

# Door knocking around The Cherry Tree Centre, Burgess Hill



February 2026





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# Context

**We are a charity on a mission to support our communities to thrive.**

For us: **it's all about people.**

**People** coming together to act on what's important to them.

**People** having access to health, wellbeing, justice, and opportunity.

**People** being heard across all our communities.

**People** being given the tools and platforms to pursue their passions and make a positive impact in their communities.

## Our strategic priorities

**In 2024/25 we have been guided by our 6 strategic priorities, including:**

### Hubs

Provide community hubs that support a wide range of services for the local community.

### Data & Knowledge

Deepen and share understanding of the strengths and challenges of our local communities using enhanced data, research and community listening.

### Community Development

Deliver high-quality, responsive, and inclusive community development support.

## How we work

We recognise that some communities are **under-resourced** and face barriers to having their voices heard. **Community People** works to bring together grassroots VCSE groups and local residents, creating connections that help people act on what matters to them.

Our approach is rooted in **asset-based community development**, building on existing strengths and skills within neighbourhoods rather than focusing only on needs. **We focus on what's strong, not what's wrong.**

We learn continually from other organisations and movements, such as **Good Practice Mentors**, whose shared knowledge and co-production tools inform our practice and strengthen our work. Central to this approach is the role of Helen Crofoot, our **Participation Lead**, who works alongside the wider team to ensure local voices shape our activities and that collaboration is at the heart of what we do.

# Purpose



A few of the Cherry Tree lunch club regulars who helped get the drop in event started.

The Cherry Tree Centre (CTC) is a well-used neighbourhood community hub close to the town centre, with a range of spaces. Previously, it was an older people's hub run by Age UK and many people living nearby believe it to be still exclusively oriented towards older and retired people. Canvassing the neighbourhood gave us the opportunity to gauge these perceptions, and remind people that the CTC now caters to all age groups and build good will among the people who live nearby. **We pursue this work because we want to use asset based community development (ABCD) and co-production at all levels of our work and the very first step to working with people is inviting them into the space.**

This second door knocking was intended to build on a previous campaign carried out in September 2025 and formed part of our ongoing work to strengthen local engagement around the centre. The purpose of this second round of outreach was to make sure that people in and around one of the town's more under-resourced neighbourhoods had an opportunity to engage with the CTC. We wanted to follow up with people from the previous door knocking campaign and reach new people.

This time, we posted more than double the number of invitations, with 1,000 invites delivered, and focused on new areas close to the CTC that had not previously been door knocked. We were also able to access multiple assisted living locations which we had previously not been able to access to deliver invitations. This gave us a chance to reach a wider group of residents and build on what we had learned from the earlier campaign.

# Summary

**In February 2026**, Community People carried out a second door knocking campaign around the CTC in Burgess Hill, building on earlier outreach in September 2025. The aim was to better understand who lives near the centre, how local residents view it, and what would make it feel more useful, welcoming and relevant to them. This second round focused on a wider area, with around 1,000 homes mapped within a 500m radius and 950 invitation flyers delivered. Some homes received an invitation only, while others received an invitation with a simple door knock opt-out notice. This allowed us to reach more people while working within staff capacity.

**Door knocking** took place on Monday 9 February 2026, three days after the letter drop, following a short training session on safe and respectful practice. We were able to knock on 265 of the 400 doors originally planned. We spoke with 92 people, giving an engagement rate of 35%, which was almost the same as the previous Burgess Hill campaign.

**Most of the people we spoke to were over 50**, and the largest age group was 70+. Women made up 57% of doorstep conversations and men 43%. People were generally open to speaking with us, but responses to the drop-in invitation were more reserved than during the earlier campaign. Just over a quarter of residents responded positively, while a noticeable number were non-committal. Even so, awareness of the CTC appeared stronger than before, with most people having at least heard of it and some having already visited.

**The drop-in event** took place at the CTC on Thursday 12 February from 1pm to 5pm. It was kept simple, with refreshments, open doors, a chance to look around the building and opportunities to try some of the activities already linked to the centre. Several providers took part, including Encore! Tennis, Joyous Flow Arts, A Touch of Gentleness, Mid Sussex Wellbeing and the West Sussex County Council Prevention Assessment Team.

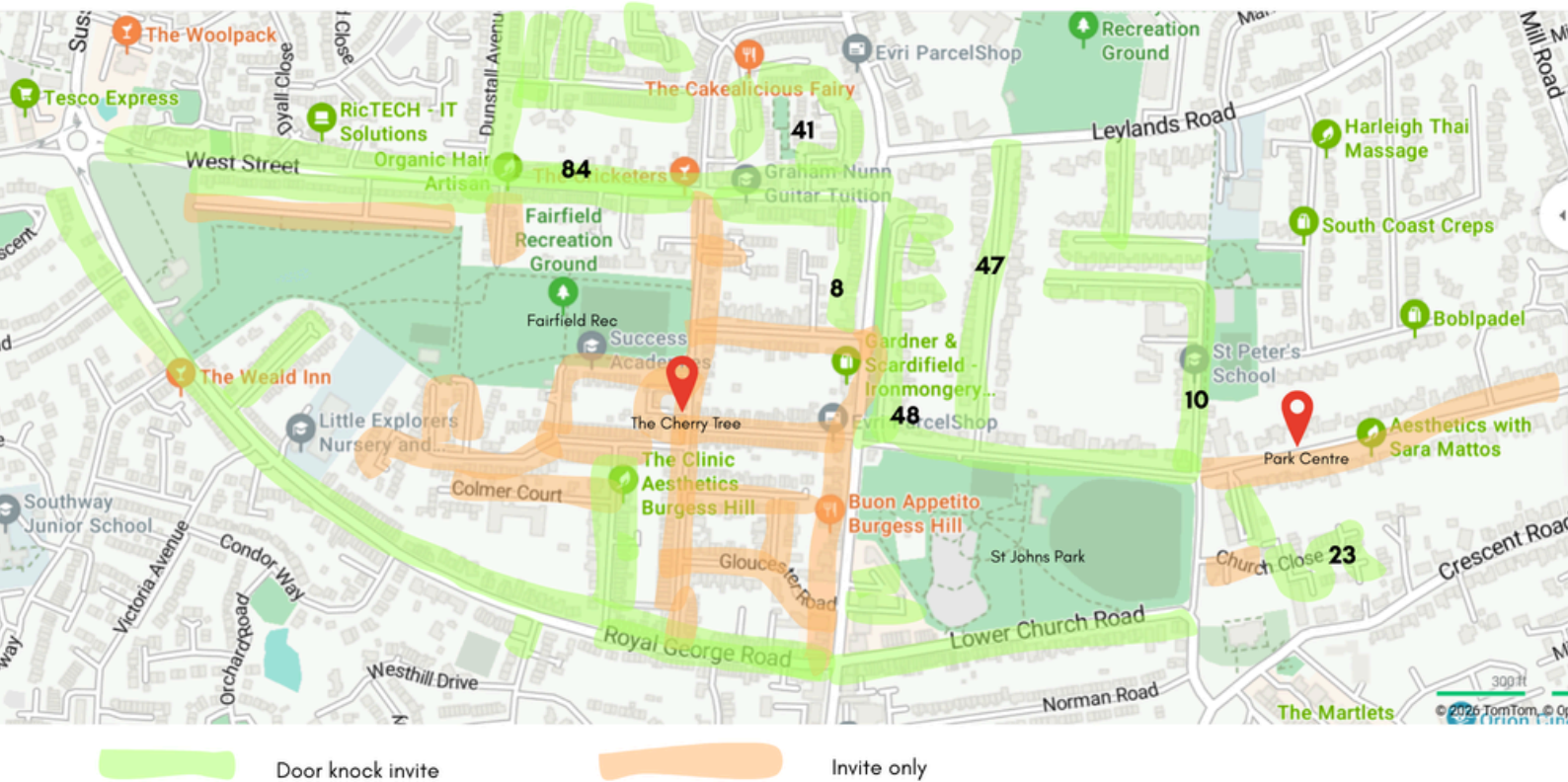
**50 people attended the drop-in**, including Community People staff and volunteers. Of these, 30 said they came because of the outreach activity. Twelve attended because they received the letter invitation, eight came after a doorstep conversation, and three came after seeing the invitation on Facebook. All 30 were new introductions to the centre, all were over 50 and most were over 70. Attendance was double the previous drop-in event linked to the September campaign.

**Feedback from the event** showed strong interest in simple, social and regular activities. People said they would like more chances to meet others and take part in things such as Knit and Natter, board games, chat groups, short walks, music, choir, bingo, tai chi, line dancing, chair aerobics, quizzes and lunch clubs. People also spoke positively about what is already good nearby, including the CTC itself, local parks, the cinema, library, leisure centre and existing social groups.

Overall, this work confirmed that there is **a good level of local interest around the CTC** and a clear appetite for more welcoming, social and community-focused activity, especially among older residents living nearby.

# Communications

## CHERRY TREE DOOR KNOCK AREA: 09/02/2026



One of the mapped invitation drop/door knocking areas surrounding Eastbrook Manor Community Centre

### Putting our plans into action

Approximately 1,000 homes within a 500m radius of the CTC were mapped. This was a wider area than previously door knocked. We opted to offer some homes a simple invitation and with others include a door knock “opt-out” note as we did not have staff capacity to door knock 1,000 homes. Invite-only homes were not door knocked. On the day, due some timetable conflicts and staff sickness, we were not able to door knock all 400 homes that received an invite with a door knock “opt-out” notice.

The invitation letter was a double sided, A5 flyer inviting residents to join us at a drop-in event at the CTC on Thursday February 12th. The invite used jargon-free, neutral language and included a direct and simple door knock opt-out mechanism and a map showing the location of the centre.

Invites were posted through doors of the homes in the mapped areas on the morning of Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February by in a risk assessed and carefully planned manner, using wooden spatulas to protect our hands from letterboxes and any potential dogs inside homes. We eventually posted 950 invites.

# Communications

## Invitation

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February  
1pm to 5pm

Free drinks  
and  
snacks!

Dear Local Resident,

We would like to invite you to drop in to **The Cherry Tree** any time between **1pm and 5pm on Thursday 12th February**.



The Cherry Tree used to be an Age UK hub but now it is run by Community People and it is for **everyone**.

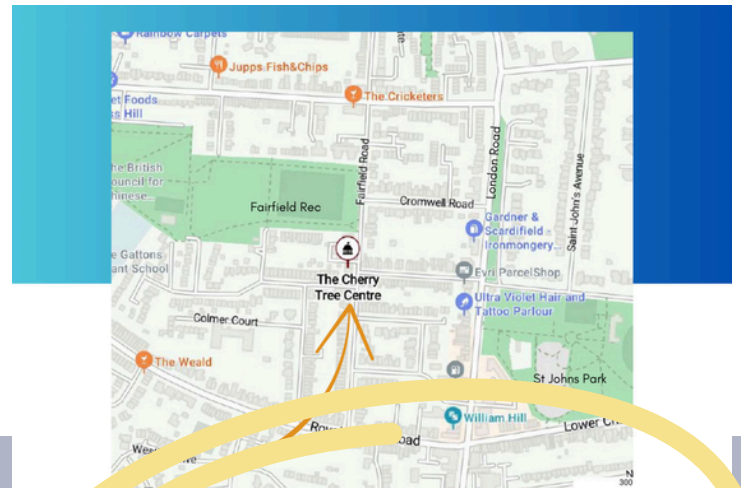
Drop in and have a look around, visit the café - it's open every Thursday - and find out what's going on.

If you are looking to make the most of your free time and meet other local people, we would love to see you.

Everyone welcome!



A5, double-sided invitation that was put through letterboxes



The Cherry Tree is on Fairfield Road, a short distance from Fairfield Recreation Ground, Burgess Hill, RH15 8QB

Helen, Jo, Nicola and John will be in your area **door knocking on Monday 9th February, after lunchtime**, to say hello and tell you a bit more about what's on.

**If you do not wish to be disturbed**, please let us know by leaving a message on 01444 258102 or email: [helenc@communitypeople.org.uk](mailto:helenc@communitypeople.org.uk)

01444 258102  
[www.communitypeople.org.uk](http://www.communitypeople.org.uk)



# Door Knocking

## Door knocking training

Three days after the letter drop, on **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2026**, Helen led a door knocking training session at Park Centre, another community centre just 10 minutes' walk from the CTC, with **Community People** staff, Marie, a member of **Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC)** and Jo from **Good Practice Mentors (GPM)**.

Some people only joined for the training which meant that our in-person knocking teams were two pairs and one group of three.

## Safety Considerations

### For residents' safety:

Given that a large proportion of door knockers are scams, it is very important that we distinguish ourselves from those behaviours by making sure we:

- Have only one person to the doorstep at a time - multiple people can be intimidating and usually used as a strategy for one person to distract the person at home and the other to gather information by peering into the house
- Do not try to look inside a person's home
- Do not ask leading or intrusive questions

### For our safety:

- Never door knock alone
- Keep within sight of your door knocking partner at all times
- Do not stroke pets
- Do not door knock if:
  - If there are clear signs posted: no soliciting, beware of dog etc.
  - If you can hear loud, aggressive dog barking or people shouting
  - If there are any other situational cues that make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe

You only have a brief moment on the doorstep to make a connection with the person answering the door, and so we practiced the quick, concise language that we learned from GPM to reassure people that we were not attempting to sell them anything and bring attention to our invitation.

It was helpful for each door knocker to have several copies of the invite with them to refer to and give out if people wanted another copy.

# Door Knocking



Flats and houses in Burgess Hill

On the door knocking day, we had less staff capacity than we originally planned for and so were able to knock on 265 of the 400 doors we planned. Of these, we met 92 people on the doorstep, giving an **engagement rate of 35%**.

The previous door knocking campaign in Burgess Hill had an engagement rate of 36%.

## Gathering Data

As previously, we recorded a small amount of anonymous demographic data after each door knock.

This helps us evaluate the time and day we do the door knocking and get a general sense of what the population is like.

Outreach Activity Location: Burgess Hill				CTC Centre		Date: 24/9/25	Outreach Activity: Invitation to CTC 24/9/25
Gender	YP	31+	70+	Family	Carer	Outcome of interaction - circle	Notes - tick all that apply
M/F		✓				RESPONSE: • No: not interested/not needed/not for me/other • <b>Yes Interested:</b> will attend/will try to attend/would like to attend INDICATORS: • Not aware of CTC • <b>Heard of CTC</b> • Has visited/engaged with CTC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information given <input type="checkbox"/> Significant conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Isolation <input type="checkbox"/> Cake run
			✓			RESPONSE: • No: not interested/not needed/not for me/other • <b>Yes Interested:</b> will attend/will try to attend/would like to attend INDICATORS: • Not aware of CTC • <b>Heard of CTC</b> • Has visited/engaged with CTC	<input type="checkbox"/> Information given <input type="checkbox"/> Significant conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Isolation <input type="checkbox"/> Cake run
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M/F			✓			RESPONSE: • No: not interested/not needed/not for me/other • <b>Yes Interested:</b> will attend/will try to attend/would like to attend INDICATORS: • Not aware of CTC • <b>Heard of CTC</b> • Has visited/engaged with CTC	<input type="checkbox"/> Information given <input type="checkbox"/> Significant conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Isolation <input type="checkbox"/> Cake run

# Data

## Who did we meet and engage?

We had 92 doorstep interactions with people; 52 (57%) were with women and 40 (43%) were with men.

The smallest group was in the 18-30 age range, at 13% of all doorstep interactions (9 women, 3 men).

The remaining age groups were as follows:

- 17% in the 31-49 age range
- 26% in the 50-69 age range
- 34% in the 70+ age range

Interesting conversations were experienced by all teams. The majority of people that we spoke to were over 50.

Interestingly, this time we encountered approximately the same number of men as women in every age bracket other than 18-30.

Resident age demographic of doorstep interactions

18-30 31-49 50-69 70+



### Age demographic:

18-30	13 (11%)	9 women	3 men
31-49	31 (27%)	9 women	10 men
50-69	30 (27%)	14 women	10 men
70+	27 (24%)	16 women	15 men

# Data

## Who was interested in the drop-in event?

In response to the drop in event invitation, 28% of people we spoke to on the doorstep responded positively saying either: yes they will, or would like to attend. 35% responded no, but for a variety of reasons, shown on the pie chart to right, and 23% were non-committal.

Responses were cooler this time when compared to our last door knock in the area. In September, the percentage of people who responded positively was 66%. 34% responded negatively to the invite, but almost half of those were due to a conflict, such as a prior appointment or having to work. In February's campaign, the number of people giving non-committal responses was noticeably greater.

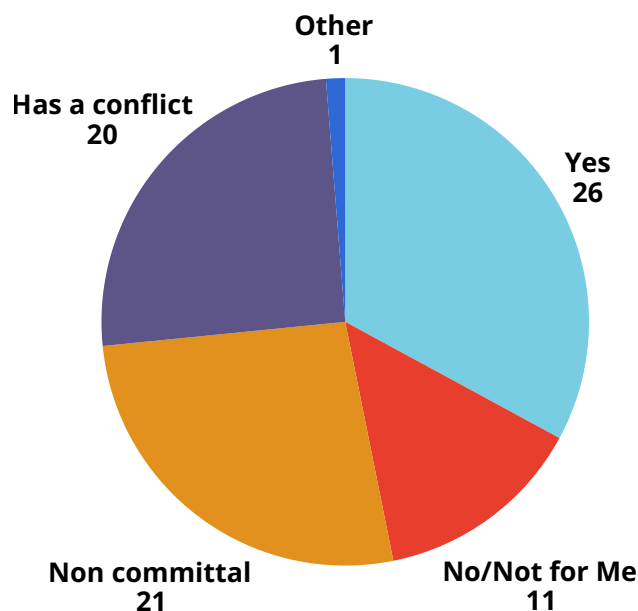
Responses are broken down by age group and gender on the next two pages.

## What were people's perceptions of the Cherry Tree?

From our previous campaign in the area we understood that many people believed that the CTC was still a venue only for older people. Unsurprisingly, after multiple near closures over the past few years, some people living nearby believed the centre to be completely closed.

In contrast, a majority of people we spoke to in February had either heard of the CTC or already visited, however this time, people were more non-committal in their responses to the drop in event.

## Total expressions of interest



# Data

## How did this door knock compare with the campaign carried out last September?

Last September, we had 116 doorstep interactions: 69 (59%) were with women and 46 (41%) were with men. In February, we had 92 doorstep interactions with people and 52 (57%) were with women and 40 (43%) were with men. Although we spoke with more people last time, both campaigns met roughly the same percentage of women vs. men.

The majority age group that we spoke to in September was 50-69. In February, the majority age group was 70+. This may have been influenced by door knocking on different days: September was on a Thursday and February was on a Monday.

Resident age demographic of doorstep interactions Sept 2025

● 18-30 ● 31-49 ● 50-69 ● 70+



Resident age demographic of doorstep interactions Feb 2026

● 18-30 ● 31-49 ● 50-69 ● 70+

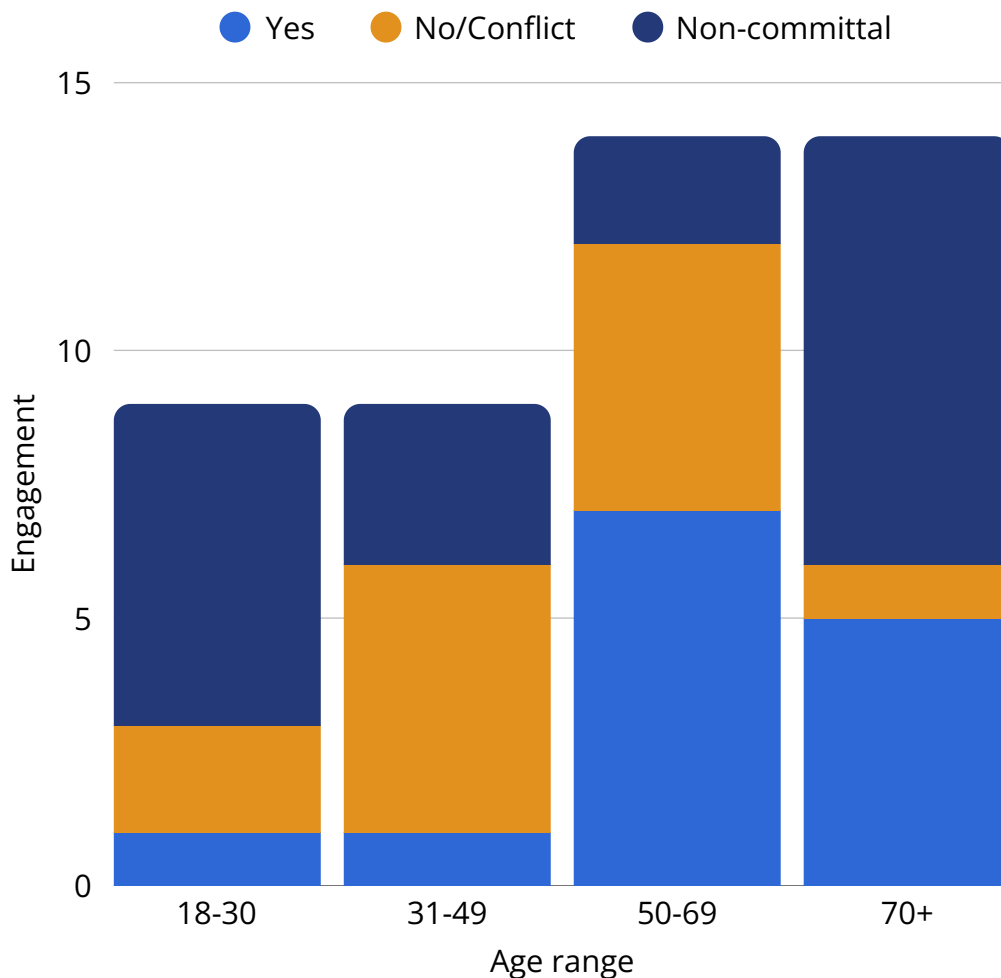


## Did people respond differently to the drop in event invite after the second door knock?

As shown on the next two pages, the doorstep reaction to the drop in invite was much cooler than in October. Most people responded no, or had a conflict preventing them from attending in every age group (seven out of eight age groups) except for women aged 50-69. Last time we door knocked, five of the eight age brackets showed more than half the people interested in the drop in offer.

# Data

## Outcome of interaction - women



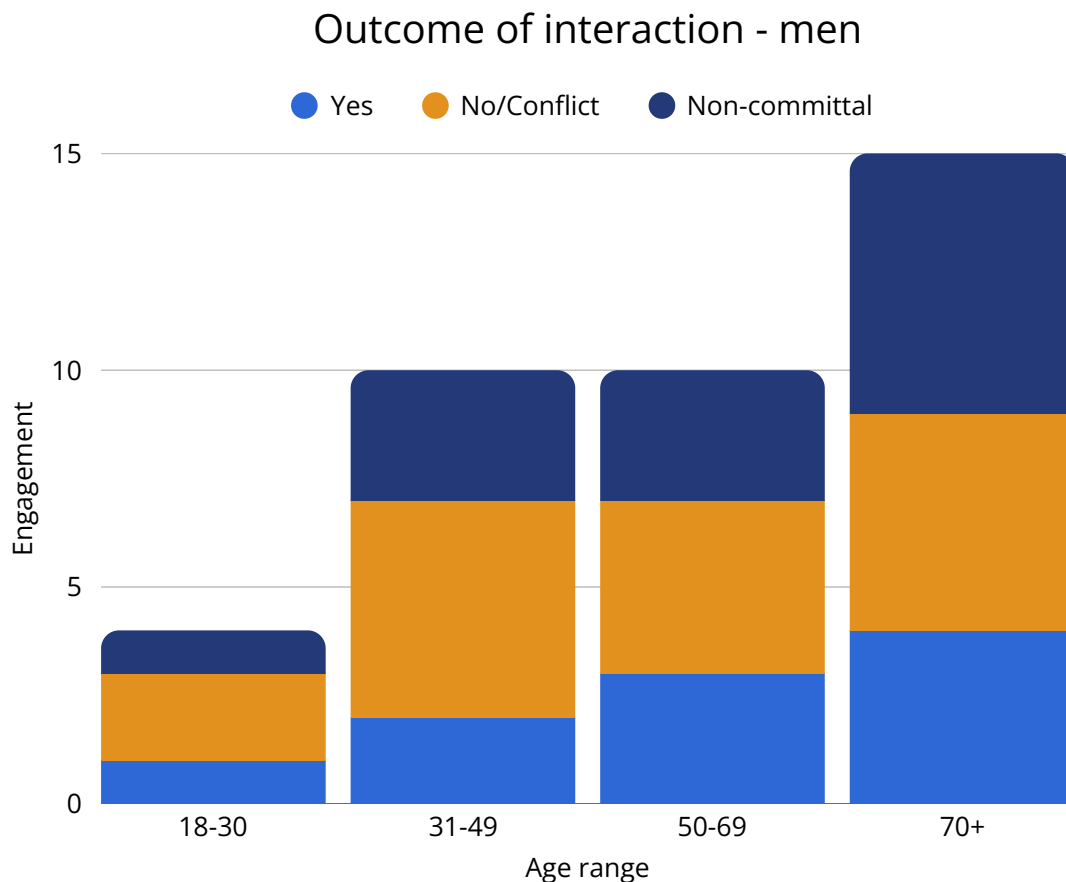
During our door knocking, we spoke to more women than men with women representing 57% of conversations. Out of the 52 women that we talked to on the doorstep, most represented were in the 50-69 and 70+ age groups.

The most enthusiastic age group was 50-69 with 50% of women in that age group responding positively to the drop in invitation. The next highest positive response was in the 70+ age group with 31% of women saying they would like to attend the event. Although, most 70+ women (50%) were non-committal in their response; saying neither yes nor no to the invitation.

In the 30-49 age group, only one woman out of nine that we talked to said she would like to attend the event, all others were either non-committal or had a conflict preventing them from attending.

In the 18-30 age group, most were non-committal with two declining or having a conflict and one responding positively.

# Data



We spoke to fewer men than women on the doorstep, with men representing 43% of all conversations. The biggest age group represented was 70+ and it was also the most positive with 33% of men saying yes they would like to attend the event.

We spoke to the same number of men (10) in the 31-49 and 50-69 age groups and they had almost identical break down of responses, with just two more men saying they would like to attend the drop in event in the older (50-69) age group.

The smallest group represented was men in the 18-30 age range, where only 1 out of 4 responded positively to the invite.

# Drop-In Event



Exterior of The Cherry Tree in Burgess Hill

## The Pop Up, Drop In, Come and Have a Look Event

The drop-in event at the CTC took place three days after the door knocking activity on **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February from 1pm - 5pm.**

We laid out a self-serve, simple refreshments stand and propped open doors to make the building obviously open without adding any decorations or signage that could act as a barrier to some people such as bunting, flowers, banners or flags. What one person finds welcoming, another can easily take to mean that an event or place is not for them in some way; for example, bunting can be read as something happening for children and families rather than welcoming to all.

We dressed simply, left off our lanyards and name badges and welcomed people, offered them refreshments and the chance to look around the building.

We posted the following two questions on flip chart paper to ask people for feedback about the area in which they live:

- **What's great around here?**
- **What do you want to do more?**

# Drop-In Event



Trying out some circus skills with Samantha from Joyous Flow Arts at the drop in event

## Who showed up?

Overall, **57 people**, including Community People staff and volunteers, attended the drop-in event. Of these people, 7 were Community People staff, 3 were volunteers and 10 were the regular lunch club attendees. Additionally, there were 2 people running tasters of their classes (tennis and circus skills), 2 volunteers giving hand massages, 2 people from the Mid Sussex Wellbeing team giving health MOTs and one person from West Sussex Country Council Prevention Team advising attendees on a range of wellbeing topics.

## 30 reported attending due to our outreach activities:

- 12 received the letter invitation
- 8 received the door knock and doorstep invitation and came to the drop in event
- 3 saw the invitation posted on social media (Facebook)

All 30 of these people were new introductions to the centre; all were over 50 and most (26) were over 70. Interestingly, the majority of people who attended did so because they received an invitation (without a door knock notice and opt-out). This makes sense given the cool response from people that we spoke to on the doorstep, however, 8 people that we spoke to on the doorstep came to the drop in event.

In October, 14 people came to the drop in event, again all new introductions. February represented a 100% increase in attendance. The atmosphere was overwhelmingly positive. The theme for the drop in event in October was: "Come and have a look," in February the theme was, "Come and have a go."

# Drop-In Event



Playing a bit of indoor tennis with Jimmy from Encore! Tennis at the drop in event.

## Come and have a go

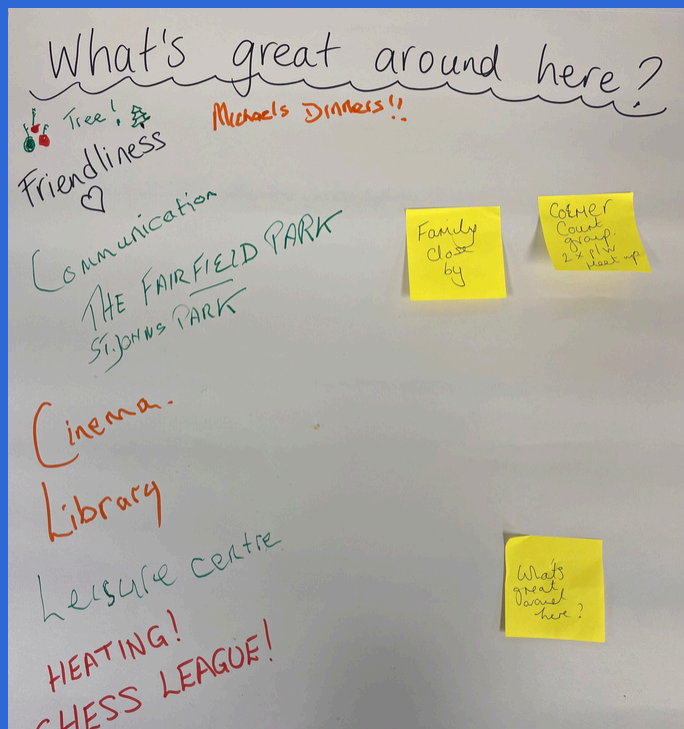
We arranged for several current providers of classes and services be in attendance at the Cherry Tree for the drop in event:

- Encore! Tennis put up an indoor net and welcomed people to have a go at indoor tennis with soft foam balls
- Joyous Flow Arts demonstrated circus skills: poi, juggling and plate spinning to small groups
- A Touch of Gentleness volunteers provided 20 minute hand massages and conversations
- Mid Sussex Wellbeing offered 10 minute health MOTs
- West Sussex County Council Prevention Assessment Team provided information and signposting over a range of topics

In addition, Community People staff were on hand to make sure all visitors received a warm welcome and any information they wanted and everyone enjoyed hot and cold drinks and snacks.

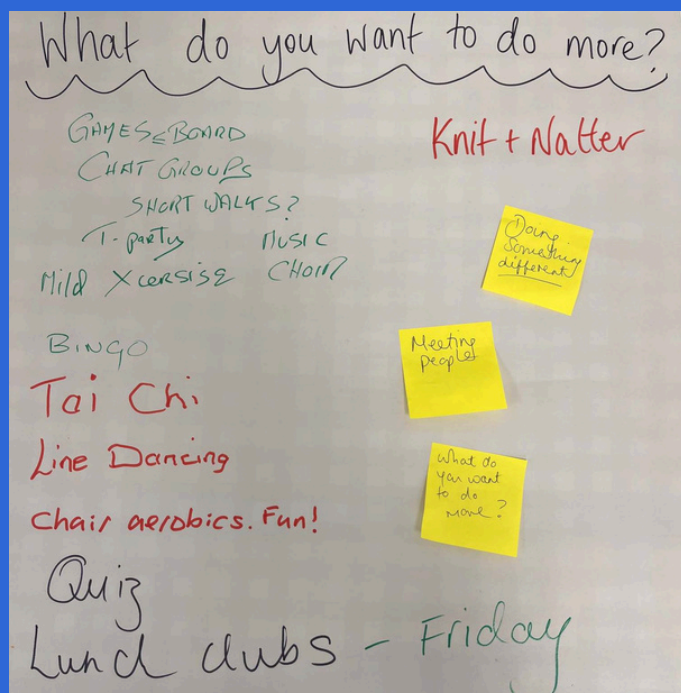
# Feedback

## What did people say?



## What's great around here?

- Michael's dinners
- Cherry Tree
- Friendliness
- Communication
- The Fairfield Park
- St John's Park
- Cinema
- Library
- Leisure Centre
- Heating
- Chess League
- Family close by
- Colmer Court group 2x per week meet ups



## What do you want to do more?

- Knit + Natter
- Games Board
- Chat groups
- Short walks
- T-party
- Music
- Mild Xercise
- Music
- Choir
- Bingo
- Tai Chi
- Line Dancing
- Chair aerobics. Fun!
- Quiz
- Lunch clubs - Friday
- Meeting people
- Doing something different

# Learnings

This exercise gave us a useful snapshot of the neighbourhood around the CTC in Burgess Hill. As with any door knocking activity, the findings are shaped by timing, weather, the day of the week, who was available at home and the people carrying out the outreach. A different day or a different team may have produced slightly different results.

Even so, this work has given us a stronger understanding of local awareness, local interest and the kinds of opportunities people want more of near the centre. It also showed again that door knocking is a quick and effective way to meet local residents and start meaningful conversations.

## What did we learn about the area around The Cherry Tree Centre?

- People were generally open to speaking with us on the doorstep. We knocked on 265 doors and spoke with 92 people, giving an engagement rate of 35%, which was very close to the previous Burgess Hill campaign. This suggests that the approach continues to work well as a way of meeting residents nearby.
- Although people were willing to talk, responses to the drop-in invitation were more reserved than in the earlier campaign. Just over a quarter of people responded positively, while a noticeable number were non-committal. This suggests that interest in the centre is there, but that a doorstep conversation does not always translate into a firm commitment to attend an event.
- Compared with the previous round of door knocking, more of the people we met were older. The largest age group in February was people aged 70+, and the majority of all doorstep conversations were with people aged over 50. This was reflected again in the drop-in event, where all 30 people who attended due to the outreach were over 50, and most were over 70. This tells us that our current outreach is reaching older residents especially well, but also that younger age groups remain harder to engage through this method alone.
- Awareness of the CTC appears to be improving. Unlike the earlier campaign, where many people thought the centre was only for older people or believed it had closed, most people we spoke to this time had at least heard of it and some had already visited. Even so, there is still more to do to make it clear that the centre is active, open and relevant to a wider range of local people.

# Learnings

- The drop-in event showed that invitation-only outreach was particularly effective. Of the 30 people who said they attended because of our outreach, 12 came because they received the letter invitation, compared with 8 who came following a doorstep conversation. This fits with the cooler doorstep response and suggests that a simple, direct invitation can be just as important as door knocking, especially when staff capacity is limited.
- The event itself created a warm and positive atmosphere and gave people a chance not only to look around, but to try activities already linked to the centre. This helped people experience the building as active and welcoming. Attendance doubled compared with the earlier drop-in event, which shows that wider outreach and a broader offer can bring in more new people.
- Combining activities to have a go was very well received. Mid Sussex Wellbeing conducted 12 10-minute health MOTs. A Touch of Gentleness volunteers gave 9 20-minute hand massages and many people had a go at tennis and circus skills.
- Feedback at the event pointed strongly towards simple, social and regular activities. People asked for things such as Knit and Natter, board games, chat groups, short walks, music, choir, bingo, tai chi, line dancing, chair aerobics, quizzes and lunch clubs. Across these suggestions, the clearest message was that people want more chances to meet others, do enjoyable things together and feel part of local life.
- People also spoke positively about what is already good nearby, including the CTC itself, local parks, the cinema, library, leisure centre and existing social groups. This shows there is already a base of local connection to build on, and that the centre can play a stronger part within a wider local network of places and activities.
- Overall, this work confirmed that there is a good level of local interest around the CTC, particularly among older residents, and that there is clear appetite for more regular, welcoming and socially focused activity.

# Next Steps

**It is important that we build on the momentum created through this outreach and show residents that their time, trust and ideas matter.** The people who opened their doors, attended the drop-in and shared feedback have given us a stronger base for future work around the CTC, and we should respond in a clear and visible way.

## **Around The Cherry Tree Centre:**

- We will share a follow-up update with the homes reached through this campaign, including:
  - a short summary of what we heard
  - information about current activities and room hire at the CTC
  - details of any new or planned sessions that reflect the feedback received
  - a link to the full report on the Community People website.
- We will continue to raise awareness that the CTC is open and for everyone, not only older people. Future communications should keep using simple, direct language and make it easy for local residents to understand what happens at the centre, who it is for and how they can take part.
- We will use what we learned from this campaign to shape future activity, with a particular focus on low-cost, welcoming and social offers that appealed most strongly during the drop-in feedback. This may include testing interest in activities such as chat groups, bingo, gentle exercise, music-based sessions, creative groups and lunch clubs.
- We will also think about how to improve engagement with people under 50, as they were much less represented both on the doorstep and at the event. This may mean trying different times, different outreach methods and different types of activity alongside door knocking.
- Because invitation-only homes produced a strong response, we should consider continuing a mixed approach in future: combining leaflet drops, selected door knocking and simple digital promotion through social media. This would help us reach more people while making the best use of available staff time.

# Next Steps

## At Community People:

- We will use the findings from this campaign to guide future community listening and local engagement work at the CTC. This includes reflecting on what worked well in February: a wider invitation area, a clear and simple flyer, a straightforward drop-in format, and an event offer that let people try things out rather than only look around.
- We will continue to build on the learning from both Burgess Hill door knocking campaigns so far, comparing who we reached, how people responded and what helped turn awareness into attendance. This will help us plan future outreach in a way that is realistic, safe and responsive to the people living closest to the centre.
- We will also keep working with local partners, providers and volunteers to make sure the centre remains active, welcoming and connected to the wider community. The relationships built through this work give us a good base for future events, services and opportunities shaped by local feedback.



Trying some juggling with Samantha from Joyous Flow Arts

# Thank You



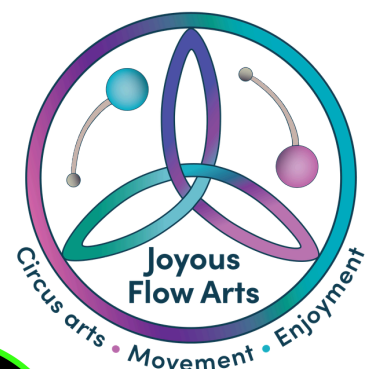
We would like to thank everyone in Burgess Hill who gave their time and thoughts during this work. Thank you to the residents who opened their doors, spoke with us on the doorstep and shared their experiences, ideas and honest views about The Cherry Tree Centre and the local area. We are also grateful to everyone who came along to the drop-in event, many of whom were visiting the centre for the first time. Your feedback sits at the heart of this report and will help shape what happens next.

Thank you to the **Community People team members, volunteers and supporters** who helped plan, prepare and deliver this work, including the invitation drop, training session, door knocking and the drop-in event itself. We are especially grateful to Helen for leading the outreach and making sure local voices remained central throughout the process.

Thank you to **Marie** from **Mid Sussex District Council** and Jo from **Good Practice Mentors** for taking part in the training and supporting the door knocking activity. Their involvement helped strengthen a safe, respectful and thoughtful approach to community listening.

We would also like to thank the providers and partners who helped make the drop-in event warm, welcoming and active. Thank you to **Encore! Tennis, Joyous Flow Arts, A Touch of Gentleness, Mid Sussex Wellbeing** and the **West Sussex County Council Prevention Assessment Team** for giving their time, offering activities, sharing information and helping local residents feel comfortable in the space.

Finally, thank you to everyone who continues to support The Cherry Tree Centre as a local community hub. We recognise the trust that local residents placed in us by engaging with this work, and we remain committed to using what we heard to support a centre that feels open, active and relevant to the people living nearby.



**Encore  
Tennis**