



## **HIGH WEALDEN COMMUNITY NETWORK - Have a Go in Crowborough**

The fourth Higher Wealden Community Network meeting was held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at the Community Centre in Crowborough and was arranged so that participants could have a chance to meet each other and try out a range of activities that were on offer to people living in the north of Wealden. Ditch the Slippers, a local voluntary organisation, hosted the event.

Participants filled out contact cards so that they could share contact information and details about their organisation. There was also an opportunity to list what outcomes groups had achieved as a result of attending the network meetings. Lunch was provided by SCDA who now run the community café in the centre.

Donna Wilson, ESCC Locality Link Worker reminded the group of her role and what had been achieved so far. In response to feedback from the last meeting this meeting was organised to allow participants to try out various activities.

### **Ditch the Slippers**

Noeleen Carpenter described what her group does and talked about the challenges faced by small voluntary organisations. *Ditch the Slippers* started in 2005 when Noeleen found herself elected, in her absence, to expand the work of a drop-in group for people with diagnosed Mental Health issues, including Dementia. *Ditch the Slippers* aims to encourage anyone over the age of sixty five, and who may be feeling lonely or isolated, to come out of their homes and to join in some well supported social and fun activities, while a secondary aim is to allow family carers to have a break, knowing their loved one is safe and looked after for a regular couple of hours every week.

Currently, there are three weekly activities, with residents of the Crowborough – Uckfield corridor and local villages being the main target group. However, people from further afield are never excluded so long as they can find their own way of getting to their chosen venue.

Running costs for Ditch the Slippers are kept to about £9,000 per year, with the main expenditure being the hire of suitable venues and to pay specialist

self - employed teachers who give focus to each session. In turn, about £6,000 is raised from members through subscription fees of £4 per session, whilst additional funds are raised through grants and donations to the group. Currently, three activities take place each week and include Skittles & Boccia, Yoga & Extend (exercise to music) on alternating weeks, and a very lively Singing group. Volunteers engage with and support the members to have the best possible experience at each activity while other volunteers provide transport where needed or are involved in administration. Roughly equal numbers of men and women attend with the oldest member now 97 years old.

### **Challenges and Rewards**

Noeleen described the main challenges facing the group such as keeping on top of the administration, finding suitable affordable and accessible venues, fundraising and recruiting volunteers to help, particularly with transport.

On the other hand, *Ditch the Slippers* is a vibrant organisation which is proud to offer opportunities for carers to relax and take part in activities alongside their loved ones or choose to take a short break away from their caring duties. All members are afforded equal opportunities to access and enjoy activities.

Noeleen answered questions from the audience and then everyone had the opportunity to try out the games of Skittles and Boccia. We also had the chance to have a go at Craft activities provided by *Artytime* and *Craftyannies*, demonstrating how Art can help with well-being. An *East Sussex Association of Blind and Partially Sighted* representative brought along special glasses, so participants could experience the effects of several partial sight conditions.

Finally, five members of *Ditch the Slippers'* Singing Group joined us, along with one of their usual Singing leaders and a guitarist. They brought a set of song books so delegates were able to gather round and choose some favourite songs to sing and to experience some of the feelgood factor normally enjoyed by members of *Ditch the Slippers*.



Some photos of the day.

## Data

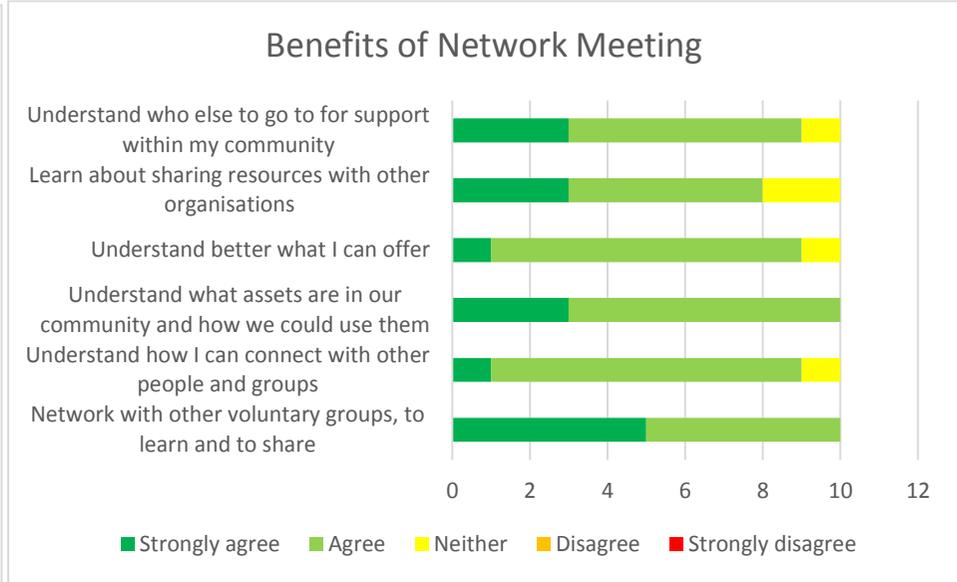
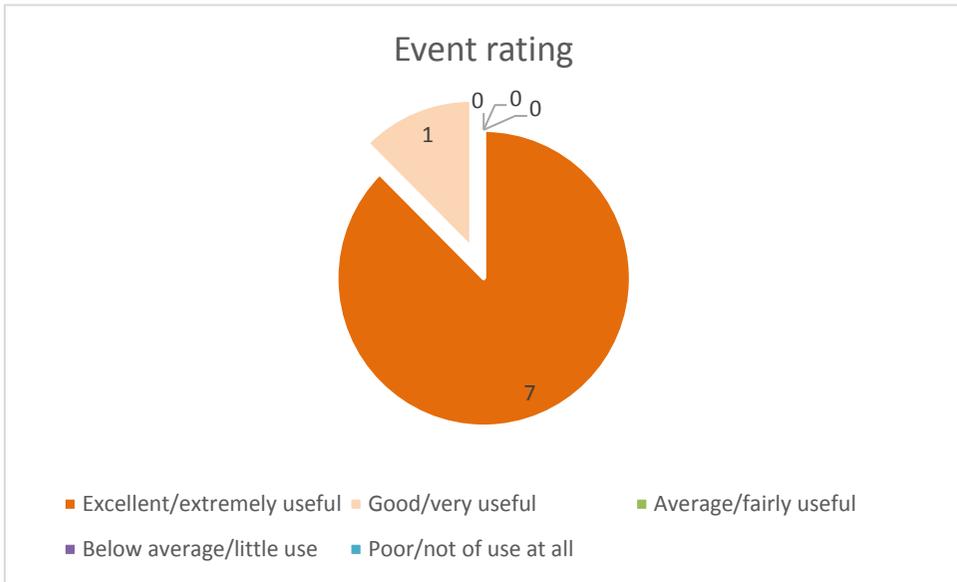
31 people attended the meeting. There was representation from voluntary and community groups, public services and businesses supporting the local community.

<b>Locality:</b> High Weald	<b>Meeting number in 2017/18</b>  4/4		<b>Location:</b> Crowborough Community centre	
<b>No of Attendees:</b>	<b>C&amp;Vs</b>	<b>Pub Sector</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Invited:</b>	42	21	3	3
<b>Attended (31 in total)</b>	21	9	1	0
<b>New Attendees:</b>	9	0	1	0

Data from the evaluation forms:

The event received a 100% rating as excellent on usefulness, location, accessibility, environment, refreshments and time of day!

10 people completed the evaluation forms giving the following feedback:



The following comments were made:

“Talking to people during lunch and activities really useful”, “Shame it had to finish at 1pm”, “bit too long”, “low numbers and quite elderly intervention related”, “great interactive activities and networking”, the demo of the services....invaluable”

**AS A RESULT OF ATTENDING THE NETWORK I HAVE.....**

Made more links with the voluntary and community sector, which has helped to make a more joined up way of working. I have more contacts, so I know who to go to if I have a specific question and have in general learned more about what is out there and what is on offer to our residents. Also, as the networks are in different places to where I am based, I have got to know the areas better. (HWLHCCG)

Made contact with ESAB. We will organize a train trip with some of their members (Sussex Community Rail Partnership)

Been inspired by what others are doing to help themselves.

Made contact with Crowborough Life to help promote our outreach vehicle services (ESAB)

Been able to send information about grants to groups directly, resulting in good outcomes (3VA)

Spread the word on ESFR community safety activities (ESFR)

Learned more about what is available in the area. Other organisations have had a chance to find out about Ice Project (Ice Project)

Obtained information and contacts to help with funding and meet people who can aid in creating a wider awareness within communities of what Know Dementia does and how our charity can help individuals and families affected by this dreadful disease (Know Dementia)

Found out more about the different services and activities in the area which lonely and isolated people could be directed towards (many of them potential scam victims). I will be feedback to the Safeguarding Adults Team about the importance of liaising with the locality link worker tea/3VA/other attendee organisations (ESCC – ES Against Scams Partnership)

Locality: High Wealden	Date: 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2018	Venue: Crowborough Community Centre	Facilitators: Fiona Morton, Donna Wilson, Ditch the Slippers
Themes / Topics from previous meeting:	Meeting more activity based /try out what organisations do		
Theme: (by service area?)	Previously Known Priority:	Insight / intelligence/ Discussion highlights	Next Steps: (where will this go?)
Wellbeing for over 65s	Challenge of Rural areas	<p>Lots of different venues using transport corridor</p> <p>Keep costs low –</p> <p>BSC needs to be made simpler</p> <p>Charge membership fee</p> <p>Recruit more volunteers particularly drivers</p>	Bigger event with more community groups represented – available to public too.