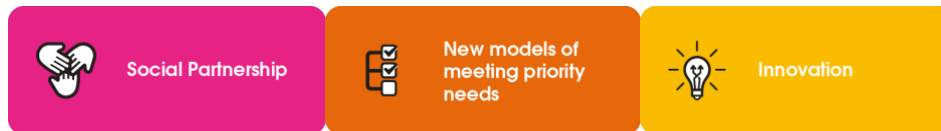




COMMUNITY



Chorley Council

Chorley Together

Chorley Together is a boroughwide partnership that strengthens how the council and the voluntary sector work side by side to support residents. By investing in advice, training, and funding, the network has supported over 300 local groups in enhancing community resilience and celebrating volunteers who help Chorley.

Chorley Together was originally established in 2019 as a response to Covid-19, helping us identify vulnerable residents and establish a borough-wide support system during a time of greatest need. When the pandemic subsided, the network did not disappear. Instead, it naturally evolved, enabling us to maintain close collaboration with partners and to distribute grants so they could continue providing vital support within their communities.

In 2024, the council reviewed how it supported the third sector, and we decided to strengthen and formalise our relationship with civil society partners so that, together, we could deliver more to residents and directly advance the council's priority of creating healthy, safe, and engaged communities. Through consultations and discussions with our voluntary partners, we identified some of the barriers they faced, particularly around access to advice, practical support, and opportunities to connect with one another. To make a meaningful difference, we invested in both funding and staff, and created a new role, the Voluntary and Community Sector Development Officer, to join our Community Partnerships team. This post sits alongside existing officers who provide training and signposting to support partners in submitting bids for large and medium-sized grants. Together, we agreed the best way to move forward was to reinvigorate Chorley Together and utilise the network as the primary route for providing this support.

A key part of the refresh involved creating a dedicated section of the council website for Chorley Together. In effect, these pages now serve as a one-stop shop for community groups to access council grants alongside other funding sources and support. It provides information for both existing community groups and those wishing to establish new ones, including how to identify community needs. The site also offers details on volunteering, including support for

individuals using it as a stepping stone into employment. In 2025, the webpages were viewed more than 20,500 times, demonstrating the value of this resource.

Chorley Together also brings together representatives from the public sector, such as health and uniformed services, alongside social housing providers, to promote programmes that support residents and make referral pathways easier. It provides a vehicle for these services to consult with the VCFS to improve services and to provide valuable insight to either improve or create new services that address gaps in local provision.



Chorley Together volunteers attending their reward event

As well as the help available on the webpages, community groups are able to sign up to membership of Chorley Together. Membership is free and opens the door to additional opportunities such as a volunteer recognition programme, networking opportunities, funding opportunities and promotional/marketing support. The Chorley Together members value the opportunity to come together in-person and online so they can network, learn from each other and increase their awareness of the variety of other groups operating locally to support the borough's residents. Through the membership, we have been able to identify topics to provide training on, such as carrying out robust risk assessments, food safety, safeguarding and making better funding bids. This training has now been delivered by council officers.

Recognising the incredible contribution of volunteers was another of our priorities. So, alongside the benefits of gaining practical skills and support, we also launched a new reward and recognition

scheme, which includes a discount card for local businesses and events, as well as milestone certificates for volunteers who have given one, five or ten years of their time. This helps formalise their experience and can be used as a stepping stone into paid employment . So far, 487 people have signed up. The Chorley Together membership scheme launched in June with a celebration meal, giving members the chance to meet each other to network and connect with the officers supporting the programme.

Since its re-launch, Chorley Together has supported over 316 voluntary, community and faith groups; in turn, these groups have supported over 38,000 residents. 17 free training courses have been delivered by the council, with over 200 volunteers upskilled to support their voluntary group. This ecosystem of community support also means we have a provision of diverse and accessible services, which provide essential support to our vulnerable residents. Chorley Together also supports residents in accessing information to help them take on roles in the management of voluntary groups and volunteering.

Our approach has laid firm foundations for community groups to grow and thrive. The sustainable legacy of our work is a set of resources for VCFS partners to use, a programme of training provided by council officers and a visible, popular volunteer reward scheme that benefits local organisations as much as it benefits volunteers.



Chorley Together Logo

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