

Programme of Work 2005-2008



Contents

Our work in the city: an introduction 3

Why the Resource Centre is needed, who benefits, and what we do

Our users 5

Which groups use the Resource Centre, how often, and what they think of us

Our services 7

What we provide, and how the services are developing

- ◆ Special Support 7
- ◆ Equipment for organising 9
- ◆ Information for organising 11

Funding our work 13

Where our funds come from and the crisis ahead

Annual accounts and budgets 17

Aims and objects 19

Standards and values 19

Organisation and management 20

The charitable company, trustees and staff

Access to services 21

Opening hours, contact details and access for disabled users

Published by:

*Resource Centre
6 Tilbury Place
Brighton
BN2 0GY*

*For further information, please
contact:*

*Dave Witts
Tel. (01273) 606160
email:
dave.witts@resourcecentre.org.uk*

Our work in the city: an introduction

The Resource Centre exists to support community activity. By this we mean the work done by the hundreds of small groups, generally run by unpaid volunteers, which organise a huge number of events and activities in the city. We recognise, of course, the important role of the voluntary sector, of business and of government, but it is these small groups who are our priority and are by far the heaviest users of our services.

We focus on these groups because we believe in a diverse, inclusive, active and democratic city. We believe such a city can only exist on the basis of thriving small scale local activity.

Tens of thousands of people are active every day in their neighbourhood, their community of interest or in city wide organisations. The range of activity is immense and so is the variety of people involved. All of this activity greatly improves the quality of life of all of us who live and work in Brighton & Hove.

Who benefits?

The city benefits, because more people are actively involved in its development. This involvement can be formal, through participating in consultation structures or development agencies. More often it is not: it is people themselves getting on and developing something they think is lacking. Either way the life of the city is enhanced.

Neighbourhoods and communities of interest benefit both directly, from the work of groups, and indirectly, from the increased cohesion their activities bring.

Services, and those who use them, benefit. Groups provide services that nobody else provides. They also provide them in a way that statutory organisations cannot. Often, the people running a community based service are themselves users, or have been in the same situation, and can therefore respond more fully to needs.

The participants themselves benefit: they gain a sense of satisfaction at contributing, they build their confidence and increase their skills and often they even enjoy themselves!

The goal

Together with these people, and other voluntary organisations, the Resource Centre works to build a community and voluntary sector which is

- ◆ **diverse**, with groups which reflect and promote the interests of the full range of people in our city
- ◆ **accessible**, with groups whose services and activities are open to all
- ◆ **democratic**, with groups which reflect the wishes and views of their members
- ◆ **collaborative**, with groups which work together
- ◆ **empowering**, especially for small groups, marginalised communities and deprived areas
- ◆ **stable**, with groups which have sound organisation and practices
- ◆ **effective**, with groups which achieve their aims

In short, the kind of community sector which reflects the kind of city we all want to live and work in.

*Thank you, thank you, thank you! It's great to know you exist!
Very best wishes.*

Brighton & Hove Integration Project

What we do.....

The Resource Centre is unique in our emphasis on equipment, and we specialise in practical help. We believe those involved in groups are best placed to decide what they want to do and how they want to get together to do it. We also believe that this self-activity is most effective when groups have access to good quality equipment, up to date and relevant information and good practical advice.

These beliefs led to the establishment of an organisation which specialises in providing groups with 'the things which they need'. The emphasis is on both parts of the phrase.

....and why we are good at it

We believe we are good at what we do and that our strengths stem from our independence, our small scale and our democratic management structure:

- ◆ We are **responsive**: acting quickly to follow up new groups as they emerge, and to meet new needs as existing groups develop.
- ◆ We are **flexible**: each group has a range of needs and in each case this range will be different. Flexibility enables us to deal with each group on its own terms.
- ◆ We are **approachable**: being small we are seen as open and welcoming by less established groups.
- ◆ We are **neutral**: local groups need support even when in conflict with other agencies or groups; neutral support is vital in this case.
- ◆ We are **efficient and reliable**: groups expect a professional service and know that they can rely on our equipment, our information and our advice.

- ◆ We provide **things**. The major part of our work is managing over 120 different types of equipment. Our information is aimed at filling specific gaps – where can I find a marquee? – and our advice at providing specific answers – how can I keep my accounts?
- ◆ We meet **needs**. Every item of equipment which we have is here because a group has requested it. Similarly all the information we have is the result of a group asking us a question, and all of our advice expertise is based on a group coming to us with a problem.

This concentration on things means groups know we are likely to have something or know where to get it. It is also important that we can provide it efficiently and reliably – it is no good if equipment is often broken or information out of date. We concentrate on needs because groups are the best judges of what will most support their work. By responding to what groups know is necessary we are maximising the support we can give to community activity across the city.

We couldn't have put it better ourselves

“General community activity, such as sports clubs, social clubs, parent and toddler groups, faith based groups, carnivals, health and education groups are informally run and may not at first site (sic) appear relevant to improvement programmes, particularly alongside outputs, such as job creation. However, these networks and groups provide the basic social environment from which more targeted initiatives can be built: they all help to provide personal support, confidence and skill development.”

(Brighton & Hove and Adur Area
Investment Programme 13.1.4)

Our users

The first thing to note is the sheer number of groups who now use the Centre: 1,408 different groups last year. This represents a 39% increase on the previous year and is double the number of groups who used us five years ago.

A high proportion of these are smaller grass roots groups. In more than 65% of our user groups fewer than 10 people do the main organising, while 70% have no paid staff and only 25% receive a grant from the city council. For almost 60% of our users we are the only support agency from which they receive support.

The massive number of small groups using us reflects our emphasis on community rather than voluntary organisations. The fact that so many groups use only us reflects the uniqueness of what we provide, as well as the range of our services.

User groups are involved in every facet of life in the city. When asked in our survey to describe what they did large numbers said they provided advice, training or support to individuals (46%), worked to improve their local area or neighbourhood (38%), or organised social or play activities for young people or children (34%). Smaller but still substantial numbers were also involved in more specific activities such as creating art (22%) or providing religious services to a faith community (7%). (Many groups, of course, do more than one thing and so the figures do not add up to 100%.) Our user groups come from such a broad spectrum that we can fairly claim that the Centre's work supports every type of activity in the city.

Great equipment and absolutely brilliant service. Friendly, supportive, reliable and affordable.

Brighton
Unemployed Centre
Families Project

How often did they use us?

Groups made 4,383 visits to use the Centre in the course of the year. (We define a 'visit' as someone coming to the Centre or receiving information or advice by telephone, letter, e-mail or through our website.) This works out at over 20 visits a day for each day we are open. Of these 86% are from groups in Brighton and Hove.

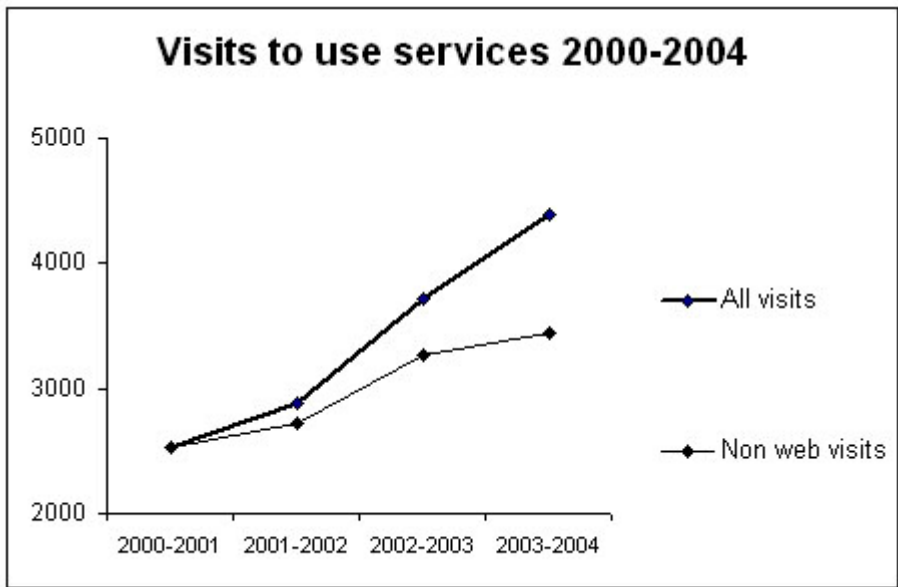
The number of visits is 18% higher than the previous year and 56% up from 5 years ago. While at the Centre we often take these increases for granted – it seems the number of groups and uses rises every year – it is worth noting that it is a remarkable achievement since there has been no increase of staffing levels.

Clearly, a major contributor to the rise is internet use, which now accounts for around a fifth of all uses. However, as the graph on page 6 shows, even without the internet, use of the Centre has risen by more than a third in the last 4 years.

We know that our own work is not the only determinant of how heavily we are used: the level of activity among groups always has an effect. As a result we expect figures to fluctuate over time. However the rise in the last four years is too large, and too consistent, to be a fluctuation. It seems to be a trend based on

- ◆ The increased amount of equipment we have available and the increased variety of the kind of equipment. This in turn reflects our success in fundraising.
- ◆ The increased visibility of the Centre. We carried out a burst of publicity in early 2002 when we had both our website and our new SRB project to tell groups about. Since then the website itself has been the first point of contact for many groups who have then gone on to use other services.

Finally, there is a big variation in how regularly groups use us. Around half our users are regulars who use us more than three times a year, while roughly a fifth use us only once a year. This reflects the variety of the activity of the groups themselves: a community group may produce a bi-monthly newsletter while a school PTA may run an annual fête. It also emphasises the importance of a central source of support, with a wide range of services, if the needs of all these different groups are to be met.



The future – our targets for Brighton and Hove

The majority of our uses are from Brighton and Hove. Assuming we can secure continued funding we expect the following take-up of services from groups in the city in each of the next three years.

- ◆ A minimum of 850 user-groups
- ◆ Equipment services will be used at least 4,000 times
- ◆ A minimum of 1,900 uses of the Information service
- ◆ At least 150 advice sessions or other uses of the Special Support service by small, locally based, groups other than tenants' associations
- ◆ At least 350 uses of the Special Support service by tenants' associations

And what did they think?

The key questions we asked in our survey were 'How satisfied did you feel about the service you received from the Centre?' and 'How useful is the Centre to your group?' The responses are shown below.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not very satisfied
How satisfied did you feel about the service you received from the Centre?	88%	12%	0%
	Very Useful	Useful	Not very useful
How useful is the Centre to your group?	91%	9%	0%

These figures speak for themselves. Not only did we support a record number of groups, on a record number of occasions, but 9 out of 10 users were very satisfied and a similar number found our support very useful.

To deliver these services we must overcome two hurdles. We must continue to receive funding for our work with tenants' associations, in a period when the structure of council housing is in flux. We must fund our special support work when our SRB project ends in April 2006. If we fail in either of these then the delivery of these services, and the continued existence of the Centre itself, is at risk. How we plan to confront these challenges is outlined later in this document.

Where the figures come from

Figures on this page are drawn from our user statistics for 2003-2004 and from the survey of groups who came to the Centre in July 2004. Full reports on both are available.

The survey was carried out in July 2004. We offered survey forms to all groups who came to the Centre in the month and 164 groups took a copy. The response rate was remarkably high at 60%. All users were invited to respond anonymously if they preferred. We were supported in the design of the survey by the Community University Partnership Programme and would like to take this opportunity to thank them. It meant we had a more professional, and useful, survey.

Our services

Special Support Services

A significant, and growing, aspect of our work with groups is our 'special support' service. Use of this service was just over a quarter higher in last year than the year before. There was a corresponding rise in the amount of staff time going into what is our most time-intensive area of work. Since we provide these services mainly to groups in our priority areas, these increases indicate that our targeting has been successful. (For a description of services and of priority areas see **What is Special Support?**)

A major factor in increased demand for this service seems to be the growing complexity confronting community groups and their own growing professionalism. As well as being approached by more groups for advice and consultancy support, we were asked for help on a wider range of issues and on more specialised areas. Our artwork service helped groups with more substantial and complex pieces of work, while many of the accounts we were asked to examine were also complicated.

Advice and consultancy: more complex needs met

The most striking development in our advice and consultancy work is the increase in the number of issues we are being asked to cover. We record each session under a broad category such as 'fundraising advice' or 'writing letters and reports.' In the year 2002 to 2003 we had 20 such categories, but by last year we were covering 31 different subjects.

For a number of years we have provided advice and training in all of the basic issues for groups, such as the role of the chair and publicity. So it is not surprising that the new requests were for more specialised support. What is surprising is the number of new areas we were asked to cover and the number of groups who suddenly wanted this help.

For example, we have always given some advice on issues of legal status. This has mainly been help with a basic constitution or advice as to

whether charitable status is appropriate to a group. Last year we did 10 sessions with groups on charitable status and registration as a charity. This is around average but, in addition, 13 groups asked for help with more complex legal structures. Two of these were fairly new minority ethnic groups wanting to be structured on a more formal basis; two were established community organisations considering limited company status as their work expanded; and several were not-for-profit groups looking for a structure that suited their needs. Of the latter, many were arts groups. One of our responses to these requests was to create an interactive 'route map' on legal structures for our web site.

We also received, for the first time last year, a number of requests for support in various policy areas. A youth group, for example, asked for help in developing a health and safety

What groups think of our support sessions...

- ◆ **Fundraising:** *Lots of good ideas and resources - brilliant ideas for our groups to raise funds for ourselves.*
- ◆ **Policies and management:** *It's been incalculably useful, and we've now reviewed all of our policies.*
- ◆ **Computer training:** *Very helpful. I am trying to get my own computer as soon as I can.*

policy, while a group based in the LGBT community asked our advice on various aspects of employment policy. Some of these fell outside of our priorities for advice and consultation work as they were larger voluntary organisations. However, as one of the largest and longest established voluntary organisations in the city we are happy to share best practice in these areas.

In a further development we are undertaking some intensive work with a small number of pre-school and after-school groups. We are particularly pleased to be carrying out this work, which is being funded by the Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership. We are working in conjunction with EYDCP staff to help the childcare groups make their future more secure by improving their management systems and funding base.

Growth in community newsletters

There has been a marked increase in the number of groups producing newsletters at the Centre over the last two years. This is especially true of tenants' associations, several of whom are now producing quite substantial regular newsletters for their areas. This development is a good example of how we work.

Firstly, the work is very much a joint effort between the Centre and the group involved. They have complete editorial control, and collect together articles from their members. Where necessary we help them knock these articles into shape. We discuss with them what should go where, and we then produce a draft for the group to look at, before final publication.

Secondly, we are flexible in what we offer. If the group feels it needs more help with putting their ideas on paper we can provide it. For people who want to do more of the layout themselves we provide training. However, in most cases the effort of providing a regular newsletter, on top of other demands on their time, means that they are more than happy to leave layout to us. Essentially we focus on what will best help each group achieve its aim, rather than starting with a pre-defined structure of how to do it.

Finally, the work has developed over time. A few groups began to do newsletters, and more expressed an interest. We built on this by organising a workshop on the subject for tenants' associations across the city. We showed them what was possible by looking at newsletters which other groups were producing. We were then able to suggest a package of support that meant people felt confident to take on the task.

Support with newsletters is time-intensive work. As the number of newsletters increases, the increase in staff time is even greater. While the number of occasions on which we prepared artwork for groups increased 30% last year, the time spent on this work rose by 50%.

What is 'Special Support'?

The Centre strives to treat all groups equally. We recognise, however, that we live in a society which is unequal. Some people, when they get together to organise, are confronted with greater difficulties than others.

We do not intend to draw up a list of all those who are disadvantaged by our society. Instead we aim to look at community groups in Brighton and Hove and to give priority to those who we think would benefit from some additional help. Our current priorities are groups based in areas of social housing and run by local people; groups run by black and minority ethnic people; and groups run by disabled people.

The Special Support service breaks down into three broad categories:

- ◆ *Advice, training and consultancy. We deliver this service in a number of ways: advice sessions covering subjects such as fundraising, running meetings and drawing up a constitution; training in practical skills needed by active members, such as computer skills and book-keeping; sessions designed to help groups work through more extensive problems, such as unclear aims or conflicts within the group; researching specialist information; and drafting policies and fundraising applications.*
- ◆ *Examinations of accounts and general financial advice, including charity independent examinations.*
- ◆ *Preparation of leaflets, newsletters; minutes, and letters for groups unable to use our self-help service owing to, for example, disability, language, child-care or distance from the Resource Centre.*

This is not an exhaustive list and the services often overlap when working with any particular group. We want priority groups to know that they can turn to us with any problem or piece of work and that we will help, or find somebody who can.

Examining accounts: regulations get tighter

The Resource Centre examines the end-of-year accounts of around 80 groups each year. While less strict than a formal audit these examinations reassure groups, and funders where relevant, that records are being kept well and proper procedures followed. In many cases the group's books are fairly simple. A matter of a few hundred pounds raised and then spent.

However, the financial situation of others, especially registered charities, can be more complicated. Some of these examinations are increasingly time-consuming, to the extent that we spent 20% more time last year on this work despite doing the same number of jobs.

There are two reasons for this increase in staff time. Firstly, groups themselves, as they grow, tend to increase their turnover. They then need more precise accounting to keep check of this increased activity. In turn the examination requires more time. Secondly, we have a specific role with charities, whether or not they are registered – we act as a charity independent examiner and have duties set out by the Charity Commission.

The accounts of larger charities must comply with the Commission's 'Statement of Recommended Practice'. There is an increasing expectation that even small charities will also comply. As a result, it takes us longer to prepare a set of charity accounts. However, we do not want to simply produce acceptable accounts – the most important thing is to ensure that groups understand the implications of their accounts. For example, groups will store up trouble for themselves if they do not show grants and their expenditure accurately, especially if they appear to show that a grant has been mis-spent. We therefore take considerable time to go over the accounts with each group. At the same time we advise groups on what is needed in their annual report to make sure that this too meets Charity Commission guidelines.

What groups think of our support sessions...

◆ **Producing a newsletter:** *Enabled me to get group newsletter done in time to meet deadline. Hugely useful – showed me how to do lots of things I didn't know how to do.*

◆ **Examination of accounts and financial advice:** *I don't know what I would have done without your help.*

Gives me confidence that my figures and bookkeeping are accurate.

◆ **Help with funding application:** *We have an idea but we can't put it in a plan or wording as you can. You have a wide range of information which helps us a lot.*

What are the Equipment services?

1. Communication

It is an obvious point that every group needs to communicate: among its organisers, with its members, and with the wider public. The need is so obvious that these important services tend to be taken for granted. At the Centre we aim to provide groups with almost every means of communication.

◆ **Desk Top Publishing service:** *It is essential that publicity material and other publications look attractive and professional if they are to catch the eye amid all the junk mail. This service offers a range of computer programmes and equipment to enable groups to design effective publicity material. Although many groups have a high level of computer literacy, a large number need considerable help from our staff.*

◆ **Reprographic service:** *Groups want to print anything from a small quantity of handbills to several thousand newsletters. This service allows them to reproduce, as cheaply as possible, a range of high quality printed material up to A3 size and to finish the job by, say, folding or binding the publication. We also offer a Print service for those groups which prefer to pay a small charge to have their printing done for them.*

◆ **Office service:** *The majority of our user-groups have no premises and very many have no access to the type of basic office facilities which larger organisations take for granted. Without such equipment some groups find it impossible to function. This service offers basic facilities such as word-processing, fax, broadband Internet access and e-mail, and some space in which to work undisturbed.*

Equipment for organising

We are the only local agency to concentrate on the provision of equipment. It is the purpose for which the Centre was founded 29 years ago and it is still the major part of our work. To organise effectively, groups need a wide range of well-maintained specialised equipment together with training and support in its use. Our range has expanded significantly in recent years and we have also increased the support which we give to groups. (To see what we provide, please refer to **What are the Equipment services?**)

Take up

Last year the equipment services were used 5,386 times, an increase of 5% on the previous year. This figure is a good measure of the services' importance to groups, but this is only part of the picture. New equipment, particularly computers and print machines, is enabling groups to do their work more quickly and efficiently as well as producing higher quality results. It is important too to bear in mind the sheer amount of staff time needed for providing support to users and for the backroom tasks of servicing the equipment, stock control, and bookings.

Developments

Just over a year ago we began an ambitious 4-year programme to modernise or replace the bulk of our existing equipment. Our equipment is so heavily used that it has a fairly short life. On top of that, we do our best to keep pace with changes in technology so that our equipment continues to meet groups' needs. The programme will cost at least £77,000 over the four years and fundraising is well on target to meet our aim.

This does not mean that we are now just standing still – we are also bringing in new equipment. We listen to what our users ask

for, building up a list of equipment which groups request but which we do not have. Most of these requests are made when groups are trying to find equipment which they want to use. However groups also put forward ideas when we conduct our User Satisfaction surveys or they simply tell us about a piece of equipment which they have seen in use elsewhere. Our aim is to secure a number of relatively small grants to fund choice items of equipment.

The most requested item recently was a data projector. Linked to a computer, DVD player or video player, this enables groups to give high quality presentations including graphics or film. Thanks to a grant from the Capital Learning Fund we bought a data projector, together with a laptop computer and two large screens. We added new items to the Play equipment service too, among them a parachute and a set of giant

continued over

2. Equipment for hire

- ◆ **Equipment for Meetings and other indoor events:** *All groups hold meetings and, at some stage, nearly every group needs equipment to make the meeting more effective. This may be simply a public address system for an AGM. However, many groups organise training sessions, day schools, and exhibitions. For these, they require more specialised equipment, such as a data projector, for presentations and displays. Many groups hold social evenings or set up video projects, for which we have a stock of equipment.*
- ◆ **Fundraising equipment:** *The majority of neighbourhood groups are self-sufficient and rely on regular fundraising activities throughout the year. Many other groups*

boost existing income by holding fundraising events. Some will organise their own fun day, but most will have a stall at a fête or fair or a table at a car boot sale. A bingo evening or social evening with a raffle is also very popular. We offer a wide range of games and equipment and are continually expanding this service. It is a vital one for groups: a small group may make up to £200 with one or two pieces of our equipment, while a larger group may raise over £1,500 by organising an afternoon fête.

- ◆ **Equipment for Play:** *There are many out-of-school groups, playschemes, and other groups organising play activities for children in all areas of the city. Other groups set up play corners at their meetings or events. We have a range of equipment suitable for both indoor and outdoor events or special occasions.*

dominoes. Figures for last year show that this equipment was indeed needed – use of the Play equipment service rose by 35% while the Meetings & Events service went up by 28%.

In fact, we added to all six of our Equipment services last year, as well as replacing ageing items. Groups saw an improved Reprographic service with the introduction of a third digital print machine with colour printing and a faster folding machine, while the Desk Top Publishing (DTP) service benefited from both new software and hardware. We also took a hard decision to get rid of the colour photocopier which had become unreliable and was producing poor black & white copies in particular. In order to

provide the colour quality which users want, it would have been necessary to replace it with a very expensive, specialist, machine which only staff could operate. We felt that this was not a priority for our limited funding. Although we get frequent requests for colour photocopies, we see it as more important to provide a cheaper and easier service which meets the needs of most of our users. So we bought a top quality black & white digital photocopier and a combined fax/colour printer & copier which is suitable for short runs of colour photocopies. Both machines are a great improvement, giving higher quality images and increased ease of use.

Next on the shopping list is an infra-red hearing system for hearing aid users. For the past eight years we have been hiring out a portable induction loop which is used by groups at meetings or similar events. Now the technology has moved on. An infra-red system is both much clearer for users and very simple for groups to use – just switch it on and it's ready. Unlike an induction loop it can also benefit people with a hearing impairment who do not use a hearing aid. We expect that its ease of use will encourage more and more groups to make it available at their meetings. We shall also be making further improvements to the DTP and Reprographic services during the current year and beyond.

The staff were incredibly helpful in terms of explaining to me and showing me how to use the equipment. I was delighted by how inexpensive it was.

Spectrum

Information for organising

Groups require a huge range of information in their daily work. The bulk of it is practical and spans a very wide range – groups may ask for the contact details of a funder or have detailed questions on charity regulations. We aim to cover every aspect of organising in our Information service. (To see what this service provides, please refer to **What is the Information service?**)

Take up

Demand for the Information service is extremely high: groups used it on 4,137 occasions last year, nearly double the previous year. Thanks to SRB funding, we have been able to expand massively over the past two years to meet what we have long recognised as a significant need. The funding is providing the staff time to build on the success of our website, keep our stock of information up to date and relevant, and write new information sheets.

Developments

We have recently added the **RouteMap** to our website – this is a flowchart for any not-for-profit group or organisation looking for guidance in choosing a legal structure. Groups work through a

series of questions, leading to advice on the structure which seems most appropriate for them and directing them to more detailed information.

We are in the middle of a lengthy process of writing many new information sheets and rewriting several others. All of these sheets have been produced recently or will come out fairly soon, and are in response to questions posed regularly by our users:

- ◆ First Steps – getting a group started
- ◆ Not-for-Profit Organisations - a guide to legal structures
- ◆ Community and voluntary groups - finding a legal structure to suit your group
- ◆ Constitutions – step by step help with writing a constitution

- ◆ Systems for improving your organisation: a brief guide to Quality
- ◆ Media Contacts
- ◆ Raising Money
- ◆ Bank Accounts for voluntary and community organisations
- ◆ Criminal Records Bureau checks
- ◆ Licensing and Regulations – essential information for event organisers
- ◆ Charity Registration – is your group a charity, and should it register?
- ◆ Charity Reports and Accounts – a guide to annual reports and accounts for charities.

These are just some of our information sheets, one of the most successful parts of the service. Last year 2,878 copies of the sheets were taken up. We expect to add new sheets over the next three years in response to new requests from our users. Among these will be a sheet on writing and producing a newsletter.

We regularly buy new books, and again our policy is to buy books which provide practical answers for groups rather than books which discuss general issues affecting the voluntary sector. The following selection gives some idea of the range which groups require – the books are recent additions or will be available fairly soon:

- ◆ Hollis Sponsorship and Donations Yearbook 2004 – a guide to the UK's top sponsoring and donating companies
- ◆ Complete Fundraising Handbook
- ◆ Anti-bullying Toolkit – a resource for youth workers and young people
- ◆ Doing it for Ourselves – a guide to setting up and managing a refugee community organisation
- ◆ Making Diversity Happen – a practical guide for voluntary and community organisations
- ◆ Charity Treasurer's Handbook
- ◆ Practical Monitoring and Evaluation

As with the information sheets, we expect to add new books over the next three years in response to groups' needs, although it is very rare for a group to request a specific book by name. Some areas of information are in constant demand and we look out for new books which give better or updated information. At other times a new area or approach

What is the Information service?

Our Information Service aims to give groups answers to the questions which arise in their daily work. We attempt to answer every query (or find someone who can) so it is not possible to list all of our information here. The service includes:

- ◆ *details of the role of a group's officers and guidelines for arranging an AGM*
- ◆ *comprehensive information on charity registration and regulations, legal structures and equal access.*
- ◆ *a large stock of publications on fundraising, including the Grant-making Trusts CD-ROM with details of all UK grant-making trusts*
- ◆ *Favourite Funders, our own guide to the most popular sources of funding for local groups*
- ◆ *Beachcomber, our searchable database of local sources of equipment and useful contacts for groups*
- ◆ *the latest news on Fundraising and Forthcoming Events displayed on noticeboards in the Centre and on our website*
- ◆ *details of other community agencies to allow us to make referrals effectively*
- ◆ *Internet access at the Centre to enable groups to use local and national databases and other information sites*

At the Centre all this information is available through our small reference library and the information sheets which we produce. On our website, groups are able to search Beachcomber and Favourite Funders and obtain copies of our information sheets.

will emerge – several groups will come along with similar questions or problems and we will search for books which provide the answers.

We shall shortly begin work on restructuring our website. The website has been a huge success and made the Information service easily available. More and more groups have a computer at home or in a neighbourhood centre and so are able to use the service at any time without having to travel to the Centre. Last year groups visited the website 942 times to use the Information service, usually making more than one use of the service at each visit. We plan to build further on this success by redesigning the website to make it both faster to browse and more accessible to disabled users. We shall of course be improving the whole website and not just the online Information service.

Funding our work

The main points

- ◆ Our funding is fairly secure until the end of March 2006.
- ◆ From April 2006 the financial position is critical. SRB6 funding ends and funding for our work with tenants' associations may end. Even assuming some increase in income from our services, we could be left with £53,000 to find from external sources.
- ◆ If we fail to raise the £53,000, the situation will be even worse. We currently raise £55,000 from our services. If we are forced to cut staff, and hence services, a significant part of the services' income will also be lost, destabilising the Centre overall.
- ◆ In addition to the £53,000, we need to continue raising money to renew the equipment used by groups, in order to maintain the standard of our services.

Raising the money needed to maintain our services is clearly going to be a major challenge.

Maintaining services

Where our funds come from

The nature of our work makes us very reliant on funding from the City Council, either directly from its own budgets or from the central government schemes which it runs. Our role is to support other organisations in the community and voluntary sector rather than directly provide front-line services. Funding for support organisations such as ourselves is extremely hard to find.

As an infrastructure support organisation, our work is remarkably consistent from year to year. Indeed we believe this is one of our main strengths since we build year by year on the experience of groups' needs and of running a much used Centre. The work is, of course, constantly developing and the Centre is a very different place from as little as 10 years ago. Nevertheless all of our work is essentially core work, meeting

the consistent need of groups for equipment, advice and information. Unfortunately, charitable trusts and other bodies, such as the Community Fund, do not provide funds to run existing services. Indeed, it has become more and more difficult for support organisations even to get grants for the development of existing services.

The City Council is therefore providing the bulk of our revenue funding at present. Indeed the Council has supported the Centre over many years, which both we and our users greatly appreciate. By funding the Centre, the Council is directly supporting the work of community organisations. Most of our services are subsidised by Council grants as this is the only way to make them available to the community. Groups simply cannot afford to pay commercial charges and, in any case, many of our services

Information on setting up an organisation has been very helpful. One of the key functions of the Resource Centre is the advice and information for community groups.

Get involved

are not even provided by the commercial sector. Our own charges do not include the costs of staff time with the result that groups using our services are benefiting from Council funding.

In addition to grants, we raise over £50,000 per year from charges for using our services. All of this money is ploughed back into the Centre. It covers the running costs of the services themselves and makes a vital contribution to renewing our stock of equipment and to maintaining the premises.

The next three years - a crisis ahead?

Most of the money for the first year of this programme of work is guaranteed. In addition to our own income, we shall have funding from the City Council, Single Regeneration Budget 6, and eb4u. There is also a good chance that we shall get further funding for our work with tenants' associations. If that happens, our budget for next year will be in place.

Beyond March 2006, there is a massive question mark. So far, the only guaranteed income is the Council grant and a small amount from eb4u. We need to raise a further £53,000 in grants. Together with the Council grant, that will give us enough money to keep all of our staff. If the Centre is fully staffed, we shall be able to maintain all of our services. The full range of services will bring in a further £55,000, making up the money needed to run the Centre. However, at present, it is very hard to see where we shall find grants worth £53,000.

The problem is to replace both SRB and, in all likelihood, funding for work with tenants. We have already considered three sources for replacing SRB which, on the surface, seemed good possibilities. On further investigation none seems particularly hopeful.

- ◆ **'Single Pot' funding.** There is no replacement for the Single Regeneration Budget but we were looking to the Single Pot to partly fill the gap. The Single Pot is central government funding for local regeneration, both economic and social. As with all regeneration funding, this money comes through the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA). It asked the City Council in conjunction with Adur District Council and West Sussex County Council to draw up an Area Investment Framework (AIF). One of the strategic aims of this is to "narrow the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the area, including support for community engagement in regeneration." Within this, two of the priorities are 'Support to establish and sustain community groups' and 'Support for voluntary organisations providing services'.

This looks like a strong commitment to fund infrastructure support organisations such as ours. However, we are getting increasingly negative messages about Single Pot funding for the voluntary and community sector. Indeed we have been warned by people in the know not to pin any hopes on it. As it is one of the only funding sources with any potential for us, however slight, we are keeping a close watch on how it develops.

- ◆ **ChangeUp.** There is a lot of talk in the voluntary sector at present about ChangeUp. This is a 10 year framework for developing local voluntary and community infrastructure nationwide. It is an ambitious plan developed by the Home Office in consultation with the voluntary sector. Its ultimate aim is to bring about a wide range of support for community groups and front-line voluntary organisations. To get the ball rolling, the government is putting up £80 million. We may be able to get some additional funding next year, but the ChangeUp Fund looks unlikely to help us much in the longer term. The fund itself finishes at the end of March 2006 – just when we face a crisis. At the moment, the government has given no indication that it will provide any funding from 2006 for the rest of the ChangeUp plan.

- ◆ **Futurebuilders.** The community cohesion strand of this funding initially looked promising. However infrastructure support organisations are specifically excluded from receiving funding.

Turning to our work with tenants' associations, the Centre is committed to continuing this work if at all possible. Tenants' associations play an important role in community life. Most organise activities such as social clubs or support for elderly residents, as well as carrying out their role in the consultation process. For the past 14 years the City Council has looked to us to complement its own work with tenants and we have built up a specialist service. However the future of the housing stock itself is currently in flux, with the likelihood of major changes in 2006. We shall continue to monitor the situation closely, in the hope that whoever eventually controls social housing will recognise the value of what we do. Unfortunately there is no guarantee that we shall be able to secure the funding to continue our work with tenants.

We shall look into the possibility of approaching the Community Fund with a project to develop one or more of our services. This is a really long shot as the Community Fund do not as a rule give grants to replace previous funding. The only other option we can see at present is to try for some emergency funding from a charitable trust, and this would be an even longer shot. Neither option would be a long-term solution.

Excellent Information service. The very best in Brighton & Hove. Friendly helpers too.

Brighton & Hove Black History

What happens if we are short of money?

If we are unable to raise the money which we need to run the Centre, we shall have to lay off staff. Recently we again carried out a full organisational review including the costs of service provision, maintenance of premises and other running costs. The review shows that these are already at a bare minimum and that staff costs are the only ones which could be cut.

The effect of staff cuts would be severe and services would bear the brunt. The organisational review confirmed that we need five full-time posts – the current staffing level – to run the Centre. But we should need the same amount of management and fundraising time whether we have 4 or 5 posts, since these tasks would remain the same. It follows that if we are forced to cut the level of staff then service provision will take the full brunt.

The Centre is currently providing record levels of service to record numbers of groups. We are able to do so because of the integrated nature of our service, flexible work systems, and the experience of our staff. If we have to cut a post this strength becomes a weakness, as there is no separate service that can be cut back. We provide a package of support to groups and our services are inter-related. The

impact of any cut would be felt across the organisation as a whole. We need to face the possibility that at some stage we will have to make hard choices with a resulting drop in the service we can provide to groups. At the moment, though, we are trying to remain positive and are concentrating on finding ways to raise the money.

The city has a very lively community and voluntary sector with an estimated 2,000 community groups. The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy has again put considerable emphasis on the need to support these groups. They are seen as an important element in achieving the aims of the Community Strategy and the City Council is clear that infrastructure support is vital to help them thrive. This too is the message of the government's ChangeUp plan which we looked at above. We shall do everything we can to find the funding to continue our work to support local groups.

Despite the need to concentrate on fundraising for the day-to-day costs of running the Centre and providing services, we must not overlook equipment and premises. Equipment is an essential part of our services, not an added extra. In the short term we can manage without renewing equipment, but in the longer term services suffer. Similarly, we cannot afford to let the condition of our premises decline for too long.

Renewing equipment

The Centre is unique locally in providing a large stock of community equipment. Equipment services still make up over half of the Centre's use, despite the massive increase in take-up of the Information service. Indeed take up of equipment has risen by one third over the past 3 years. This makes it vital to keep all of our equipment up to date and in good order.

Because it is so heavily used, our equipment has a short life, say 3-4 years for computers and print equipment. We are in the middle of a 4-year programme, costing £77,000, to replace and renew existing equipment. Without this, equipment would soon cease to operate efficiently and maintenance costs would go up. From the point of view of users, the service would deteriorate and we should therefore face a drop in income at the same time.

Whenever the bulk of our revenue costs are met by grants, we are able to use some of our income from services to renew capital equipment. Up to March 2006, we expect to put over £20,000 towards equipment. We are grateful to the Regeneration Partnership for an extra £10,000 of capital funding from SRB6, on top of the £13,000 awarded at the start of the project two years ago. We are still fundraising to try and draw in the rest of the money we need.

From April 2006 the position looks grim, as we described earlier. Unless we find replacement funding, we shall be forced to put the equipment renewal programme on hold and use our income from services to try and retain staff.

Our experienced staff team is a key factor in attracting groups to the Centre

- ◆ *In our survey, 85% of the groups who responded said that our **friendly staff** were a very important reason for their use of the Centre.*
- ◆ *90% of our survey respondents gave our **reliability** as a very important factor in their decision to use us*

Maintenance of premises

Very little money has been available to maintain the premises and fixtures & fittings since the provision of wheelchair access in 1996. We estimate that we need to spend around £23,500 to keep the premises up to scratch. As it is almost impossible to raise funds for this work, we have to assume that the costs will be met from our own income, although we shall of course make every effort to raise the money from outside. We have made a very good start on the priorities but will not have enough money to do all the work before the financial black hole appears in 2006.

Future developments

We must work on the basis that we shall overcome the funding crisis and therefore plan some development of our work. However, it is wise to have very modest plans at this stage and so we are concentrating on bringing in some new equipment.

We have long been successful at raising funds from outside the town. For twenty-nine years we have raised money for equipment, improvements to our premises and projects to develop new services. Charitable trusts and other bodies will still give grants for capital items to support organisations such as ours. Over the next three years we aim to raise money for new items of equipment which groups need in their work. Of course, our priority for capital fundraising will be the equipment renewal programme described earlier and we shall make sure that fundraising for extra equipment does not cut across this.

We are grateful to the Capital Learning Fund for two grants, the latest being for an infra-red hearing system which groups will be able to hire for meetings. We shall also continue our strategy of approaching small trusts, applying for a single item or a small package of equipment. This is proving successful, providing money for other new items for hire.

A brilliant service, especially for (mostly) cash-strapped community groups.

Friends of the Earth (Brighton & Hove)

Annual Accounts and budgets

	<i>Summary of Accounts 2003-04</i>	<i>Summary of Budget 2004-05</i>	<i>Summary of Budget 2005-06</i>
<hr/>			
<i>Income</i>			
Provision of Equipment services	51,542	51,670	52,000
Provision of Special Support services	1,816	1,800	2,000
Brighton & Hove City Council discretionary grant	67,000	67,000	67,000
Brighton & Hove Housing Services	27,000	27,680	28,000
Consultancy fee re Independent Tenant Advisor	2,030		
Single Regeneration Budget 6	28,460	40,837	26,547
Capital Learning Fund	3,912	5,000	
B&H Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	753	6,000	
EYDCP brought forward			1,500
eb4u New Deal for Communities		4,023	5,500
Donations and interest	829	860	
Equipment Fund brought forward		3,081	
Other fundraising	1,500		
<i>Total income</i>	<i>184,842</i>	<i>207,951</i>	<i>182,547</i>

Notes

- Annual Report and Accounts 2003-04 :** *These are available for inspection at the Resource Centre.*
- Budget 2005-06:** *Grants of £100,547 are already confirmed and, in addition, we expect to bring in £54,000 from provision of services.*
- Budgets 2006-07 and 2007-08:** *It is not possible to draw up budgets at this stage because of uncertainty over funding - please see the section **Funding our work**.*

	<i>Summary of Accounts 2003-04</i>	<i>Summary of Budget 2004-05</i>	<i>Summary of Budget 2005-06</i>
--	--	--	--

Expenditure

Charitable activities

<i>Costs of Equipment services</i>	25,464	26,605	27,270
<i>Costs of Information service and Special Support services</i>	5,897	6,030	6,180
<i>Capital equipment</i>		31,795	6,850
Support costs of charitable activities (staffing and premises)	120,571	120,527	120,215
Management, administration and fundraising	21,414	21,494	22,032
EYDCP funding carried forward		1,500	
<i>Total expenditure</i>	173,346	207,951	182,547
Net income for year	11,496		
Funds brought forward	25,912		
Funds at 5th April 2004	37,408		

Funds at 5th April 2004

Restricted Funds

<i>Deferred grants offset against future depreciation of assets</i>	11,964
Unrestricted Funds	
<i>Deferred grants offset against future depreciation of assets</i>	12,863
<i>Reserves to cover stocks</i>	4,500
<i>Equipment Fund (Designated fund)</i>	3,081
<i>Free Reserves</i>	5,000
Total	37,408

Aims and objects

The Resource Centre is a registered charity working to promote the voluntary and community activity of the residents of Brighton and Hove.

1. We provide a central, and hence cost-effective, pool of those services necessary for both neighbourhood and city-wide voluntary activity. We believe that local groups deserve to have good quality equipment which is right for the job and to receive information, advice and training which is accurate and relevant to their needs.
2. We act as a central reference point for all voluntary and community organisations in the city in order to increase the sharing of skills, information and ideas.
3. We train people to do work on behalf of their organisation in order to spread skills and encourage people's confidence in their ability to be active in the community.
4. We give particular attention to the needs of organisations active in those communities which have least access to resources.

Thanks a TON! You've been a BIG HELP! On the phone! Flyers! Accounts! AGM minutes. And most of all friendly.

Queen's Park Community
Association

Standards and values

- ◆ The Resource Centre is fully accountable to the local community, through its management and membership structure, and to its funders.
- ◆ We aim to ensure that our services are responsive to the needs of users; we shall continue to seek the views of users and respond constructively to suggestions and criticisms.
- ◆ We aim, in particular, to ensure our services are of value to, and are open to, groups active in communities which face discrimination. We provide special support to groups run by minority ethnic people, disabled people, and groups which are based in areas of social housing and which are run by and for the local residents. We make particular efforts to publicise ourselves to these groups and to those composed of women and of lesbian and gay men.
- ◆ We seek to develop best practice in the city by working with other local voluntary sector support agencies in such a way that we learn from each other's experience and methods of working.
- ◆ We aim to ensure that services are efficient and cost-effective and we review them regularly. We will make sure that our services remain distinct by working with other voluntary sector organisations to avoid overlap of provision.
- ◆ We make every effort to provide a safe, accessible and comfortable working environment in the Resource Centre for both staff and users.
- ◆ The Resource Centre takes seriously its responsibilities as a good employer: we aim to pay staff the rate for the job and provide good terms & conditions of employment. We work to develop the skills and abilities of our staff and involve staff in evaluating and shaping services. We have a policy of equal opportunities in staff selection and training.

Organisation and management

The Resource Centre is a charitable limited company: Brighton & Hove Social Welfare and Educational Trust Ltd (B&H SWET Ltd).

The Resource Centre is accountable to the local community through its Council of users which is a sub-committee of the company. Membership is open to any group which is based in an area of social housing and run by local residents. There are currently 138 member-groups, which elect a Management Committee at their annual meeting. A representative of Brighton & Hove City Council also sits on this committee.

The Management Committee is responsible for the policy and general management of the Resource Centre. Seven members of this committee serve as company directors and trustees of the charity. One staff member is responsible to the Management Committee and attends meetings to present reports and discuss recommendations.

Day-to-day management and the running of the Resource Centre are carried out by the staff group. The staff group has a team structure with no line management.

B&H SWET Ltd

◆ **Company registration number**

1730256

◆ **Charity registration number**

287516

◆ **Company Secretary**

Dave Witts

◆ **Registered Office**

Resource Centre, Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 0GY

Trustees and Directors of B&H SWET Ltd

Jean Davies
Philip Doyle
Earl Holmes-Raynor
John Pippard
Beryl Snelling
John Stevens
Roy Taylor

Management Committee 2004-2005

Lizzie Beckett
Jean Davies
Philip Doyle

Earl Holmes-Raynor

John Pippard (Vice-chair)
Beryl Snelling
John Stevens

Roy Taylor (Chair)

Councillor Warren Morgan

Hangleton Community Cafe
South Hawk Tenants' Association
North Whitehawk Tenants' & Residents' Association
Hereford Court & Wiltshire House Residents' Association
The Triangle Club
Sloane Court Tenants' Association
Leach Court & Patching Lodge Tenants' Association
Knoll Community Association

Brighton & Hove City Council

Staff group

Dani Ahrens
Kate Chapman
Judy Goss
Alan Gray
Kate Page
Dave Witts

Casual staff

Ilene Robinson

Vicky Astbury left the Centre in December 2003 after 3½ years. Everyone is grateful for her big contribution to the work of the Centre and we wish her all the best for the future.

Access to services

Public opening hours

Tuesday to Friday: 9am - 4pm

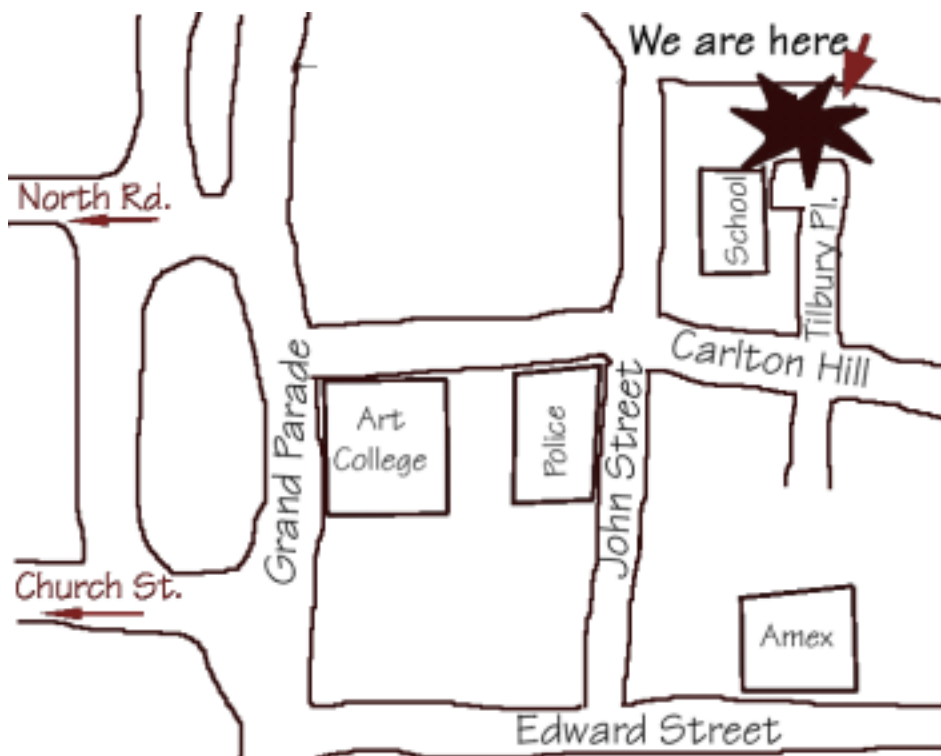
Our services are available to any community and voluntary organisation in Brighton & Hove. There is always a staff member at the Front Desk to show groups how to use the equipment, direct them to the books or files which they need and deal with any other requests for help.

Enquiries

- ◆ **Telephone:** (01273) 606160 (answering machine outside of public opening hours)
- ◆ **Fax:** (01273) 673663
- ◆ **e-mail:** info@resourcecentre.org.uk
- ◆ **Website:** www.resourcecentre.org.uk

Booking to use services

Training and advice sessions must be arranged in advance. All other services are available without an appointment. It is advisable, though, to book all equipment in advance as it is very heavily used.



Access for disabled users

The Resource Centre is on the ground floor with a ramp into the building. There are wide doors throughout and a fully accessible toilet.

Our publications are available on request in large print, Braille or Moon or on tape or disc. We are registered with *Type Talk* and there is an induction loop in the small office. The Centre is accessible to wheelchair users, with a ramp into the building, wide gangways and a fully accessible toilet. Two disabled parking bays are available just outside the building.

Transport links

- ◆ **By bicycle:** Carlton Hill/Kingswood Street is a very steep hill. Secure cycle parking outside the Centre.
- ◆ **By bus:** Take the 81 bus to Queens Park Road (Egremont Gate stop) and walk down the hill, or any bus to the Old Steine and walk up.
- ◆ **By car:** Two disabled bays outside the Centre. Three voucher bays at the bottom of Tilbury Place (we have vouchers for sale). NCP car park at the bottom of Carlton Hill. On street parking in surrounding streets is very difficult.

**The
Resource
Centre is
grateful for
funding and
support
from:**



**Brighton & Hove
City Council supported**



Supported by the
SEEDA fund for
regeneration



Supported by

