

Being Human Café

What is a Being Human Café?

A Being Human Café is a really simple and fun way to get involved in the festival. It takes some of the key features of the Being Human festival, such as sharing fantastic humanities research with communities across the UK, and adds a cup of tea and possibly even some cake.

This series of festival programming will take place across the country and all you'll need to put on a café is an intended audience, a researcher, a community space (which can be online) and some tea.

Below you will find a step by step guide on how to bring a Being Human Café to the boil (this is the only tea-based pun in the guide, we promise).



Why should I do it?

This guide will allow you to arrange a small gathering for some tea and stimulating conversation. If you have a busy schedule or are new to public engagement, then putting on a Being Human Café can be a great and simple way to get involved in the festival.

We also hope taking part will be fun and rewarding as it offers the opportunity to share your work with new audiences!

In general, by being part of the festival you are helping to make sure access to research continues to thrive and grow, as well as raising awareness about why the humanities are so important to our everyday lives.

Cafés during COVID-19

We appreciate that in recent years it has been difficult to predict what types of events will be able to take place. We hope that a Being Human Café could be a simple way to put on an event and allows for relative flexibility if, for example, the government issues new COVID-19 regulations and your plans need to be adapted.

We're open to applications that are for in-person, online or hybrid cafés, as long as you can demonstrate that it is a suitable fit for your intended audience. And if you are thinking of running an online café, there are tips for going digital in the pink boxes of this toolkit.

Step by step guide

1 Format

A Being Human Café should present research in an accessible, interactive and engaging way that allows for fruitful two-way conversations between you and attendees.

How you communicate your research is up to you, although it is often useful to have a small activity accompanying your chat to foster conversation and keep things interesting. Some possible options could be:

- Craft activities such as knitting, sewing, zines, etc.
- An element of performance such as a poetry recital or some music.
- Fun and accessible quizzes or games such as humanities-based bingo.
- Engaging flash talks with opportunities for participatory conversations about the content.

As you can see, there are several different directions you could take your Being Human Café. Try to get the balance right between finding a fun and creative format and one that is practically and financially viable.

Holding a café online

If you are putting together an online event think about:

- **How can you package your event?** Can you send bingo sheets and craft patterns in advance? Let people know what to expect - online meet-ups can be intimidating!
- **What may people have at home?** Attendees shouldn't feel pressure to buy things in order to take part and don't make assumptions about everyone having specific items.
- **Who will have the equipment to join online?** Try and make the tech as easy and straightforward as possible.

Digital platforms will not be suitable for all audiences and we need to think about the best ways to engage with different communities.



2 Audience

Move beyond a general idea of the 'public' to think about specific groups and communities you wish to attract to your Being Human Café.

Place your intended audience at the centre of your decision-making process so that you produce an event that is specifically tailored to their interests and needs. If you're working with a community or cultural partner they could provide helpful insights about what your audience normally want.

Find a 'hook' that will entice your audience and will connect your research to their everyday lives. This year's festival theme is 'Breakthroughs', which provides many different angles and opportunities to explore issues that impact society and how we could bring about change.

3 Partners

Partners can bring creative ideas, insights and access to non-specialist audiences. Potential partners for a Being Human Café could be, but are not limited to:

- A performer or artist who will help create the event and be an active part of its delivery.
- A venue that provides an event space and perhaps objects etc. to explore.
- A local community group, such as a charity, who will help shape and facilitate the event.

Whoever you partner with, it is important that you make the experience mutually beneficial so that everyone feels it has been rewarding and useful.

4 Venue

The right venue can help you reach an audience that already uses that space. A café is obviously a good option, but all you really need is somewhere that is off-campus, serves beverages and is popular with your intended audience.

Some possible options could be:

- Local community centres and libraries,
- Museums and galleries,
- Theatres and arts centres,
- Learning spaces in heritage sites.

Venues can help strike the right tone for your event, signalling to audiences what to expect. For example, a well-used community centre suggests it will be an informal and friendly event.

It will be important to work closely with your venue to see what's doable and safe in November.

Holding a café online

Online platforms allow us to meet up in a digital space. Each platform has pros and cons (security, capabilities, costs, etc.). Do your research and check which one your organisation recommends.

Choose a platform that allows for two-way conversations, whether it be by simply turning your microphones on or perhaps via:

- A chat messaging function,
- Virtual break-out rooms,
- A hand-raising system,
- Online polls.

Speak with your partners about what methods they think will be best for your audience and do a test run with colleagues to get their feedback.



5 Logistics

Now that you have an idea for your café, you need to think about the logistics. Ask yourself questions like:

- How long can my intended audience spare to attend?
- What time of day would work best for them?
- What group size can I manage and will also make people feel comfortable to contribute?

As always, think about what would work best with your intended audience's lifestyle. Perhaps its a weekend family-friendly event or an evening gathering. Cafés should be no longer than an hour online or 90 minutes in-person.

6 Accessibility and inclusivity

Although your event will have a specific intended audience, this will still include a wide and diverse range of people who should feel welcome and able to attend.

Consider issues of accessibility for those with access requirements. For example, choose a quiet space for your gathering so that background noise doesn't disturb those with hearing loss.

Think about whether anything in your content and messaging could feel exclusive or off-putting for potential attendees. Make sure you are inclusive not only in words, but in your actions and decisions, e.g. ensure you have a diverse range of contributors at your event.



7 Consumables

Hopefully there will be tea at your café, so think about:

- Your venue's ability to support catering,
- Health and safety with hot drinks,
- Hygiene standards and COVID-19 regulations,
- Asking your attendees for their allergies in advance,
- Displaying ingredients lists on the day.

If you need advice on catering speak with your organisation's events team or your venue.

Holding a café online

If you are hosting a café where you can't share a pot of tea, you could suggest attendees join in with their own beverages.

This could help people feel comfortable and part of a communal activity, even if they do not share a physical space.

Count me in! How do I apply?

Now that you're raring to go, visit the [Being Human website](https://beinghumanfestival.org) where you will find a short document on festival criteria and a simple application form.