

The Marsh Awards for Innovative Church Projects

Runner Up 2017: Home Community Café, Emmanuel Church, Didsbury, Manchester



"Volunteering at Home allows me to experience life and interact with people away from my work and my computer. We see the full spectrum of life in the café every day. We have provided breakfast for someone who hadn't eaten for 3 days and I've served new mothers who have welcomed a chat when the experience of motherhood has seemed overwhelming."
Home volunteer

"Home has changed me and changed my life. Before Home I never spoke to anyone and I used to have dark days where I just cried for all the loss and sadness inside me. Home has given me much more than I had. I have friends now, I laugh all the time."
Home volunteer

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What is Home?

Home Community Café, established in 2015, is a social enterprise, a community led and managed organization that benefits its local community. Home's aim is simple - to improve people's lives through strengthening community, valuing individuals and creating an inclusive and welcoming space where everybody knows that they belong. The café provides volunteering opportunities and activities for individuals, community and church groups. The café team retains close ties with the church's management team. The sustainability and the condition of the building is a priority.

Setting up Home

Home is an independent charity and a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), a new type of legal structure which involves less administration and less liability for individual trustees. The original idea for a café came from St James & Emmanuel and the PCC approve Home Community Café trustee appointments. The café operates independently.

An initial £14,000 investment by the founders and a £5,000 local grant led to a successful first year with a small profit. Home has set up a "Community Chest" and aims to support community endeavours through awards.

The café is open from 10.30am to 5.30pm daily with some evening events. The Living Room, ideal for small groups, is also in regular use. In its first year the decision was made to move from three to

five-day opening and to appoint more staff because of the growing demand from customers and wider interest in the use of its space for community activities.



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“Home makers”

Home accomplish what they do because of 70+ enthusiastic volunteers called “Home makers”. There is a paid Café Manager and three part time employees to manage shift leading, volunteer development and cleaning.

“It's the perfect place for me to build my confidence ready for searching for work. I have really bad anxiety and it's held me back with job searching so I just want to say thank you for creating such a welcoming environment to keep me active and fight my fears!”

Volunteer quoted Annual Report 2016



Volunteering for Home creates opportunities. Amy achieved a successful placement at Home through a partnership with WorkFit, an initiative supporting people with Down's Syndrome to enter the workplace. Amy has since moved into paid employment.

Bringing the building to the community

Before Home, the building was used for at least five hours on a Sunday, some Saturdays, most mid-week mornings for recording a daily BBC service and occasional mid-week events. Some members of the church leadership were keen to use their buildings more proactively to serve their communities. Some volunteers were drawn from the congregations, but the team expanded rapidly through community networks. Good planning and knowledge about local community needs meant that use grew rapidly too and opening times increased. Although some customers are initially concerned about a café in a church, there are those who subsequently visit the church having

learnt about it by the use of the café.

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New uses

Varied and extensive community activity is a key part of the Home vision. Events are advertised on

"We have also built relationships with other charities to offer placements and support to their volunteers including Head Start, a mental health charity, and WorkFit. Volunteers have been provided with a range of training opportunities, pastoral support and mentoring."

Home Trustee

Facebook and Twitter. New ideas are tried regularly, e.g., Nourish, a pop up spa, in partnership with local therapists.

New users

Helping to tackle isolation, a large number of parents of young children, carers and people over 65 attend regularly. The Café has been carrying out an assessment of customer numbers and profiles. Footfall is healthy throughout the day with 11.30am – 1.30pm as a peak time.

The Living Room community space has been used by more than 30 groups averaging 82 attendees per week. Groups include mental health support, art groups, family support and business start-up groups.



Regular day groups include the Dementia Café, Knitting Group, Lego Club and Classical Babies. There are also occasional evening events such as Death Cafes, allowing people to discuss this difficult subject in a safe place, and Spoken Word nights. Each quarter the café hosts "day" events to celebrate key milestones or reflect the seasons. For example it held a 'One Love' event to celebrate being open for a year, a Harvest Festival and a Christmas extravaganza. A Mexican themed week with a fun evening event is to take place this November.

Lovely café, friendly staff and best of all...has a play area for children! That seems to be a rarity, so it's deeply appreciated by parents who want to give their little ones playtime while they enjoy a drink and sit down. Definitely recommend :)

Facebook comment

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Home is a beginning ...

Refurbishing the east end of Emmanuel church was funded through a local campaign called "Love Emmanuel" and from the St James & Emmanuel Fabric Fund. The work carried out dealt with some fabric issues including some roof repair. It also improved the kitchen, refurbished a former fellowship room, foyer and former Lady Chapel. Heating was extended to the newly partitioned 'Living Room'. These works, costing £100,000 in total, enabled the successful establishment of Home Community Café, which opened in April 2015. Previously the kitchen area had been developed to support the provision of hot drinks and, over several years, meals for the homeless. However, the more radical recent changes at Emmanuel have been a direct result of setting up Home.

St Emmanuel is a Grade II listed Victorian church built in 1858 by Starkey and Cuffley. The reordered interior with the café and crèche features William Morris glass in the south transept window.

The building is on Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register. Home will benefit significantly from the proposed major roof and stonework repairs as well as the much needed improvement to the toilet facilities. Development funding has helped secure a grant of £250,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which will enable the first phase to progress. A second HLF grant will be needed to complete the work

The story behind each stained glass window at St Emmanuel's will be told to bring alive the Victorian era. Volunteers including school children will gather oral histories from the oldest members of the congregation, to preserve and share local memories for all. St James & Emmanuel are in the process of raising partnership funding, including applying for grants to contribute to the overall project, which is expected to complete by June 2019.

"Home is a great addition to the local community bringing a welcoming and safe space to many who would perhaps feel less comfortable in a more commercial environment. It brings life to the church building which is at the heart of our community. The National Lottery support is most welcome in developing and extending Home's impact to those who would benefit from it, customers, volunteers and community groups." **Miriam Jones, Home Café Trustee**





Marsh Innovative Church Project Awards

The Awards celebrate church volunteer led community activities that have been made possible through changes to a place of worship.

Well organised and very successful, judges particularly noted the close ongoing relationship between Home and the PCC which supported the sustainability of the heritage building. It was a strong forward looking partnership with numerous benefits, for people and the building. Innovation continued through great ideas for activities and through establishing partnerships.

There was strong awareness of the community's needs, volunteers' needs and of the need to invest in the building to support future development. Whilst in a populous suburb and having the benefit of some trustees with relevant professional experience, judges felt that its model could be reproduced on any scale and individual activities could be replicated elsewhere.

If you are in Didsbury, drop in to St Emmanuel's at 6 Barlow Moor Road, Didsbury, Manchester, M20 6TR <http://homecommunitycafe.org/>

50% of church volunteers that attended our events in 2017 told us that their church is having difficulty attracting volunteers. The Marsh Innovative Church Project Awards give us the opportunity to share stories about teams of volunteers. By sharing their experiences and secrets of success we hope to inspire and help faith communities on their journeys to make their place of worship more sustainable.

About the National Churches Trust

The National Churches Trust is the national, independent, charity dedicated to promoting and supporting church buildings of historic, architectural and community value across the UK.

We receive no income from government or church authorities, and we rely on voluntary contributions from our supporters to undertake our work.

Find out more about our work including information on our grants programmes for churches which in 2018 can look at project development, repairs, installing facilities and maintenance [here](#).

This case study has been prepared with the help of the Home Community Café. Photographs have been sourced from Home.

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