

Are you a good neighbour?

Neighbours are a fact of life in a big city like Manchester, and are essential if we're to have thriving, popular communities. We recently celebrated European Neighbours' Day on 31 May, so Manchester People sent Janet Reeder out on the streets of the city to discover just who is a good neighbour. Here are some of your views, with responses from Councillor Richard Leese, Leader of the Council.

- **Jacqueline Young and baby Lauren from Manchester city centre**

We live in a group of three flats. We know the person in one of the flats, but not in the other one because she's not that friendly. I like to think I'd make the effort, especially as I have a baby, which is very difficult in the city centre because there aren't any children. In fact I have set up a carer and baby and toddler group at St Peter's crèche in the Town Hall for people who live in the city – or come into the city – and have met two other city centre mums. It's on Mondays from 1.30 to 3.30pm. Hopefully, this way I am adding to the community.

- **Francine Sheridan from north Manchester**

Since I have been on maternity leave I've been a lot more neighbourly and have met all the mothers with children, but when I was working it was hard to be a good neighbour as I'd be out of the house at 8am and wouldn't be back until 6pm, so I'd hardly see them. We would say hello and if we threw a party we would invite them, but that's as far as it goes.

It can be difficult to feel you have time to see your neighbours, but inviting them to parties or other social gatherings is an ideal opportunity to get to know one another. On European Neighbours' Day, 31 May, many residents across the city took advantage of the opportunity to invite their neighbours to small local events.

- **Lisa Parker from Radcliffe**

I have always got on really well with my neighbours. They're older next door, probably my dad's age, and I only work parttime, so I'm able to help if they want it. I put the bins in for them, that sort of thing, and if they asked me to do anything I probably would do it for them.

- **Zak Hane from Manchester city centre**

I've lived in my flat for two years and don't really see my neighbours at all, unless it's to say hello as we pass on the stairs. There doesn't seem too much scope to be a good neighbour, although I do try to keep the music down.

It can be easy to feel isolated living in an apartment block, yet there are many ways in which you can become involved in your local community. One way for you to get involved is through the Manchester City Centre Residents' Forum. This is a voluntary association of residents keen to encourage participation in the shaping of the city centre – including building a community based on good neighbourliness.

- **Anthony Hall from east Manchester**

I've lived in the same house all my life and know my neighbours well. We keep an eye on each other and help each other out – it's something that comes naturally. I don't take it for granted that I have good neighbours and try to do what I can to help. Sometimes I think if they moved and we got someone else, it could be a nightmare.

- **Ellen Malmoos from Manchester city centre**

I am new to Manchester, so I can't really say I'm a good neighbour, although if our neighbours have parties we don't complain, and if we have parties they don't complain. It's a relaxed and quite young sort of place.

- **Sue Lawton from north Manchester**

I had an old man living next door who was a recluse and I used to help him a lot. He was very independent though, so I'd say things like: "I've cooked too much food, could you do me a favour and take it from me?" He died and now we have a young couple, who we haven't really met. I'm now at the age where they might bring me food and I'll tell them to get lost, like he used to tell me.

Having a friendly neighbour around can make a big difference to the quality of life of older residents. Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Police have piloted a Nominated Neighbour Scheme in Wythenshawe where vulnerable residents can identify a neighbour to assist them when their home is approached to make sure callers are genuine. These schemes are now in operation across Manchester in order to help older members of the community feel safer in their homes.

- **Sue Bell from Blackley**

Yes I do believe in being a good neighbour. I think it is important to be part of the community, although I am not in people's houses all the time. I do look after the old folks around, change light bulbs for them, that sort of thing, and I always tell them that I'm at the end of the telephone if they want to talk at any time.

- **Sandra Pears from Chorlton**

Chorlton is one of those places where it's a bit of an alien culture for me as I'm new to the area. In flat land you never really see your neighbours. Those who have lived there all their life tend to know each other really well. It's a bit incestuous, and I feel a bit of an outsider. It's a shame, because I think it's nice to say hello to your neighbours at the end of the day.

It is sometimes difficult to feel at home in a new area, but there are many ways in which you can get to know your neighbours. European Neighbours' Day, on the last Tuesday in May each year, provides the opportunity for you to organise a small event to get to know the neighbours in your area and make new friends.

- **Nabila Sabir from Withington**

Both of my neighbours are elderly and live on their own, so I do their shopping for them and keep an eye on their bits and bobs while they're out. I cut their grass and generally make sure they're OK. We're so close my son calls them grandma. I think being a good neighbour depends upon the person you are. If you treat people nicely, they tend to treat you nicely.