Partnership Celebratory Report 2021–2026

Westminster Foundation

CHESTER FOOTBALL CLUB COMMUNITY TRUST

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About Chester FC Community Trust

Who is Chester FC Community Trust?

Chester FC Community Trust is proud to be the official charity and club community organisation for Chester Football Club.

We use the Chester FC brand to inspire and improve Cheshire West communities through sport, education, health and wellbeing, and social inclusion.





What does Chester FC Community Trust do?

We work with people of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those facing disadvantage, to improve physical and mental wellbeing, develop skills and confidence, reduce social isolation, and provide opportunities to reach their full potential through sport, education and community programmes.

Why were Chester FC Community Trust invited to join this partnership?

The opportunity to help create the King George V Sports Hub was a compelling project that promised a lasting legacy of life-changing sporting facilities for the Blacon community and for young people across Chester and beyond.

Although the Westminster Foundation does not ordinarily provide capital grants, Blacon had a significant need for a facility that could serve as a base for sport and a range of other activities designed to improve local people's life chances and wellbeing. Chester FC Community Trust already had a strong reputation, a passionate approach and a clear vision to change lives for the better.

Alongside the planned sports education programme, new opportunities for girls' football and an inclusive physical activity offer for all, this made the partnership too valuable an opportunity to pass up. The grant therefore included a contribution towards the capital build, as well as funding for the staff costs of community development workers.

Visit Chester FC Community Trusts' website to find out more: www.community.chesterfc.com

About The Westminster Foundation

The Westminster Foundation is an independent grant maker and registered charity representing the charitable interests of The Duke of Westminster and Grosvenor businesses.

We provide long-term sustainable help to organisations working with vulnerable children and young people and the support around them. Our grants are focused on early intervention work that inspires children and young people aged 0–25, giving them opportunities to thrive, build confidence and raise their aspirations. Our early intervention focus is critical to young peoples health, security and fulfilment. We seek guidance from local and national experts to help us work at the heart of systemic issues that perpetuate intergenerational inequalities.

Through our funding, the Westminster Foundation supports organisations to provide opportunities to young lives, families and the communities around them. The Foundation collaborates with those we trust and who care about the same issues.

What we fund

- Charities registered with the Charity Commission or organisations with exclusively charitable objectives operating in Westminster, Chester, rural Cheshire West, rural Lancashire, rural Sutherland, and those delivering programmes nationally to rural areas of the UK.
- Community organisations (e.g. youth hubs) that understand the local need and have the long-term capacity to support their young beneficiaries.
- Core costs and project-specific grants.

Where we fund

We are primarily a place-based funder operating in Westminster, Chester and rural communities in the UK. We also support national and international organisations that play a role in preventing long-term systemic problems for children and young people.

Partnership Grants

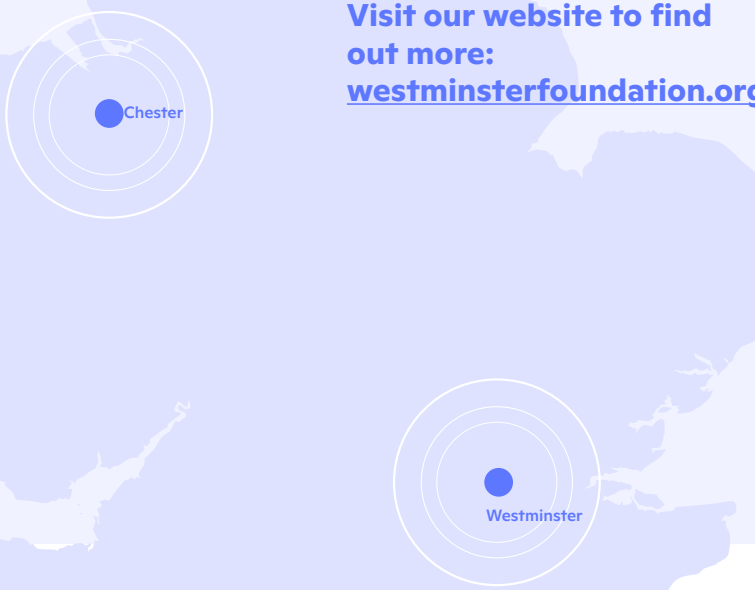
Partnership Grants are a multi-year strategic investment, typically £100,000 per annum over five years. These grants are collaborative endeavours, working with organisations as experts in their field to understand an issue, improve learning, experiment and influence change. We see these organisations as our partners. We back them to undertake their crucial work every day and sit alongside them, providing the support they tell us they need.







Visit our website to find out more: westminsterfoundation.org.uk



Achievements

The Westminster Foundation Partnership Grant has been transformational for Chester FC Community Trust, providing the stability and confidence to grow our organisation, expand services and create a lasting community legacy.

The most significant achievement has been the development of the King George V Community Sports Hub, a £1.8m facility in Blacon which has become a central base for our work, providing high-quality spaces for sport, education, health and wellbeing activities, and community engagement. With the Foundation's support, we have expanded beyond traditional football delivery to develop health and wellbeing programmes including walking sports, mental health initiatives, cancer rehabilitation and activities tackling social isolation, helping us reach new audiences and demonstrate the wider impact of sport.

The Hub has become a dedicated base for girls' football, providing high-quality pitches and facilities for Cheshire Girls Football League's regular fixtures and training sessions. This has made the girls' football more accessible to local players, reducing the need to travel long distances and creating a stronger, more sustainable pathway for girls to participate and develop in the game.

The grant has also supported the growth of our Post-16 Football Education programme, enabling young people to combine education and football development in a supportive environment, where they can gain qualifications and progress into employment or further education.

More recently, funding has helped establish the Blacon Youth Hub, providing a safe and welcoming space where children and young people can build friendships, access positive activities and receive support.

Beyond individual programmes, the partnership has provided organisational stability, helping us retain key staff, strengthen partnerships, attract further funding and plan for the future. The Westminster Foundation's investment has supported our evolution from a football-focused initiative into a broader community organisation delivering measurable social impact across Cheshire West.



"This five-year partnership with Chester FC Community Trust is an example of why it's important to make long-term investment in communities. It is fantastic to see how King George V Sports Hub has become a thriving centre of activity, helping more children and young people in Chester to access opportunities in the community."

Kate Brown, Director, the Westminster Foundation

Impact of the partnership on...

Young people

Through our monitoring and evaluation, we have seen strong progress among the young people we support.

84% of young people reported increased confidence.

82% of young people reported a stronger sense of community and belonging.

Launched in 2024, the Blacon Youth Hub has quickly become a valued local provision, with 75 registered members and an average weekly attendance of 51 young people across its junior and senior sessions.

Our Post-16 Football Education programme has also continued to grow, giving young people the opportunity to combine education with football development while gaining qualifications, building employability skills & progressing into further education, training or employment.

Together, these demonstrate how our work is helping young people become more confident, connected and active.

Volunteers

Volunteers are central to Chester FC Community Trust's success, supporting programmes, events and community activities across the organisation. Over the past five years, our volunteer network has grown alongside the Trust, helping us extend our reach and strengthen community connections.

We currently engage around 20 volunteers who support community events, youth provision, matchday experiences and health and wellbeing programmes. Their contribution enables us to deliver a wider range of activities while ensuring they remain welcoming, inclusive and community-led.

The development of the King George V Community Sports Hub has further expanded opportunities for community involvement, providing a dedicated space for volunteers to support activities and connect local organisations with our programmes.

Growing partnerships

The Westminster Foundation Partnership Grant has enabled Chester FC Community Trust to strengthen and expand our partnership network, helping us work with a wider range of organisations to increase our impact across the community.

Over the past five years, we have built strong relationships with local authorities, schools, health organisations, community groups, funders and businesses. As a result, we now deliver more than 30 programmes across sport, education, health and wellbeing, and social inclusion, many of them delivered through partnership working.

A key example is the King George V Community Sports Hub, developed in collaboration with the Westminster Foundation, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and other funding partners. The Hub has become a focal point for community activity, enabling us to host a broader range of services and work alongside more local organisations.

We have also expanded our community reach through the Blacon Youth Hub, developed with local stakeholders to provide a safe and positive space for young people.

Overall, the Partnership Grant has enabled us to move beyond delivering individual projects and develop a connected network of partners working towards a shared goal: creating happier, healthier and fairer communities with Chester FC at their heart.



Case study

For many young people in Blacon, opportunities to continue education locally after GCSEs have traditionally been limited.

With no sixth form provision in the area, many students have had to travel elsewhere to continue their studies, contributing to higher rates of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

To address this challenge, Chester FC Community Trust delivers the Chester FC Football Education programme in partnership with Access Sports College, offering 16 to 19-year-olds the opportunity to combine full-time education with high-quality football development. Students work towards recognised qualifications while benefiting from coaching, mentoring and competitive playing opportunities in a supportive environment.

The programme is designed to do more than develop footballing ability. By providing positive role models, structured activities and ongoing support, it helps young people build confidence, improve wellbeing and prepare for their next steps in education or employment.

In 2024/25, the programme achieved a **100% pass rate**, with every student progressing into a positive destination, including university, employment, apprenticeships or opportunities within Chester FC.

By combining education, personal development and sport, the Football Education programme is helping young people develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed.

> *"Since starting the course, my confidence has grown and I've thrived in every aspect. It's given me new opportunities and opened a lot of doors for my future, which is thanks to the tutors, and everybody involved being so supportive and encouraging. I now have a clear idea of what I would like to do in my career. I am planning to complete a Foundation Degree with UCFB alongside working for Chester FC Community Trust as a football coach part-time."*
>
> Kingsley, Second Year Student



Reflections on our partnership

Chester FC Community Trust

Looking back, the partnership has enabled us to achieve far more than we imagined.

A defining milestone has been the development of the King George V Community Sports Hub, providing a permanent home for our work and a platform for growth. Over the past five years, we have expanded our health and wellbeing offer, grown our Post-16 Football Education programme and established the Blacon Youth Hub, providing activities, support and opportunities for young people in the local community.

Like many charities, we have faced challenges, including rising costs, changing community needs and the ongoing need for sustainable funding. However, the stability provided by the Partnership Grant has enabled us to plan strategically, respond to local need and continue investing in high-quality services.

Through improved monitoring and evaluation, we have been able to demonstrate the difference our work makes. Our 2024/25 Social Value Impact Report identified £8.7 million of social value generated, highlighting the return created through investment in our programmes and partnerships.

Importantly, the relationship with the Westminster Foundation has felt like a genuine partnership rather than simply a funding arrangement. For future funders, we believe this partnership demonstrates our ability to turn investment into measurable community impact. With the right support, a football club community organisation can become a trusted local anchor, bringing people together, and creating lasting positive change.

CHESTER FOOTBALL CLUB COMMUNITY TRUST

The Westminster Foundation

It has been exciting to see the King George V Community Sports Hub take shape.

On our first site visit, the field was disused, uneven and overgrown; today, it is a vibrant community facility with all-weather pitches, floodlighting, a purpose-built car park and a modern clubhouse and flexible community space. The Westminster Foundation was pleased to work alongside Chester FC Community Trust and other partners to help make this ambitious vision a reality. The team's perseverance throughout the fundraising and development has paid off, creating an important and lasting asset for Blacon.

Westminster Foundation

The Hub has become a home for girls' football locally, hosting regular league matches and training sessions and helping to drive participation by enabling girls to play much closer to home. The Football Education programme has also created a valuable and accessible alternative pathway for young people in Blacon. Alongside these, established offers such as pan-disability football, walking football and netball remain popular, while the Blacon Youth Hub has been a runaway success.

The breadth of activity developed from scratch is particularly impressive. Wellbeing walks, stay-and-play sessions for babies and toddlers, art, school holiday activities and healthy diet education delivered with the local council demonstrate that the Hub is about far more than sport. It has been a pleasure to work with Chester FC Community Trust and to see the team's passion and hard work bring about such positive change in the community.

Future developments



As the Westminster Foundation Partnership Grant comes to an end, Chester FC Community Trust enters its next chapter with a strong foundation, clear ambitions and a renewed focus on creating lasting community impact. The support provided over the past five years has helped us build the infrastructure, partnerships and reputation needed to grow as a trusted community organisation.

Our priority is to sustain and expand the programmes that have proven to make a meaningful difference, while continuing to respond to local needs. We will build on the success of the King George V Community Sports Hub by increasing community use, developing new partnerships and creating more opportunities for local people to get involved. We also plan to grow initiatives such as Blacon Youth Hub, our Post-16 Football Education programme, health and wellbeing activities, inclusive sport and school-based projects.

Sustainability will remain a key focus. We will continue to diversify our income through grant funding, sponsorship, fundraising, programme income and strategic partnerships, while demonstrating the social value and impact of our work. The strong relationships developed through the Westminster Foundation partnership provide a platform for future growth and investment.

Ultimately, our ambition remains unchanged: to create happier, healthier and fairer communities with Chester FC at their heart. The Westminster Foundation Partnership Grant has helped us build a sustainable model for community impact, and we look forward to building on this legacy and reaching even more people in the years ahead.