WINTER WELLBEING

**2017/18**

EVALUATION REPORT

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Manchester Cares is a community network of young professionals and older neighbours hanging out and helping one another in our rapidly changing city.**

At the most isolating time of the year, in winter, with shorter days and the possibility of snow and ice, older people already at risk of isolation can find themselves even less likely to leave the house or to have visitors. This means many find it difficult to access the resources that can make life easier, and less likely to enjoy the human interactions that make life worth living.



To tackle this challenge, Manchester Cares' Winter Wellbeing project identified people over the age of 65 who may be at risk of isolation, and through a combination of conversations, referrals, activities and friendships helped older people in the city to stay **warm, active, healthy and connected** during those challenging winter months.

The project is part of Manchester Cares' vision to help reduce loneliness and isolation amongst older and younger Mancunians alike, to improve neighbours' wellbeing, connection, self-worth and power, and to reduce the gaps across social, generational and attitudinal divides.

As a new charity which opened in November 2017, our Winter Wellbeing project this year was necessarily smaller than it will become in future years. And yet the impact of the work demonstrated the importance of proactive community outreach, and offers substantial lessons for how we can develop the work in future.

Specifically, from December 2017 to March 2018, we spoke **face-to-face with 354 older neighbours**. Of these, **126 received direct practical help or connections to new friendships**. The fact that over one in three people (35%) we spoke to readily took up help suggests a significant need for this type of community outreach.

There are many stories that attest to the project's demand. Mary, 70, had lost her husband and told us she didn't have many friends anymore. Upon attending her first Manchester Cares social club she told us, *'I think Manchester Cares will be good for me. I'm ready to make some new friends.'* Mary was soon laughing and reminiscing about classic films with younger neighbour Stacy over a choc ice. Many similar stories can be found in the 'Case Studies' section of this report.

As Manchester Cares deepens ties in the City of Manchester over the coming years, working closely with new partners and neighbours, we believe that Winter Wellbeing will become a vital part of the local community landscape – **connecting older Mancunians** who might otherwise fall through the gaps in local services and activities, preventing deeper isolation, and providing that all important glue that helps people feel **valued, vibrant and visible** in a rapidly changing city.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Manchester Cares is a community network of young professionals and older neighbours hanging out and helping one another in our rapidly changing city.

We have a plan to reduce **isolation and loneliness**, to improve older and younger Mancunians' wellbeing, connection, skills, self-worth and power, and to reduce division across social, generational, digital, cultural and attitudinal lines.

Our work is based on the success of our sister charities North London Cares and South London Cares, which have built equivalent and rapidly growing local community networks over the past seven years. But our vision is also **uniquely Mancunian**: we are working closely with partners in the local authority and voluntary and business sectors to ensure we achieve our community's shared goals.

The Winter Wellbeing project is a vital part of that vision. Alongside Manchester Cares' Social Clubs, Love Your Neighbour one-to-one friendship programme and Community Fundraising work, our **proactive outreach** identifies older people at risk of isolation and connects them to **new experiences and relationships year-round**, as well as to short term **interventions** which can help people to stay connected at an otherwise difficult time.

Our **partners** at Manchester City Council, local healthcare providers, Good Neighbour groups and other organisations are, of course, already on high alert during the cold weather. Our Winter Wellbeing project aims to **complement** their vital work by offering an agile, proactive **community outreach dimension** and helping to connect people to existing activities including, but not limited to, ours.

## 3. OBJECTIVES

The project has three key **community** and **public health** objectives. The first is to make contact with older people who may be **housebound or isolated**, to ensure that people who might otherwise be unforthcoming in accessing mainstream public services or local activities do not fall through the gaps in statutory provision – and to make referrals to those services as relevant.

The second objective is to take a **preventative approach**, identifying individual and community concerns early so they do not become emergency cases further down the line and working with the council to raise those issues. The third – and from our point of view most valuable – objective is to **invite people** who may be at risk of isolation to **exciting, fresh, inclusive activities** with younger Mancunians, to help reduce loneliness in future.



## 4. APPROACH

In order to achieve these aims, our Winter Wellbeing project focuses on creating hundreds of **interactions** and **interventions**.

**Interventions** include:

- The delivery of **blankets, hats, gloves and socks** so that older neighbours who may be struggling with the cold can stay warm;
- Signposting and referrals to **housing support, partner voluntary organisations such as Age UK Manchester and Citizens Advice, and health and social services** which can offer practical support;
- **Small grants of up to £100** for those neighbours most in need – for example those struggling with fuel poverty or rapidly changing circumstances related to winter which might deepen isolation and/or anxiety;
- **Invitations** to Manchester Cares' year-round **Social Clubs** and **Love Your Neighbour** programmes – to help build real and meaningful social networks around people who need them.



Details on the numbers and impact of these interventions can be found later in this report.

To achieve those interventions, Manchester Cares aims to have as many **interactions** with older people in our target areas as possible. Through the Winter Wellbeing project we did this through a combination of:

- **Door-knocking**, including in local Sheltered Housing Units;
- Working with **housing providers** to distribute leaflets and other materials promoting our work;
- Attending and **speaking at community events** and groups;
- **Working with GPs**, pharmacies and local businesses;
- **Building community partnerships** with other organisations working with older people in the City of Manchester.



Further details on our outreach approach can be found later in this report.

## **5. PROJECT SUMMARY**

One of the clearest ways to measure the reach of Winter Wellbeing is to assess the numbers of people who were ultimately part of it, and who benefitted in various ways. Later sections in this report demonstrate the specific impact of those interactions.

Through Manchester Cares' Winter Wellbeing project in 2016/17:

- **354 face-to-face conversations** with older people were held;
- **126 older neighbours** received further specific help;
- A total of **178 deeper interventions** were made;
- **7 small fuel grants** of up to £100 were given to those in most urgent need – **£560 in total**;
- **11 older neighbours** are now due to be matched to a **Love Your Neighbour** friendship;
- **17 people** were referred to **23 health and social care services or groups**;
- **23 blankets** and items of **warm clothing** were **delivered** to people who felt cold in their homes;
- **105 older neighbours** wanted to come to **Manchester Cares' social clubs** and will now receive monthly invitations to up to 12 social clubs per month;
- Nearly **690 leaflets** containing **cold weather advice** were given to older people in the City of Manchester;
- **92 organisations** also distributed **500 of our leaflets** to their memberships;
- **15 organisations** included information about the project in **newsletters** or on their **websites**;
- We attended **30 community events** and **groups** to raise awareness;
- We visited **6 retirement housing schemes** to speak with older people about our seasonal and year-round work.

And while we don't know the dates of birth of everyone who was part of the project, we know that a **majority were between 65 and 74 years of age**, with a **significant minority (around 25%) between 75 and 84** and a smaller minority were over 80. We also supported 15 people under 65, although this is not our target demographic.

## **6. OUTREACH**

### **Door knocking**

A core aspect of Manchester Cares' Winter Wellbeing project is knocking on the doors of older neighbours' homes. Through the project, **we knocked on 372 doors** in areas of the city that Manchester City Council had identified as being particularly at risk of isolation due to the pace of change. Those areas included **Ancoats, Moston, Miles Platting and Newton Heath.**

Evaluations of nine previous Winter Wellbeing projects delivered by our sister charities North London Cares and South London Cares have demonstrated the benefits of this approach. Many neighbours were reassured by a **friendly conversation** and the knowledge that the community was looking out for them.



***Christopher, 77,** told us he had been struggling with grief since his wife passed away, and his health has deteriorated. When we met him he told us he hadn't been able to leave the house for 12 months and goes "weeks without speaking to anyone" apart from his carers. After being referred to Age UK's counselling service, and being given some mobility aids, he's since told us that "life is getting a little easier now".*

### **Housing providers**

Winter Wellbeing was also delivered in partnership with retirement schemes and housing associations which were grateful for the **extra resource** to reach out to people living in their buildings. Over 270 leaflets containing cold weather advice were delivered by Manchester Cares' staff and directly by housing associations. The information was also included in **tenant newsletters**. Where there were activities running in retirement homes or housing association community rooms, we visited the meetings to hold informal conversations with people.

Through this pathway, we talked to **143 older neighbours** about the objectives of the Winter Wellbeing project and 55 took up support including referrals, the delivery of warm items and joining Manchester Cares' Social Clubs mailing list. 11 people expressed an interest in being part of our Love Your Neighbour programme and will be matched to new one-to-one friendships. People living in housing association homes were the most likely to be in need of a deeper interventions like practical support from health and social care services.

*We met **Faye, 83**, at home in Miles Platting. She told us she hasn't left the house in nearly eight months and has dementia. Accepting her diagnosis and learning to adapt has been difficult. Faye said, "I don't want to worry my son but I'm forgetting lots of things now. I feel a lost and frustrated but I'm not really sure how to talk to them about it." We referred Faye to a dementia support service who will help her plan for the future and access the services she needs.*

## **Community events and groups**

Over the four months of winter we **attended 30 community events** and groups to talk to older neighbours and local organisations about the Winter Wellbeing project. These varied from Christmas parties and walking groups to long term condition support groups.

Through this outreach we spoke to **169 older neighbours** and partnered with 40 organisations to raise awareness of the Winter Wellbeing project. We gave out literature about the project to nearly 500 people at these events. 51 of the neighbours we spoke to took up the offer of further help or getting involved with our activities. The majority of people we spoke to at community events wanted information about local activities or to come to Manchester Cares' social clubs.

*We met **Christina, 72**, at a Christmas party. Christina told us that she loves singing and wants to get back into swimming after moving back to the area. We helped her access the free swimming programme for over 60s in Manchester, found a community choir a few minutes from her house, and let her know about our social clubs. Christina said, "I didn't even know about all of these things on my doorstep. Thanks!" A few months later Christina is singing solos, swimming laps again, and having a ball connecting with new friends at Manchester Cares' social clubs.*

## **Community drop ins – GPs, pharmacies and local businesses**

Over the course of the project we contacted 10 GP surgeries, eight pharmacies and 20 local businesses that may encounter people at risk of isolation, including pubs, churches and post offices. We posted 300 leaflets to their staff teams with information about the projects aims. We held stalls at three supermarkets, two surgeries and two pharmacies, enabling us to talk to older neighbours.



As a result, we spoke in depth to 22 older people about the offer of support which was taken up by six people who signed up to come to Manchester Cares' social clubs. We also distributed an additional 130 leaflets to passers-by who didn't need specific help – but that further raised awareness of Winter Wellbeing and Manchester Cares.

## Building community partnerships

Over the course of the project we engaged with 92 other organisations including agencies, businesses and services. Manchester Cares' Winter Wellbeing project was put in 15 newsletters and those agencies gave out over 500 leaflets on our behalf to older neighbours. This resulted in identifying six older people who would benefit from the **extra security of receiving small grants** to help them cover urgent needs during the winter.

**George, 84**, lives alone and had been in and out of hospital a number of times this winter. When he was referred by a local community worker he told us he was “really grateful and touched by this support”. The small grant he received has meant he could keep the fire on a little longer in the evening while he recovered from his hip replacement.

**Susan, 65**, met us at one of our community outreach events in early 2018. She wasn't involved in many groups and was a bit unsure about coming to her first social club. Now she's been travelling across Manchester to meet up with new friends at smartphone, photography and creative scrapbooking workshops. She said, “Thank you – this was great! I didn't even know what Instagram was. I wondered why my son was always sending me pictures of his food. I didn't know that was a thing – funny really isn't it!”

## 7. CASE STUDIES

Numbers are important, but they do not tell the whole story of the Winter Wellbeing project. Part of what makes the project important is its **highly personal approach**: we treated every person we met as an individual, spending time listening to their problems (with **no time limits to conversations** or follow-up calls), and helping people to access what they needed – regularly helping to make sense of **confusing forms or online processes** that are so fundamental to navigating the modern world. Below are a few of those stories.

### Jim, 89

Whilst door knocking in December we met Jim. He had recently had a bereavement and **didn't know many people in his building** so often felt he didn't have anyone to talk to. Since then, Jim's been a regular at Manchester Cares' social clubs. On a recent visit to The Sharp Project he **braved the bus for the first time in six years** so that he could hang out with his new friends. Jim shared photographs that he had taken 60 years ago and told us, “Wow, this was just spectacular! I want to live here. Definitely worth braving the bus for.”



After the trip Jim asked us if we could match him a young professional for one-to-one friendship through our Love Your Neighbour project. He'd like someone to talk to about life over a coffee, someone to share his love of photography and art with, and someone to visit art galleries with now and then. Jim told us: *"Lots of the friends I had are gone now. I've enjoyed braving new things with Manchester Cares. I didn't expect everyone to be so interested in my work and career."*

### **Christina, 67**

When met Christina through one of our community partners, she told us that caring for her husband was causing financial difficulties and debt. The couple have lived in the same house for 40 years but keeping up with the bills was difficult. Christina was **left without heating** in her bedroom. She was hesitant to tell anyone she was struggling, including her children as *"they have their own lives"*.



We gave Christina a fuel grant of £100 to remove some of the immediate pressure and to make sure she could stay warm at night. Our partners at the Citizens' Advice Bureau have applied for a bigger grant to clear some of her fuel debt and arrears. They also helped Christina talk to her energy company about putting her on a lower tariff.

We also contacted a local food cooperative scheme and food banks. For the first time in years Christina now regularly has food in her cupboards and a warm bedroom at night. Christina said: *"Thank you so much for all your help! I don't have to sit hungry in the cold or hide this from everyone anymore."*

### **Yvonne and Kenneth**

We met Yvonne and Kenneth doing outreach at their sheltered housing scheme – and, a little later, the couple celebrated their 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at one of our social clubs. They had a great time at the quiz, sharing cakes and the secret to a happy marriage with younger neighbours.



They struggle to get out of their flat most of the time, but Kenneth asked us recently to see if someone can help him feel more confident so he can go shopping in the Arndale again. We've put him in touch with a service where someone will go with him until he builds his confidence up. We can't wait to hear about his shopping trips.

### **Carol, 76**

Since we met Carol through Winter Wellbeing she has been making lots of new friends at Manchester Cares' social clubs. So far, she's attended three clubs and has really enjoyed being around younger people. Carol said: *"The thing about getting older is you don't feel it in your head, just your bones sometimes. I still want to party like I did in my 20s."*

### **Graham, 82**

The staff where Graham lives in Ancoats told us that he was feeling the cold this winter, and that he needed some thermals. With budgets from our Winter Wellbeing project, we were able to help Graham out. Now he's been able to wrap up when he goes shopping.

Graham wore his new hat to his first Manchester Cares 'Desert Island Discs' social club one very cold night in March, and he's been swapping dance floor stories with his new younger and older friends ever since. He said, *"They've come in so handy, it went really cold after you brought them. I've been wearing them loads."*

### **Thomas, 73**

When we met Thomas he told us he didn't talk to anyone where he lives and his health often meant that he struggles to go out. But, with a little encouragement, Thomas came to his first Manchester Cares social club in February.



He spent the whole night talking to Bethan, 25, about his life and children. They've been swapping stories at fortnightly music nights ever since. Now Thomas feels confident trying new things and after years of spending his days alone he is *"talking to everyone because he knows they want to listen."*

### **Stuart, 81**

Stuart has travelled the world teaching art but when we knocked on his door he told us that he doesn't have many visitors now. His family live in the south and they don't get much time to see him. He came to his first social club and enjoyed telling his younger neighbours about the time he spent living in Sicily painting for a Baroness. *"Truly thank you! I've not been to anything after sunset in years!"*

Stuart has now asked us to help him build new friendships through our Love Your Neighbour programme. He said: *"I feel like I have so much of my life to share, stories to tell. I'd like to meet someone who's on the cusp of their career and life. People were very kind to me when I was starting out, and I'd like to do the same for someone younger."*

## **8. PROJECT STRENGTHS**

Winter Wellbeing is ambitious in its scope and personal in its approach. This combination of breadth and depth makes it a challenging project to deliver, but the benefits for older people living in Manchester are clear. Specifically, we felt the project was a success because:

- Of the **354 people** we spoke to face-to-face **over a third** took up the offer of help between December 2017 and March 2018.

- Of the **126 older people** we helped there were **178 specific interventions in total** and **23 referrals to health and social care services or local groups**;
- There was **clear increase** in Manchester Cares' **social club attendance** between the start of December and the end of March, with **over 40 new neighbours** attending during that period;
- Many older neighbours we met **weren't involved with other social activities** in their area – and didn't know how to get involved;
- The **personal approach** and **lack of bureaucracy** meant people could relate to the project on a human level;
- We limited the project to **four wards experiencing rapid community change: Ancoats, Miles Platting, Newton Heath and Moston**. We researched each ward thoroughly, allowing for a more focussed and comprehensive project – and this will be a foundation for more outreach as Manchester Cares grows;
- We built a number of **successful partnerships** with other **local community groups** and increased the profile of Manchester Cares' work in the community;
- We were able to execute the project **efficiently** and to **time**.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS**

There were also a number of challenges in delivering a project of this scale and with so many people and moving parts. We have learnt a lot from this first Winter Wellbeing project. Specifically:

- Researching, planning and making contacts in each of our target wards took longer than we had anticipated. While it was impossible this year due to Manchester Cares only opening in November 2018, in future years the majority of planning should take place before the Winter Wellbeing project begins, so that during the **coldest part of winter we can focus on outreach and immediate intervention follow-up**.
- Although we had the resources available to help more people, because we didn't have lists of addresses from partner services or housing associations for this project more of our team's time was spent attempting to find people who could benefit from our assistance, rather than providing the connections. We would like to create a formal partnership with existing programmes in Manchester in time for the 2018/19 project so that we can **reach more older neighbours together**.
- We spent a large amount of time attending community events. However, people who attend community events or who live in sheltered housing units are generally connected with services already (although we provided a number of important interventions in the form of **potential social activity**).

- All of the of door-knocking took place in retirement schemes linked to housing associations. We need to identify **more older neighbours in private housing** who might benefit from Winter Wellbeing and **year-round activity**.
- The take up of small grants took time, and we didn't receive referrals for grants until we were halfway through the project. We need to start **raising awareness of the project and it's aims earlier in the year** to ensure that more partners identify older neighbours who may benefit.
- Whilst our Winter Wellbeing focussed on helping older neighbours over the age of 65, we met 15 people between the ages of 55 and 64 who required help this winter. Many lived alone, and had complex or multiple health conditions or limited mobility. This is unsurprising as the number of people living with long term conditions and disabilities in Manchester is [higher than the national average](#). Next year we will consider this when looking at the capacity needed to deliver the project and when discussing partnerships to ensure we are better **connected to services that can provide appropriate support**.
- We recognised over the course of the project that we need to make better links to ensure the demographics of older neighbours we offer help to reflects the diversity of Manchester as a whole. We met neighbours whose first language was not English and we couldn't deliver the aims and ambitions of the project to them as well as we would have liked. Next year we will make **links with organisations who can support us to reach all of Manchester's diverse groups**.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

It is clear from Manchester Cares' first, small scale Winter Wellbeing project that proactive outreach can add huge value to collective community provision and to the lives of individual Mancunians. At a time when winter pressures on the NHS and social services are growing, and GPs are seeing between [one and five people a day](#) with no other condition than loneliness, **highly personal community interaction is more important than ever**.

One in three of the 354 people we engaged with took up our offer of either extra social connection or practical help. The project rapidly transformed the number of people accessing our year-round activities: **in December, we held our first social club with three older neighbours – by March, there were 45 neighbours regularly attending and 11 people had told us they would like a Love Your Neighbour friend**.

Meanwhile the reaction from people who didn't require further assistance was overwhelmingly positive, suggesting that as well as providing interventions that both help to prevent and solve problems, the project is a means of **providing reassurance and strengthening the ties of community in a rapidly changing city**.

We also found, through the course of the project, that, as awareness of the work increased, people were identifying neighbours in their community who might benefit from **some extra connection**, or passing our contact details on. This reinforces that people within communities want to connect and help each other.

It is clear, then, that the Winter Wellbeing project embeds a preventative approach whereby **practical, social and emotional issues** are identified before they become emergencies – and whereby people learn how they can get the support or connections they need to live more fulfilling lives.

We have also learned a great deal for a much **more ambitious Winter Wellbeing project in 2018/19**. Greater planning and better integration with local authorities and health services, as well as other community organisations working with older people, will help us to **connect even more older Mancunians next year to their younger neighbours to enjoy time, laughter and new experiences**.

As the populations in the city of Manchester continue to change, leaving some older people feeling **left out or left behind**, and other local services continue to transform, it is important that this offer of practical, social and emotional outreach and connection during one of the toughest, most isolating periods of the year grows. That will be our ambition next winter, in 2018/19.