



**EKTA-UNITY**  
 PROMOTING COMMUNITY COHESION  
 Charity registration number 1159031



# Annual Report 2016-2017



# Chair's Report

It gives me great pleasure and pride to present this report as the past year has given the organisation a much-needed boost towards the next stage of its development. The year started off with Ekta securing project-based funding from People's Health Trust for a period of two years. However, whilst it was small funding it enhanced the capacity of the organisation to expand its activities and services, and is a step towards longer-term sustainability.

Hence, we started the year with a great enthusiasm, which continued to grow as the project progressed to delivering varied activities and services 3 days a week to the local community. I am pleased to report that with the dedication and commitment of our sessional staff and volunteers, we managed to have the project up and running within a very short space of time. The details of Ekta's activities/services are provided within this annual report.

Our enthusiasm grew further when the organisation came to know that it was awarded the 'Queens Award for Voluntary Service'. This was a great honour and pride for the organisation and a recognition of the importance of the services it provides. On behalf of the organisation, I would like to thank the Community Development Team of City Council for nominating the organisation for this great honour. I would also like to thank Voluntary Action Coventry for its continued support during our journey from the very start to receiving this honour.

Following on the Queen's Award, the organisation was honoured with another prestigious national award from the Asian Fire Service for 'Tackling Health Inequalities in the Community', which we were thrilled to receive. We are grateful to the Asian Fire Services and Community Engagement Team of NHS Partnership Trust for the recognition of our work in the community.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge that the organisation's biggest strength is its support in the community, its membership, and above all our team of volunteers. It is their tireless work, dedication and commitment that has enabled the organisation to reach where it is today. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to every one of them.

I would also like to thank all our partner agencies and funders for their support throughout the year, especially the funders. Without their support, the organisation would not have been able to achieve what it has. I sincerely hope they continue with their support in years to come.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Board of Trustees for their support, hard work, commitment and dedication throughout the year, even through difficult times. We have come a long way to reach this stage, but still have a long way to go yet.

I wish the organisation every success in the future.

**Chairperson - Surinder Dhillon**

## Our Achievements to-date

Ekta Unity is in its fifth year and it has come a long way since formation in 2012. The management committee has achieved to put in place effective governance, policies and procedures, administration, systems for monitoring and evaluation within legal requirements. It has recently managed to secure project-based funding for two years, which will enable the organisation to continue with providing services to the local community.

Our board of trustees and volunteers have all been working hard to ensure the smooth running of the organisation and services it provides. Our users and members have always shown a dedication, enthusiasm and openness to learn and share. With the help of our volunteers we have progressed with our new marketing materials, producing new up to date flyers, banners and a website which is now live.

We operate from St Paul's Church on Foleshill Road and provide a variety of services and activities three days a week. The attendance at all of the activities has been steadily growing and we have been getting a positive response from our partners. We have a good working relationship with all local voluntary and statutory organisations, community and faith groups.

During the past year, the organisation received 2 national awards for outstanding work and the services it provides to support the community:

- **Queen's Award for Voluntary Service**
- **National Award from the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)**





# Queen's Award for Voluntary Services

## Queen's Award Presentation Ceremony



We are delighted to report that our organisation was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, which is a great honour for any organisation to receive, as this is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK to recognise outstanding work in their communities. This was a great accolade for the work undertaken by the organisation in the community.

The award presentation ceremony took place on 19th September 2016 at the Mercia Venue in presence of our members and supporters, partners, local voluntary and statutory organisations, community, faith groups and funders. We are delighted to report over 350 people were present at the award ceremony.



The chief guests included the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Her Majesty the Queen for West Midlands Prof Rashid Gatrad, Lord Mayor of Coventry City Council Councillor Lindsey Harvard, Chairman of Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust Mr Jagtar Singh, as well as councillors and other distinguished guests and officers from local authorities.

The award ceremony was conducted by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant Prof Gatrad and Lord Mayor Cllr Harvard, where local media including local press, Asian Radio stations and TV channels were present and they broadcasted the event on their channels followed by live interviews on the TV channels.

Prof Gatrad admired the work the organisation does and he was very impressed with what he witnessed during his visit to the organisation. He was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of volunteers and trustees for making sure everything runs smoothly and professionally. He was able to speak to several users on his visit and they all were very pleased with the service they receive. He had 'no hesitation to recommend the organisation for this award and it gives him a great pleasure to present this award.' He wished the organisation every success for the future.

A quote from one member: "I can't help feeling so happy and feel very proud of our organisation, this is so good" .

"The atmosphere was electric" one attendee commented.

Since the organisation's services have been broadcasted on a Asian TV channel it has resulted in people from other cities approaching the organisation for advice to replicate similar projects in their areas.

A telephone call from Slough "You have given me the inspiration to do something here".

"So proud of my gran being part of your organisation, I didn't know what she did before watching the programme on TV".

# Our Services & Projects



## Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace

Following on the announcement of the award, the organisation was invited to attend the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

On behalf of the organisation the Chair and Secretary attended the Queen's Garden Party on Thursday 19th May 2016 where they met the Queen, other members of the Royal family and other winners of the year's award.



## National Award from the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)

The organisation has been working in partnership with Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership Trust (CWPT) for addressing health inequalities in the community. We are pleased to report that our partnership was one of four in the country to be short-listed to receive a national award from Asian Fire Services Association for the work we carried out for addressing health inequalities.

Ekta-Unity along with CWPT and West Midlands Fire Service were invited to take part in a high profile event in London. We are delighted to report that our partnership won the award. Jagtar Singh, Trust Chair, along with colleagues Sue Eato, Associate Director of Service User and Carer Involvement, and Jaspreet Singh, Involvement Engagement Co-Ordinator, received the award on Ekta's behalf.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer from West Midlands Fire Service Gary Taylor was also present at the ceremony, said "We are really pleased and proud to have received this award as part of a partnership team. Working to address health inequalities is something that underpins all of the work West Midlands Fire Service does and we know that working together is the most effective way to engage with the most vulnerable members of the community." He commented that the Foleshill Fire Service supports the work of Ekta and really grateful for its help.

## Health Promotion & Wellbeing

Majority of our service users suffer from mental and physical health conditions. We encourage them to adopt a healthy and active lifestyles by taking part in the following activities and information sessions. Provided to promote a holistic approach for positive social and physical mental wellbeing:

## Weekly Group Sessions

Monday is our most popular and primary day therefore our major events and celebrations take place then. The Monday wellbeing sessions provide women with a focal point to meet and gain information. Group sessions have included topic-based talks and discussions. Specialist speakers are invited to provide information on various appropriate subjects such as welfare benefits, social care, hospital discharge, nursing homes, domiciliary care, carers support, eye care, community safety, the fire service, and keeping warm.

## Health Check Sessions

We were lucky to have health trainers from the healthy living team provide weekly health checks for our members from the NHS CWPT to encourage participants to take ownership of their health by making positive changes and adopting an active lifestyle.



## Cook & Eat Well Course

We arranged with Groundwork Midland to deliver a 9 week Cook & Eat Well course at our base. This covered a wide range of topic-based talks, discussions and practical demonstrations around healthy and balanced diet choices and how cooking can be fun and enjoyable. The main focus of the course was how cooking can be easy, fun, and cost-effective. Most importantly, the course was interactive, yet the dishes were tasty!

During the 9 weeks 60-70 people attended each session. They enjoyed taking part in the preparations and cooking demonstrations, as well as learning new recipes, and how to make small healthy changes in their diets and cooking methods.



## Great Memories - Dementia Awareness Project

The South Asian community is seeing a faster rise in the number of people diagnosed with dementia than the general population. There are more than 25,000 people with dementia from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups in England and Wales. This figure is expected to double by 2026 and rise to over 172,000 by 2051. Ekta-Unity was successful in securing funding to deliver a dementia awareness project in the community.

An increase in the South Asian population in the UK in the 50s, 60s and 70s has meant the number of people aged 65+ is due to rise sharply. The government has predicted nearly a seven-fold increase in the next 40 years of people with dementia from BAME backgrounds.

However, stigma surrounding the condition is common and cultural differences can stop people getting the help they need. Raising awareness about the condition amongst relatives and carers in the South Asian community is a priority.

Older Asian people, who are at risk of developing the disorder and unable to seek help due to awareness, language and cultural barriers.

The organisation held a series of group sessions facilitated by specialist dementia professionals providing information on the disease, early symptoms, early detection and methods of prevention/ delay in the progression of the disorder. The sessions also included the importance of healthy eating, adopting active lifestyles and most importantly keeping the brain active. The project also included the practical activities that keep the brain active to encourage people to exercise their brains, such as games, puzzles, quizzes, word searches, riddles.

We worked in partnership with Coventry Alzheimer's society, which helped the society to develop links with the community. This has helped them to have direct feedback from the community and an increase in uptake of services for carers and loved ones diagnosed with dementia. We were jointly able to recruit volunteers to become Dementia Friends.

We also hosted a large scale event to raise awareness of dementia and services available. The event included dementia specialist speakers and service providers providing information about the support services for sufferers and their carers. A carer shared her personal experience of living and managing day by day.

One of our members wrote a script depicting symptoms of dementia, the experience of living with a person diagnosed, and how difficult it can be to cope with the last stage of dementia. During the event, our volunteers presented the script in drama form on the stage, which was entertaining and the best way to deliver the message. Everyone appreciated the drama script and we received several requests from other agencies to perform at their events. The event was well attended with over 200 people attending from all sections of the community, including voluntary and statutory agencies.

Although we have completed our commissioned work, we are continuing with the work initiated during the life of the project such as: singing for the brain weekly sessions, brain-sharpening activities, once a month, support group for the carers and recruiting volunteers to become dementia friends.

## Yoga, Meditation & Gentle Exercise Sessions

We continue to hold weekly yoga, meditation and gentle exercise sessions throughout the year. These sessions have become one of the most popular activities of the organisation across all ages and backgrounds. Attendance at these sessions has grown to the full capacity of the church hall. The tutors encourage participants to do as much as they are able to do. This includes our members who sit on chairs, and wheelchair users. The sessions include laughter therapy, and relaxation which helps to reduce stress hormone levels and promote a sense of well-being and can temporarily relieve pain.



# Social Inclusion & Community Engagement



## Knitting Club & Wellbeing Sessions

Moving the knitting club from Foleshill Library to St Paul's church has helped the knitting club to operate more efficiently as all the materials are at hand. Since then, the project is steadily attracting new members and some of them are very keen to improve their knitting skills, especially learning to knit from patterns. We have an experienced tutor, who has been teaching the members the skill of following instructions from knitting patterns. We are pleased to report some of them are already started knitting garments following patterns, which is also helping them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Our members are always prepared to help whenever possible. CRISIS a charity that helps homelessness approached the group to help complete blankets. Our members gave their time and skills to complete them in good time, so they could be distributed to the homeless.

During the school holidays, some of the users bring their grandchildren to the club and they also expressed an interest in learning to knit and other art and craft activities. We are pleased to report five children regularly attended the club throughout holiday period and joined in the knitting and other craft activities. They also expressed an interest coming back in their future school holidays. It was very pleasing to see the interaction between the generations with skills being passed on.



## Musical Instrumental class

Every week we have a class facilitated by a qualified music teacher. She teaches musical instruments that interest individual members. This has been very empowering for members who previously have not had the opportunity to learn.



## Themed Chill & Chat Coffee Mornings

Every Wednesday 11am - 2pm and open to everyone wishing to join. The activities have included Mindfulness for wellbeing sessions which have benefited our members, by learning basic techniques. The Mindfulness sessions have been very popular and delivered by a trained trainer and was enjoyed by everyone who took part.

We are fortunate to have the benefit of two experienced music tutors facilitating these sessions. Members are helped to overcome their initial inhibitions to sing in front of others. This helps individuals to develop their confidence to engage in the group, community setting. The sessions are fun and friendly and are making a noticeable positive impact on participants' well-being. The members have performed in events and celebrations for the group. Their confidence and talent has been very impressive attracting more members to join the session.



# Events & Celebrations

We organised the following events and celebrations to mark special days in the calendar. It helps to bring communities together and promote community cohesion by learning and sharing different cultures and traditions:

## Vaisakhi Festival Celebrations

The annual Vaisakhi festival took place in April 2016. We are proud to report that some of the group members volunteered to sponsor and organise the Vaisakhi festival, including entertainment and refreshments. Members performed for the group on the day. The hall was full to its capacity and the event was well appreciated by everyone who attended. The organisation is grateful for their efforts, hard work and financial contributions.



## Positive Images Festival

Ekta Unity is pleased to be part of this annual festival in June. This year the theme for the group was 'reminiscence'. This fitted with our work on dementia. The group exhibited the Coming to Coventry exhibition 'Stories of the first South Asian Pioneers who came to Coventry' and had themed weekly sessions. The sessions included members sharing memories and experiences, with some amusing stories of arriving in England. This helped them learn about similarities and some of the struggles members encountered. They also had a session where they brought items that they had from when they arrived. Members brought some wonderful objects and clothes. They shared memories and stories attached to the objects.



## Yoga Session & Picnic in the Park

The annual Yoga and Picnic in the park part of the Positive Images festival took place at the War Memorial Park with more than 70 people joining us. The event started off with the tutor conducting the yoga session, followed by lunch, sing-songs, and fun and games which attracted other people in the park to join in.



## Keep Fit with Bollywood Dance

Due to the continuous demand, we organised these sessions for 12 weeks as a trial with an experienced and qualified instructor. The response was overwhelming, attracting 25-35 women of all ages, abilities and sections of the local community started attending straight away. We were fortunate to have a Bollywood trained Dance Instructor to facilitate our sessions. The sessions proved to be a positive way to encourage some members of the community to become more active and exercise. Our younger members continue with the sessions and we are pleased to report they performed at our events and celebrations, and have been complimented by everyone who saw them perform.



## Art, Craft and Creative Activities

Several projects took place with artists from the Peace House starting with a mosaics project. They learnt new skills they had not done before, how to make patterns, tiling using cement and grouting and then sealing the tiled mosaic panels. The finished mosaics are planned to be displayed in the church hall.



A second project was making prayer flags for Peace Day to be exhibited at the local library. The members made flags from silk and decorated them with silk paint.



Members took part in workshops for a second project with the Peace House. This entailed silk painting to make panels inspired by Tibetan prayer flags a show of support for Coventry's Hiroshima Day commemorations. The prayer flags traditionally promote peace, compassion, strength and wisdom. This links in with the festival of light 'Diwali' which is celebrated throughout the world in November. This activity is very appropriate for celebrating peace and wisdom in all communities and sharing.





## International Women's Day

This event was organised as part of International Women's Day celebrations, which included inviting local Asian women who have been successful in politics, businesses, and professions, as well as housewives. They shared their experiences they had gone through to achieve what they have. The members were encouraged to be proud of who they were and what they have all achieved, this was very uplifting session.



## Diwali & Eid celebration

The celebrations for Diwali and Eid took place in November 2016. This was an opportunity to thank all members and allow all the members to enjoy the day by celebrating both occasions. Several members volunteered to help organise the day's events. They booked a popular musician to provide the entertainment for the members. Over 150 members attended the event and enjoyed themselves.



# Trips & Outings

All our trips have been successful which is satisfying for all the hard work and time the organisers put in so trips are enjoyed by everyone. The majority of our members are very isolated, live alone and do not travel on their own due to language and cultural barriers. It is very satisfying to see that they all join in to enjoy all the activities and facilities available on these trips, helping and supporting each other, and sharing life stories that create a strong bond between among all of us. The verbal and written feedback was the same "When is the next trip?" and everyone who completed evaluation forms ticked the box so that their names are included for the next trip.

## Annual holiday in Tenerife

Our annual holiday abroad to Tenerife was joined by 42 members who had the opportunity for a 7 day all-inclusive holidays. Travelling from Birmingham airport to Cyprus the members relaxed and enjoyed themselves. A number of members had not travelled other than returning to their country of birth so this was a new experience. Members enjoyed the facilities in the complex and explored other parts of the island. The week flew by with everyone having a wonderful time. Members were already planning for the next annual trip on the journey home.



## Day Trip to Great Yarmouth

Our members' chose to go to Great Yarmouth for the annual day trip, which we then organised for July 2011. We took 2 full coaches (94 people) including wheelchair users early in the morning. Although the weather was not good everyone enjoyed spending the day together.



# Partnership Working

The organisation has developed a good working relations with statutory and third sector organisations and worked together to support local initiatives, charities and campaigns. The following are some of the agencies we worked with:

## Coventry Older Voices

The organisation has built a link to enable group members to be a part of Coventry Older Voices so they have the opportunity to voice views and concerns with them on a regular basis. Members have participated in consultations on issues that affect older people in the city of Coventry.

## Coventry Culture Bid 2021

The organisation has taken an active part in several projects to support the Culture Coventry 2021 bid including hosting a consultation meeting for ideas, hosting events, creating items in preparation for displays using our members' skills and talents.

## The Herbert Museum

Ekta-Unity was invited to become a panel member for the Herbert Culture Coventry 2021. The panel helped with decisions for projects for the Herbert and the Transport museum. The Herbert museum purchased art pieces from new upcoming artists depicting life in war zones. Two art projects were discussed between them and a suggestion was made by Ekta-Unity for 'Maharajah Ranjit Singh's Golden Throne' to be exhibited in The Herbert Museum. We are delighted to report the museum took the idea on board and are making arrangements for an exhibition 'Crafts of the Punjab' to be hosted in Coventry in October 2017.

## Godiva

Pru Purretta present day Lady Godiva approached the group if any members would be interested in being part of a project she was starting for the Culture Coventry 2021 bid. The members needed to have the skill to embroider for a piece of work which will be a "Tapestry which will be 10ft long depicting 100 years of Coventry's history". Members of the group helped to complete pieces of the tapestry. On completion they were invited to Coventry city council, to the Lord Mayors chambers to meet the Lord Mayor Cllr Harvard and be thanked. On completion the tapestry was on tour visiting various venues and eventually is to be displayed in a prominent place.



## Consultation Meetings

During the year we hosted consultation meetings for Health Watch Coventry, Older People's Forum, CEMAP, Women's Voices and CRUSAC for them to directly provide information of their services to the local community and seek their views. Most importantly, they provide the local community an opportunity to voice their unmet needs and opinions to shape future service provisions.

## Volunteers Recruitment & Training Programme

The organisation thrives on the support of the volunteers. A majority of the activities and services are provided by the volunteers. Currently, the organisation has a very dedicated and committed team of volunteers who step in to take the lead on running and facilitating activities, supporting users needing assistance, receiving visitors, translation, interpreting, providing refreshments and anything else that needs to be done.

The organisation continues to recruit and train new volunteers. During the past year, the organisation has managed to recruit 5 new volunteers with a variety of skills and they have undergone our training programme. We also have an on-going training programme for our volunteers either to update their skills and legal requirements or to acquire new skills. The following was the outcome of the training programme:

Training	Outcome
First Aid Training	3 Volunteers completed training
Successful in seeking employment	2 Volunteers
Accepted by Coventry University for further education	1 Volunteer

The organisation is extremely pleased with the number of young volunteers who have come forward to support the organisation. Their input in the events and celebrations is a great strength to the organisation and very much appreciated by everyone. Their presence makes the whole atmosphere lively.

## Signposting to other agencies

The organisation operates an active signposting system and refers our users requiring specialist help, advice or service to the appropriate agencies. We work closely with them to ensure that they receive the help they need.

# Working with other agencies

We worked closely with following agencies to network and support local issues, initiatives and campaigns:

- Age UK
- Asian Blind Organisation
- Belgrade Theatre
- BOPA – British Organisation for People of Asian-origin
- Cook & Eat Well – Groundwork
- Coventry Alzheimer's Society
- Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust
- Coventry Carers Association
- Coventry Council – Community Development Team
- Coventry Independent Advice
- Coventry Library Services
- Coventry Older Voices
- Coventry Peace House
- Coventry Transport Museum
- Coventry University
- CRASAC
- CRISIS
- Culture Coventry Bid
- Foleshill Fire Service
- Friends of Foleshill
- Godiva Association
- Health Watch Coventry
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Hope in the City
- IAPT
- Positive Images Festival
- St Paul's Church
- The Herbert Museum
- University Hospital NHS Coventry
- Voluntary Action Coventry
- Warwick University
- West Midland Police Service
- Community & faith groups

# Our Team

## Board of Trustees

Surinder Dhillon	<i>Chairperson</i>
Balbir Dhillon	<i>Treasurer</i>
Nermaljit Samra	<i>Secretary</i>
Kiran Brar	<i>Vice Chairperson</i>
Dieshie Purwal	<i>Assistant Secretary</i>
Sharan Walia	<i>Health &amp; Safety Officer</i>
Jasvir Sandhu	<i>Membership Secretary</i>
Dr Surinder Basu	<i>Evaluation officer</i>
Parmjit Bains	<i>Users representative</i>
Sunairah Miraj	<i>Governance Advisor</i>
Sandeep Viridi	<i>Publicity &amp; Marketing</i>

## Volunteer Tutors & Facilitators

Naginbhai Prajapati	<i>Yoga &amp; Gentle Exercise Tutor</i>
Ramesh Talwar	<i>Assistant Yoga Tutor</i>
Elizabeth Meyhew	<i>Knitting Tutor</i>
Swaran Lota	<i>Music Instruments Tutor</i>
Ravinder S Kundra	<i>Singing for the Brain Tutor</i>
Meenu Singh	<i>Keep Fit with Bhangra Tutor</i>

## Volunteers

Gurjeet Grewal	<i>Group sessions &amp; events</i>
Gurmit Kaur	<i>Group sessions &amp; events</i>
Jagir Kaur	<i>Group sessions &amp; events</i>
Kashmir Kaur	<i>Group sessions &amp; events</i>
Surinderpal Kaur	<i>Group sessions &amp; events</i>
Kulwant Kaur	<i>Knitting Club &amp; events</i>
Pushpa Ben Mistry	<i>Knitting Club &amp; events</i>
Hema Vagad	<i>Knitting Club &amp; events</i>
Kashmir Gill	<i>Coffee Mornings &amp; events</i>
Sital Rai	<i>Coffee Mornings &amp; events</i>
Joginder Jagdev	<i>Coffee Mornings &amp; events</i>

# Quotes & Comments

## Our current regular activities

Yoga & Meditation Session	<i>Mondays</i>	11.00am	12.30pm
Wellbeing Session	<i>Mondays</i>	1.00pm	3.00pm
Musical Instrument Class	<i>Tuesdays</i>	6.00pm	7.00pm
Music Lessons	<i>Wednesday</i>	10.00pm	11.00pm
Coffee Mornings & Mindfulness Session	<i>Wednesday</i>	11.00pm	12.30pm
Music for Pleasure	<i>Wednesday</i>	12.30pm	2.00pm
Knitting Club	<i>Thursday</i>	10.30am	12.30pm

## Our Accountants

Justa & Co.  
Justa House  
204-208 Holbrook Lane  
Coventry  
CV6 4DD

We would like to thank all our funders and organisations for all their support.

“She is happier since she is attending the group”

She has started to take care of her health and she herself says that “I exercise at home and my joints feel better.”

“I feel this group is my family and everyone is very friendly and caring”

“If I don’t come to the group I feel as if something is missing”.

“This is my family and I feel empty if I miss it”

A comment that has been said so many times by many of our members at different times

“We learn by coming and listening to the speakers”

## Our Mission

To promote social inclusion in the city of Coventry for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded and assisting them to integrate into society.



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