Brighter Together

Impact Report

Sept 2020 - July 2021

REGISTERED CHARITY 1190557

Introduction to the report

A message from our Founder & Chair

This year has been a year like no other. Isolation, fear and anxiety have been ever present, and yet there have been rainbow moments amid the gloom where we have celebrated those on the frontline and felt tremendous pride in how our communities have rallied together. The overriding experience for so many of us was the understanding of our basic need for human connections and how important relationships are for our wellbeing.

As an organisation, we were among the first to take our intergenerational sessions online, believing that doing something would be better than doing nothing and recognising that connections can continue to be made, even when we can't be face-to-face . But we weren't prepared for just how beneficial a 30 minute online session could be! The smiles were wonderful and the feedback has been overwhelmingly postive. We've heard how our sessions impacted the mood and behaviour of care home residents far beyond our weekly sessions; and the empathy that the children have demonstrated has been astounding.

We've been very privileged to have supported our community in this way and it's been a joy to contribute alongside the many unsung heroes working in the education and care home sectors. The staff that we work with show dedication, work tirelessly and see their job as a true vocation - we take our hats off to you and thank you for all the encouragement and support you've given to us during this time.

Most importantly, we are pleased to be emerging stronger from the pandemic. Taking our sessions online created a huge challenge in how we could use activities and games to develop real and meaningful relationships between young children and care home residents. Our learnings from this have now improved the service we offer; from more diverse activities that support physical health, to games that are accessible and stimulating to every individual involved. We have weaved these lernings into our new programme, which we are excited to start delivering as the new school year begins. We look forward to enhancing our support over the coming year, and beyond, expanding into more care homes and nurseries, and developing partnerships in new settings such as day centres.

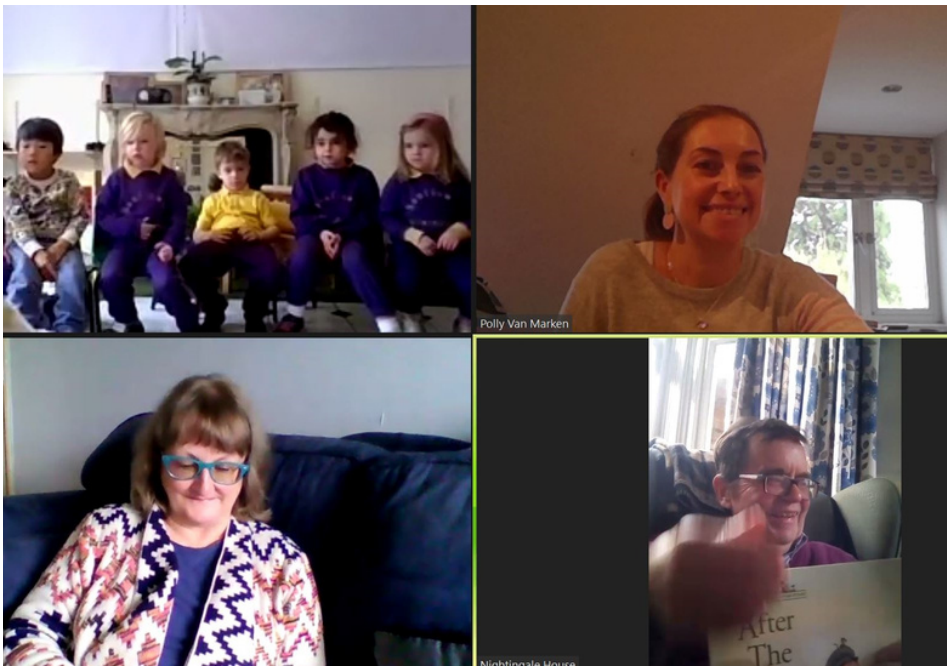
Whilst undoubtedly operating online has been hugely beneficial, we are excited to get back to in-person sessions, where warm handshakes, shared laughter and energetic balloon tennis (amongst many other activities) will make an even bigger difference to the lives of our participants.

Thank you to all our partners for a wonderful 2020-21 and we're looking forward to magical moments in 2021-22.

Polly van Marken (Founder) and Andy Melia (Chair of Trustees)

Our Mission & Purpose

Brighter Together brings together two vulnerable groups; care home residents with Early Years children, for mutual benefit to their wellbeing.



40%

of care home residents are suffering from depression; the leading cause being social isolation and lack of opportunities for meaningful connections.

62%

of the children on our programme this year did not have regular interaction with someone over the age of 65, putting them at a disadvantage in terms of confidence, communication skills, concentration and school readiness.

Residents on our programme see their involvement in these children's lives as giving them a real sense of purpose, and thereby improving their wellbeing. Children delight in the relationships formed with the residents and their development and wellbeing is enhanced by the time spent together.

How we do it

Our aim is to maximise the benefit from the time that the children and care home residents spend together. To do that, we are rigorous about our programme planning which is built around the following 4 aspects:

Designed by Experts:

Our sessions are designed with input from an Advisory Board. This board consists of a range of experts from fields including Occupational Therapy, dementia care, physiotherapy and Early Years education.

Session Structure:

Each session is based on the approach of Cognitive Stimulation Therapy which has well documented success in improving and maintatining cognitive functioning in older adults.

Bespoke Training:

Pre-school practitioners leading or supporting the sessions alongside our Brighter Together Session Facilitators, are provided with professional training on how best to engage with older people, working in the care home environment and accredited dementia training.

Community Involvement:

The activities build up to a celebratory end of term event to showcase the work of the group to friends, family and staff. This is an essential part of including the community, bringing a much wider range of people into the care home.

Our response to the pandemic

Due to the lockdown restrictions, we were quick to move delivery online. During the March - June 2020 lockdown we trialled and refined our online programme with one project. From this we have developed a varied and stimulating programme of online sessions for the 2020-21 acadmic year.

The proportion of over 70s experiencing depression has doubled since the start of the pandemic.*

We've been delighted to bring all our partners onto our online programme during this year and have played a vital role in tackling social isolaton & depression. The benefits of these virtual connections have been far beyond our expectations.

"The beaming smiles on the residents faces when the children come onto the screen is evidence that the sessions bring them huge amounts of joy. Being able to interact with young children, even through a screen, satisfies a nurturing/maternal/paternal emotional need for the residents and as such acts as a form of occupational therapy. This has been particularly important during COVID as many residents have had very limited access to their extended families & friends."

JESSICA CORLETT, ARTS & EVENTS COORDINATOR, C&C CARE HOMES

Key aspects of our online programme:

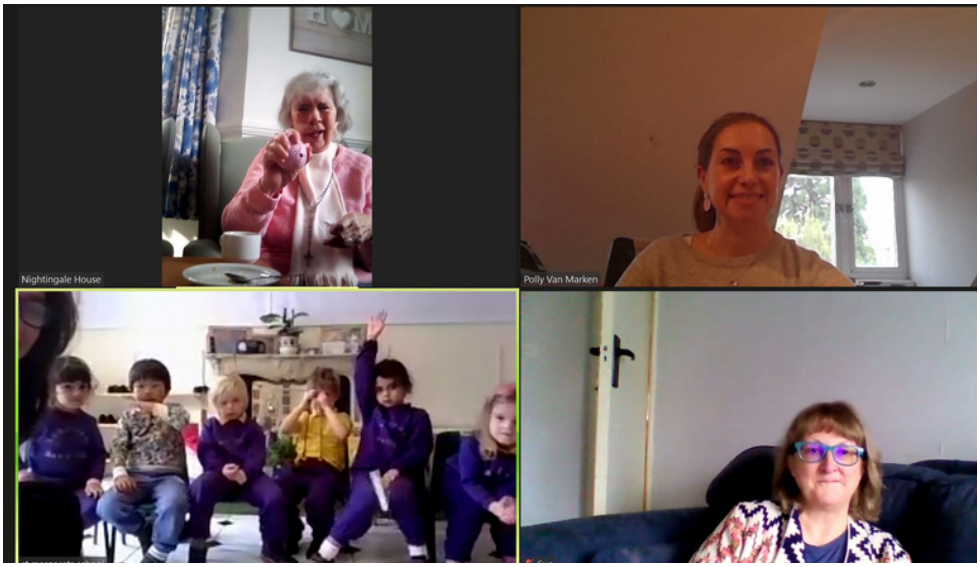
1. Kept as much of the **existing** session **structure** as possible.
2. Introduced **more physical movement** based games to address the issue of an increasingly sedentry lifestyle as a result of lockdowns.
3. Incorporated **more sensory, reminiscence and relationship building acitivities** that supported the group to create strong connections.

Outcomes

During 2020-21, we delivered **60** intergenerational sessions.

74

CARE HOME RESIDENTS & CHILDREN PARTICIPATED IN WEEKLY SESSIONS



100%

OF CARE HOME RESIDENTS WE WORK WITH DO NOT HAVE ANY OTHER REGULAR INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN.

100% of partners would recommend the poject to a colleague.

Our impact

100% of our partner nursery schools said that the sessions made a **very significant** contribution to the children across all **3 areas of:**

- **Social wellbeing**
- **Emotional wellbeing**
- **Development**

100%

of children made noticeable improvement in their **social wellbeing** as a result of being part of the programme.

"I don't think there is anything that we can put in place at the nursery that would replace this form of connection that the children are able to experience through this project."

CLAUDIA NEVES, HEADTEACHER

94%

of children made noticeable improvement in their **emotional wellbeing** as a result of being part of the programme.

81%

of children made noticeable improvement in their **development** (against the EYFS characteristics of effective learning**) as a result of being part of the programme.

Our impact

100% of our partner care homes said that the sessions made a **very significant** contribution to the residents for both:

- **Social wellbeing**
- **Emotional wellbeing**

"During the sessions everyone smiles. The residents are calmer, more communicative and happier after each session. Our residents have created beautiful connections with the children and during the week they always talk about their friends from nursery."

ANTONELA, ACTIVITY COORDINATOR

100%

of residents made noticeable improvement in their **social wellbeing** as a result of being part of the programme.

77%

of residents made noticeable improvement in their **emotional wellbeing** as a result of being part of the programme.

Looking ahead

COVID-19 has created a new context for our work, where the importance of intergenerational relationships to people's wellbeing has a much greater focus and understanding. This has given Brighter Together 2 clear focal points for the future:

1. Expanding our reach & strengthening our operations

With the shocking statistics on social isolation and depression among older people, coupled with the decline in wellbeing for children, we want to be able to reach more people in the future. This will include assessing the viability of working in different settings, such as day centres and sheltered housing. To be able to support this growth, we will be bringing on a team of Session Facilitators who will support our current partnerships and ensure we retaining our aims, ethos and quality that has been the lynchpin to our success so far.

2. Continuous programme improvement

Our focus will continue to be to maximise the benefit of the time our participants spend together. We remain committed to researching, trialling and refining our sessions and we will continue to incorporate the learnings from the online sessions as we move back to being together in-person. Our Advisory Board will continue to play a vital part in incorporating best practice from a variety of sectors into our programme design.

Our Supporters

Our Funders:

We are very grateful to the following funders for the generous support they provided the programme during 2020-21.

HM Government

In partnership with THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

LONDON COMMUNITY RESPONSE FUND

RPLC

In Kind Support:

During this year we have been incredibly fortunate to have benefitted from the very kind support of some forward thinking organisations and their dedicated and talented staff.

FRIED FRANK

LawWorks

wiggin

weAGILE

The Digital Line

With thanks

An enormous 'thank you' must go to the children and residents involved, who have given so much joy, patience and energy this year. We are also incredibly fortunate to work with a wide range of people who have enabled this year to be so successful. Thank you to each and every one of you.

Our partners & their wonderful staff teams:

- St Margaret's Montessori
- Annie's Nest, Greenwood Twickenham
- Kew College
- Nightingale House
- Lynde House
- Cecil Court

Our Advisory Board:

- Dr. Sue Allingham
- Tina English
- Teresa Keegal
- Homa Zahedi

Our Trustee Board:

- Andy Melia (Chair)
- Dr. Sue Allingham
- Parita Doshi

Pro-bono Supporters:

- James Frecknall, Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP
- Charis Shakespeare, Wiggin
- Monshur Ali, Pete Wackett & the team at We Agile
- George Vaughan & Andy Coney at The Digital Line

Endnotes

Page 5 - * Office for National Statics (2020), 'Coronavirus and depression in adults, Great Britain: June 2020'. https://www.ons.gov.uk peoplepopulationandcommunity/ wellbeing/articles/ irusanddepressioninadultsgreatbritain/ june2020

Page 16- ** Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. Department for Education, 31 March 2021. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf

Brighter Together

Connecting the old & the young
to shine **Brighter Together**

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