



Impact Report 2024-25



Brighter Together is rooted in a simple belief: everyone has value and meaningful connections change lives.

By bringing generations together, we are rebuilding the fabric of our community.



Welcome to our Impact Report 2024-25

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A note from our team



Polly Van Marken
Founder & CEO

Over the past year, momentum has continued to build — both at Brighter Together and more broadly across society - with increasing recognition that relationships are central to happiness and wellbeing. Increasingly, evidence highlights the importance of laying these foundations early in life and nurturing social and emotional development during the ages of 0-5. Despite this progress, our society remains deeply divided, with loneliness and isolation considered a “silent epidemic” for people over 75.

Against this backdrop, [our work has never been more critical](#). We continue to see the incredible benefit of intergenerational relationships, and we’re delighted to share this Impact Report to showcase case studies, testimonials and data that capture the impact of regular, meaningful intergenerational activity.

The findings reflect the transformative power of consistent relationships between our youngest and oldest generations. Our programme strengthens social and emotional wellbeing for both children and older adults, and contributes to more connected local communities.

[During 2024-25, we more than doubled our delivery](#), responding to growing demand while maintaining the quality that sits at the heart of our programme.

We are particularly proud that [every single child who took part in our programme showed a ‘significant’ or ‘very significant’ improvement to their social wellbeing](#) — reflecting their increased confidence, and ability to engage positively and create connections with others. These outcomes underline the vital role that relationships play in a child’s early development.

As we move into 2026, our focus is on reaching children and adults who stand to benefit most, while continuing to use evidence-based insight to refine and strengthen our approach. We are never standing still, and we look forward to seeing many more children and older people flourish in the year ahead.

We are deeply grateful to our funders, partners and team, whose support and commitment have enabled us to grow as an organisation, extending our impact across lives and communities. We hope you find the report an uplifting read.



Andy Melia
Chair of Trustees



2024-25 At a glance



341
joyful
hours
shared

354
children
& adults
participated

29
partnerships
with care
settings

97%
of older adults
made 'significant'
improvement in
their social
wellbeing

100%
of children made
'significant'
improvement
in their social
wellbeing



Why this work matters

We are living in one of the most age-segregated countries in the world.³

This growing generational divide⁴ has profound consequences: children miss out on relationships that shape empathy, confidence and resilience, while many older people experience isolation, loneliness and a loss of purpose.⁵

At a time when communities feel increasingly fragmented, **moments of genuine connection have never mattered more.**

Brighter Together exists to challenge this reality. We are disrupting the status quo that separates our youngest and oldest generations and are replacing it with something far more hopeful.

We connect generations through structured, joyful projects linking care homes and day centres with local nursery schools. Our sessions give children and older people the opportunity to learn from one another, to celebrate, and to have fun together.

These shared experiences build strong relationships, reduce social isolation, support children's development and strengthen community ties.

94%

of children in the UK do not live near anyone aged 65 or over⁶

7%

of care home residents have regular interaction with someone under the age of 30⁷



For older people, involvement in children's lives brings renewed purpose and pride. They are valued for their knowledge and life experience, and gain confidence and belonging as they watch their young friends flourish.

For children, this provides opportunities to develop connections beyond their immediate families. Their communication, empathy and emotional understanding are enriched through time spent with older adults.



"The programme provides exposure to diversity which creates more inclusive communities. Children talk positively about ageing and older people.

It also fosters a greater understanding of disability as children learn to work within the boundaries and physical limitations of their older friends."

Celia Tilli
Nursery Director
Monty's Nursery and Pre-School



Our approach

The benefits experienced by children and older adults during our sessions are **transformative, creating connections that feel truly magical**. This success is built on rigorous research, thoughtful design and continual refinement. Our evidence-based practice and highly skilled team ensures every session delivers meaningful benefits.

There are 4 pillars to our work:



Designed by Experts

Our sessions are designed with input from an Advisory Board, using expertise in occupational therapy, dementia care, physiotherapy and early years education. Their insight ensures our programme is impactful, inclusive and grounded in best practice.



Session Structure

Each session is informed by the principles of Cognitive Stimulation Therapy, which successfully improves and maintains cognitive functioning in older adults. Our sessions align with the Early Years Foundation Stage framework to support children's learning and development in a meaningful way.



Bespoke Training

Our Session Facilitators and volunteers receive specialist training in how to engage older people and support high-quality intergenerational interactions. This includes accredited dementia training, ensuring every session is delivered safely, sensitively and effectively.



Community Involvement

We end each term with a special celebration that brings together friends, families and staff – a wonderful way to welcome the wider community into the care setting. This shared experience is a vital part of our approach, strengthening relationships across local communities.



Creating transformative change

From the beginning, Brighter Together has had a clear vision for the change we want to create. Developing a Theory of Change helps us articulate how our activities lead to meaningful outcomes and long-term impact for children, older adults and the wider community. This approach also enables us to measure progress effectively and continually improve our programme.

Setting up for success

- We work in partnership with care homes, day centres and nurseries, supporting them to create the right conditions for successful projects.
- We train Session Facilitators and volunteers to deliver high-quality, safe and engaging sessions.
- Our curriculum is carefully designed using evidence-based practice and tailored to the needs and abilities of all participants.

Our Activities

- We deliver weekly intergenerational sessions that bring together a consistent group of older adults and young children.
- At the end of each term, we hold celebratory events that strengthen connections with the wider community, including families, staff and friends.

During sessions

- Children feel secure, happy and valued. They build meaningful relationships with older adults and engage in age-appropriate, enjoyable activities.
- Older people take part in stimulating activities that encourage interaction and reminiscence. They feel relaxed, energised and joyful, and valued through their role with children.

Outcomes

For participants:

- Improved communication skills
- Increased empathy and understanding
- Greater confidence, agency and sense of belonging
- Stronger, more meaningful relationships

For partner staff:

- Improved morale
- Increased wellbeing

For communities:

- Stronger relationships between local organisations

Our impact

- Improved social and emotional wellbeing for children and older adults.
- Reduced levels of social isolation, loneliness and depression among older adults.
- Improved life chances for children.
- Communities become more connected, inclusive and empathetic, with a reduced sense of generational divide.

Our impact

We are committed to understanding the difference our work makes and continually strengthening our programme. We use a combination of outcome observations, structured wellbeing tools, and feedback from participants and families to build a full picture of the programme's impact on children, older adults and communities.

In this section you'll find:

Outcome improvements observed by partner staff (pages 12-18)

These capture changes in social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, children's development (aligned to the EYFS Characteristics of Effective Learning) and older adults' physical health, based on observations from our partner nurseries, care homes and day centres.

Wellbeing and engagement data using the Leuven Scales (page 19)

Structured observations carried out by trained Session Facilitators at the start and end of each project to measure emotional comfort and levels of involvement during sessions.

Real stories of change (case studies throughout this section)

In-depth examples from families, participants and partner staff that bring the data to life and illustrate longer-term impact beyond the sessions.

Together, these approaches allow us to understand both measurable outcomes and lived experience.

"Cassandra talks a lot about 'meeting the old people', speaks joyfully about the activities she has done with them and what an enjoyable experience it has been. The project has given her greater confidence in her behaviour towards adults of all ages."

Frances Hedges
Parent of Cassandra





92%

of older people made
**significant or
very significant**
improvement in their
emotional wellbeing

“Thank you so much for making the sessions so enjoyable for Mike. He feels that he is doing something positive for the children and it gives him a real sense of achievement.”

Heather
Wife of participant



“The programme improves the wellbeing of our members by bringing them happiness and giving them something to look forward to every week. It energizes them and gives them a sense of purpose knowing that they can share their skills and knowledge, and that they can contribute to the child's learning experience.”

Sam Vaughnley
Centre Manager
The Elleray Centre

97%

of older people made
**significant or
very significant**
improvement in their
social wellbeing



**“Through the activities,
the residents do movements
that they wouldn't normally do.
This has a great impact
on their physical health.”**

Anna Loveland
Activities Coordinator
Nightingale House Care Home



89%

of older people
made **significant or
very significant**
improvement in their
physical health

as reported by care home
& day centre staff

Case studies

From withdrawal to connection

"When A. (aged 83) first moved into the home, she was withdrawn and spent most of her time alone in her room, showing signs of depression. After she joined the Brighter Together sessions, the change was immediate.

A. began anticipating the children's visits, often asking when the next visit would be. She now gets up early so she can be ready on the mornings the children come. She has developed a particularly strong bond with one little girl, whom she describes as 'adorable and well-mannered'.

The impact of the programme for A. extends beyond these sessions. Brighter Together has encouraged her to take a more active part in the life of the care home, and she now joins in other activities and is more sociable."

Carine Cavagna
Wellbeing Assistant, Wandsworth Common



Moments that matter

Living with dementia means that B. initially experienced high levels of anxiety and disorientation when she first joined the Brighter Together sessions at The Avenue Club, Kew.

But the moment the children arrive, B.'s face glows with happiness. She greets them with smiles and praise, instantly showing that her ability to connect and share joy remains beautifully intact. One of the most powerful moments comes during singing with the children. Although B. needs support with many everyday tasks, she sings every word perfectly and joins in the actions. In these moments, music seems to gently bypass cognitive barriers, unlocking memories that light up her life.

Perhaps the most moving evidence of the sessions' impact came from B.'s son. "Mum's face lit up when I mentioned the get together... 3 hours later. She genuinely recalled something of it and felt something very positive. Normally Mum doesn't recall what she did earlier that day... on Monday, it was different."

For B. and her family, these moments matter. Brighter Together helps create meaningful emotional connections and joy that stay with participants long after the sessions end.



“It impacted every single child. Those that were timid and unsure become eager to attend every week, and those that were more confident developed stronger relationships with the residents, and were eager to help them in tasks.”

Claudia Neves
Headteacher
Riverside St Margaret's Montessori



100%

of children made
**significant or
very significant**
improvement in their
social wellbeing



91%

of children made
**significant or
very significant**
improvement in their
development
(against the
characteristics of
effective learning)⁸

“T. has delayed speech and is receiving speech therapy. After attending sessions at the care home, T. began to open up and started sharing stories about their holidays, home, toys, and more. The activities and singing helped a lot with T.’s learning of new words.”

Asha Kafle
Greenwood Nursery



“Receiving attention, praise and interest from adults helped the children feel valued.

They gained confidence in expressing themselves in a respectful and supportive environment.”

Silvia Lengo
Manager
Raphael Nursery

90%

of children made
**significant or
very significant**
improvement in their
emotional wellbeing



Wellbeing & involvement

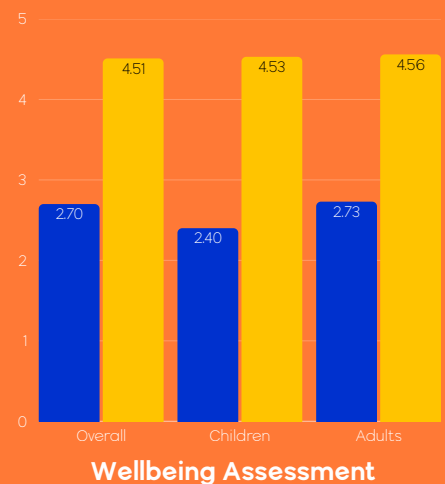
To understand the impact of our sessions, we use a simple observational tool called the Leuven Scales of Wellbeing and Involvement. By observing what happens during sessions, the scales help us assess how people are feeling and how engaged they are.



Wellbeing

Wellbeing looks at whether someone appears relaxed, confident, and emotionally at ease. On average, children showed a 40% improvement in wellbeing, while older adults showed a 36% improvement.

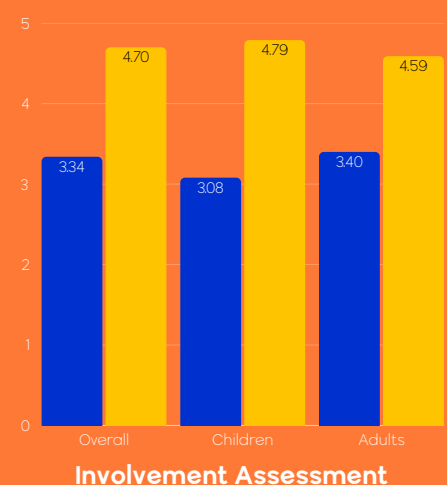
By the end of the projects, 94% of participants scored 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale, indicating that the vast majority of children and older adults felt emotionally comfortable, confident, and displayed high levels of self-esteem and resilience during sessions.



Involvement

Involvement measures how focused, interested, and actively engaged participants are in an activity. By the end of the projects, 100% of participants scored 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale, demonstrating consistently high levels of shared engagement.

Observations showed clear and consistent improvements in both wellbeing and involvement for children and older adults over the course of each project. On average, children's involvement increased by 27% and older adults' involvement increased by 34%.



■ Baseline
■ End of term measurement



Case studies

Growing confidence through connection

At the start of the project, G. (age 4) was very shy and hesitant to take part in activities without the reassurance of a familiar adult. They observed quietly and were reluctant to express themselves or engage independently.

As the project progressed, G. began to grow in confidence. They started to participate more openly in activities and no longer relied on adult support to join in. Through regular contact with care home residents, G. formed meaningful emotional connections that fostered a strong sense of trust and emotional security.

By the end of the project, G. was more confident in expressing themselves and engaging. For children like G. who have limited contact with extended family, the intergenerational relationships formed through Brighter Together offered warmth, consistency and connection that might otherwise be missing, supporting both emotional development and a sense of belonging.”

Silvia Lengo
Manager, Raphael Nursery



Learning to embrace differences

Before joining Brighter Together, L. (age 4) was hesitant around difference.

Although his aunt uses a wheelchair, he struggled to connect with her and often avoided unfamiliar situations. When his Mum suggested joining the sessions, L. was reluctant and unsure what to expect.

After just a few sessions, L’s confidence grew noticeably. His Mum observed a clear change in how L. interacted with his aunt — he became more curious, open and accepting.

As L. settled into the sessions, he began talking enthusiastically at home about the residents and the activities they shared.

When one of the residents was unwell, L. spent time with her and made her smile and laugh. L. spoke about how good it felt to laugh together and to know that he had helped. Through Brighter Together, L. has developed confidence, empathy and a strong sense of purpose.



Case studies

A growing community in Wandsworth

One of our most heartwarming new projects takes place at George Potter House in Wandsworth, where over half of the residents live with dementia. Through the weekly sessions with local nursery children, the project has blossomed into a meaningful and lasting connection between two often separated age groups. These new bonds have become so valued that the children are invited to a special shared lunch with the residents every term - a gesture that marks a deepening partnership between the nursery and the care home.

During these lunches, the care home staff go above and beyond to ensure it's a special and inclusive experience. Picture-based menus are created so the children can easily see what will be served. The dining room is filled with warmth as children and residents, now familiar companions, gather around one long table.



Their shared laughter and conversation creates an atmosphere that lifts the spirits of everyone in the room. This project has begun the cultivation of a caring, inclusive community. It's a shining example of how intergenerational work can stitch stronger threads into the fabric of a neighbourhood.



"Each term the children attend an informal lunch in the beautiful George Potter dining room. This is a special lunch, and the staff go out of their way to make the children happy to sit and eat alongside their aged friends. When asked about their experience, the children's voices reflected great joy and satisfaction. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for the opportunity to enhance our children's understanding of the world around us."

Catherine O'Brien
Bridge Lane Nursery

"I love to sit on the soft chairs next to Susan"
Jasper, age 4

"I love doing the songs."
Josephine, age 4

"I like Mo. I like the chips."
Caleb, age 4





Volunteer voice

"I wanted to find a volunteering position that primarily involved helping people. What really motivated me to volunteer with Brighter Together was the sense of purpose and connection I experienced during the sessions. There's always lots of fun, laughter, and genuine interaction. Seeing the positive impact those moments have on both the young children and older people reinforces the value of intergenerational work and makes the experience incredibly uplifting and rewarding.

Volunteering has had a really positive impact on me personally and on my wellbeing. It gives me a strong sense of purpose and fulfilment each week, and I always leave the sessions feeling happier, uplifted, and proud to be part of something so meaningful. It has strengthened my appreciation of community and importance of relationships across generations.

This experience has influenced other areas of my life by making me more aware of how important empathy, patience, and genuine connection are in everyday situations. I am more present and engaged with the people around me, and it has reinforced how rewarding it feels to be part of something that brings real value to others.

I would encourage anyone considering volunteering with Brighter Together to give it a go - it's an incredibly rewarding experience. The sessions are welcoming, well planned, full of warmth, and you quickly feel part of something meaningful. You gain a real sense of purpose, connection, and joy from being involved."

Georgina Humphries



Focus for the future

As Brighter Together continues to grow, we have been thoughtful and ambitious about what comes next. Drawing on our learning, our partnerships and the voices of those we work with, we are excited about the future and the difference we can make.

Extending our reach

Over the coming years, we will focus on growing Brighter Together's reach across London and the country. Our expansion will be guided by need, prioritising communities where social isolation among older people is highest and where early years children face greater barriers to achieving a good level of development.

By working closely with local partners, we aim to bring high-quality intergenerational programmes to the places where they can make the greatest difference.

Innovating to meet new needs

We are committed to learning, reflection and innovation. We plan to explore and test new programme ideas that respond to the evolving needs of our communities and our partners. This will allow us to work in diverse settings, connect with new groups, and support more people in the future.



Amplifying our voice

Drawing on our experience and partnerships, we will help raise the profile of intergenerational activity in the UK and contribute to wider conversations about connection, wellbeing and community.

By amplifying the voices of our participants and partners, we hope to inspire others and influence how intergenerational approaches are understood and valued.



Our supporters

We are extremely grateful to the funders whose generous support during 2024–25 enabled us to reach and benefit more children and older people, as well as to the forward-thinking organisations who provided pro bono support. Their commitment, expertise, and belief in our work played a vital role in helping us deliver high-quality programmes and extend our impact.



The future of Brighter Together will be shaped by the people and organisations who choose to stand alongside us. If you share our ambition for more connected, compassionate communities, we would love to explore how we can work together to make this vision a reality.



With thanks

As always, our heartfelt thanks go first to the wonderful children and older adults we have worked with this year, who have filled each week with joy, energy, and connection.

We are also extremely grateful to the brilliant organisations and individuals whose support make it possible for us to deliver such a meaningful programme.

Board of Trustees

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- Boyana Ivanova
- Nigel Slone

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- Lisette Reilly
- Sarah Sansbury
- Freya Ward



Our partners and their teams

- Age UK Hammersmith
- Atfield House
- Bridge Lane Nursery
- Bright Horizons Wandsworth Common
- Bushy Tails
- Chiswick House
- Clifton Gardens
- The Elleray Centre
- Evolution Montessori
- George Potter House
- Greenwood Twickenham
- Greenwood Wandle
- Gwynneth Morgan Day Centre
- Homelink Day Respite Centre
- Little People of Fulham
- Little People of Hampton
- Lynde House Care Home
- Maryville Care Home
- Mini Me's
- Monty's Nursery
- Nazareth House
- Nfamily Club Wandsworth
- Nightingale House
- Raphael Nursery
- Riverside St Margaret's Montessori
- St Mary's House
- The Avenue Club
- The Pines
- Wandsworth Common Care Home



End notes

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"I cannot put into words how much these sessions mean to me.
It is so wonderful to be with children...
we don't just teach them, they teach us."

Margaret
Participant





Thank you.

www.brightertogether.org.uk

 [brighter_together_uk](https://www.instagram.com/brighter_together_uk)

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

