Small Groups Network Autumn Conference 13 October 2016

- Safer and healthier communities

Small groups are the bedrock of keeping our city safer, happier and healthier, there is a saying that in order to nurture we must nurture ourselves.

<u>Reps update:</u>

Kirsty Walker – there's a BHCC consultation on Parks and Open Spaces, please reply

Bob Stevenson– The need for better voluntary sector working with the council. The council thinks they can deliver lots, but with the austerity cuts, they can't.

Helen Russell – Housing. Workshop on housing this pm.

See CW website for 'rep update' for further info:

http://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/members/services/voice-and-representation/

At this workshop we shared how we meet our duty of care to each other:
- We explored together how to balance supporting attendees and members of groups to access extra support when and if they need.
- Knowing more about and linking with Local Action Teams (LATS), how why and when.
- Explore how small groups can play a role in the wider community safety agenda.

Headlines from network:
<u>Keeping our groups healthy and happy:</u>
- All groups need to balance the needs of the individuals with the needs of the group and be realistic about what they can achieve.
- More people will come to groups and activities if they know they will be supported.
- We MUST value and support our volunteers
- Consider practical issues like transport; use a variety of communications methods.
- Develop positivity- Celebrate your successes.
- Have fit for purpose governance and review this with people as often as realistic for your size of group/organisation.

<u>Linking With LATS and how do small groups contribute to the wider community safety agenda?</u>
- Be an active citizen Community Safety is **everyone's** issue
- LATS need to be more open, use innovative ways to engage and communicate more effectively.
- There is a need for ATS to do more and talk less (Be active by doing actions)
- LATS are important as we do not just want to hear from the loudness voices.
- We need to build trust and support the vulnerable and isolated together.
- There's a need for all of us to share resources and knowledge.

Link to the LAT Map used at the conference is here:
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oMfYS_5Q3t_cjb4mukTY669Zmhs&usp=sharing

Exercise 1- Group 1
- ➢ **What keeps your group healthy and happy? (Healthy in its widest sense)**
- ➢ **How does your group manage its own health?**

- Valuing our volunteers, supporting them
  - o particularly in times of upset (e.g. if a group member dies, we meet and talk about their life and how we'll manage without their input)
  - o social activities too, have snacks at meetings
- Safeguarding e.g. policies, what to do, how to behave
- Need 'succession planning' – new people, new ideas
- If you need new volunteers/trustees:
  - o Could create 'search groups'
  - o List tasks your organisation needs
  - o Community mapping: everyone in the group lists people they know
  - o Link 'tasks with people', invite them to join
- When advertising for people:
  - o use multiple communication channels, not everyone is on social media/the internet
  - o If using computer, a web-page (that anyone can click on) is more accessible than a page that people have to log into (eg Facebook)
- When new people arrive:
  - o Communicate well – make yourself understandable
  - o Other people can play the role of 'clarifier'
- When a mental health difficulty means that a group member is upsetting others, we can:
  - o speak to them away from others
  - o help them to understand how their actions are affecting others
  - o inform them that they will be asked to leave, if the upset continues. This is a last resort.
  - o It can be a balance between 'the needs of the individual' and the 'health of the group'.
- When supporting disabled volunteers to be part of our groups:
  - o Speak to the individual, learn their needs and the adaptations they request
  - o Tune into that individual's particular skills, perhaps they can't do a whole role
  - o Possability People (was called 'the Fed') publish wheelchair-accessible venues. If you go back to the same accessible cafes you can build a relationship with their staff.
  - o Links to dropped kerb/blue badge maps:
    http://www.visitbrighton.com/plan-your-visit/accessibility

- To involve people with learning difficulties, slow your meeting down
- To involve people with hearing loss, think about different methods of communication
- Show people they are valued
- Be open about your accessibility. The more people know your group is accessible, the more they'll come along.

What keeps your group healthy and happy? Group 2

- **Supporting** group members into group initially
- **Defining group members** in the way that works for your group (e.g. activist, volunteer etc.)
- Clear policies and procedures to **protect the group** (e.g. insurance cover)
- **Outreach** activities
- Tapping into **existing friendships** to grow the group
- Making sure volunteers and **properly resourced** (e.g. equipment, support, expenses)
- Making sure volunteers have clear and suitable **responsibility** levels
- Managing the aims and activities of the group by **clear aims and objectives** (to avoid misappropriation)
- Good and effective **governance**
- **Training and checking** members / volunteers where appropriate

Where would you go to find out about what extra support exists in the city so that you support a member of your group or attendee?

- It's **hard to keep track** of all the available stuff
- Community Works is a good resource
- Good to encourage people to **share resources on the Facebook** small groups network has a Facebook page here is the link; https://www.facebook.com/smallgroupsnetwork/
- It's important to keep increasing ways of **open lines of communication** in order to keep **information up to date**
- Use of **service directories**
- Involving **volunteers with particular skills or interests** can support this process specifically
- Citizen's online (www.**citizensonline**.org.uk) is a useful resource for increasing online communications
- There is an increasing need to **vary communications methods**
  - Need to **suit the group**
  - Need to reach **new members**

TOP TIP's: Groups can identify five key issues of concern for themselves and their members and decide what five organisations are best to serve those concerns, so that if an issue does arise they can know who to contact and how.

When a group is concerned about a member of their group or a member of the public, contact the Social Services Access Point for advice or to discuss the concern.

There are good on line resources to enable people to access the right service for them, if you are working with non-computer users the local library may be able to help people.

People would recommend using www.mylife.org.uk.

Exercise 2: Groups 1 & 2
- ➢ **How does your group contribute to the wider community safety agenda?**
- ➢ **Linking with LATS - Local Action Teams. LATs are local people, businesses and groups working with the Police and Brighton & Hove City Council to enable communities to feel safer.**

- The new policing plan is removing police from street-level support in order to focus on high-level crimes.
- The council wishes to support LATs with –
    - o Community cohesion and resilience
    - o Helping vulnerable people
    - o Putting events on
- LATs tend not to be constituted, even though they are community groups
- It's important that LATs talk to their nearest community groups. LATs are area-based.
- Other groups, besides LATs help residents to liaise with the council/police etc, such as Racial Harassment group, LGBT, Disability Advisory.
- LATs need to make sure the 'action' happens!
- LATs need to be open to new ideas, not rely on 'old fashioned' approaches
- People can get to know people/facilities in their street via their LAT.
- Statutory organisations need to consult outside of the 'same old organisations'. One way is to go out onto the streets: talk to homeless people, shop-keepers. Gather a database of people who want to hear.
- Concept of 'civic responsibility', not just the 'council's responsibility'.
- Isolation requires a 'reappraisal of a world view', not just policy. Are services 'nanny state' or 'being looked after'? But, 'dependency' could make us helpless.
- Example of a LAT service – Patcham LAT set up a dementia café.
- LATs could share good practice by:
    - o Meet quarterly to share info
    - o Individuals from a LAT could visit another LAT – personal development

- To avoid LATs being dominated by the special interests of individuals, it's important to reach the broader community, bring in fresh blood
- Communications are important to encourage participation, be inclusive and encourage the hidden community
- We need to educate on what a LAT is. Explain to people how they began as Police initiative and now have developed into a wider range of activity i.e. Environment & Planning, Social Welfare, and crime.
- LATs have formed in different ways they Collaborate on delivery of services, work with services to be more responsive to community needs, Link resident groups to services and come up with solutions for shared concerns.
- Information about LATS can be found on the safe in the city website.

Priorities for Small Groups Network in order of preference by those present:

Another Session on Volunteers (including Recruitment and retention, managing expectations and maintaining motivation)	**7**
Managing "difficult" people	**7**
Finding the right partner – creating a partnership agreement	**5**
Innovative Ways to fund raise	**4**