COMMUNITY PEOPLE



IMPACT REPORT 2025-2026

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO OPPORTUNITY. STRENGTHENING ORGANISATIONS TO THRIVE. TURNING LOCAL INSIGHT INTO INFLUENCE.

2025 to 2026 was a year of pressure, change and possibility.

Across the voluntary and community sector, rising costs, tighter funding, growing demand and workforce pressures continued to bite. Nationally, organisations were restructuring, merging and, in some cases, closing. NCVO's Road Ahead 2025 described a "big squeeze" of falling funding, increasing costs and rising demand.

We saw those pressures locally too. Our 2025 Member Survey found 79% of respondents were experiencing increased demand, while 62% wanted support with funding and fundraising and 59% with volunteer recruitment. A year later, members were still telling us about rising costs, harder fundraising, pressure on volunteers and difficulty funding core running costs. But they also told us what they value: practical support, trusted relationships, local knowledge and our ability to bring people together. Member Survey 2026 gave Community People a recommendation score of 8.9 out of 10.



We listened, and we responded.

During the year, Community People continued to develop its role as a core capacity building organisation, helping local charities and community groups become stronger, more sustainable and better connected. Alongside direct support to our 578 members, our role increasingly reached into the wider system, including supporting the West Sussex strategic lead for SVLA, the Food Partnership, ICT Mid Sussex and West Sussex County Council's Early Support Programme.

At the same time, running community buildings, including No 34 in Haywards Heath, keeps us rooted in everyday community life. We see first hand the increasingly complex needs people bring through the door. Sometimes our role is connecting someone with a brilliant local service. Sometimes it is spotting the barriers, including digital exclusion, that make that support harder to reach. And sometimes it is joining the dots between services because people's lives rarely fit neatly into organisational boundaries.

That combination matters. We support people. We strengthen organisations. And we use what we hear and see locally to influence the systems around them.

Our impact this year is the story of those connections, and what happened because of them.

Photo credit - Julie Edwards Visuals

COMMUNITY PEOPLE

STRONG AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

2025 - 2026

Our year in numbers

£401k
income

11 staff
6.8 full time equivalent roles

13,500
visits to our 2 community hubs

Capacity Building

578 member groups from grassroots to national charities

241 new volunteers using our matching service

210 hours of 1-1 support for 203 member groups

Training & Events

581
people attended 21 training and events sessions

9.9 out of 10
we scored when asked if attendees would recommend our event

Community Hubs

2 x Community Hubs

13,500 x Footfall (visitors)

2,000 x Individual users

Participation & Engagement

1,621 x Doors knocked

585 x Doorstep conversations

Engagement rate:

36%

Bringing together

799

community leaders

SUPPORTING CHARITIES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS TO START, GROW AND THRIVE

What makes us get out of bed in the morning?

We love running in person events for local community leaders. Our East Grinstead Networking events provides a unique opportunity for local funders to connect directly to groups and talk face to face about their projects and costs. East Grinstead Common Good Trust and East Grinstead Memorial Estate both came to our 2025 networking along with **58** community groups. This led to **55 grants** being allocated to local grassroots groups totalling **£65,038.**

Jane Harmen from Meridian Rotary told us: "**I just wanted to thank you for the Networking event a couple of months ago at Trinity Church. I was able to talk to the delightful Chris Peaty from East Grinstead Common Good Trust. We are being given a grant of £2k for the Sackville School bungalow repurposing project. This would not have been possible without Community People's Introduction".** We then asked Jane:

When are Community People at their best?

> Community People's ability to connect different organisations is **vital** to maintaining and growing the VCSE sector across Mid Sussex and beyond. Their training and **nurturing** of new community groups is **essential** if we are to maintain a thriving well managed VCSE sector which saves the NHS and other statutory organisations millions of pounds each year.

When standing close by and giving you some of their experience and knowledge. They all have **charisma**, **energy**, **imagination** and a great way of explaining things.

PUTTING THE HOURS IN!

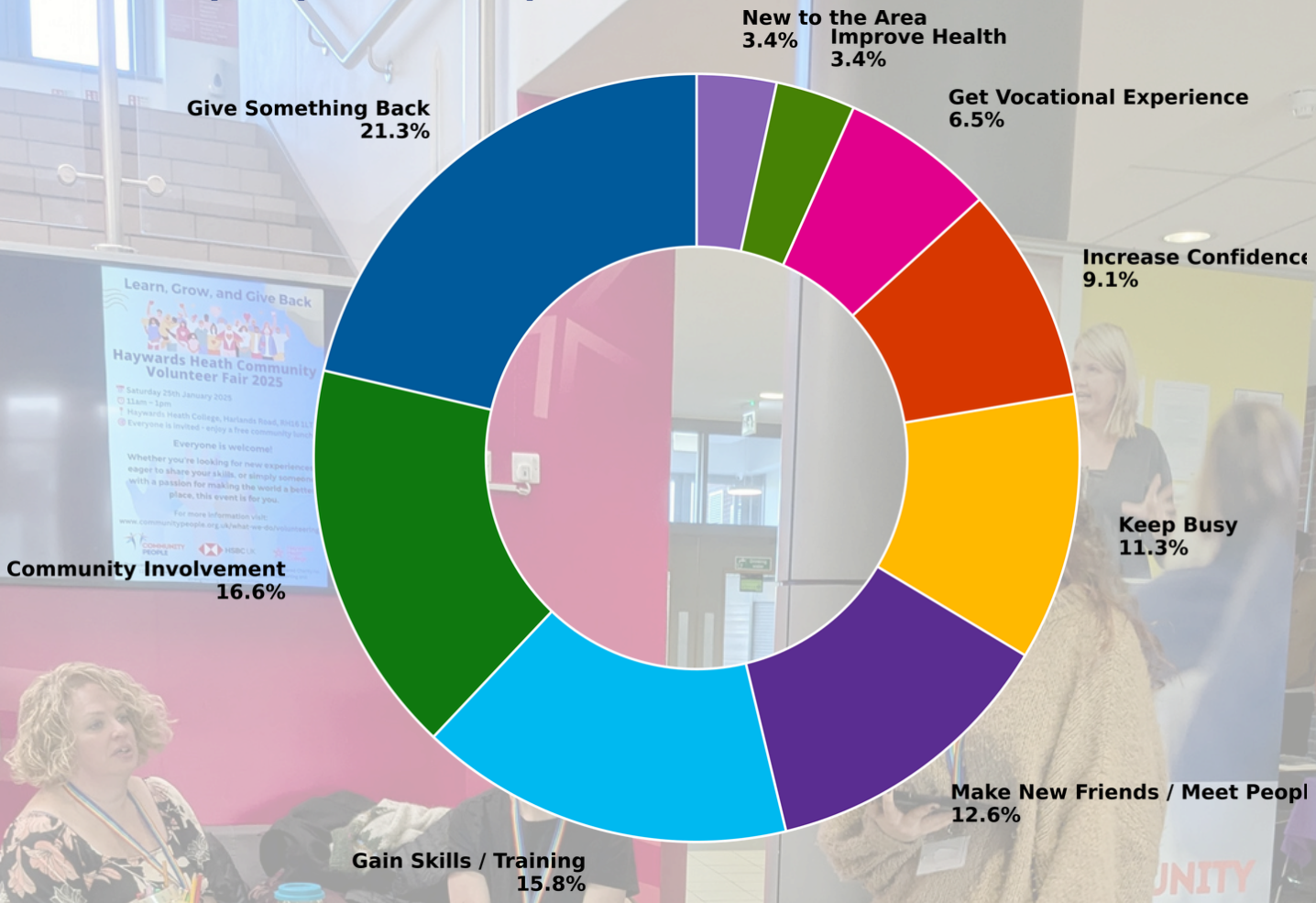
146 hours building confident leaders
87 hours creating connections
50 hours making strong partnerships
160 hours advocating for a valued VCSE sector

267

enquiries about new volunteering opportunities

241 NEW VOLUNTEERS IN OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH OUR ONLINE MATCHING SERVICE

And this why they want to help their communities:



2 Volunteer Fairs | 73 local community groups | 193 residents

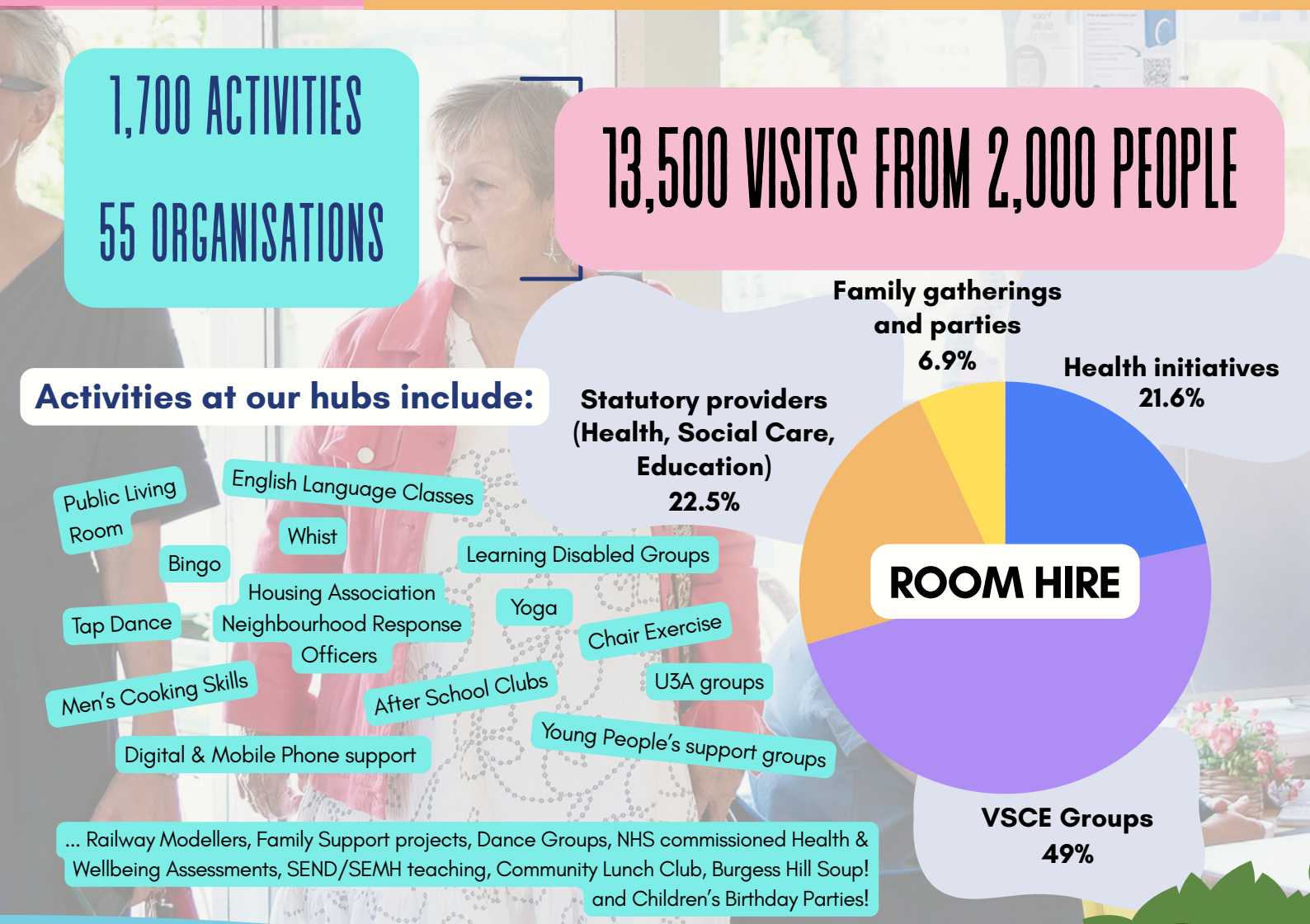
"We were delighted to attend this event. We spoke to **49** people on the day so hopefully some of them may apply to volunteer with us in the future. We have so far recruited one volunteer which is amazing as we have tried before in that area and been unsuccessful."

"We only got one volunteer from the event, but really he is proving to be **one of the best volunteers we have**. So he is probably worth 10!"

OUR COMMUNITY HUBS

CHERRY TREE CENTRE, BURGESS HILL

BENTSWOOD @34, HAYWARDS HEATH



1,700 ACTIVITIES

55 ORGANISATIONS

13,500 VISITS FROM 2,000 PEOPLE

Activities at our hubs include:

- Public Living Room
- English Language Classes
- Whist
- Bingo
- Learning Disabled Groups
- Housing Association Neighbourhood Response Officers
- Tap Dance
- Yoga
- Chair Exercise
- Men's Cooking Skills
- After School Clubs
- U3A groups
- Digital & Mobile Phone support
- Young People's support groups

... Railway Modellers, Family Support projects, Dance Groups, NHS commissioned Health & Wellbeing Assessments, SEND/SEMH teaching, Community Lunch Club, Burgess Hill Soup! and Children's Birthday Parties!

- **Family gatherings and parties** 6.9%
- **Health initiatives** 21.6%
- **Statutory providers (Health, Social Care, Education)** 22.5%
- **VSCE Groups** 49%

We are a Fareshare distributor!

Over 12 months, we will have picked up **630kg** of food destined for landfill, equivalent to **1500 meals**, and **120kg CO2** savings. Food waste recycled from our lunch club totals **105kg** for the year!

Cherry Tree grows!

3 new centre volunteers

15 new lunch club regulars

3 new accessible exercise classes

Photo credit - Julie Edwards Visuals

A LIFE IN THE DAY OF A COMMUNITY HUB



8AM: The day starts with a security check and a fire alarm test before filling up the urns for the many hot drinks we will provide.

9AM: The Lunch Club chef arrives to prep the two-course hot meal we will serve at 12 midday in the café – this week it's Robert's 70th birthday so we have a celebration planned.

10AM: The Public Living room space opens, inviting the community to connect over a hot drink and biscuit.

11AM–1PM: Participants in the English classes for Speakers of Other Languages arrive next closely followed by the U3A Quiz Group for the fortnightly test of their knowledge. After lunch the Whist Club and Bingo club are in full flow whilst the local authority's Learning Disabled group take over the kitchen for a session of teaching cooking skills.

2–4PM: By mid-afternoon the after-school Arts & Crafts club opens up. As does Moon Oasis, a facilitated peer support group for NEET young people to express themselves creatively.

5PM: As the early evening arrives so do the aerobic fitness class, tap dance and Tai Chi sessions to finish off the day before our hard-working cleaners arrive to clear up and prepare the centre for the next day.

LISTENING TO LEARN!

Our community listening campaigns, '**On Your Doorstep**', identified many people living close to the centres who had never visited before or were unaware of what was available. Listening to their views continues to form the backbone of our current and future planning.

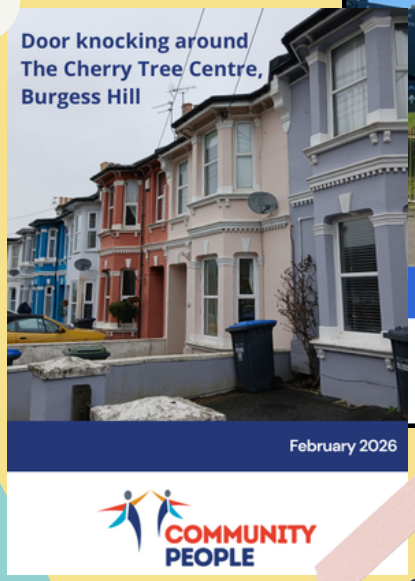
OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES

People feel **less isolated**.
People feel **more connected**.
More people from **underrepresented communities** have their voices heard.
People have greater influence over activities and decisions.
More residents **volunteer** and contribute their skills.
More residents start, **organise** or lead community activities.
Local organisations and residents work together to **address community priorities**.

Photo credit – Julie Edwards Visuals

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

'ON YOUR DOORSTEP'





Click the images to read our reports!

Across **three door knocking campaigns** in Burgess Hill and Fishersgate, Community People delivered more than **1,600 invitations**, knocked on **891 doors** and had **322 doorstep conversations.**

110

people attended the two later community drop-ins at Eastbrook Manor Community Centre and The Cherry Tree Centre

55

people came to those two drop-ins directly because of our outreach

30

new introductions to The Cherry Tree Centre through the February 2026 outreach

2×

increase in attendance at The Cherry Tree Centre drop-ins from September 2025 to February 2026

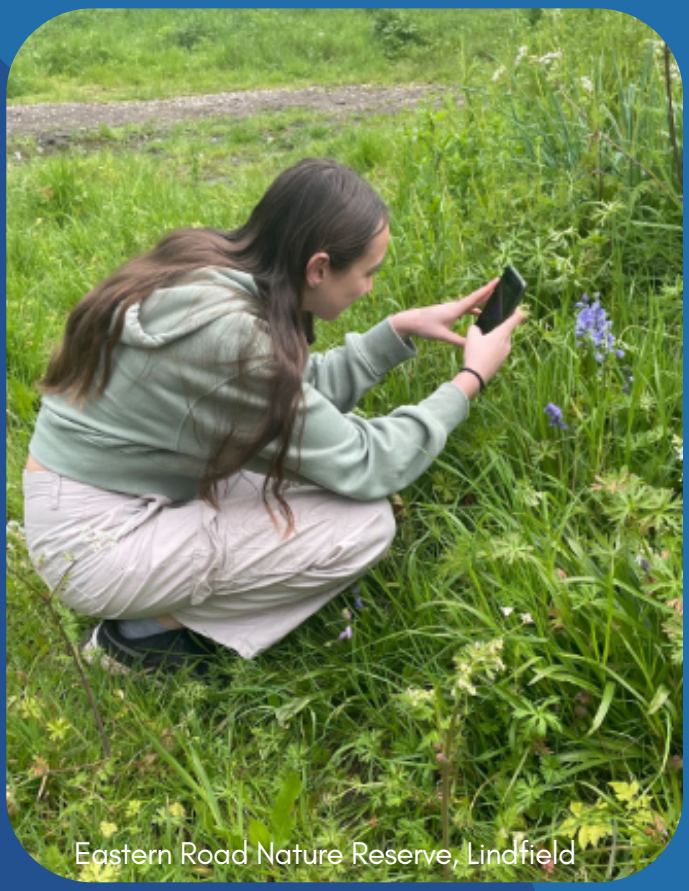
This was listening that led somewhere. New people came through the doors, attendance doubled and residents accessed wellbeing support. 30 new people discovered The Cherry Tree Centre, 12 had health MOTs and connected with WSCC Prevention Assessment Teams and residents shaped what comes next, from chair exercise and lunch clubs to more ways to connect.



CLIMATE AND NATURE

The Climate and Nature Crisis is **central to all our work** – this is central to all our work: from the leaders and groups we talk to, to the hubs we run and the events we host. We carry the same values into the choices we make as an organisation. **We have committed to choosing ethical banking and investments, reflecting NCVO's work encouraging charities to move away from fossil fuel investment.** We are working on our purchasing policies, recycling soft plastics and compost in the office, reducing email sizes and are only using AI where it adds really value.

We host a bi-annual **Eco Forum**, welcoming **66 community leaders** to come together, share projects, time, ideas, resources and tea. It's a really thriving and interactive event – the only one locally that offers this space. We were told: **"The format is excellent, but most important is the chance to meet and talk to people in person. There is huge value in that and you facilitate the process very well."**



Eastern Road Nature Reserve, Lindfield

EDEI

E**quality, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion runs through everything we do**. Over the last two years we have worked with The Diversity Trust to provide race, gender and disability awareness training for staff, trustees, volunteers, hirers and community groups. We have supported local groups to better engage SEND, LGBTQ+ and Global Majority communities, helping local people start and grow their own projects and community initiatives, **including plans for the first Mid Sussex Pride in 2027 in partnership with Haywards Heath College, Allsorts and local inclusive churches.**

We take practical steps to remove barriers which includes translated welcome signage, displaying the Progress Pride flag, low-cost community meals, subsidised room hire and flexible, supported volunteering opportunities for people with learning and physical disabilities. Where possible, we use Google Translate to support conversations with people whose first language is not English, including when door-knocking.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT



Jargon buster:

ICT - Integrated Care Team
NCVO - National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training
VSCE - Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise
SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SVLA - Sussex Voluntary Leadership Alliance

Thank you to all our trustees, volunteers and partners for your continued support, time and expertise. We appreciate each and every one of you.

ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS
BurgessHill Town Council
CLARION FUTURES
COMMUNITY FUND
HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL
MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL
Sussex COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
west sussex county council

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