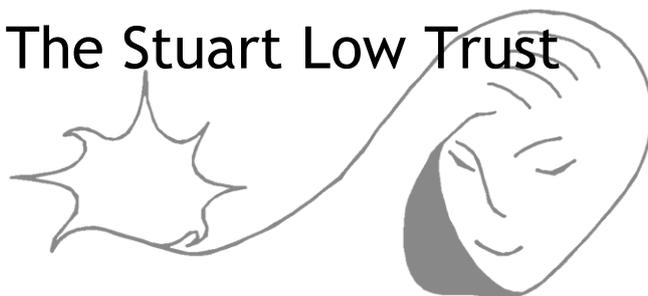




**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The Stuart Low Trust



bringing people together for better health and wellbeing

What is The Stuart Low Trust?

In 1997, Stuart Low, a young Islington man with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, sadly took his own life. He failed to find the support he needed to cope. Stuart's death prompted local people to form The Stuart Low Trust in 1999. Their aim was to create social therapeutic activities for vulnerable, local people. This was poignant, as Islington is the sixth most deprived borough in the UK and its suicide rate is much higher than the national average.

One in four of us will experience a mental health problem at some point in our lives. Through social activities, the Trust supports people living with or recovering from mental illness, who are isolated, in despair, living in fear, homeless or in poverty. The stigma around mental illness means people feel alone, ashamed and judged. This brings a risk of withdrawal and suicidal ideation. The Trust exists to counter this downward spiral. *"Being here has liberated my life"*.

Importantly, most of the Trust's activities take place out-of-hours in the evenings or at weekends, when people are at their lowest ebb and when there are few alternatives. Its **Friday Evening Events** run 52 weeks a year (including Christmas day). Currently, between 70 and 100 participants attend each week. They are welcomed with free, nutritious refreshments followed by an entertaining performance or interesting presentation on a health, wellbeing or mental health topic. Friday evenings offer respite from social isolation and provide a sense of belonging and community in a non-judgmental space. Participants can choose to attend every week or just drop in. In 2017, over 400 participants attended. *"I love the sense of community. It's such a crucial thing to our wellbeing"*.

The Trust's activities offer environments that build confidence and social skills. Most are run by a core group of 55 volunteers, providing over 4,000 hours per annum. We welcome volunteers and attendees wherever they live or whether or not they have had a diagnosis of a mental illness. Over 1,000 people receive the bi-monthly events flyer. *"Just getting your activity flyer in the post keeps me alive"*.

The **Saturday Projects** include arts and expression, relaxation and mindfulness and social skills workshops. The Thursday afternoon **Gardening Club** offers a sense of calm and wellbeing. The Tuesday evening **Singing Group** tutor puts participants at ease and helps them find their voice. The Sunday **Philosophy Forum**, led by experienced philosophers, is an opportunity to debate the big questions - who we are and what we want most out of our lives. **Narrow boat day trips, outings and art workshops in partnership with a local gallery** complete our present program. *"Empowering, restful and helpful"*.

There is much goodwill for the Trust in the local community, from partner organisations and funders. Recent external accolades include recognition with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2015, the highest award a UK charity can receive; and 1st prize in 2016 for Islington in Bloom Best Community Centre Garden. In late 2017 SLT was awarded with the Healthy London Workplace Charter and in 2018 SLT was nominated and runner up in the Mayor of London Team London Awards for Community Engagement and most Innovative Charity. SLT has been the British Medical Journal's small charity of the year since 2014. The Stuart Low Trust has certainly built solid ground since its inception in 1999. It can be proud of its achievements. Would you like to join us?

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