



Yearly 2023 Report

Centre Classes

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Monday Art	202	228	0	203	448
Cookery		657	0	629	1207
Crafts	749	832	0	523	847
Sue's social	303	372	0	195	401
Sewing	229	326	0	190	409
Cards	1018	995	0	584	957
The Club/Scrabble	592	612	0	301	616
Friday Art	363	233	0	205	454
Babies & Buddies		674	0	506	2009
Knit & Natter	15		0		43
Gardening Club					186
Total	3471	4929	0	3336	7577

(Above are the attendance figures for the last 5 years, 1st April to 31st March. Please note 2020-21 the centre was closed due to the COVID pandemic, 2021-22 the centre was only open 8 months again because of COVID)

This year has seen an improvement in attendees in all classes, and the introduction of two new groups (Knit & Natter and Gardening). The Cookery group and the Baby & Buddy group have doubled in size, as has the art groups, computer class and sewing class. The cookery group has always been popular and now we have rearranged the rooms to accommodate more people, we are seeing the potential of what this group could become. The cost-of-living crisis has helped us grow the toddler group. Not only are parents able to come and chat and gain support not only from the volunteers but also from their peers, we have been able to support them with food vouchers, gas top ups, school uniform vouchers, free Bread, bags of fruit and baby bank toiletries for baby and parents to take home free of charge. We also serve a full English breakfast to all the parents and toddlers every week.

It was disappointing that the scrabble group never took off after the covid pandemic. Unfortunately, we lost quite a few members to covid and a couple of our users have gone into nursing homes. In the past scrabble has always been a well-attended group and we were determined not to lose it so the remainder of the group changed their day to a Thursday and joined with the games group (The Club). This has worked better than we expected as each group complements each other. The games group continues to grow as we are now offering even more games to play.

One of our great achievements this year is to attract more men to our classes. If we saw 10 men a week, 12 months ago we were lucky. For the last few months of this financial year, we are seeing over 30 men consistently week on week and some are coming to more than one group

We always note the numbers of attendees that attend each class every week, and have done this since we started back in 2018. This was mainly to monitor our growth and see how popular each class is. We have seen over 200 new people join The Hub since July 2022, which is more than we have ever seen before and we can see these figures continuing to grow. We now need to consistently look to what other classes we can put on to accommodate the numbers coming through the door, as several of the classes are at full capacity. As we have become closer to our users, we have been able to identify the worries and problems each of them has and we have been in a wonderful position to be able to help some of them. Our ambition for the future is not only to keep growing the centre in numbers but also to make a difference in people's lives.

Working with a local arts organisation called Leftcoast we are planning a summer event all about 'belonging'. We invited a cross section of our users to a lunch for a chat about what the Hub meant to them. We were also lucky to have a local poet called Nathan Parker who also came and was so moved when he heard everyone's story, he wrote a poem while sat listening to them. I feel the words that were said and he wrote, say everything that needs to be said about The Hub. (Please see attached)



It is great to be able to see new friendships form and people's confidence grow. The constant chatter and laughter are wonderful to hear. There is a real community spirit in South Shore and it is growing all the time.

Friends of Highfield Park

The 'Friends Group' have settled well since we took over the running of their charity (due to ill health), some of them attend classes at The Hub. They have been incredibly supportive whenever we do events in the park as they love to show the Park off. This year we have made headway with the Council's Parks Department and we were delighted when they arrived with 40 trees and over 100 whips and shrubs for us all to plant. In years to come when children play on the playground, they will be looking at a green hedge with trees, rather than brick walls. We have a long way to go with the park but feel we have eventually started. The gardening clubs have been a great success – working with local GP surgeries we have been able to target some of the people that really need our help. This year we hope to see the group grow and hopefully get some to volunteer on the park.



Groups

We are really thrilled that we were able to offer a new home for Rainbows, Brownies, Beavers, Cubs & Scouts at a very nominal fee. (We are finding that many small groups are being asked to find alternative accommodation as many church halls etc are closing, this is mainly due to the cost of heating and lighting). The most exciting part is that since they have joined us their numbers have increased dramatically and most weeks in term time, we are seeing over 75 children attending the centre in one of these groups. The various leaders join us and help out at any events that we hold. They really have become part of the family.

This can also be said with the Bipolar group and MacMillan Cancer, MacMillan now come in 2 days a week due to the number of patients attending and the Bipolar group is now seeing numbers of nearly 20 attending every month.



Commercial Hire

The Hub has essentially three activity rooms and a small meeting room. The majority of the activities that we run are in activity rooms 1 & 2. This year thanks to the Halsall foundation, we have seen activity room 3 have its own toilet installed, making this room self-contained (as it already has a kitchenette with Tea/coffee making facilities). It is an ideal room for us to let commercially. We have had some interest so far, but intend to market this room in the coming year. Our hope is that the revenue from our commercial lets, will go a long way to contributing towards our core costs.

Events

Well, what a year we have had in events, starting June 2022 with the Queens Jubilee and ending with the Kings Coronation. In between we had an afternoon tea, kids craft sessions, a spooky Halloween walk with 'Audrey' our friendly witch who told her story, Bingo and the ever-popular Christmas tree light switch on, with Christmas parties for all groups. All our events have been very popular and well attended. It's a really lovely way to bring all generations together and enjoy an event. It also is a nice way to introduce what we do to our local community



Social Media

Facebook plays a big part in promoting our events, community meetings and generally bringing the community together. We have two Facebook pages – The Hub at South Shore which is our newest page this has over 1200 followers, Friends of Highfield Park which has over 1800 followers and our Facebook Group - All about South Shore which has over 5000 followers. We try not to carry too many advertisers and keep all the platforms for the community.

Funders

This last year has been amazing with regards to funders helping us with projects and the running of the centre. The centre manager has had the time to apply for more funding. The projects we have run this year have made a massive difference in people's lives from tackling isolation to helping with food vouchers and gas top ups in the cost-of-living crisis.

The Tudor Trust has made a massive difference to the charity by allowing us to employ a centre manager, they also helped with core costs, which has taken a lot of the pressure off us. The centre manager made several applications for funding which resulted in the following. The Vera Wolstencroft Children and Animal foundation contributed towards our new heating system, which included air sourced heat pumps in our main rooms and a new efficient boiler which has saved us as fortune in costs – especially since the gas and electric prices have gone through the roof. Blackpool Council (including local councillors) have helped support the baby and buddy group. January this year saw desperate times for many of our families and thanks to a grant from the council we were able to help with food, gas, clothing etc. The council also providing the funding for our gardening club which we promoted through local GP surgeries and their social prescribing teams, this made a dramatic impact on people who live alone and were too frightened to come out. The Arnold Clark Community fund for their continued support for the baby bank and the Pay Back Time Trust who contribute substantially towards our core costs.

Working with Other Groups and charities

Having a member of staff at the Centre, has given us the opportunity to work with many other people and let them know what we are able to offer to the community. We now work closely with two GP surgeries and also several social prescribers. We also are developing links with units at the local hospital including the stroke unit, mental health teams, crisis teams, and health visitors. The director of public health from Blackpool Council has met with us at the centre as he believes, as we do, that by offering the services we do, we are actually saving the NHS money both in GP appointments and hospital admissions. He has said he wants to continue working with us. It sounds a strange thing to say, but the people who attend The Hub are 'too busy to be ill'. The chief executive of the council has also been to see us, he again has heard of the work we are doing and was delighted when he had a Q&A with many of our users. We have formed good links with two primary schools and also the High School. We are becoming well known in many areas and other charities, the feedback is always very positive.

Conclusion

This year has been the busiest it has ever been, having a member of staff has made a dramatic difference not only to the level of business we are now doing but on a personal level being able to listen to people's problems and worries. We feel being able to spend time with people has really helped them and it has given us a better understanding of what we can do to help.

It has been a really enjoyable year to work at the centre, we have had so many high points with people being the centre of everything that we do. The cost-of-living crisis was not just a burden to our community but also for ourselves. Our utility bills were a concern, as was the increase costs in our day-to-day shopping. Thanks to The Tudor Trust, Pay Back Time Foundation and Blackpool Council we have got through this winter and will put plans in place for next winter.

Our emphasis is looking at the coming year and what we can do to improve what we offer to our community. After discussions with the trustees, it is very clear that we need another member of staff to ensure that the centre and park keep growing. We have lots of ideas that we want to see happen but initially we need to get an extra member of staff on board to share the load.