



Looking out across Park Green
in Macclesfield – a town with a
thriving community spirit.
Photo: Kurt Thomas, DKS Drones

PLACE WE LOVE

THE INSIDERS' GUIDE TO MACCLESFIELD

HANNAH HILES talks to the people behind four organisations aiming to enhance life in their hometown, from a 'secret' members' club and a beloved hospice to an international aid charity and a youth project aiming to leave a lasting impact

KARYN JOHNSTON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EAST CHESHIRE HOSPICE

**‘Fundraising can often be part of the healing process,
a way to pay the love forward’**

Many families in Macclesfield and the wider local community have a special place in their hearts for East Cheshire Hospice, which has been caring for people with life-limiting illnesses in the region since 1988.

This strength of feeling is reflected in the warmth of the support shown by residents, who hold bake sales and coffee mornings, run half-marathons and jump out of planes to keep the hospice going.

It's the second lowest NHS-funded hospice in the country, with just 21 per cent coming from the government. The remaining £9,362 a day is donated by members of the community in memory of their loved ones or in recognition of the important service provided by the hospice.

From the child who does a sponsored climb of Tegg's Nose to the popular biennial Art Fair Cheshire, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2024 and has raised nearly £700,000 for the hospice, every contribution is appreciated.

Chief executive Karyn Johnston, who has worked at the hospice since 2014, says: 'Every local hospice has its supporters, but our community has to pull a shift more than anyone else's.'

'Forty per cent of households in the East Cheshire area contribute to us regularly and we need that level of contribution to sustain us. Twenty to 30 per cent above that will have been touched by our services in some way.'

'Fundraising can often be part of the healing process, a way to pay the love forward so the next family can have the care they have received.'

'We are always careful spending the money people donate and make sure we are relieving suffering, which is what we were set up to do.'

Karyn, who is originally from Belfast, has lived in Macclesfield for 25 years, after moving to the town to work for Cheshire Building Society.

She says: 'I fell in love with it straight away. Macclesfield has everything you need without a big city feeling. You are just two stops on the train to Manchester and 25 minutes to the airport, but you can be in the countryside in a matter of minutes. There's such a great sense of community. My colleagues often say the philanthropy in this area is unmatched.'

Being the chief executive of such a well-loved organisation comes with its responsibilities. 'It's like a Ming vase – you definitely don't want to wreck it,' says Karyn – who is supported by a dedicated workforce of more than 100 staff and more than 300 volunteers.

'We are always at the front of people's minds when they think about local charities, and we have built a great reputation over the years.'

'We have a universal cause – everyone dies. We will never solve this problem, and we will always need support. But it would be unthinkable that maternity care, for example, would be funded by people running half-marathons.'

East Cheshire Hospice celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2028 and is collecting stories from people who have had a connection over the years.

To submit a testimonial, visit eastcheshirehospice.org.uk/support/tell-us-your-hospice-story



PHOTO: KURT THOMAS

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DAVID LISLE

COMMITTEE MEMBER, OLD BOYS' AND PARK GREEN CLUB

**‘We are such a secret. Half the men
of Macclesfield don't even know it exists’**

From the moment David Lisle stepped through the discreet front door of the Old Boys' and Park Green Club, tucked away on Churchside, to attend a President's Lunch, he thought it was 'fantastic'.

'It's like Hogwarts,' he says. 'It's unique. It's an oasis in the centre of town.'

The private members' club formed in 1985 from an amalgamation of the Park Green Club, established in 1771, and the Macclesfield Old Boys' Social Club, which began in 1910 – and with that heritage lays claim to being one of the oldest clubs outside London.

But these days it's such a hidden gem – there isn't even a nameplate on the door – that many men in the county don't know it's there. And this is something committee member David, who runs his long-established bespoke kitchen business from a historic chapel in the town, is determined to change.

'The club goes back to the days when the silk manufacturers were there in their wigs,'

he says. 'It's a very old-fashioned, traditional gentlemen's club in a Georgian building with oak panelling, a snooker table and a live-in steward who used to be a chef on the royal yacht, Britannia, and who, with his wife, looks after everything.'

'It's open to anyone who would like to join and get involved. We are actively looking for new members because we are such a secret. We want to get out there. Half the men of Macclesfield don't even know it exists.'

The club, which is based in a three-storey Grade II-listed building dating back to the early 19th century, has a busy calendar of luncheons, dinners, competitions, special interest groups and activities.

In keeping with the club's traditional feel, membership is restricted to men, although women are welcome at some events – and there are no plans to change this.

David says: 'At the moment there are no lady members, but who knows what will happen in the future? It's the oldest

non-residential club outside London so we try not to change things too much with the fashions of the day.'

'I like the camaraderie; so many places are mixed now and it's nice being in a men-only environment, just as I'm sure women like to be in women-only places. There's a bit of an old-school attitude to it.'

Prospective members can apply to join and will then be asked to attend a function – and if they are a good fit, they will be invited to become a member. The club is affiliated with six others around the country, including the Chester City Club, the Artists Club in Liverpool and the Snail Club in London, which means members can use their facilities on their travels.

'It's a treasure of the town and I don't want it to disappear on my watch. It's been running for 250 years and it's really important we pass it on to the next generation and ensure it survives,' says David.

Visit obpgc.org.uk



Anne Hancock and fellow members of the Macclesfield Ukrainian Aid Team showing they have just sent their seventh HGV filled with aid

ANNE HANCOCK MACCLESFIELD UKRAINIAN AID

‘We need another generous sponsor to provide an alternative storage unit, so we can continue’

Volunteers at Macclesfield Ukrainian Aid have been working tirelessly since the Russian invasion in 2022 to take humanitarian aid into the war-torn country.

A team of more than 80 volunteers has dispatched 11 articulated lorries – seven in 2024 alone – full of much-needed items, as well as driving and donating 160 vans, 4x4s, pick-up trucks, minibuses and breakdown vehicles, all laden with humanitarian aid, into Ukraine.

But now they are on the lookout for a new storage unit as their current arrangement is coming to an end.

Anne Hancock, who co-ordinates the collection and transport of aid with her husband, John, and son, Tom, says: ‘Sadly, we will have to vacate our present storage unit, but we certainly made the best use of this generous free facility. Pallets of humanitarian and medical aid keep flooding in through our doors.’

‘We have a good reputation, fantastic volunteers, a great system and good

contacts, but now we need another generous sponsor to provide an alternative storage unit, so we can continue.’

The new unit needs to be clean, dry and secure, around 1,500 x 2,000 square feet, and with access for loading articulated lorries.

‘A toilet and somewhere to make a brew would also be nice, but not essential,’ adds Anne.

Anyone who can help can contact Macclesfield Ukrainian Aid on info@ukrainianaid.org.uk

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PROFESSOR SIMON HAYWARD OUR SPACE MACCLESFIELD **‘It will improve employability and make young people happier and more likely to stay in Macclesfield’**

Young people in Macclesfield will enjoy access to life-changing opportunities if planning permission is granted for a £3m youth centre in the town.

The project would see the bespoke centre built on land off Oxford Road, the site of the Fermain Club until its closure in 2015.

Youth Fed, a Cheshire charity providing youth services across the county, and a dedicated team of volunteers and supporters are working hard to make the plans a reality and leave a lasting impact on the town.

Youth Fed trustee Professor Simon Hayward, who is co-ordinating the project and leading the fundraising team, says the centre will support eight to 18-year-olds in the town.

‘At least 750 youth centres have closed in the past 10 years around the country. Funding has been massively cut and local authorities are under huge budgetary pressures, which have seen youth services sacrificed. We need to replace them,’ says Simon.

‘Our Space will be a safe place to meet and will be beneficial for physical and mental health. It will improve employability and social mobility and will make young people happier and more likely to stay in Macclesfield.’

‘Young people will be able to come along, have fun, learn new skills and develop their confidence, but if they need support for things like mental health, that will be there for them too. It could be life-changing.’

‘This could be the leg-up and confidence boost they need to go for that job or that university place and make the best of their lives.’

Plans for the centre show outdoor spaces featuring a multi-use games area (MUGA) and grassed space for other activities, as well as places for gardening and relaxation.

There would be a snack bar, social areas, games, and creative rooms, quiet and support rooms and a hall that could be used as a gym,

concert space, cinema, and for indoor sports such as table tennis.

The project team has worked closely with young people to find out what activities they would like to take part in. Proposals include gaming, cooking, music, podcasting, arts and crafts, filmmaking, and a range of sports such as football, tennis, badminton, basketball, hockey, table tennis and gymnastics.

In addition, Our Space, which is set to be open six days a week, will run formal programmes for mental health, financial literacy, employability, career development and cyber security.

In a survey across the secondary schools of Macclesfield, with 363 responses, only 10 per cent thought there were enough spaces dedicated for young people in the town and 83 per cent said they would attend the new youth centre if it had the facilities listed.

No central government funding is available for the centre and the team is trying to raise £3m for the construction. At least £350,000 will be required to run the facility each year.

Simon, who lives in Macclesfield with his wife, Clare, the High Sheriff of Cheshire, says: ‘It’s a challenge but we will get there because it’s a great cause. It’s the sort of project where people can see the long-term value and it’s exciting to be part of something that will have a huge impact.’

‘I came to go to business school in Manchester in the 1980s and stayed. I’ve been here 40 years and am very happy. It’s a very grounded sort of town and brings together a range of people. The culture and the people make it special.’

‘If I can help young people in Macclesfield to have the best life they can have and be the best version of themselves, that is very rewarding.’ ●

Visit youthfed.org.uk/programmes/ourspace

Dame Zandra helps to fashion Macclesfield events – see page 95

