MANCHESTER MAGAZINE

DIGITAL EDITION
July 2026

Compiled from stories published online in July 2026



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On the cover: Jennifer Cleary Named Manchester's Director of Culture and Creative Industries, page 6. Photo supplied by Manchester City Council.

This is a look-back edition, put together in November 2026 from stories that appeared online in July 2026. Manchester Magazine's first digital edition was published in November 2026.

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Photo: Mark Waugh

MANCHESTER

Thousands Gather for Manchester Day Parade with Catalan Twist

Thousands of people gathered in Manchester city centre today, Sunday 26 July, to celebrate Manchester Day, one of the city's best-loved annual events, which this year featured a distinctive Catalan twist.

The highlight of the celebrations was the spectacular Manchester Day Parade, featuring more than 500 participants from 25 community groups, alongside an afternoon of free family-friendly activities.

In an exciting first for Manchester Day, this year also saw artists and performers from Barcelona join in the celebrations as part of a unique partnership with the Catalan city.

It follows Manchester's role as guest city at last year's La Merce Festival in Barcelona, which saw performers and musicians from Manchester invited to Barcelona to take part in the iconic annual festival.

Today's stunning Manchester Day parade, a crowd-pleaser from start to finish, has been several months in the making and was brought to life by local community groups from across the city who worked alongside artists in the run-up to the big day, along with artists and performers from Barcelona, to help create a parade filled with music, energy, colour, and Catalan vibes.

Led by Manchester's very own giant-sized Queen Bee and Worker Bee and joined by

"Manchester Day has always been our city's favourite day of the year, but this year was without doubt every more special: the best Manchester Day yet!"

Barcelona's own larger-than-life giants taking their first-ever trip outside of Barcelona, the Gegants de la Ciutat de Barcelona, the oldest and most significant pair of giants in Catalonia, representing Kind Jaume I and Queen Violant d'Hongria, this year's parade provided plenty of seize-the-moment selfie opportunities for the cheering crowds.

Parade highlights included an amazing Chinese junk boat complete with the Hong Kong skyline above it, an enormous basket filled with the most amazing colourful fungi, a huge bookshelf stuffed with over-sized books, the hungry caterpillar cycling along the parade route, stilt walkers with their heads in the clouds, and a flock of exotic birds on umbrellas, as well as a kingfisher, a beautiful phoenix, and even an eagle on a bike!

Volunteers from Friends of the Earth also brought a collection of oversized animals from endangered species to highlight the dangers facing some of our most beloved creatures including red squirrel, puffin, and a beautiful butterfly.

With dancers from community groups across the city, many wearing traditional costumes, and live music throughout, the parade wound its way through the city as crowds lined the streets, from St Peter's Square, along Deansgate, Cross Street and Princess Street, before coming to a finish back at St Peter's Square.

Away from the parade the city's squares were filled with live music, dancing, theatre shows and pop-up performances, from duelling Shakespeares, unicycling knights and damsels in distress, to serenading singers in a punt that glided through the city streets, giant polar bears, a brimstone dragon, and even an enormous walk-in sperm whale for youngsters to step inside for story-time sessions with fishy tales.

Mancunians took to the streets in their thousands throughout the day to make the most of the Manchester Day festivities and to give a massive Manchester welcome to the artists and performers who had travelled from Barcelona to take part in the day.

Catalan highlights included The Ultimate Player's Handbook: a fabulous dance performance that saw dancers from Manchester's own Company Chameleon join forces with dancers from Catalan company Clementine & Lisard to perform a vibrant dance piece created and first performed at La Merce last year.

Performance artist and Catalan superstar Joan Català also paid a visit to Manchester, performing with Pelat in a show that blurred the lines between circus, dance and thrilling theatre.

The crowds also loved the acrobatics, dance and physical theatre of Catalan performers Elelei with their piece Too Much, alongside an immersive travelling pop-up performance theatre piece from Kamchàtka, and Zum-Zum Theatre's incredible herd of bright pink inflatable hippos.

By Manchester Magazine Online 27 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/thousands-gather-for-manchester-day-parade-with-catalan-twist**

Jennifer Cleary Named Manchester's Director of Culture and Creative Industries



Photo supplied by Manchester City Council

Jennifer Cleary has been named as the Director of Culture and Creative Industries helping to keep the arts at the heart of the city's ongoing growth and help more people and communities experience and take part in Manchester's thriving cultural offer.

Jen has more than 20years experience working as a senior leader in cultural strategy, investment and major events, currently as Director, Combined Arts and North at Arts Council England (ACE).

At ACE she's led on new partnerships, programmes and opportunities driving ambition and equality, including the new Inclusive Sport and Culture Festival in partnership with UK Sport, and the Theatre Breakthrough Fund targeting new and ambitious ideas by Black, Asian and ethnically diverse theatre makers in the North.

Previously, Jen was Director of Creative Engagement at Manchester International Festival, leading award-winning programmes of participatory commissioning and producing, artist development, education and engagement, talent development and fundraising. She also played a key role in the early development of the Greater Manchester Cultural Skills Consortium and the Factory Academy, aiming to transform pathways into the cultural industries.

Jen sits on the Internationalisation and Marketing Advisory Board for Marketing Manchester and has previously sat as a board member of the arts organisation Walk the Plank, who help deliver the annual Manchester Day celebration.

The Director of Culture and Creative Industries provides strategic leadership for Manchester's cultural and creative sectors, ensuring that arts, culture and creativity are central to the city's economic growth, regeneration, community wellbeing and international reputation.

The role leads delivery of Manchester's ten-year cultural strategy, Always Everywhere: Manchester's Cultural Ambition 2024–2034, while championing the development of creative industries across music, film, media, design and the wider cultural economy.

By Manchester Magazine Online 29 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/jennifer-cleary-named-manchesters-director-of-culture-and-creative-industries**

Manchester Summer Reading Challenge Returns To Inspire Young Readers



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The annual Summer Reading Challenge is back, giving children and their families the chance to take part in the hugely popular event and encouraging young readers to keep enjoying books throughout the summer holidays.

Launching today, 1 July, as part of a series of three events across the week, more than a hundred eager Year 1 and 2 pupils at Wythenshawe Forum Library enjoyed a football-themed reading activity, Footy Fairy tales, to coincide with the World Cup. With live music, super songs and fabulous characters, this engaging storytelling show combined the excitement of the football stadium with the magic of a good story, to prove once and for all that the beautiful game has something for everyone.

And “Read to the Beat” the overarching theme for the Summer Reading Challenge this year is all about connecting reading with music, rhythm and creativity.

This popular book challenge has run in Manchester Libraries for more than 20 years and encourages children aged 4 -12 years to keep reading during the summer holidays helping to activate their imaginations and prevent the dip in literacy over the long summer holidays.

This year Manchester Libraries will be promoting the challenge to schools across the city to encourage pupils to sign up and visit their local library to borrow books and complete the challenge, helping children feel ready to return to school in September as well as supporting Year 6 pupils as they prepare for high school.

By Manchester Magazine Online 1 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/manchester-summer-reading-challenge-returns-to-inspire-young-readers**

MANCHESTER

KJ Akay's New Memoir Shines a Light on 1960s Manchester



8

Barnsley-born author and former primary school teacher KJ Akay (born Jennifer Wragg), 81 is celebrating a breakthrough year in 2026, after her childhood memoir The Fruits of Victory soared to #1 in Amazon's Regional UK Biographies chart. While the book reflects on her early life in post-war Barnsley, its success has paved the way for a deeply personal follow-up rooted in a new chapter of her life: Manchester.

Her latest memoir, Life Around the Sparrow, shifts the spotlight firmly onto 1960s Manchester, where Akay began her teaching career after leaving home. Picking up where her first book ended, it traces her move to the city and her experiences between 1965 and 1972, offering a vivid and unfiltered portrait of life in one of Manchester's most hard-pressed communities.

By Manchester Magazine Online 14 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/kj-akays-new-memoir-shines-a-light-on-1960s-manchester**

MANCHESTER

From Photography to Plate, Shivani's Journey into Running a Café as Creative Practice



8

A new independent café in Fallowfield is bringing together food, art and community, with its founder hoping to challenge traditional ideas about what it means to build a creative career in Manchester.

Marigold Café opened on Lloyd Street South in May and was founded by 25-year-old British Asian artist Shivani Patel. After just a few months in business, the café has begun attracting a mix of local residents and students, adding another independent venue to Fallowfield's growing high street.

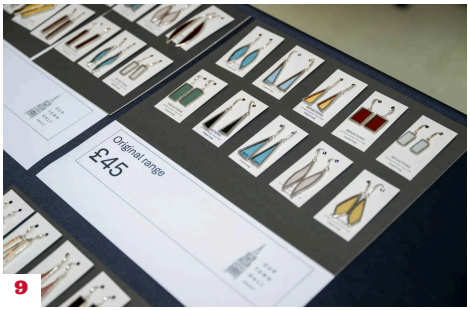
The business was established in less than two months after Shivani came across a vacant unit while completing a master's degree in Fine Art at the Glasgow School of Art.

"I walked into the space and just thought, I can actually do something with this," she said.

By Huma Ahmed Online 28 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/from-photography-to-plate-shivanis-journey-into-running-a-cafe-as-creative-practice**

MANCHESTER

Stained Glass From Manchester Town Hall Transformed Into Wearable Art



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A unique jewellery collection crafted from original stained glass salvaged during the restoration of Manchester Town Hall is now available.

The Town Hall Jewellery collection has been created by stained-glass artist Lin Fletcher, who is part of the expert team repairing and restoring more than 4,000 windows as part of the Manchester Town Hall restoration project.

The jewellery is now for sale and will be sold through the Manchester Central Library shop with all the profits going to the Lord Mayor's Charity.

By Manchester Magazine Online 15 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/stained-glass-from-manchester-town-hall-transformed-into-wearable-art**

MANCHESTER

Chorlton Street Art Project Brings Colour and Community Pride to District Centre



9

A vibrant new street art project has transformed parts of Chorlton, bringing artists, traders and residents together to create a more colourful and welcoming space for the whole community.

The project has been led by The Chorlton Civic Society who helped steer the response to the increasing amount of graffiti being found on walls and shutters, which many believed was negatively reflecting on the area. The business shutter design project was made after the success of previous community art initiatives in Chorlton, including artwork at the Metrolink station, utility box designs and murals on the two main Metrolink bridges, the project aimed to improve the look and feel of the area while reducing unwanted graffiti.

By Manchester Magazine Online 23 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/chorlton-street-art-project-brings-colour-and-community-pride-to-district-centre**

In brief



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MANCHESTER

Forget Gold or Bronze: Manchester Open Winners Receive Handmade Wiggly Pink and Orange Ceramic Sculptures

Whilst Oscars are lavishly plated in 24-carat gold and BAFTA awards are cast from bronze, the victors of this year's Manchester Open art show instead took home eye-catching pink and orange ceramic sculptures, handmade in the city, to celebrate their winners' status.

By Sara Teiger Online 30 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/forget-gold-or-bronze-manchester-open-winners-receive-handmade-wiggly-pink-and-orange-ceramic-sculptures**



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MANCHESTER

St John Ambulance Launches Casual Responder Pilot In Greater Manchester

St John Ambulance is launching a pilot programme in Greater Manchester to help meet increasing demand for event healthcare services.

By Manchester Magazine Online 5 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/st-john-ambulance-launches-casual-responder-pilot-in-greater-manchester**



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MANCHESTER

Manchester Fashion Graduate Brings Adaptive Designs to Market Street

A schuh pilot project showcasing emerging creative talent in Manchester has been extended, as the footwear brand partners with a young local adaptive fashion company for Disability Pride Month.

By Manchester Magazine Online 20 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/manchester-fashion-graduate-brings-adaptive-designs-to-market-street**



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MANCHESTER

Manchester Council Plans £3 Million Skills Investment For Residents

Manchester City Council is set to invest almost £3 million in new initiatives designed to help more residents benefit from the city's economic growth.

By Manchester Magazine Online 5 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/manchester-council-plans-3-million-skills-investment-for-residents**

In brief

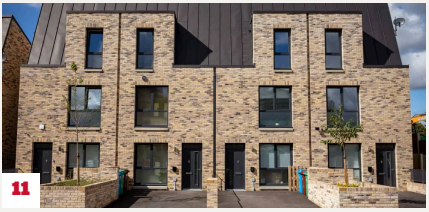


Photo: Kamran Butt

MANCHESTER

Record-Breaking Year for Manchester's Ambitious Housing Strategy

Manchester built more homes in the last year than all 32 Greater London boroughs combined, according to a report heard by the Council's Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee today, Wednesday 22 July.

By Manchester Magazine Online 22 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/record-breaking-year-for-manchesters-ambitious-housing-strategy**

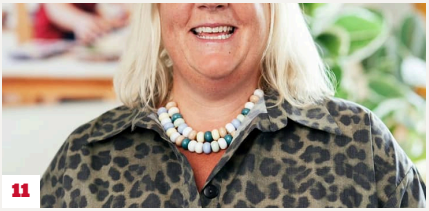


MANCHESTER

GM4Women2028 Event Brings Greater Manchester Together in Rochdale

More than 100 attendees gathered at Rochdale Library on Saturday 4th July 2026 for GM4Women2028's annual Dialogue, Deeds & Determination event, bringing together Greater Manchester's people for a day of discussion, collaboration and action.

By Manchester Magazine Online 16 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/gm4women2028-event-brings-greater-manchester-together-in-rochdale**



MANCHESTER

Manchester Nursery Support Centre Backs Menopause Workplace Pledge

Partou, one of the UK's largest day nursery providers, has signed the Menopause Workplace Pledge, a national campaign led by the charity Wellbeing of Women that encourages employers to take practical steps to support people experiencing perimenopause and menopause symptoms.

By Manchester Magazine Online 7 July 2026
Continued at **manchestermagazine.co.uk/manchester-nursery-support-centre-backs-menopause-workplace-pledge**



CHESTER

Kings Moat Community Primary School Handed Over Ahead of September Opening

Cheshire West and Chester Council has officially handed over the brand-new Kings Moat Community Primary School, marking a major milestone for one of Chester's growing communities.

By Barbara Parker Online 15 July 2026
Continued at **chestermagazine.co.uk/kings-moat-community-primary-school-handed-over-ahead-of-september-opening**

In brief



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LIVERPOOL

Liverpool Achieves Prestigious International Recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City

The prestigious recognition from UNICEF UK acknowledges the progress Liverpool has made in embedding children's rights across services, policies and communities, ensuring that children and young people are listened to, respected and given meaningful opportunities to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

By Barbara Parker Online 22 July 2026
Continued at **liverpoolmagazine.com/liverpool-achieves-prestigious-international-recognition-as-a-unicef-child-friendly-city**

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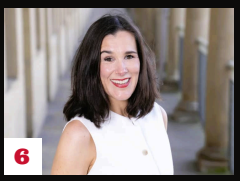



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