

Case study:

Sunday Assembly

A small group with a big idea – radical inclusivity promotes better mental health

The Sunday Assembly has been running for three and a half years, holding a monthly secular gathering, regularly attracting 200 people. The gathering is built on a church format but is non-religious. Sunday Assembly is based on 'radical inclusivity' meaning everyone is welcome, regardless of faith, political beliefs or anything else which might otherwise separate people in social settings.

Each gathering has got a theme, such as 'truth', 'play', 'movement', 'community' or 'family' with music, readings, speakers and a science section. The gathering concludes with tea and cake and mingling.

In addition to the monthly gathering they have had spin-off activities like sewing and knitting groups, creative writing group, mindfulness course and choir.

How Sunday Assembly supports better health

Sunday Assembly gatherings frequently promote practical approaches to good mental health- reflecting on the positives in life, finding purpose, gratefulness, happiness, connection and curiosity, but without any doctrine or dogma.

The group reports several anecdotes from attendees who say they feel less isolated, have found new purpose in volunteering with the group, have met new friends, and who would otherwise not leave the house.

Support accessed by Sunday Assembly

The group is run entirely by volunteers – there are about 15 core members, with others helping out occasionally. The group was sparked off when a few local people attended a Sunday Assembly in London and were inspired to start something similar in Brighton & Hove.

They used the Resource Centre's online information resources to shape the organisation in the beginning, being concerned to do things effectively and correctly- for example constitution templates, info about AGMs, volunteering, policies etc.



They also frequently hire equipment which they need to put on the gatherings, such as projector, sound system and tea urns. They use the Resource Centre's print facilities for AGM paperwork.

The group report that the Resource Centre has helped them enormously.

They have not received support from any other organisation – they are linked with the national Sunday Assembly organisation, but this only means they can use their logo.

How the city can support groups like Sunday Assembly

Sunday Assembly is typical of the kind of groups which use the Resource Centre. In 2016-17, 765 groups based in Brighton & Hove used the Centre's services.

The Resource Centre's 2016 survey showed that:

- 83% of the Centre's user groups are run mainly by volunteers
- 57% of groups have fewer than ten people regularly attending their organising meetings
- 56% of user groups had not received support from any other local agency in the past year.
- 85% agree that the Resource Centre is the only place they can get the equipment they need.
- 76% of groups who used the Resource Centre's information found it "very useful" and the other 24% found it "useful".
- 100% of respondents agree that the Resource Centre makes life easier for their group

Small group volunteers have immense potential to enhance the mental and physical health of the city's residents. This potential can be unlocked by the right support. Key elements are the provision of practical resources, straightforward online information and responsive support from skilled and knowledgeable staff.