

2017-18 Case study: Christian Arabic Club

The Christian Arabic Club is a social group connected with the Arabic Evangelical Church, which is based in Portslade. They have been regular users of the Resource Centre since 2001.

The club organises regular social gatherings, trips and outings for their members, many of whom arrived in the UK as refugees in the 1990s. This social support is very valuable for the members, and provides them with friendship, a space where they can relax in the company of other Arabic speakers, and support to access local services.

Over the last two years, they have also begun to provide a fortnightly cooked lunch for residents of sheltered housing schemes in the immediate vicinity of their church. This project has been a great success, with 20 regular attendees. As well as a healthy meal, the lunches provide a social space for people who live alone to meet each other and make friendships. Volunteers encourage their guests to share stories about their lives and keep in touch with them between sessions.

Like many other shared meal providers in the city, the Christian Arabic Club's lunch project plays a valuable role in "improving the health, nutrition and mental health of the city – tackling isolation, food poverty and acting as a gateway to advice and support" (<http://bhfood.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Eating-Together-Report-FINAL-1.pdf>)

The Resource Centre has provided information and support to help the Christian Arabic Club get their lunch project started. During 2017-18, the Resource Centre has helped with:

- Planning fundraising for the year and drawing up a budget
- A free examination of the group's accounts
- Applications to Brighton & Hove Council and Sussex Community Foundation for grant funding
- Evaluation reports for funders
- Registration as a food business with Brighton & Hove Council
- Arranging food safety training for the group members who volunteer at the lunch project
- Designing and printing publicity for the lunch project and other group activities

Resource Centre support has enhanced the ability of group members to structure and develop this important project which enables group members and their guests to make nourishing and enriching connections.