

2022 - 2023



# IMPACT REPORT



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

Registered Charity 1190557

**Brighter Together is an intergenerational charity that connects two vulnerable groups: older people and pre-school children, to participate in shared activities, for mutual benefit to wellbeing and development.**

## FROM OUR FOUNDER & CHAIR



Polly van Marken  
Founder & CEO

The latest United for All Ages report, 'Together in the 2020's', stated that '**Britain is now one of the most age-segregated countries in the world**'.<sup>(1)</sup> All the latest research shows the UK as being in a crisis of social isolation and loneliness – the outlook can look bleak, to say the least.

However, **our research and evaluation from the last year presents a compelling picture that intergenerational activities have so much to offer** in tackling social isolation and ageism, and are a valuable tool for improving the emotional and social wellbeing of older adults and children. Importantly, these benefits to wellbeing aren't limited to our group participants - they also extend to the staff from the nurseries and care homes supporting the sessions. As one member of staff from a Day Centre says:

*"Personally, I love taking part in sessions - it gives me a lot of satisfaction. I have close contact with our clients, more time to listen to them and listen to their needs. Each session brings something new, we can learn more about ourselves and get to know each other better. I have the impression that the sessions brings us not only joy, but are also therapeutic. It teaches us all respect, sensitivity, patience and acceptance."* Agnes Lozowska.



Andy Melia  
Chair of Trustees

The testimonials and case studies in this report really bring the data to life and we're grateful to those that allow us to share their experiences of the programme.

This year we are doubly excited that not only does our **impact evaluation clearly evidence that our programme has such wonderful benefits** for participants, the community and thereby wider society; but also, that **funders have**

recognised the importance of our work. We are extremely grateful to grantmakers, including Betty Messenger Foundation and City Bridge Foundation who have agreed **to support our programme growth** over the next two years as we expand our reach. We're delighted that we will be able to support more older people and early years children as we work across more of London.

Additionally, we will also be introducing a **volunteering programme** to support our sessions this year. If you're someone who might be interested in volunteering with us, then we'd love to hear from you. This will be a hands-on role where you'll be supporting participants to engage with activities which will be rewarding from the get-go.

As always, we couldn't do what we do without our wonderful participants, project partner staff, our incredible session facilitators, generous supporters, and our Trustees. **A huge thank you to each and every one of you who make Brighter Together such a valuable charity.**



## Key Stats:



### GROWTH

More than doubled the number of sessions: delivering **242 hours** of intergenerational activities.



### QUALITY

When asked if they'd **recommend Brighter Together's programme** to a colleague, **88% of partners gave 10 out of 10** (where 10 is extremely likely).



### IMPACT

**100%** of project partners reported that the programme made a **difference in all areas measured.**



## Impact for our Partners...

*"If you're only with adults, you forget how delightful children are and how they bring a breath of fresh air to everything."*

**CHRISTINE PARTICIPANT**



*"Throughout the term, one child who finds new environments and change very challenging, became more and more involved in the sessions. After a few sessions they were fully enjoying the activities and speaking with the residents. They felt very proud each time they returned and have spoken very positively with both staff and parents about their experiences at the Homelink sessions."*

**KATIE TIDY  
ROOM LEADER, TWICKENHAM DAY NURSERY**

*"The improvements in self-worth and self-esteem can be amazing. For older adults living with dementia, intergenerational activities are wonderful because they improve their mood and cognition and that improvement will last for several hours after the activity has taken place."*

**TERESA KEEGAL,  
COMMUNITY DEMENTIA PRACTITIONER**



*"For all the residents in the group, our Thursday Brighter Together sessions are a highlight of the week. They give a sense of purpose and having a fixed engagement in the diary is so important – our diary at The Pines focuses around Thursday afternoons! This programme greatly reduces loneliness, boredom and helplessness."*

**HEATHER SAID,  
MANAGER, THE PINES CARE HOME**



**At Brighter Together, we know the potential that intergenerational relationships and activities have to transform lives.**

Our aim is to create regular opportunities for the old and the young to develop purposeful connections with one another.

Brighter Together is directly addressing multiple challenges across these two vulnerable groups. Beyond this, we are also tackling the generational divide afflicting wider UK society.<sup>(2)</sup>

“

*“I believe this intergenerational initiative is a must for all day centres, care homes, and for society as a whole. It is a model of excellence and one that should be taken up by all thinking societies.”*

**ELIZABETH WATSON, PARTICIPANT SPOUSE**

**HOMELINK DAY RESPITE CARE CENTRE**



## THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Since the end of WWII the UK has been moving away from multigenerational living, to seeing the rise of the nuclear family, and recent research has found that the UK is one of the most age-segregated countries in the world.<sup>(3)</sup>

This has created a number of issues, directly impacting the oldest and youngest in our families, but also for our wider society as a whole:

### THE UK IS FACING A CRISIS

#### 1 Social Isolation



UK society is increasingly age-segregated, with stark and concerning generational gaps creating more social isolation and less social cohesion.<sup>(4)</sup>

#### 2 Loneliness & Depression



Loneliness and depression are on the rise and the number of people over 70 experiencing depression has doubled since the start of the pandemic.<sup>(5)</sup> The leading cause of depression is social isolation and lack of purposeful activity.<sup>(6)</sup>

#### 3 Disadvantaged Children



Children with fewer opportunities to have regular connections with those over 65 are at a disadvantage in terms of confidence, communication skills, concentration, and school readiness.<sup>(7)</sup>

### INTERGENERATIONAL WORK TACKLES THIS CRISIS

#### 1 Wellbeing



Spending time engaged in meaningful activities in intergenerational groups has proven benefits to the wellbeing of participants.<sup>(8)</sup>

#### 2 Life Chances



Children's life chances are significantly enhanced through regular interaction with those over 65.<sup>(9)</sup>

#### 3 Social Cohesion



Social cohesion - intergenerational learning encourages greater understanding and respect between the generations and helps to bridge the 'generational divide'.<sup>(10)</sup>

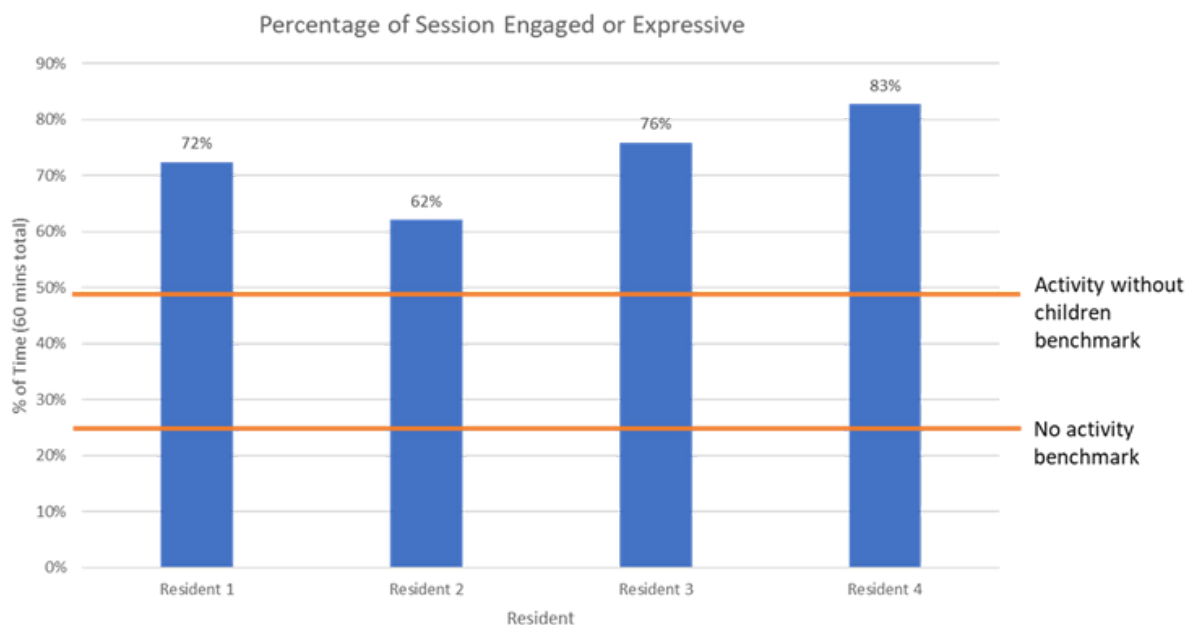
# PROGRAMME EVALUATION

6

## THE SUCCESS OF BRIGHTER TOGETHER IN ENGAGING OLDER ADULTS

This year we have been delighted to host a placement term for Abby Latham, Occupational Therapy Student from London Southbank University (LSBU). Part of Abby's work with Brighter Together was to help evaluate our programme.

**We wanted to understand how our intergenerational activities affected the engagement of care home residents in comparison to non-intergenerational activities.** Abby assessed and mapped the engagement of the residents across the course of a session.



**The results showed that residents were engaged between 62% and 83% of a Brighter Together session compared to as little as 25% of the time with no activities and 49% during activities where children are not present.<sup>(11)</sup>**

**Brighter Together sessions see a marked upturn in engagement;** resident 4 was engaged for **50 mins out of the hour** which is quite a remarkable difference to other non-intergenerational activities.

Abby then used this information to map engagement against each aspect of the session to analyse what part of the sessions are most beneficial. This clearly highlighted the importance of the structure that we use in our sessions, the types of activities we include and why we weave in elements such as reminiscence and music as ways to engage all participants so they can realise the maximum benefit from our sessions.

We have since been using the data and information that Abby gathered to trial incremental improvements to our programme that may create even more benefit for participants.

On behalf of the team and the trustees, we want to say a huge 'thank you' to Abby for this work, which is proving incredibly helpful as we develop our programme.



# OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

7

## 242 sessions



We **more than doubled** the number of sessions we ran this year, delivering **242 sessions**.



*"Brighter Together changes our clients lives and self-perception; they feel needed and important...The client's joy and happiness can be seen in their behaviour, conversations, and mood. They can't wait for the next session."*

JACQUI PARRIS

CEO, HOMELINK DAY RESPITE CARE CENTRE



**91% of older adults** participating **had no regular contact with children** of any age before Brighter Together sessions.



## 183 participants



We worked with:

**111** children

**72** older adults



*"Brighter Together programme is a valued and enriching programme as it connects our children to the greater community and helps them to establish empathetic understanding and sensitivity to those around them."*

LAUREN WATSON

EARLY YEARS TEACHER

GREENWOOD TWICKENHAM NURSERY



**58% of children** participating reported having **no regular contact with grandparents**.

# OUR IMPACT FOR CHILDREN

8

## EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



100%

of children made significant or very significant improvement in their emotional wellbeing as a result of being part of the programme.



*"The real benefits we are seeing for the children is through their social engagement with people they are meeting for the first time - they are far more open and willing to talk to them."*

**EDWARD PRIOR**  
DIRECTOR, GREENWOOD CHILDCARE LTD

*"I've seen huge benefits in my children when they've come home from the sessions. I definitely think it's helped their confidence and social skills."*

**SARAH WALLER**  
PARENT

## SOCIAL WELLBEING



95%

of children made significant or very significant improvement in their social wellbeing as a result of being part of the programme.

## CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT



88%

of children made significant or very significant improvement in their development (against the characteristics of effective learning<sup>(12)</sup>) as a result of being part of the programme.







## GROWING CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE

"One of the children participating is a very curious child but can find communication tricky with unfamiliar adults. At first the child was unwilling to attend the session as they felt unsure about leaving the nursery environment. They attended alongside a familiar adult and our Session Facilitator, Katy, was absolutely wonderful taking her time to allow them the chance to communicate fully. She allowed them to bring along a train toy which is a particular fascination and made them feel more comfortable joining in.

During each of the weekly activities Katy adapted it slightly for the child, linking it to trains and we found as the sessions went on the child was confident to attend without their toy and to speak about a variety of subjects from the beach to football matches they had attended with family.

Throughout the sessions I watched as the child grew in both confidence and was able to communicate really well with one of the residents who they became good friends with throughout the sessions. The child talked regularly to their parents and teachers about "visiting the granny and grandads" and asks if we are going each time they join us at the nursery.

They adored their time at the Homelink sessions and their parents are very keen to stay in contact with the group even after leaving the nursery and going off to big school as they found the sessions so valuable for their child."

***Katie Tidy, Room Leader Pre-school, Twickenham Day Nursery.***

# OUR IMPACT FOR OLDER ADULTS

10

## EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



89%

of older adults made significant or very significant improvement in their emotional wellbeing as a result of being part of the programme.



## SOCIAL WELLBEING



89%

of older adults made significant or very significant improvement in their social wellbeing as a result of being part of the programme.

*"Every moment spent with the clients and children makes me feel happy to be able to take part in this project and I understand how important such activities are, how they can change a life, give wings and faith in other people."*

**AGNES LOZOWSKA, HEALTH CARE ASSISTANT**

**HOMELINK DAY RESPITE CARE CENTRE**

## PHYSICAL HEALTH



85%

of older adults made significant or very significant improvement in their physical health as a result of being part of the programme.







## PROVIDING PURPOSE & SELF-WORTH

“My Father, Terry, very much looks forward to his weekly visit to Homelink. He loves his time there very much but the highlight for him without question is his time with the children on the Brighter Together scheme.

Dad has no Grandchildren, but as an ex-Beaver Leader he has a great affinity with children who also seem to gravitate to him. The scheme brings sunshine into his life and a big smile on his face. With Vascular dementia he sadly cannot remember much, but every Tuesday when he wakes up he is already talking about getting to Homelink. His time with the children brings back purpose to his life. When he returns his eyes are bright and he has an even bigger smile on his face as he recalls what he has been doing with the children in the session.

Dad takes great pride in everything that he makes in the session and he says with joy that he made it with one of the children. We keep a box of all that he has made and he likes to show them off too my older sister when she FaceTimes every week from Australia.

The scheme does so much for Dad and his self-worth that has taken a knock with his dementia. It also makes Mum and myself so happy to see Dad enjoying his time with the little ones.

As a family we would very much like to thank Brighter Together for everything you do for Dad and all the older people who get so much out of their time with the Children.”

***Denise Drury - Terry Drury's youngest Daughter and carer.***

## THE BRIGHTER TOGETHER APPROACH

We aim 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:



### 1. 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



### 2. Session Structure

Each session is based on the approach of Cognitive Stimulation Therapy which has well-documented success in improving and maintaining cognitive functioning in older adults. The sessions have also been designed to work within the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.



### 3. Bespoke Training

Our Session Facilitators and the pre-school practitioners supporting the children in the sessions are provided with professional training on how best to engage with older people, working in the care home environment, and receive accredited dementia training.



### 4. 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.



# BENEFITS TO OUR PROJECT PARTNERS

13



*"The staff connect more to the residents while they are assisting them in the Brighter Together activities. They get to know our residents in a better way. They discover their likes, dislikes, and their thoughts on different areas of life. This gives them a better understanding of each resident and improves the person-centred care we can offer."*

**TITI, MANAGER**

**NIGHTINGALE HOUSE CARE HOME**



## WHAT OUR PARTNERS SAY...



*"The staff members who have attended have valued expanding their knowledge and experiences as well as feeling members of our local environment. Not all of our staff members live locally and have loved getting involved in the local community of our nursery. Our staff members thoroughly enjoy attending the sessions and always come back with lovely anecdotes about their and the children's experiences."*

**KATIE TIDY**

**PRE-SCHOOL ROOM LEADER  
TWICKENHAM DAY NURSERY**

## INTERGENERATIONAL PLAY

During Dementia Awareness Week 2023, care home residents from Dalemead and children from Greenwood Twickenham, participated in an innovative and immersive intergenerational play.

This initiative was developed with actress Amanda Root and our Founder, Polly van Marken to provide care home residents with the opportunity to engage in the arts and feel valued members of a performing group.

Scripted by acclaimed screenwriter and playwright, Nick Warburton, *The Other Pond* told the story of two sisters who took a trip to the local park, meeting a variety of interesting people along the way, intertwined with reflections on their childhood.



*"This fabulous project has provided our residents with a wonderful opportunity to be meaningfully engaged, to have fun and to experience a live theatre production."*

**SARAH WITHEY**  
ACTIVITIES MANAGER, DALEMEAD



### THE OTHER POND CAST:

With huge thanks to:

- Amanda Root
- Rebecca Mondadori
- Julia Taylor
- Laura Power

And to Nick Warburton for writing such a beautiful and engaging play.

### TAKING THIS INITIATIVE FORWARD:

Capitalising on the success of this project, we have secured funding from the Mayor of London's Building Strong Communities Fund to take this initiative into some of our other projects during 2023-24.





## Our plans for 2023-24

2022-23 has been a year of consolidating our approach and ensuring that we have solid foundations upon which we can grow Brighter Together.

2023-24 is set to be a year where our focus is on expanding our programme to deliver more intergenerational activities whilst maintaining the exceptional quality of our programme.



### GROWTH

Thanks to City Bridge Foundation and Betty Messenger Foundation, we have the funds in place to focus on expanding our reach. Our aim is to double the amount of projects we are working with over the next year.



### SUPPORTING THOSE MOST IN NEED

Our aim is to work in the areas of London where levels of social isolation and loneliness are highest and thereby, where our programme can make the biggest difference.



### STRENGTHENING OUR CORE OPERATIONS

To support this growth whilst maintaining our quality, we will be strengthening our core operations, through our staff team, Trustee Board and operating systems.



### DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

We recognise the value that volunteers could bring to our programme and a key area of focus for 2023-24 will be to launch our volunteer programme.



## OUR FUNDERS

We are very grateful to the following funders for the generous support they provided to the programme during 2022 - 23 which enabled us to benefit more children and older people.

SUPPORTED BY  
**MAYOR OF LONDON**

**McCARTHY STONE**  
FOUNDATION



**Edgar E Lawley Foundation**  
Charitable Foundation founded in 1961



## OUR SUPPORTERS

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.

**wiggin**



As always, thanks must go to the wonderful children and older adults we have worked with this year, who have made each week so full of joy, energy, and fun.

We're also extremely grateful for the support and hard work of some brilliant organisations and individuals, without whom we wouldn't be able to offer such a beneficial programme that achieves the outcomes we have this year.

## OUR PARTNERS & THEIR STAFF

- St Margaret's Montessori
- Greenwood Twickenham
- Nightingale House
- Lynde House
- Laurel Dene
- Dalemead Care Home
- Cecil Court
- Greenwood Wandle
- Twickenham Day Nursery
- Homelink Day Respite Centre
- The Pines
- Kew College

## OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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

## OUR ADVISORY BOARD

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

## OUR DELIVERY TEAM

- Katy Heale
- Polly van Marken
- Laura Power
- Victoria Romo
- Meg Fung



## Page 2:

(1) 'Together in the 2020s', (2020), United for All Ages.

## Page 4:

(9) 'Healing the Generational Divide', (2019), All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration.

## Page 5:

(3) 'Together in the 2020s', (2020), United for All Ages.

(4, 9) 'Healing the Generational Divide', (2019), All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration.

(5) 'Coronavirus and depression in adults, Great Britain: June 2020', (2020), Office for National Statistics.

(6) 'Common mental health problems: identification and pathways to care', (2011) NICE guideline CG123.

(7) 'Starting Young: Lifelong Lessons from Intergenerational Care and Learning', (2017) Lorraine George.

(8) Park, A-La (2014) 'Do intergenerational activities do any good for older adults well-being?: a brief review.' (2014), A-La Park, Journal of Gerontology & Geriatric Research.

(10) 'The Next Generation. A policy report from the Early Years Commission.' (2008), The Centre for Social Justice.

## Page 6:

(11) 'Evaluating the Impact of Intergenerational Activities on Elders' Engagement and Expressiveness Levels in Two Settings', (2004), Xaverius and Matthews.

## Page 8:

(12) 'Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five.' (2021), Department for Education, 31 March 2021.





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



[www.brightertogether.org.uk](http://www.brightertogether.org.uk)



[brighter\\_together\\_uk](https://www.instagram.com/brighter_together_uk)



[@BrighterTogetherUK](https://www.facebook.com/BrighterTogetherUK)



[linkedin.com/company/brighter-together](https://www.linkedin.com/company/brighter-together)



[@Brightertogethr](https://twitter.com/Brightertogethr)

**Registered Charity 1190557**