

COMMUNITY FESTIVAL 2017-2019

EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT

CONTEXT

The University of Manchester's [Local Community Social Engagement Plan 2016-2019](#) had four key engagement actions which aimed to deepen the involvement and engagement between the University and its local communities through opportunities to meet, share knowledge, collaborate and inspire for mutual benefit. The plan identified three priority community spatial zones – the first being the ten city wards surrounding the University where it had its largest physical and student footprint.

One action in the Plan was to improve engagement with local residents and stakeholders by facilitating ongoing engagement through the delivery of a free community open day. This became the University's annual one-day [Community Festival](#), the first held on 17 June 2017.

The Festivals aimed to share the University's research, culture and facilities by opening its doors to local communities and engaging them first-hand with the varied things the University did. They also aimed to foster links with local neighbours and provide a friendly, positive and enjoyable day for everyone. This was to be achieved by curating a fun, accessible and engaging programme of activities that provided an opportunity for the community to engage with key University activities. And to allow opportunities for people to meet each other and build further engagement opportunities so empowering community members to take pride in the activities of their local university.



FACTS AND FIGURES 2017-19

- 7,707 people attended the Festivals
- On average 52% of visitors came from a Manchester postcode with 40% from the targeted neighbouring areas surrounding the University
- 80% were in family groups
- 159 different activities were offered
- 15 science buskers plus 3 busking leaders entertained visitors
- 15 Festival Co-ordinators organised the events
- 47 staff and 34 student Festival Ambassadors supported the events

“Fantastic community event bringing diverse people of different backgrounds together in a local venue.”

“Brilliant to see the diversity of things at the University and ... for the kids to experience this.”

“Everyone at the stands are so knowledgeable & friendly it's been a great to get expert knowledge.”

Visitors who were interviewed also felt the Festival had a strong sense of community and thought staff and students were welcoming and friendly. Many were amazed how varied the University was.

As well as face-to-face interviews, all visitors were given the opportunity to share their experiences of the Festival on graffiti walls located at key areas. 345 notes were posted over the three years.

Comments posted on the graffiti walls could be grouped into categories:

- those mentioning having an enjoyable day that was exciting, interesting with a variety of hands-on experiences particularly for children. Some adults mentioned their joy of seeing children having fun and enjoying themselves.
- comments about the educational value of the activities at the Festival. Many loved the day and thought their children were learning new things, inspiring them about future careers.

All these comments from visitors provide evidence to illustrate how the Festivals were meeting their aim of providing a friendly, positive and enjoyable day with a programme of fun and engaging activities that provided an opportunity for the community to engage with key University activities.



Visitors also suggested ways the Festival could be improved and what they would like to see and do at future events. These included providing more activities for under 5 year olds; providing bags to carry all the freebies and things their children had made; information in other languages; and improving signage to and about the activities.

Visitor recommendations were reviewed after each Festival and acted on whenever possible, for example in 2019, a dedicated Under 5's play area was introduced with mud painting for 5-7 year olds outside on the green. Free sustainable bags were provided for all the freebies and materials being given out at the event and in 2018 advice was sought from the University's Multilingual Manchester Centre on providing information in different languages. Sail banners were purchased and placed outside each Festival venue to encourage people inside.

c. What did the staff and student Festival Ambassadors have to say about their experience of the Festival?

Each year a number of staff and students worked as Festival Ambassadors whose role was to provide a friendly, positive and knowledgeable welcome to all visitors; provide information and signpost people to activities; and help with the setting up and taking down of the event. After each Festival they were asked what they thought about the event – what worked well, what didn't work so well and what could be improved.

Both staff and students thought that focusing the Festival activities in a small area on campus helped create a great buzz and atmosphere. They enjoyed taking part and mentioned how friendly it was. It gave them an opportunity to meet colleagues and fellow students they did not normally work with and two thirds of staff and half of student Festival Ambassadors returned each year to work at the events.



Some feedback that the promotion of the Festival was bringing in a more diverse audience and, those who had worked at previous events, thought that those attending were from more diverse backgrounds.

"I had a great time ... I'd love to be a part of it again next year."

As with visitors, staff and students made suggestions on how the events could be improved. Some ideas echoed what visitors had asked for and others included improving the facilities in a particular building for families and visitors with accessibility needs such as wheelchairs or buggies; providing a marquee outside to extend floor space for activities; and rethinking the use of paper wristbands to calculate the headcount because visitor numbers were increasing and queues forming at welcome desks.

d. Social media analytics

Key to the success of attracting local communities to the Community Festivals was how the events were marketed and promoted to the primary target audience. Therefore, the evaluation assessed the success of the Festival's promotion and marketing campaigns.

One main approach to promoting the Festivals was to use social media particularly on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and in 2017 on Snapchat. A Facebook page was generated for Social Responsibility which was used to promote the Festivals.

This use of social media proved to be successful with the Festival's Twitter hashtag #CommunityFestUoM trending nationally during the afternoon in 2017. From 2018, promotion was targeted to identified audiences such as those who had an interest in children's activities and those who were aged 18-60+ and lived within a ten mile surrounding area of the University. This saw an increase in social media activity and impressions on Twitter increased after the first year. In 2019, external advertising space was also bought, for example on the Manchester Evening News (MEN)'s Facebook page which resulted in additional clicked links to the Festival's web site, nine times more than the national average.



In 2019, the Festival took over the University (UoM)'s official Facebook and Instagram accounts allowing a wider reach and engaging a wider audience.

Summary Social Media Statistics 2017-2019

 SR Twitter 2017 17,400 impressions 687 clicks 106 likes 15 comments 58 shares	 SR Twitter 2018 57,400 impressions 84 clicks 166 retweets 188 likes	 SR Twitter 2019 46,700 impressions 150 clicks 138 retweets 225 likes	 Paid Twitter 2019 13,400 impressions 105 clicks 0.45% click rate
 Facebook 2017 103 average monthly Facebook reach 583 average Facebook reach week of Festival 264 visited Festival web site via paid advertising on MEN Facebook page	 Facebook 2018 <i>(2-17 June 2018)</i> 879 likes <i>(9-19 June 2018)</i> 264 reactions, comments, shares 555 reach of top post	 Facebook 2019* 1,487 views post on UoM Facebook 182 over 1,000 interested on Facebook Event page <i>*Data measures given differs from previous year</i>	 Facebook paid 2019 <i>(28 May -15 June 2019)</i> 26,500 impressions 69,300 reach 441 event responses
 Instagram 2017 56,278 total views	 Instagram 2018 <i>(16 June 2108)</i> 56,278 total views	 Instagram 2019 <i>(15 June 2019)</i> 53,257 total views	 Instagram paid advertising 2019 <i>(28 May -15 June 2019)</i> 15,108 reach 31,142 impressions 158 no. Link Clicks £0.80 cost per result
 Snapchat 2017 1,400 views			