



Stay Up Late

About

Stay Up Late is a registered charity that promotes full and active social lives for people with learning disabilities.

What has changed since 2013?

The organisation now delivers support across the whole of Sussex as well as Brighton and Hove. Expansion into East Sussex was initially resourced via East Sussex County Council's Commissioning Prospectus but a successful Big Lottery fund bid enabled expansion into West Sussex.

In 2013 Stay Up Late employed 1 part time member of staff. It now employs the equivalent of 6.5 full time staff.

Activities cover:

Campaigning nationally

Running Gig Buddies across Sussex – matching people with a learning disability with a volunteer for nights out

Sharing knowledge and learning from the model

Volunteering Impact

Volunteer roles are similar to 2013 but they have evolved. Participants sit on the advisory group and have formed a splinter group to establish an LGBTQI group called the Wild Rainbows. They led the charity in the Pride Procession last year, contributed to PhD research and took part in a Human Rights Exhibition, 'Rightful Lives'.

Co-production is at the heart of the development of the organization and volunteers play an active role in terms of shaping strategy and activities.

- Stay Up Late supports **52 volunteers** in Brighton and Hove and 98 across whole of Sussex who each contributes 6 hours per month.
- If calculated at the living wage of £9 per hour, this equates to in-kind contribution of **£33,696** per annum in Brighton and Hove.
- The contribution from all 98 volunteers across Sussex equates to **£63,505**.

Good Practice

The Stay Up Late '(un) Ordinary Conference' developed a 'manifesto for an ordinary life'. The manifesto details 8 fundamental principles of an ordinary life, including having a love life; a job; and opportunities to go out. All the speakers were people with a learning disability who explained how they were leading 'ordinary' lives. The objective was to provoke the audience, who were mostly social care professionals, to acknowledge these principles as ordinary for many more people with learning disabilities.

While recognition of the event as a success was positive, there was frustration that it was described as 'innovative'. The aim is to create an environment in which people with a learning disability are able to live full, ordinary lives without this being viewed as extraordinary. "It's about time we had a greater representation of speakers with lived experience at these types of events".

Reach

There are approximately 100 service users across Sussex, plus an additional 150 on the waiting list. In 2013 Gig Buddies supported 35 people with learning disabilities in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

Creativity

Stay Up Late has engaged with festivals to create **opportunities** for people with a learning disability to run stalls at Glastonbury and Latitude. The principles to support and encourage users to develop their confidence, to make friends and build connections have led some to create new opportunities for themselves. One now has a job working in a pub one shift a week which he got simply by walking in and asking. The **confidence** gained from **going out** and forming **new friendships** unquestionably contributed to him feeling able to do this.

Impact

Stay Up Late are invited nationally and internationally to share their model and learning. In 2014 Stay Up Late was recognized by [NESTA The Innovation Foundation](#) as a 'new radical organisation' and has been ranked 25 in the Big Issue's top 100 Community Changers. 78% of people who have used Gig Buddies have gone on to make more friends and now go out more often, including independently of the scheme.

"I am very happy to see that Mark's Gig Buddy is able to be very flexible with him. 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 {his Gig Buddy}." *Mark's Paid Support Worker feedback*

Why Invest?

Schemes like Gig Buddies are not only fun, but also life changing for the participants. At the core of this work is the profound purpose of reducing isolation, reducing stigma around people with learning disabilities and autism, and promoting their role in local communities.

Stay Up Late empowers people with learning disabilities to take more control of their lives and work, including out of office hours when paid support might stop; enables them to take part in day to day activities to live an ordinary life; and to be valued and welcome in their communities.

"I love being part of Gig Buddies. Before I was stuck indoors without having ideas, or the confidence, to go out. Now I've got a buddy we get up to all sorts, things I wouldn't have dreamed of and I've made new friends too. Not just with my buddy." *Gig Buddy Service User*

Flexibility

In response to concerns about the length of time that it could take to match individuals with a buddy, a programme of **social events** was developed to engage people until they were matched. For some, this is preferable to being matched and has led to a whole range of different kinds of activities such as **ghost walks** and **bat watching**.

Research in Practice for Adults

Independent evaluation of the Gig Buddies scheme run by Stay Up Late found that:

- 90% of participants said they enjoyed having a Gig Buddy.
- 86% said they see their Gig Buddy as their friend.
- 82% said they felt really able to make decisions about what they wanted to do with their buddy.
- 76% said they're more aware of other ways they can now spend their spare time.
- 79% said they now go out more in the evenings as a result of Gig Buddies (not just with their buddy).
- 48% said they did feel lonely at times.
- But 90% said that having a Gig Buddy makes them feel less lonely.

The full report can be accessed here: [Gig Buddies Evaluation](#)