



50 giving stories shared as part of
The Marketors' Trust's 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2026

No 13: The Sunday morning charity that never spent a penny on marketing



A Sunday session in Wokingham. Free, all abilities, no booking required. Photo: Park Yoga.

Every Sunday morning from May to September, in parks across England and now Scotland, people roll out a mat, or a towel, or a blanket, and move through an hour of free yoga in nature. No booking. No fee. All abilities welcome. Park Yoga has grown to around 6,000 participants a week this way, and until recently it did all of it on a marketing budget of exactly zero.

“We’d literally grown to thousands of people a week across the country on a zero marketing budget,” says Cathi, the charity’s director. “Word of mouth is probably our biggest mechanism. We even run a Bring a Friend Week, because getting the word out about us is as important as donating.”



Hundreds gather for a session in Poole. Photo: Park Yoga.

Cathi has been part of Park Yoga since it began in 2017, first as a participant at one of its earliest venues in Dorset, then as a founding trustee, and for the last couple of years as a paid staff member. Her own background, she laughs, is about as far from yoga as it gets. “I’ve always been physically active, but my background was playing rugby. It’s definitely not yoga and stretching. But I just loved it.”

They kept it hyper-local, targeting venues with fewer participants and tailoring the imagery to each community. “If we were working in a South Asian community, we’d make sure we had imagery to make the adverts relatable to those participants.” The season that followed brought a 29% increase in attendance compared with the year before. Some of that came from launching new venues, but a good part, Cathi says, came simply from “doing some marketing in those areas for more people to hear about us.”



All abilities welcome: a participant in Wolverhampton. Photo: Park Yoga.

What those people find when they arrive is deliberately gentle. Two thirds of participants are, by Sport England’s measure, inactive or only fairly active, and the sessions are built for exactly them. “Our instructors might start by saying, if you just want to lie in nature for an hour, that is absolutely fine. There’s no pressure.” The charity is as much about company as it is about movement, and its own survey bears that out: 90% of participants feel happier after a session, 74% become more physically active, 68% feel more connected to their local community, and 41% feel less lonely. Last year, 31% had never really done yoga before, which is precisely the point.

The stories that reach Cathi are what stay with her. One man told her he'd lost around 20 kilograms after Park Yoga became one of the first things he did, before he took up the gym and overhauled his whole routine. "He said this would not have happened without Park Yoga." Then there are the smaller joys, like the Sunday she describes with real delight, when a group of "Park Yoga tourists" drove down from near Oxford to the Bournemouth session carrying the biggest watermelons you have ever seen, and handed them out to everyone afterwards. "People were just enjoying fruit and snacks together after the session. That's the community connection."

The grant's biggest legacy, though, is one the Marketors might not have expected. By running its first campaign and measuring the result, Park Yoga could finally prove to its own board that marketing was worth the money. "It's been great to grow our participant rates, but also to demonstrate to my trustees that spending on marketing is worthwhile. They'll now invest in it. I've been able to get that budget allocated going forward because of the results I could share." A one-off grant, in other words, that keeps paying out. "It'll have lasting impact year on year, because we were able to demonstrate the ROI from that first grant."



A session in Burnley. Photo: Park Yoga.

Ask Cathi what she would say to the Marketors who made it possible, and the answer carries the weight of a charity that runs on under £100,000 a year. "A massive thank you. As a small charity that had never had a marketing budget, this let us grow, and it changed how we invest for good."



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