

GIG BUDDIES

PROJECT REPORT

JANUARY 2013 – DECEMBER 2014



Promoting the right of
people with a learning
disability to live the lives of
their choice.



Gig Buddies is a project that was set up in 2013 by the charity Stay Up Late

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Learning to be with one another, making friends, meeting as equals on the term 'Everybody belongs' needs our full attention. It literally needs to be learnt and practised by all.
Parents for Inclusion, 2015

Executive Summary

Gig Buddies was the winning pitch at City Camp 2012 in Brighton and Hove. City Camp is an annual 'non-conference' where the theme is 'how can we improve the lives of people living in our city?' It is attended by academics, community activists, local government officials, creatives, people who use services and anybody who has an interest.

The focus of the Gig Buddies pitch was to look at a simple way to end social isolation whilst also enabling more people to engage in regular volunteering activities. Being the winning pitch meant a cheque for £2000, a great deal of positive support from our local community and around a year's worth of fundraising, research and awareness raising before we could officially launch in Jan '13 with our Project Manager in post.



This evaluation report will look at where we have come in two years of running the scheme, the lessons we have learned, the way we are managing to support people to be less socially isolated and also creating new types of volunteers in the process.

We are aware that there is nothing new about volunteer befriending schemes but it does seem rarer to find schemes that match people based on a shared interest, rather than the traditional model of it being based around need (i.e. of being lonely or wanting to volunteer in your local community).

This report also looks at the plans to replicate Gig Buddies as a social franchise ('Gig Buddies in a box'). By sharing our work and creating a model that enables replication, whilst also protecting the integrity of our project. We believe our pilot project demonstrates that Gig Buddies has the potential to transform communities, enabling many more people with learning disabilities and autism to be less socially isolated and unleashing the capacity of communities to become more involved in voluntary work.

Paul Richards

Director, Stay Up Late

Acknowledgements

Gig Buddies would have not been possible without the support and encouragement of a great deal of people and apologies if we've missed any of you off. We'd like to particularly acknowledge the involvement of our staff, trustees (past and present), volunteers, the Storm and Thunder Team, our participants, our funders, individual fundraisers, people and organisations who have given us in-kind support and all those people who have given us their support through their enthusiasm for the project.

In particular we'd like to say thank you to the organisers of City Camp Brighton who created the moment and the catalyst for turning Gig Buddies from an idea to a reality.

The context of Gig Buddies and background to the project

Policies, practice, campaigning and cuts

Stay Up Late first emerged as a campaign, set up by the punk band Heavy Load, some of whom had learning disabilities. They wanted to change the widespread practice of care homes operating ridged rotas, where people who relied on support were not able to access it after 10pm in the evenings, excluding a large population from evening social lives. The campaign became well known through Heavy Load's fame as a result of a BBC documentary being made about them, and many supported living settings swapped their practice of low-level institutional abuse for a more flexible, person-centred approach in supporting people. However, many adults with learning disabilities are still unable to access support in the evenings.

The campaign message reflected various government policies around social care becoming more person-centred, such as Valuing People (2001) and Valuing People Now (2009). Heavy Load were perhaps they first punk band to campaign to uphold government policy.



Heavy Load stopped playing in 2012 due to the drummer wanting to retire. The Stay Up Late campaign had done a good job of informing people about what needed to change, and Paul Richards, one of the two non-disabled band members, was keen to carry the work of the campaign forward to continue to create real and positive change. He successfully obtained charity status for Stay Up Late.

Gig Buddies was set up amid some huge changes to social care, and the cuts that social care services have faced under the coalition government have meant that many people access support for the very basic aspects of life, such as eating and budgeting. Building relationships and socialising, so vital for human wellbeing, is often deprioritised when Local Authorities are under so much pressure to make savings.

It is important to note that, whilst under-resourcing is puts a strain on support services, the issue of people with learning disabilities not being able to control their own support was an issue identified before the widespread funding cuts began. It is an issue of cultures and of disempowerment.

Evidence for need

To provide an evidence base for Gig Buddies, Stay Up Late commissioned some research through the University of Brighton Community University of Brighton Community University Partnership Programme, examining the barriers that people with learning disabilities face to going out in the evenings. The main barriers identified were:

- Not having anyone to go out with
- Not being able to access support in the evenings
- Not knowing what's on
- Not having the confidence and motivation
- Not having access to transport
- Not having enough money, and not knowing what activities are free
- Worrying about safety issues

Gig Buddies seeks to help people overcome the barriers listed to getting out in the evenings.

Social Isolation

Adults with learning disabilities face disproportionate social isolation. The Learning Disability Coalition reported that:

- 47% of people with learning disabilities spend most of their time at home
- 51% say they feel lonely
- 64% don't see their friends. (*Stories from the Frontline*, 2012)

Stay Up Late decided to adopt a Community Connecting approach to combatting social isolation:

"It marries people's skills, talents and aspirations to opportunities in their communities. The emphasis of connecting is less on supporting people to be 'in the community' or to do activities, and more about them building relationships based on reciprocity – what do people with high support needs have to offer their communities and what they can be offered in return." (*What is 'Connecting'?* (accessed 2015) Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities)

What is unique about the Gig Buddies approach to community connecting is the idea of enabling people to build a relationship to somebody in their community based on a shared enjoyment of music.

Scope of our evaluation

We have decided to evaluate the project, in as much depth as possible within our current capacity and resources, in January 2015. Two years after first starting to set the project up on a small scale in Brighton and Hove, we have made a huge amount of progress, so it is a good time to map this journey out and reflect on it.

Within this evaluation we aim to look at both progress and changes in what we have achieved and how we do things, and also the outcomes and impact for the various stakeholders – primarily people with learning disabilities who are buddies, but many others too.



The Storm and Thunder Team review and evaluate Gig Buddies on an on-going basis

Methods used to evaluate the project - quantitative:

- We have mapped the numbers of people who have accessed the project and the numbers of people on the waiting list.
- We have mapped responses to satisfaction questionnaires and the percentage of participants who are satisfied with Gig Buddies.
- We have mapped our reach geographically, and how well we reach people of a certain age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality and ethnicity.

Methods used to evaluate the project - qualitative:

- We sent questionnaires to all participants, after a period of 4-16 months of being matched to a buddy, which gather data on outcomes.
- We sent questionnaires to the carers of many participants, which gather further (or alternative) data on participants' outcomes and also outcomes for carers.
- We regularly gather feedback and information when we talk to and see participants – at socials, Storm and Thunder Team meetings, events.
- We had regular telephone check-ins with participants
- We complete questionnaires with volunteers before their supervisions, and also use supervisions as a means to evaluate.
- We used various other questionnaires – eg with volunteers after training.
- We used the Storm and Thunder Team as experts and consultants on the project.

We used a community development approach in our work, therefore considering that the community (both participants and volunteers) are the experts in the project and we are facilitators. We are therefore always actively listening to people, and being responsive, changing the processes of running Gig Buddies accordingly. Formative evaluation is inherent in everything that we do, and we are constantly trying to improve the project.

These are the main limitations of this evaluation:

- The project began on a small scale and has grown organically. We did not have an evaluation plan when we set it up in January 2013, and have developed our monitoring and evaluation techniques as we have progressed.
- The monitoring systems and questionnaires that we have used were sourced largely from the funder East Sussex County Council Learning Disability Development Fund. We have gradually adapted these to meet our needs, so there is some inconsistency in the data that we have from participants depending on their geographical region and when they joined the project.
- Gig Buddies is person-centred, so one way of working may help one individual to achieve certain outcomes and not another, which is important to bear in mind when evaluating the project as a whole.

Inputs

Over two years we were awarded the following grants to finance the project:

Funder	Time period	Award (£)
City Camp	No designated time period	2,000
Brighton and Hove Learning Disability Development Fund	1.1.13 - 1.7.13	9,833
Brighton and Hove Small Grants	1.1.13 - 1.7.13	1,500
Southdown Housing Association (commissioned the project for 5 clients)	No designated time period	5,000
Sussex Community Foundation (general)	1.1.13 - 1.12.13	5,000
Sussex Community Foundation (grassroots)	8.4.13-8.4.14	5,000
Brighton and Hove small grants	1.4.13 - 1.3.14	1,500
Awards for All	19.8.13-19.8.14	9,760
Brighton and Hove Learning	1.7.13 - 1.7.14	11,950

they work, actively listen to participants and ensure that people with learning disabilities are in control of how we do things.

We have divided this section by areas of methodology, which make up the whole picture of a Gig Buddies project.

Volunteer recruitment

For Gig Buddies to be strong and sustainable, it is vital that we have a steady intake of new volunteers, who have the potential to be good matches for the diverse cohort of participants.

What worked?

We used a variety of recruitment methods:

Marketing – We ensure that all graphics associated with Gig Buddies are of a very high quality. This is essential for getting noticed, but also to promote the principles of inclusion among gig audiences and to attract people who are new to volunteering.

The media – We released press releases to local press in areas where we wanted to recruit and had consequential interest, for example the Argus and the Eastbourne Gazette.

We have also had two articles on Gig Buddies in the guardian, one for the Social Care Network in 2013 and one in the Do Something supplement in November 2014. We also had a mention in an article in the NME and were interviewed on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme.

'Having identified a problem, [Stay up Late] saw it as their responsibility to provide an answer. In January 2013 Paul launched the befriending scheme Gig Buddies, which partners people who have a learning disability or difficulty with volunteers who share their interests, to accompany each other to events. The scheme runs all over Sussex, and tonight we're in Worthing to join some buddies on a Friday night out.' The Guardian, November 2014

DO YOU ENJOY GOING TO GIGS?

Local charity Stay Up Late are looking for Gig Buddies

WHAT'S A GIG BUDDY?

A Gig Buddy is a volunteer who is linked up to a person with a learning disability, who has similar interests to you, to go out and enjoy gigs and events together!

Whether you're a fan of folk, rock, reggae, clubbing, theatre, festivals... if you'd like to use your love of music and fun to help somebody else in your community get out and enjoy themselves a couple of times a month, get in touch.

FIND OUT MORE

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STAY UP LATE

All our volunteers receive a DBS (disclosure and barring service) check and complete an induction.
Stay Up Late is a registered charity (England and Wales no. 1145040)
Registered address: 2 Bell Lane, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1JU

www.stayuplate.org

These attracted nationwide interest, meaning that we have potential volunteers in many areas ready for when we are able to replicate the project.



Feature in the Guardian's *Do Something* supplement, 2014

Word of mouth - our reputation amongst the disabled and wider community, through volunteers, staff and participants talking about being involved in Gig Buddies, has meant people find out about the opportunity through word of mouth.

Social events - We have recruited volunteers through people seeing us 'in action', for example, one volunteer was recruited from seeing us at our Christmas party and another from seeing us deliver a workshop for young people with learning disabilities.

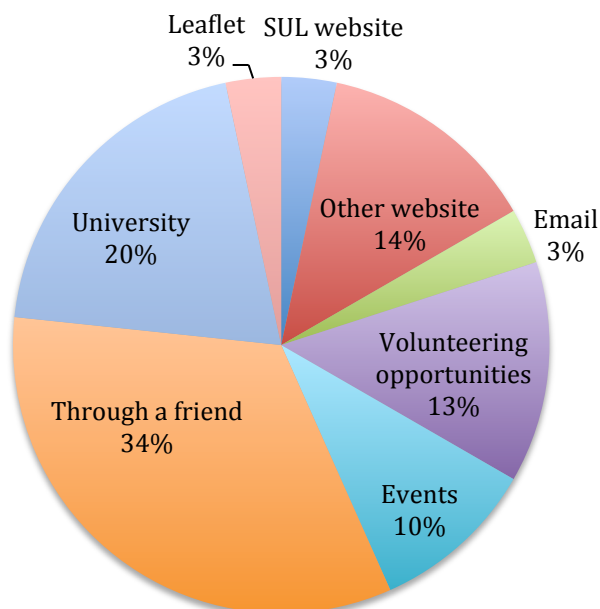
Gig venues - We have recruitment posters and leaflets in venues all over Sussex and request to be mentioned in newsletters.

University Volunteering Organisations - We have made good connections with Active Student, the University of Brighton's volunteering organization, and regularly have volunteers who are using their experience to as a placement for their Community Engagement module for their degree. We also use University events, such as the University of Sussex volunteers fair, which was a great way to engage students looking for meaningful ways to donate their time. 35 students signed up as interested in joining Gig Buddies.

Community Volunteering Organisations - We also advertise on volunteering sites such as www.do-it.org, which attracts a steady intake of new volunteers.

Social media - We share volunteer recruitment posters through Facebook and Twitter.

How volunteers heard about us



What didn't work?

We were invited to run a stall at a Sci-fi convention stall in Eastbourne but only one delegate responded and has not yet applied, so perhaps the audience was a little too specific! This highlights the importance of finding ways to recruit efficiently.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

Starting to do video interviews on skype with new volunteers has meant we were able to save travel time and costs for both parties as well as include participants in the interview process.

What could be improved?

Engaging with potential volunteers in remote areas can be challenging, but is particularly important as participants in those areas are at more risk of being isolated and therefore in need of the project the most. We often have to put particular energy into recruiting a volunteer for a person who is 'difficult to match', putting up posters in different community settings such as churches.

Participant recruitment

What worked?

Throughout the project we have built up good relationships with people and agencies involved in the care and support of adults with a learning disability.

Meeting the participants 1:1 alongside a carer or somebody they know well to gain an insight into their personality, support needs and what they want to gain from being involved has helped us keep a person centred approach

What didn't work?

At first we had not developed ways of managing the huge demand for the project, but over time made it clear from the beginning to every new participant that we could not guarantee them a buddy. We developed a version of our newsletter for people on the waiting list, with the view to

enabling them to come along if they are able to with their own support, but on listening to feedback from carers, many felt that it was unfair to advertise opportunities that would not be accessible to participants unless they actually had a Gig Buddy to help them get there.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

We developed a shortened assessment form with basic 'about me' questions for new participants to fill out remotely, so that we could arrange to meet them when we are nearer being able to match them to a buddy.

What can be improved?

Although most of the main service providers are well aware of Gig Buddies, we need to develop better links with community support providers, in order to get referrals from people who would benefit most from the project.

Volunteer training

What worked?

The content of the training includes:

- The principles of disability inclusion and equality
- What the Gig Buddy role involves
- Questions and answers with participants
- Games
- Supporting people with learning disabilities
- Safeguarding adults – basic awareness
- Approaching difficult situations
- Confidentiality and boundaries.

However, we have 'tweaked' the training each time we have run it to ensure that it is consistently improved. We have developed the following good practice in our training:

- Keeping it to a small group helps make sure each volunteer has the chance to participate
- Having a variety of media – video, photo, games, drawing, discussion, powerpoint and writing to meet the needs of different types of learners and keep the training visually interesting
- Involving participants as representatives and co-facilitators of the project – most volunteers report that meeting a participant, and asking them questions is their favourite part of their training
- Developing training around issues that come up for Gig Buddies, e.g. communication with carers and saying goodbye when you stop volunteering.

What didn't work?

In many of the feedback forms volunteers said they would have liked to meet a buddy pair to get an idea of what it might be like – as yet we have only involved 'single' participants.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

We originally held the training over two half-days, then three evenings. We now facilitate the entire training in one day, in order to make it as easy as possible for volunteers to attend which also keeps our costs down.

What can be improved?

Making a video of a few different 'Gig Buddy pairs' so volunteers can see examples of what it's really like to be a Gig Buddy.

Continuing to find new and innovative ways that participants can facilitate training new volunteers.

Matching and relationship building

What worked?

- Sensitive matching based on factors that are important to both parties – for example gender, age, interests, motivations for being in the project which vary for individuals – does the buddy want to go to more gigs or simply want to make new friends?
- Close supervision, through follow up phone calls or encouraging buddies to go to a group event for their first gig, so the pair are well supported before going out on their own.
- Well-facilitated introduction meetings. These are a chance for the volunteer and participant to have an informal chat and get to know each other. We go through issues around staying safe and sign a risk assessment. We then talk through the events that buddies will go to together, how they will organise these, how they will travel, who will help with communication and planning, etc.
- Clarity among buddies as to when they will next see each other, and well-organised future plans.



The following case study illustrates some of the value in a coordinators input at the beginning of a Gig Buddying relationship:

Case study: Sandra and Grant

Sandra (volunteer Gig Buddy) and Grant (participant Gig Buddy) joined Gig BuddiesGig BuddiesGig Buddies in May 2013.

Sandra is an artist, based in Brighton, a woman in her 30s. Grant is in his late 20s, and lives with his family in Lewes. He has various health conditions and a physical disability, which alongside his learning disability means that he needs somebody with him at all times when he is out in the community. Grant accesses various local services, such as DJing workshops, and is supported by another charity to be in a band, but because of his level of support needs his mother to support him relatively full time to do these things.

Sandra and Grant attended a couple of learning disability events to start with, as these events were also attended by other people that Grant knew, he therefore felt comfortable there. However, going to these events with Sandra rather than his mother meant that Grant had a better chance to mix with peers and join in – Grant developed his confidence around breakdancing with Sandra. He says that he likes having a Gig Buddy *“because I like going out to listen to music and to dance, and I like going out without my mum.”* (Participants mid-point survey) They also attended an inclusive punk gig at the Green Door in Brighton, where some of Grant’s friends were playing. This enhanced Sandra’s knowledge about the learning disability music scene and she really enjoyed the night.

Grant’s mother is able to have some respite, where she normally would be out with Grant. His mother says *“Because he lives at home and does not have a regular carer apart from his parents, he usually goes to these events with me, his mother. He enjoys the feeling of independence in being free of my supervision when he goes with a Gig Buddy. The sense of being a young adult enjoying doing the sort of things that other young adults like in a parent free zone is very important to him.”* (Carers mid-point survey)

Sandra and Grant had a month where they didn’t go to a gig, and when I spoke to Grant’s mother and Sandra, they had struggled to communicate with each other and arrange something, partly due to Grant’s family not having the internet or mobile phones. They have therefore now established a monthly meeting in a café, where they look through the ‘what’s on’ guides for Brighton and Lewes together online, and Grant’s mother is present to help with diaries / logistics. Grant struggles with abstract, open-ended questions such as “what sort of thing would you like to do?” but Sandra understands the importance of including him in decisions. Grant did state that he wanted to go to another gig at the Green Door, so they went through the listings on the internet, listening to the different bands that were playing there and talking about which ones they liked. I was able to secure free tickets for the buddies at the gig that Grant chose, through the support of local music promoters for Gig BuddiesGig BuddiesGig Buddies, which is useful for Grant as his mother has expressed concern with Grant attending more expensive events.

We have experimented with using the project as a platform to form connections based on other types of shared interests. This can involve using a lot more resources, as we don’t have a ‘ready-made pool’ or people applying for other buddy roles. However, the following case study shows that value of this work:

Case study: Richard

Richard is a man living in a shared supported living home in Eastbourne. He doesn't have much of an interest in music but has a keen interest in museums, old buildings and churches. He doesn't spend time with anyone except for his support workers and occasionally his family. We recruited a volunteer who wanted to spend more time exploring what Sussex had to offer, and linked them up to go adventuring together. They have been to several National Trust places, and Richards's support worker has said that he's seen 'a difference in how happy he is' since he has started to go out with Brian. (carers mid-point survey)

What didn't work?

It is important that both buddies understand the difference between a volunteer and a support worker and that both buddies understand that the relationship is one of equality, so that participants do not expect more of their buddy than they can give.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

We have found that matching volunteers quickly is important to ensure that they do not become disengaged.

Ensure all volunteers fill out an availability questionnaire during their training, to make it easier to arrange introduction meetings as quickly as possible.

What can be improved?

Finding new ways to recruit more volunteers in remote areas to match people to who may be more socially isolated.

Introduce a Gig Buddies networking night where people who haven't been matched yet could meet others to keep their interest in the project.

Developing the Gig Buddy volunteer role

What worked?

To ensure that both buddies are able to have input in the events that they attend, we now ask volunteers to meet with their buddy on a bi-monthly basis, to plan what they want to do together, and also to become more well-acquainted with each other.

What didn't work?

Some buddies have found the logistics of booking tickets together, preferably with free carer's tickets, difficult. We now offer to help with this, and ensure that this is discussed in some detail in the introduction meeting.

What can be improved?

A small group of participants have raised the issue of their buddy not being easy to get in touch with, and not committing to the minimum one gig a month commitment. We have set up different strategies to respond to this issue:

- All volunteers with whom this was an issue were quite young and were students at the University of Brighton, and we think that it would be appropriate to encourage volunteers of this age group to buddy in a way that focused on group socials, which takes the onus off the volunteer to plan so much.

- We have recently set up a record sheet for all volunteers to fill out with their Gig Buddy after each gig to have a record of their experiences, which we will then collect every 3 months. We hope this will ensure that any issues around attendance are responded to quickly, and if a replacement buddy is needed due to a volunteers' lack of engagement, this can be arranged.
- We now provide a 'recommendation service' where we email or contact both buddies each month with different gigs that they could both do.

We will need to evaluate these approaches on an on-going basis to see if they are helping to ensure equity of provision.

Support and supervision

What worked?

- Checking in with volunteers and participants with a phone call every 3 months to keep on top of any issues that might arise has mostly kept Gig Buddy relationships running smoothly.
- Supervising every volunteer every 6 months ensures that we are able to draw out issues, and shows appreciation for each and every volunteer.
- Involving support staff - ensuring that the 'main person' (eg a keyworker) responsible for a participant's support either meets the volunteer buddy, or has an intro meeting to them on the phone. We also make sure the keyworker knows that they have responsibility to help the participant communicate with their buddy, and to communicate with the Gig Buddies manager if they need to.

What didn't work?

Group supervision didn't work due to confidential information having to be shared to make the supervision worthwhile.

What can be improved?

Streamlining our databases and administrative systems so that we can organize and keep track of issues and volunteers supervisions more efficiently.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

We recruited two Admin Volunteers who volunteered one afternoon a week for 6 months (One who had a learning disability and one who was able to provide the other volunteer with some support). The volunteers were able to call up participants and volunteers do their 3 month and 6 monthly check in and pass on any issues to the Project Coordinators.

We could consider creating a more efficient way to do supervisions that still makes the volunteers feel supported, for example by Skype.

Community building

Although the relationship to a Gig Buddy can in itself be invaluable, we recognized that many participants and volunteers are keen to meet other people involved in the project. Our vision with the project was to build an inclusive community of people who share passions and interests. We therefore developed methodologies around building links and relationships between different pairs of buddies.

What worked?

- Sharing contact details at volunteer supervisions and setting 'homework' for volunteers to organize a small group gig with another pair that they have things in common with has helped to create links.
- Sourcing free gigs for larger events, sometimes with chances to go backstage and meet 'stars' has enabled Gig Buddies to get to know each other.
- Going for drinks after Storm and Thunder team meetings has helped to build friendships within the team.
- Gig Buddies socials have been the best way to develop friendships.
- Developing a Gig Buddies 'Newsletter' to ensure that Gig Buddies are aware of events where they can meet other Gig Buddies. *"The newsletter is a good idea and suggestions about upcoming events are always appreciated."* Carer of a Gig Buddy participant

What didn't work?

At times we were too stretched with staff capacity, to have regular socials.

What can be improved?

Setting clear targets for socials, which should be bi-monthly in each area.

We recognize that we have more work to do in this area, and that this takes time, as friendships that develop 'naturally' are formed over time.

Partnership work

Using Gig Buddies as a platform, we have worked with the wider community and in partnership with other organisations.

Relationships with disability music organisations:

- Two staff members and one participant ran a song-writing workshop at Be Free Festival 2014, a festival for people with learning disabilities.
- Our participants volunteered as disabled access stewards at Glastonbury in 2013 and 2014 through Attitude is Everything, a charity which ensure that music events are accessible, supported by Gig Buddies staff and volunteers.
- Linking up with other local learning disability led charities such as Carousel, and the Rock House to help to promote each others work to participants.



Gig Buddies**Gig Buddies****Gig Buddies** volunteering as Access Stewards at Glastonbury Festival

Relationships with venues and promoters:

Several local venues and promoters will put Gig Buddies on the guest list for their shows. This was at first difficult to administrate, and changes of staffing in the other organisations has been challenging, but several Gig Buddies have regularly taken advantage of this opportunity. We also promote our work at community festivals and events such as Kemptown carnival and Pride.

Involvement in other events / projects:

As an organisation our work attracts invitations from various organisations and bodies wanting to learn from our approaches, or who want to collaborate in some way. Examples of this are:

- Being invited to participate in a seminar at the Camden Arts Centre (organised by Lemos and Crane) looking at how to make the arts more inclusive.
- Running workshops at the British Institute of Learning Disabilities annual conference in 2013.
- Giving a talk, and running workshops at Learning Disability Wales' annual conference.
- Teaching year 9 children at Somerhill Junior School in Hove how to write punk songs with a disability rights focus.
- Leading inclusive song-writing workshops at the It's Not On anti-hate crime conference in Hove, 2013.
- Being one of 7 partners in the ART-is art project to create a festival celebrating art by people with learning disabilities in Malta in June '15. This has seen us enable Gig Buddies participants to go on collaborative planning trips to Iceland, Belgium, Spain and Poland.
- Being offered out as a prize by Brighton University's Social Enterprise team where Paul our director gave a few hours of mentoring support to a start-up project aiming to take art workshops in to nursing homes and prisons.
- Speaking a City Camp Brighton to give annual updates on the project and hopefully inspire further social entrepreneurs to develop similar projects. (We were also asked to be on the panel of judges).
- Running an information stand at the Godney Gathering Festival in Glastonbury in 2014. (We continue to get many requests to attend various festivals).
- Paul, our director, has been invited to WOMAD Festival for the past 3 years to talk about his experiences in the human library.
- Speaking at the Funky Llama Festival Conference in Plymouth where we also ran an Open Space Forum discussion around the wider aims of the charity.
- Organising fundraising gigs which also serve as ways to engage much wider audiences and attract new volunteers. In the past year we were honoured to have folk guitarist play what turned out to be one his last ever gigs and also soul singer Alice Russell (also our patron) to a packed Concorde 2 in Brighton.
- Running a creative workshop at the Side By Side exhibition and symposium at the Royal Festival Hall in 2013.
- Over the past few years we have been releasing a series of CD compilations gathering together original music by people with learning disabilities from around the world. The releases have been under the banner of 'Wild Things' and we also created a touch-screen juke box, in collaboration with visual artists with learning disabilities to create an installation at the Side By Side exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall in 2013.
- Being invited by ACL Disability Services in Sydney, Australia to support them to set up their own version of Gig Buddies which saw us support one of our participants to travel over to Sydney in Feb '13.
- Speaking at Lemos and Crane conferences, both to launch their 'Loneliness and Cruelty' report in 2013 and to discuss their 'Action Against Cruelty' initiative.
- Being invited to pitch to a 'Dragon's Den' panel at the Health Expo at London's Excel Arena in March '13.

Governance and user leadership

As a charity we want to be as user-led as possible. The Storm and Thunder Team were created out of a group of adults with learning disabilities who were passionate about the Gig Buddies ethos and wanted to build an advisory group to help lead the charity in the direction that is important to them.

The trustees committee has a strong group of people with much specific expertise and this has helped the charity be supported well. As Storm and Thunder have developed we have invited members to attend trustees meetings and strategic planning meetings, always challenging ourselves to find more ways to ensure these are accessible as possible.

We're also aware that meaningful involvement, and true co-production, are always going to be difficult things to attain and so always challenge ourselves to continually improve our practice and enable our participants to continually shape the way we work.

The trustees have really valued the increased input from Storm and Thunder Team members at strategic meetings enabling them to make decisions influenced by people with learning disabilities; the beneficiaries of our work as a charity.

What worked?

- Ensuring the Storm and Thunder meetings have a strong mix of consultancy, creative input, sharing thoughts and ideas, socializing and tea drinking, leadership and decision making.
- Making the AGM an Open Space Forum, with the theme of making it an inclusive 'punk' AGM for all. A place where everyone's ideas and views are welcome in shaping the possible future work of the charity.
- The Project Manager identifying additional support needs and utilizing the expertise of the trustees to meet these needs.
- Taking time to support participants to prepare for meetings and presenting information in as easy to read a format as possible.



Stay Up Late's Punk AGM

What didn't work?

The Storm and Thunder team went through a period of losing its focus in 2014 and it became more about the creative aspects than a steering group. We therefore need to:

- Ensure that there is a focus and agenda for each meeting, and that quieter members are able to have their voice heard.
- Enable members to induct new members with the ethos of the team.

Outcomes and Impact

Gig Buddies has developed a number of exciting social outcomes, both in Sussex and less directly, beyond. Although our primary beneficiaries are adults with a learning disability, we have built this project around the principles of inclusion, which means that we assume:

- Communities will be stronger and better if they find new ways to include everyone.
- The inclusion of people with learning disabilities in all aspects of life makes for a richer life for everyone.

Therefore, we are keen to demonstrate the impact that Gig Buddies has on volunteers and the wider community too.

Participants

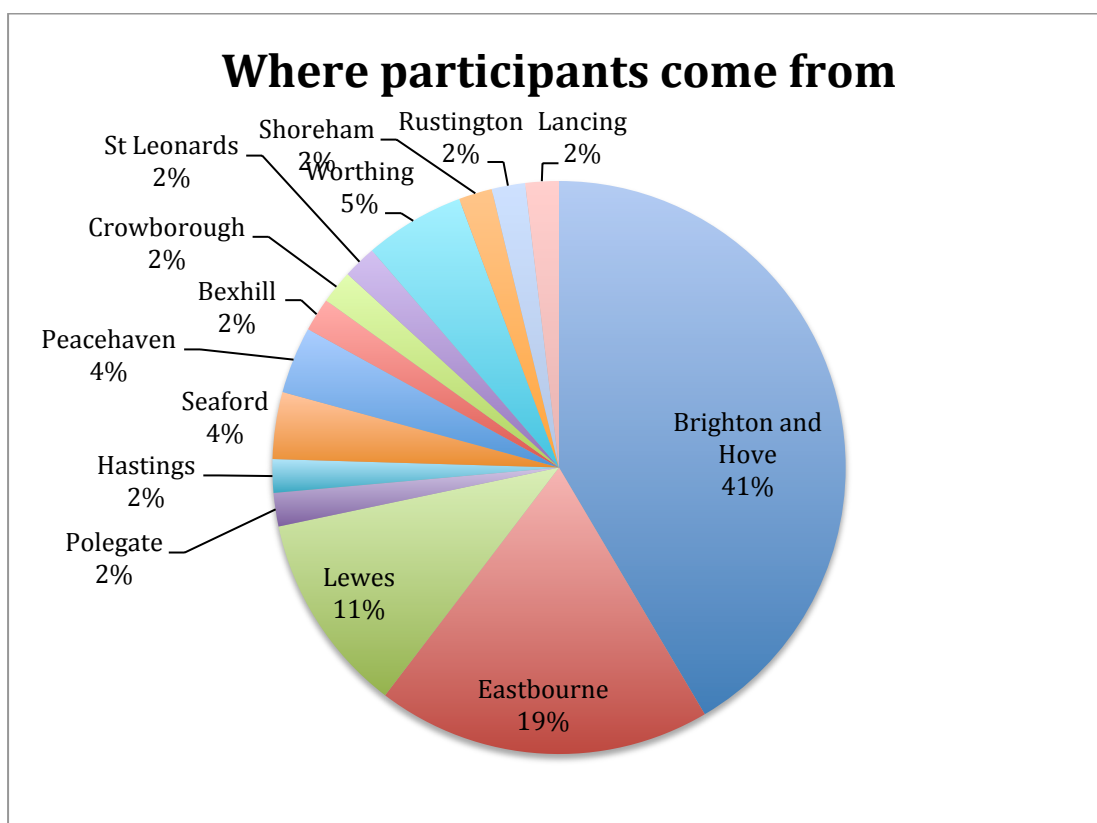
Reach

Between January 2013 and December 2014, the Gig Buddies staff matched 61 participants to a volunteer buddy, with the view to the pair forming a friendship based on shared interests, and attending events that they both enjoyed 1-2 times a month together.

Around 15 people were matched in the pilot project of the first 6 months (10 in Brighton and Hove and 5 in East Sussex), and the project grew rapidly after this point, following larger funding from East Sussex LDDF and Brighton and Hove LDDF.

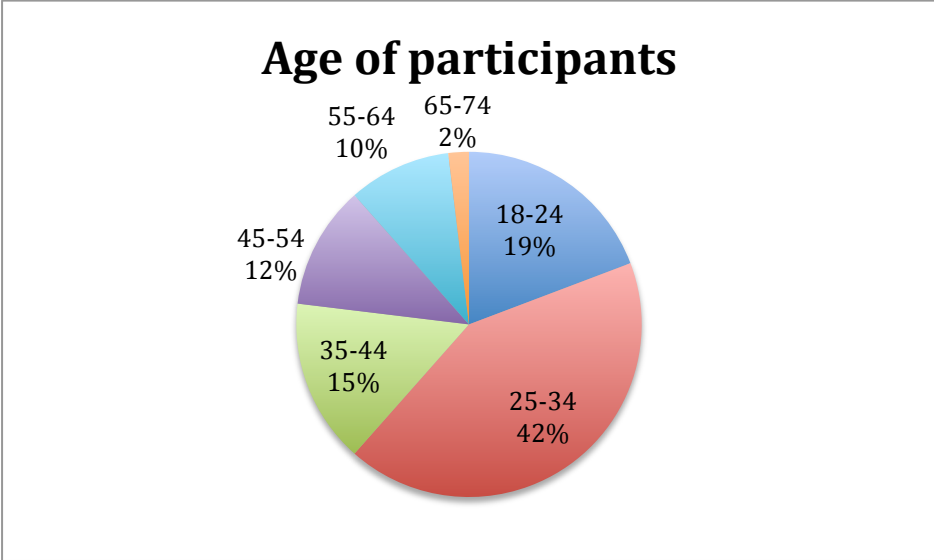
Where participants of Gig Buddies live

The 'hub' of Gig Buddies has been Brighton and Hove – although participants are dotted around Sussex, many of them are matched to volunteers who live in Brighton and Hove, meaning that they often travel to Brighton to enjoy the nightlife there.



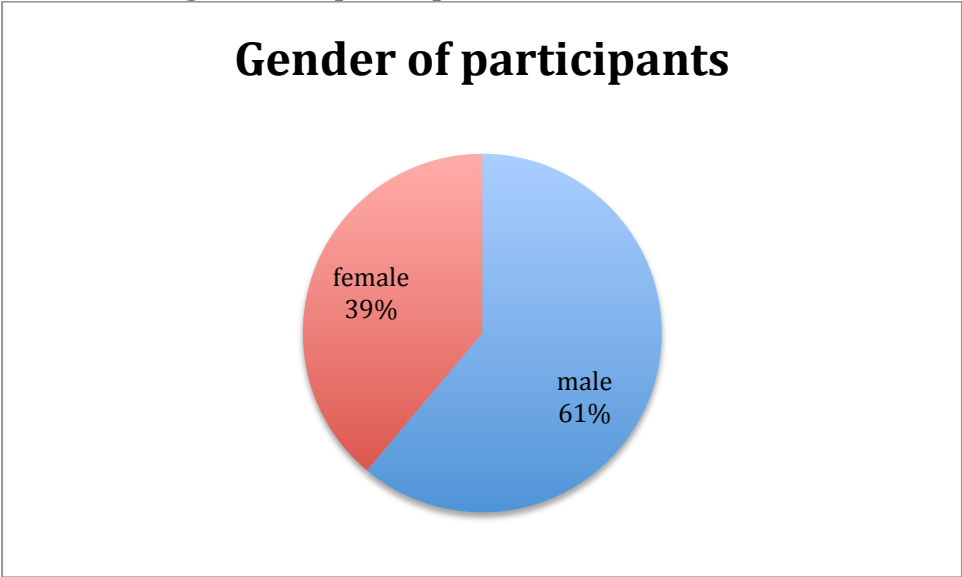
The disparity between East and West Sussex is due to the different funding levels from each Local Authority. We generally find that finding a volunteer Gig Buddy is easier in Brighton and Hove, as the project is better known, and has a stronger ‘music scene’ to be built around.

Ages of Gig Buddies participants



Gig Buddies is certainly not an age-specific project, as the age distribution chart shows. However, Gig Buddies is particularly suitable to younger adults. Often people with learning disabilities and their carers face a difficult transition when reaching adulthood, as there is often less support available. Having a Gig Buddy can help to alleviate this difficulty. Participants often use Gig Buddies as a way of establishing their identity as an adult (see case study – Sara and Emilie), and develop new forms of independence through practicing going to new places and trying new things.

Gender of Gig Buddies participants



We have found that referrals (either through agencies or self-referrals) are more common for men than women. We would like the scheme to be more gender equal, and have received feedback from a carer that our website and marketing materials are quite ‘male’ (relating to the colour scheme and usual associations of black and red as being ‘male colours’.) The gender disparity is possibly due to a wider gender disparity among people who are strongly interested in music, as there is a tendency for music as an entertainment form to be quite male-dominated, although along with disability inequality among audiences this gender inequality is changing. (Lara Baker *Women in the Music Business: Mind the Gender Gap* (2013) The Huffington Post)

Surveying our participants

We questioned all participants at the start of the project about what they wanted to get out of joining Gig Buddies, as a way of monitoring their individual progress and support needs. We then sent out follow-up questionnaires from September 2014 – November 2014.

We sent questionnaires to 40 Gig Buddy participants, all those who had been matched for more than 4 months and were currently matched up (ie their volunteer had not left the scheme) and in most cases their carers. This was dependent on whether the participant had a significant carer in their life.

We received a **65% return on these questionnaires** (from either participant, carer or both). The data was largely qualitative.

Overall satisfaction

We looked at how people answered the questionnaires, particularly question 1, 'Have you enjoyed having a Gig Buddy?', and summarized the results as to how satisfied people were.

- **Not returned: 14**
- **Fully satisfied: 20**
- **Satisfied with room for improvement: 3**
- **Dissatisfied: 3**

3 of the 'room for improvement' and two of the 'dissatisfied' results were due to volunteer attendance – volunteers had been in regular contact at the beginning but had missed certain months, not been in contact for periods of time or participants hadn't heard from their volunteer for a few weeks. The methodology section explores how we changed our practice in response to this issue.

Outcomes

We had a wide range of outcomes that we knew we wanted to achieve for our core beneficiaries, including:

1. As a person-centred project, Gig Buddies needs to fulfill what each participant wants to achieve (usually interconnecting with the outcomes below, but sometimes specific to the individual).
2. Participants have greater social networks and feel less lonely.
3. Participants increase self-worth and confidence.
4. The practical barriers to going out in the evenings (eg transport, lack of support and safety) are removed for participants.
5. Participants have greater choice of options available to them in how they spend their time.

We also wanted to ensure that these outcomes were achieved by a diversity of people reflecting the communities they lived in, and by the people with a learning disability who were most in need of the project.

Outcome: Each individual achieves what they want to get out of the project

'What are the best things that you have done with your Gig Buddy?'

When the Full Monty (musical show) took all their clothes off!

Surveying participants helps us to see that their intended outcomes may be different from our intended outcomes

This outcome was simpler to measure, and we did this through regular check-ins with participants, making interventions if needed. This is illustrated in the case study below:

Case study: Milly

Milly is a young woman in her early twenties who has a learning disability. When the project manager first met her and her family, they were despairing about what to do – her learning disability was considered too 'mild' for her to qualify for any paid support, yet it affected her in a way that prevented her from being able to travel to new places without a lot of travel-learning and confidence building, and she had found it extremely difficult to form friendships with her peers.

She loves dancing, and attended a dance class for people with learning disabilities, but really wanted to go out clubbing and to see bands that she could dance to. Therefore, her mother was taking her out to club nights in Sussex. Milly didn't really want to go out with her mother, but before joining Gig Buddies Gig Buddies had nobody else to go with, and even if she did, would need some support on the night with finding the venue, money and staying safe.

Milly was matched to a Gig Buddy, Laura, and they developed a positive relationship where both reported that they got on well. However, Laura was quite shy about getting up on the dance floor and having a boogie! They had some great times going out to sit-down pop gigs, but Milly hadn't quite got what she wanted out of the project. We therefore re-matched Milly to a volunteer who specifically loved dancing, and re-matched Laura to a participant in Lewes who enjoyed sit-down concerts. We also organised monthly meet-ups with the four young women, so that Milly and Laura could continue their friendship, and the four could go out on group nights out when they found things they all wanted to do – and in a small group there would be less pressure on Laura to dance!

We also looked at the results from each individual survey – sometimes these showed us whether the participant was fully getting what they wanted out of the scheme, for example in the case of Beatrix:

(At the start of Gig Buddies)

Q1. What was it about the project that made you want to join?

Wanted someone that I'd get on well with, make a good friend.

(At the mid-point)

Q2: What are the best things that you have done with your Gig Buddy?

Going to all the gigs and then getting on well with her.

Or, in the case of Sarah:

(At the start of Gig Buddies)

Q1. What was it about the project that made you want to join?

To get me out, don't go out in the evening, because people may pick on me. I mostly stay in bed. Can't get on with people in home as they are older.

(At the mid-point)

Q2: What are the best things that you have done with your Gig Buddy?

I feel like I'm in the community and not being bored at home and get me out to see sport event and music and if I did not have my Gig Buddy I will be anxious and scared to go by myself.

A huge part of our methodology centres around enabling both buddies – the volunteer and the participant to achieve what they want out of the project. We found that these aims sometimes changed over time, and the on-going relationship with both parties and the project manager was important for helping to ensure that people were happy with the match.

Outcome: Participants have greater social networks and feeling less lonely

A really key outcome from having a Gig Buddy was that participants increased their social networks. For some, this has been simply through the regular contact with the buddy.

Case study: Sophie and Emilia

Sophie is a young woman from Lewes, who lives with her family and has a learning disability. She receives all support from her family – her parents, siblings and siblings-in-law. Perhaps because of the closeness of the family, Sophie's mum sometimes struggles with the idea that her daughter is an adult, who should be able to do the things that other young adults do.

For Sophie, having a Gig Buddy was a chance to go out and be supported by somebody outside of this family unit, who was able to see her as a young adult, and have conversations about relationships and her own sense of identity as a young woman.

Sophie loves pop music, and Emilia enjoys this too, so they sometimes go out dancing together, occasionally joining Gig BuddiesGig BuddiesGig Buddies socials. However, because Sophie gets little time to spend with somebody one to one, being from such a large family unit, she prefers to go somewhere where she can sit and talk things through with Emilia.



A pair of Gig Buddies at our Alice Russell fundraiser at Concorde 2, Brighton

At other times, Gig Buddies has involved the building of friendships and networks beyond the individual volunteer, sometimes through deliberate work by the Project Manager, and sometimes as an unexpected outcome. We have not systematically recorded the friendships that have developed between different buddies, but have seen strong relationships within the Gig Buddies network. Time has been a huge factor in achieving these outcomes for people. It takes time for buddies to -

- attend enough groups events to meet others
- exchange numbers and methods of contact
- feel a part of the 'Gig Buddies community'
- learn how to travel to meet up with other Gig Buddies, perhaps without their volunteer in some cases.

However, a key theme with buddies who have been interviewed and surveyed is the idea that once you start making friends, it becomes easier and your network grows. For example, in this case study:

Case Study: Bella and Jasmine

Bella is a young woman with a mild learning disability and depression and anxiety. She has had a Gig Buddy for a year now. Through Gig Buddies Bella has been to many gigs.

She has also met some of Jasmine's friends and goes out dancing with them too. Bella has said of the project:

"Before I had a Gig Buddy I felt like I was lost at the weekends. I had never been to a music gig before, but having a Gig Buddy has meant that I've discovered new music. It means that I can travel to Brighton, which I couldn't do before. Once you start going out you are more able to do other things – it improves your confidence."

Outcome: Participants increase their self worth and confidence.

A key aspect of getting to know a volunteer Gig Buddy for participants is that the new person in their life will show positive regard for them as an individual. For many people with a learning disability, the quality of support can be unpredictable. Research by Mencap for their 'Stand By Me' campaign found that up to ninety percent of people with learning disabilities have been victims of hate crime and bullying, which inevitably has a huge impact on sense of self worth.

For many participants, they enter a new type of relationship – where a person is building a relationship with them not based on their need, the support they require and what they can't do, but based on what they enjoy –the positive aspects of themselves as adults. A befriending relationship supports and nurtures both people's self-awareness and development. This has a huge impact on confidence and self esteem, as the following case study demonstrates:

Case Study: Brendan

Brendan, a man with mild learning disability, was the victim of homophobic hate crime when he lived in Southend. He moved to Brighton three years ago as he'd heard it was a friendly place for gay people, but when he moved he didn't know anyone and faced total social isolation.

Brendan is a huge music collector. He received four hours of community outreach support each week, and his support worker referred him to Gig Buddies. Through Gig Buddies Brendan now has a volunteer who shares his passion for 70s glam rock and who is also active in the local gay community.

They now go out regularly and are firm friends. Brendan has also built up a network of people at a couple of clubs who look out for him, and who he feels comfortable talking to. His Gig Buddy, with the help of the project manager, has been able to have ongoing conversations with Brendan about staying safe when he goes out.

Often, the process of building up confidence has to happen first in order that the participant can engage fully with Gig Buddies, as this paid support worker describes:

Gig Buddies is as I thought it would be, but I am very happy to see that Mark's Gig Buddy Liam is able to be very flexible with him. As of yet, Mark has not been up for going to a 'gig' - but the things they have done (bowling, playing board games) have been great for him and excellent for his confidence. I think Mark is gaining invaluable social contact, which he struggles to get at his accommodation, and also is gradually getting more confident. I have not seen Mark engage as well or as quickly with a support worker as he is doing with Liam.

In the case above, Mark is a huge music lover, but has various complex mental health issues which mean that his volunteer needed to take a long time to get to know him before they could try going to smaller, quieter gigs. They have since been to several music events, which Mark has really enjoyed.

Outcome: The practical barriers to going out in the evenings (eg transport, lack of support and safety) are removed for participants.

At the beginning, all participants are surveyed about how often they go out in the evenings.

60% of participants never, or only very occasionally, go out in the evenings when they join the project, and a further 30% go out less than once a month.

This is likely to have a huge impact on individuals' sense of freedom and self-worth.

Outcome: Participants have greater choice in the options available to them, in how they spend their time.

72% of our participants report that they have tried something new with their Gig Buddy.

Some of the new experiences reported include:

- "Go to Brighton Centre and festival."
- "Before I had only gone to events like Kiss My Disco and Blue Camel especially for people with disabilities. With my buddy I go to other events as well."
- "Gone to new venues, I went to the Green Door Store and the Concorde 2."
- "See a football club. See jazz band. And a night club for people with a learning disability."
- "Went to my first concert"
- "He took me to James Bond in the summer, it was at Eastbourne, I'd like to go there again!"

We try to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to take up another opportunity through Stay Up Late's work, for example to travel abroad on our Art-Is project, attend a festival or volunteer at an event, in order to expand people's imaginations around how they can spend their time, and to provide other opportunities for these outcomes to be met.

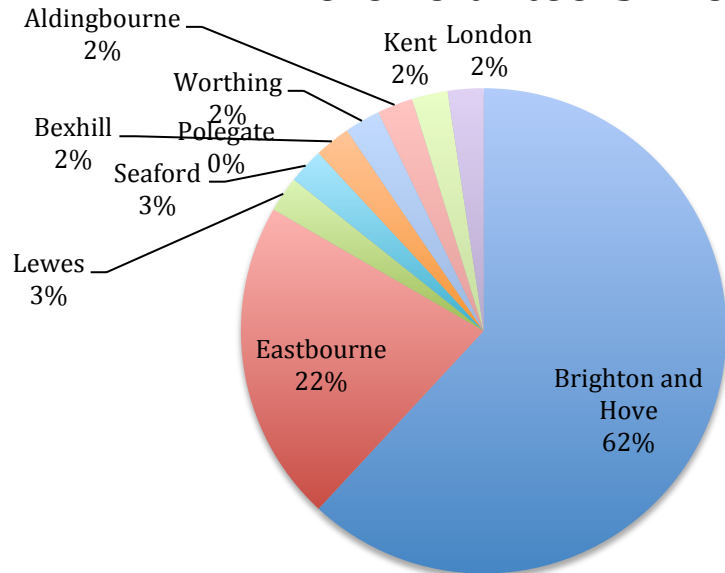
Volunteers

Reach

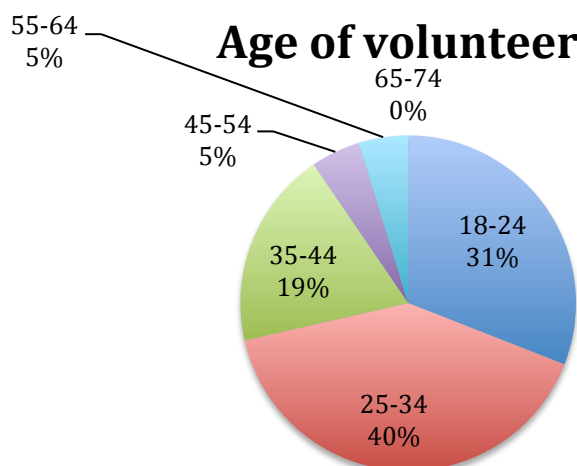
The project currently has 42 volunteers who are actively buddying, and 17 people who have had to stop their volunteering (December 2014).

One of the strengths of Gig Buddies is that it is built on the time given by hugely diverse cohort of volunteers, with different levels of experience, different lifestyles and ages.

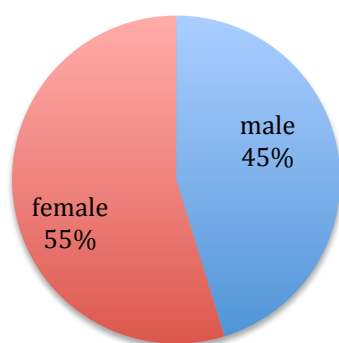
Where volunteers live



Age of volunteers



Gender of volunteers



Anecdotally, we hear that other befriending schemes in the Brighton and Hove area attract a great deal more women than men, so we hope that Gig Buddies appeals to men who would not otherwise think to volunteer. One volunteer said,

“My girlfriend works as a support worker, and I’d never thought to do anything like that, but she said ‘you like music, why don’t you try this’ and I thought that it would be awesome!”

Comparably, 66% of volunteers in Brighton & Hove are women and 34% men, which demonstrates the role that Gig Buddies has in attracting men to volunteering. (Brighton and Hove City Council, May 2013) .

Retention

Of our current volunteers, the time that volunteers have been active varies between 20 months and 2 weeks.

The average length of time spent with Gig Buddies among active volunteers is slightly over one year.

Of volunteers who have stopped Gig Buddying, the average length of time spent with Gig Buddies is 5 months. Most volunteers either decided that they could not fit the commitment in immediately after their introduction, in order not to let their buddy down, or stopped volunteering after giving the full year. Those that stopped after a few months generally cited a change in circumstances as being the reason (eg bereavement).

Outcome: Feeling more connected to your community

One of the outcomes that we wanted to see from Gig Buddies, was that volunteers would ‘feel more part of their community’. We have not developed a way of measuring this among volunteers, but know from anecdotes that this is something that many of our volunteers experience.

“I’ve experienced a side of life in Eastbourne that I wouldn’t have done if I’d just come here to study, gone out to student nights and then left.”

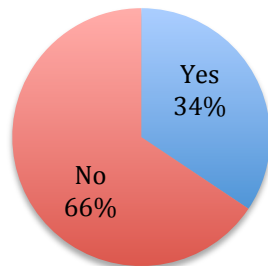
Outcome: Non-disabled people have the opportunity to have a friendship with a person with a learning disability

We believe that having the opportunity to befriend and welcome people regardless of disability is important for everyone.

Among our volunteers, 66% have no friends with a learning disability when they join the project, demonstrating the lack of connectedness even among a group of people who are taking action to make their community more inclusive.

(Volunteers)

Do you have a friend with a learning disability?



One volunteer, Sarah, was quoted when she first joined Gig Buddies, before starting to volunteer, in the Guardian:

"Initially I'd gone along to see one of the bands, but then I looked more into it and now I've signed up for the training. If I was young with a disability, I'd want to be out. Different people need different things. Some are vulnerable; some independent. If you're vulnerable and your parents can't be there looking after you, this works. It's empowering and a bit like dating without the love."
A chance for people with learning disabilities to lead more active social lives (May 2013) the Guardian

She has since said, in a pre-supervision questionnaire,

"At first I was nervous about supporting B with his epilepsy and disability, but now it doesn't feel different to going out to watch a band with any other friend."

Sarah illustrates the journey that many volunteers go through, from recognizing in some way that they want to live in a more inclusive society to having a life that reflects this. The training and supervision was at the beginning was key to ensuring that Sarah was happy and confident in her role as Gig Buddy.

Other outcomes for some, but not all volunteers were:

- **Being able to use learning from Gig Buddies as part of the volunteer's study or degree**
- **Being able to seek and gain employment in the care sector**
- **Being more knowledgeable about issues facing disabled people**
- **Going to more gigs and having somebody to go with**

Carers

(Please note, we use the term carer to mean a family member or another person responsible for the care of a participant, who is unpaid in their caring role, as opposed to paid staff)

Although the primary beneficiaries of Gig Buddies are adults with learning disabilities, around a third of participants live with informal carers, and many others receive a significant amount of support from their parents or another relative.

When we set the project up, we expected that a core outcome of Gig Buddies would be around respite for carers. However, we have found that in many cases for the participant's carer has helped with lifts or logistics to ensure that the volunteer is not giving up too much time to travel. Whilst we try to encourage the volunteer to take pressure off the carer, cutting down travel time can be helpful to volunteers. There is a careful balance to tread in each case, as often carers are so happy that another person is spending time with the person that they care for, they actively want to help make things fun for the volunteer and help them.

Outcomes for some, but not all carers included:

- **Having respite for an evening when their son or daughter goes out with their buddy.**
- **Pressure taken off the carer to be the sole source of the participant's entertainment.**
- **Attending our AGM and feeding into the work of the charity.**
- **Project staff helping the carer to know what they or their son or daughter could be entitled to.**

The degree to which each of the above outcomes apply, is dependent on the family's individual situation.

The outcome that we found does apply to all carers is:

Outcome: Having the opportunity to see the person the carer supports as an empowered adult

All carers see the person they support being welcomed and included into another person's life. Particularly for carers who have only ever seen the person they support accessing segregated services for people with a learning disability, Gig Buddies challenges expectations and pre-conceptions about what the person they support can do with their free time.

Support staff

Over half of participants live in supported living settings (a couple very low level support). Usually participants have a particular support worker who they know well, often called a keyworker. We often work closely with the support staff to ensure that the buddying works well for both parties, and keep them filled in with an introduction letter (see appendix 3).

An example is a case where a participant had challenging behaviour, and at one point the support staff said that he would not be able to take part. We encouraged them to work with us closely to develop a six month plan for him to be able to develop a friendship safely with his Gig Buddy, with support staff supervising. This has encouraged the support staff to think positively about getting through barriers that clients could face to having friendships. There difficulties were exacerbated when the manager of his care home wanted to place his Gig Buddy with another of their clients. We resolved this through working carefully with all parties. We established a positive working relationship with the home, making it clear that it is the participant who has ownership over their friends (in this case his Gig Buddy), not the people who support them.

Outcomes for some, but not all paid support teams included:

- **Volunteers, with support from the Gig Buddies Coordinator, have made comments, or in one case a complaint, about the standard of support that the participant receives, to enable the team to reflect and improve.**
- **Gig Buddies enables staff to develop the support worker role beyond just supporting clients to do things, to supporting clients to make friends and sustain friendships.**

The engagement and support of support staff can have a huge effect on the relationship. At a minimum, we ask staff or carers to provide an emergency contact for the volunteer, and be on call in case of problems. However, when staff actively help participants write things in their diary, email their buddy, call their buddy or research things they would like to do with their buddy, the support of the Gig Buddies staff can be at a lower level, making the relationship more sustainable.

The music industry

The project has enabled audiences to become more inclusive. We have encouraged venues to make their free carers ticket system more accessible.

Some companies have utilised Gig Buddies as a relevant form of Company Social Responsibility. We have had two promoters, two venues, one regular gig night and a festival provide Gig Buddies with guest list tickets on an on-going basis, and many other large promotion companies have donated tickets on a one-off basis. In return, we are able to thank the company publically to our 30,000 Twitter followers.



Gig Buddies backstage with James Blunt, after being provided with guest list tickets to his concert at the Brighton Centre

Achievements as an organisation

Gig Buddies has enabled Stay Up Late to raise its profile as a charity. The Gig Buddies project has received the following awards and recognitions:

- Being listed as one of Nesta and The Observer's '50 New Radicals' – awarded to organisations and individuals making a positive impact in their communities.
- Winning the 'Sector Stars' award from Brighton and Hove Community Works.
- Being shortlisted for the DSC Social Change Awards
-

Books and other media which have referenced Gig Buddies:

- 'Loneliness and Cruelty', Lemos and Crane, a report looking at social isolation of people with learning disabilities citing Gig Buddies as an example of good practice.
-
- 'Music and the Social Model', Jane Williams. A text book for occupational therapists.
- In June '15 a book about inclusive arts practice, published by Routledge, will be launched at Tate Modern. We have contributed several passages and photos.

- We have also enjoyed media coverage with interviews on BBC Radio 4's The Today Programme, the iconic Triple J station in Australia, and featured in The Guardian and Observer newspapers as well as in local papers and on local radio.

Other acknowledgements which Stay Up Late received prior to the project starting, which helped to raise our profile and promote Gig Buddies were:

- and The Erica Awards. Being awarded an Inspire Mark by the organisers of the Olympic and Paralympic Games for our Wild Things project (curating a compilation of music by people with learning disabilities from around the world).
- Winning the Lemos and Crane SupportActionNet Award in 2009 (the prize enabled us to get over the threshold financially to apply for charitable status).
- Heavy Load the movie. A feature length documentary film released on the BBC and US TV as well as at cinemas. The film features the birth of Stay Up Late and went on to win various awards at film festivals and enjoyed extremely positive reviews in the press.
- Academic papers inspired by our work have been published such as 'Heavy Load: The Love Child of Johnny Rotten and Audrey Hepburn' and 'Loaded Pistols: the interplay of social intervention and anti-aesthetic tradition in learning disabled performance', both by David Calvert of Huddersfield University.
- 'Punk Rock Saved My Ass', Medusa's Muse – a collection of essays about punk rock and the impact on individuals.
- A feature in Metal Hammer paying tribute to the campaigning work of Heavy Load.

Gig Buddies in a Box (the potential for project replication)

Due to our well established networks and early interest in the Gig Buddies project due to the press created through City Camp Brighton we have received a great deal of enquiries from organisations wanting us to set up a scheme in their area, from potential participants, carers and also volunteers.

So much of what makes Gig Buddies special is about the time we invest in developing relationships, and getting to know everyone that we work with well. It would therefore make no sense for us to run the scheme in other locations when local organisations will be better placed to do so.



In 2014 we were awarded the recognition of being one of Nesta's and The Observer's '50 New Radicals' for the work we've been doing through Gig Buddies which resulted in a feature being written in The Guardian's 'Do Something' supplement, the resulting interest was quite overwhelming. As a charity we have had the replication of the project as a strategic aim but this really galvanized our thinking around this.

It is important for the charity that the integrity of the project stays intact, whilst also recognizing that the project would need to be able to adapt to local needs. We have therefore decided to work

with just two pilot sites to test the best ways of doing this. The organisations are ACL Disability Services, Sydney, Australia and Thera Scotland, Midlothian. Both organisations approached us after hearing about our scheme and we have taken time to establish a working relationship which is all about mutual support, discovery and transparency.

We are now well on the path of knowing what 'the box' should contain, and the kind of support we need to provide to partner sites but as trustees we are now working on our business model (and how much we need to charge) and also seeking legal advice around the best way to licence the model.

We see no reason why we couldn't support at least 10 organisations per year to set up their own versions. We currently have a list of around 70 interested organisations from both urban and rural locations wanting to work with us, including organisations who see the potential for the model to work with other client groups such as people with mental health issues and older people.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have learnt more from two years of developing the Gig Buddies project across Sussex than could be documented in this report. Gig Buddies is about real people with different lives, having fun and enjoying each others company. Therefore, there are no simple formulae to running a Gig Buddies project, but one theme that runs through our practice is 'Balance'. The balance of two different people, and their expectations from a friendship. The balance between real friendship and boundaries and safety. The balance between promoting a participant's choice and expanding the choices available to them, enabling them to try things they may never have thought of. And the balance between allowing a pair of buddies to be autonomous and independent, and ensuring that both have a high quality experience.

METHODOLOGY – Gig Buddies has and will continue to work on the ethos of keeping things 'punk' and therefore as well as reflecting on and evaluating our practice, as part of our learning we will try to be leaders in not being afraid to try new things out as we go. The biggest barrier to the project having an impact is volunteer attendance, so ensuring that this is consistent and that volunteers are motivated is a key part of methodology. Using staff time to provide good quality support at the beginning of a budding relationship is a good investment as it helps to improve retention and ensure that the budding is sustainable.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT – We have had some amazing volunteers join the project and feel a combination of high quality marketing and positive articles in the media have been key to getting ourselves known. As well as this word of mouth has been the biggest way we have recruited volunteers, which is credit to the project. It would be valuable to find an efficient way to support participants in remote areas as they are likely to need the project the most.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT - Gig Buddies reaches a wide range of people representing the diverse communities in Sussex. The project is more appealing to younger adults, but still caters for people of all ages. However, more could be done to address the gender disparity, potentially through widening the activities in our marketing materials to other cultural things such as theatre.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING - We have shaped the training as we have grown, so although it always includes the core parts of safeguarding, boundaries and confidentiality we will continue to base

parts of the training on things we learn as the project is in action to keep it relevant and aim to constantly improve it.

MATCHING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING – Taking time to match pairs sensitively is key to try to sustain good Gig Buddy relationships. Although it is harder for us to monitor and evaluate real friendships amongst our Gig Buddy pairs we believe that from excellent training around boundaries and regular supervisions with both volunteers and participants throughout their time together we can support relationships to be sustainable and positive. Our private Facebook group is another good way to monitor communication between all our Gig Buddies and we will aim to organize more regular group social events to encourage networking and friendship building amongst other Gig Buddy pairs.

DEVELOPING THE GIG BUDDY ROLE – Although the Gig Buddy volunteer role was born out of a need to give people with learning disabilities the chance to stay up late and see headline bands at gigs, the role has been able to take into account different people's tastes and although it was inspired by being able to support people attend gigs, Gig Buddies have been able to support people with niche tastes. Some of our participants have felt more comfortable being supported to go to specific learning disability nights or continue with a routine they are used to such as going for dinner or socializing at their local pub with their Gig Buddy and some have been keen to try new things straight away. We will continue to encourage participants to try new experiences but will make sure we keep a person centred approach to meet the needs of each individual in the project.

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION - We have tried many different methods of supporting both volunteers and participants and have concluded that keeping our numbers manageable for our small staff team means we can provide more valuable support. Having our admin workers keep in touch with Gig Buddies every 3 months to make sure they are ok by phone, having face to face supervisions every 6 months, and introducing a gig review sheet to Gig Buddies to fill in to keep a record of their gigs means we can monitor Gig Buddies are keeping to their commitment of monthly outings and flag up potential problems if they are not.

COMMUNITY BUILDING - Although questionnaires, 1:1 supervisions and written feedback are all important, group socials are when we can really see how our Gig Buddy pairs are interacting. Many have reported they enjoy meeting up with other people in the project as their favourite part of being involved. We will continue to encourage pairs of Gig Buddies to form links over time.

PARTNERSHIP WORK - Gig Buddies have been able to access mainstream festivals through working with partnership organisations and several venues in Brighton have supported us with free tickets to events. It is our aim to create more partnership work in East and West Sussex.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP - The Storm and Thunder advisory group has been a great way for us to listen to our participants and make sure they are given a voice to lead the project. It had been challenging at times to achieve all their wishes and keep the group focused on 'steering' the charity as for the members it is also about socialising. In the future we will make sure we keep it balanced.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT - Participants' sense of self-worth is greatly increased by having a Gig Buddy. The Gig Buddies project is enabling adults with learning disabilities and autism to have the choice to stay up late with support, as well as changing social attitudes of inflexible support staff rotas, and creating meaningful opportunities for our participants to develop relationships and increase their social network.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Template for introduction meetings

Agreement between Gig Buddies

	<p>How often will we go out together? (Gig Buddies usually go out together once a month)</p>
	<p>How will we communicate with each other? Will someone else need to help? (for example parents, carers, support workers, friends)</p>
	<p>When / where / how will we plan what we do together?</p>
	<p>Who else will help with planning? (for example parents, carers, support workers, friends)</p>
	<p>What kinds of gigs or events will we go to?</p>
	<p>Can we afford to pay for gig tickets?</p>

Is it ok for the volunteer buddy to use carer's tickets if they are available?



How will we travel?



Where will we meet?



What will we do if one person has to cancel?



Appendix 2: Volunteer Agreement



Volunteer Agreement

As a volunteer with Stay Up Late you commit to the following code of conduct.

I commit to:

- Carrying out my volunteering activities to the best of my ability.
- Working within Stay Up Late's Volunteer Policy.
- Helping Stay Up Late fulfill its objectives.
- Being an ambassador for Stay Up Late, and promoting the rights of people with learning disabilities.
- Working within Stay Up Late's agreed policies, guidelines and procedures including its equality and diversity policy, safeguarding policy and health and safety procedures in relation to staff, volunteers and service users.
- Upholding confidentiality with regard to information about Stay Up Late and its service users.
- Treating others fairly and equally.
- Meeting my time commitments and work to standards agreed and give reasonable notice so other arrangements can be made when this is not possible.
- Attending training, supervision and support sessions where agreed.
- Enhancing Stay Up Late's reputation when I am representing Stay Up Late in public.
- Seeking the support of my designated volunteer manager if I require support with my role or am uncomfortable in any situation.

Stay Up Late values the role of its volunteers and as such expects volunteers to adhere to all policies. This is out of respect to all volunteers and users of our services.

SIGNED.....DATE.....

Appendix 3: Letter to carers and support staff about Gig Buddies

Hi!



..... is a participant of Gig Buddies (you may already know this!). This is some information for people who care for or support participants of Gig Buddies. It's good if everyone involved in’s support reads this.



Gig Buddies is run by the charity Stay Up Late, based in Brighton.

The project matches an adult with a learning disability or autism (a Gig Buddy participant) to a person with similar interests to them (a Gig Buddy volunteer) to attend gigs and events together.

Gig Buddy volunteers get to know the person that they are matched to and support them to go out.

The role is different to a support worker. The volunteer is unpaid. It is important that both buddies – the volunteer and the participant - choose events that they enjoy together. It is important that the person you support is getting the opportunity to choose things that they enjoy.

The volunteer commits to going out once a month with their Gig Buddy.

Usually, they share telephone numbers to keep in touch.

Gig Buddy pairs can arrange to go out together on their own, and can also go out with other Gig Buddies to social events. Gig Buddies receive a newsletter about upcoming socials.

These are some things that you can do to help ensure that the person you care for or support gets a great experience from having a Gig Buddy (although they don't all apply to everyone):

- Ask them if they have enjoyed the time they spend with their buddy. If there is anything they are worried or unhappy about, help them to call the Gig Buddies staff. Occasionally buddies just don't click – we're happy to re-match participants if this is the case!
- Make an effort to chat to the volunteer if you have a chance to meet them. Let them know that you are another person that they can speak to about how to support their Gig Buddy well.
- Help the person you support to research things they'd like to do with their buddy – it's good if both the volunteer and participant make suggestions.
- Buddies should be in contact regularly, and we need to know as soon as possible if there is a problem here. If the person you support hasn't heard from their Gig Buddy for a month, please support them to get in contact with them. If you can't get hold of them, contact the Gig Buddies staff.
- When the Gig Buddies go out together, the person you support may need some help with taking out the right amount of money, or remembering that they are going out with the diaries.
- Volunteers will often book tickets for events for their buddy, and their buddy will pay them back. They may need your involvement in this process.

Information about’s Gig Buddy:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Other details:

We’d love to chat to you more about any feedback you have about Gig Buddies. You can contact the Gig Buddies coordinators using the details below:

For Frequently Asked Questions on Gig Buddies, go to www.stayuplate.org/news/faqs-gig-buddies

<p>STAY UP LATE Care co-ops 9 Russell Place Brighton BN1 2RG</p>		 <p>Madeline 07827 228171</p>
		<p>Kate 07514622204</p> <p>kate@stayuplate.org</p> <p>madeline@stayuplate.org</p>