



IMPACT REPORT

2023-24



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Introduction

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 their wellbeing and development.

FROM OUR FOUNDER & CHAIR



"Our report highlights the diverse ways in which intergenerational connections transform lives and I'm delighted that we've been able to reach more people this year. Brighter Together has gone from strength to strength and our aim is for that growth to continue with even greater pace in 2024-25."

Polly van Marken, Founder & CEO



"The step change in the charity and our delivery over the last year is a credit to our team and our partners, who place great value on the impact of our programme despite a challenging financial environment. We're grateful to the support of our funders who recognise the importance of intergenerational connections, and have been critical in underpinning a successful year of growth."

Andy Melia, Chair of Trustees

2023-24 saw us transform as an organisation, growing our proven programme to reach more older adults and young children, whilst also improving the quality of our sessions.

We've been able to achieve this through the dedication and enthusiasm of our small team, our highly talented group of Session Facilitators and volunteers all underpinned by our funders who support our vision.

As you'll see throughout our report, intergenerational activities are a win-win for everyone involved. The impacts are far-reaching and wide ranging; improving wellbeing not only for our direct participants, but also for the staff members of our partner care homes, day centres and nursery schools.

We're thrilled that our partners are placing such a high value on the relationships that are forged during our sessions. Our retention of projects has been exceptional this year despite the tough climate that nurseries and the care sector are experiencing. We appreciate their support and have been working closely with them to understand how we can work better together for improved outcomes for all involved.

Part of our response has been to launch a volunteer programme, which has been a huge success. Our volunteers bring with them a wealth of expertise from a range of professional and personal backgrounds which has strengthened our team. The volunteers support participants, maximising the benefits of the sessions. Their work has strongly contributed to the high level of impact which you'll see in this report.

We were delighted that our hard work was also externally recognised with the Intergenerational Activities Award at the Dementia Care Awards. Our dedication to training our team, tailoring our sessions and always searching for ways to improve our programme was recognised and praised by the judging panel.

As you'll read in our 'Focus on the Future' section, we have big plans. If you're inspired by our work in this report and can help us achieve these goals, then please get in-touch.

2023-24 Snapshot



179

OLDER ADULTS &
EARLY YEARS
CHILDREN ATTENDING
PROJECTS FOR AT
LEAST 10 WEEKS EACH

168

SESSIONS DELIVERED



163 HOURS
OF VOLUNTEER TIME

15
PARTNERS



DELIVERING ACROSS
3
LONDON BOROUGHES



98%

of children made
significant
improvement in their
social wellbeing

97%

of older adults made
significant
improvement in their
emotional wellbeing

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

Agnes Lozowska, Health Care Assistant,
Homelink Day Respite Care Centre.



When asked if they'd recommend Brighter Together's programme to a colleague, 100% of partners gave 10 out of 10 (where 10 is extremely likely).

Our Vision & Mission

Vision



The UK becomes a country where every setting for older people has regular connections & interactions with local children.

Mission

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



Through our programme...

Older people see their involvement in these children's lives as giving them a real sense of purpose, thereby improving their wellbeing.

Children delight in the relationships formed with older people and their development and wellbeing is enhanced from the time spent together.

Why We Exist

Since the end of WWII, the UK has been moving away from multigenerational living. We've seen the increasing rise of the nuclear family. Recent research has found that the UK is now one of the most age-segregated countries in the world.⁽¹⁾

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

THE UK IS FACING A CRISIS

INTERGENERATIONAL WORK TACKLES THIS CRISIS

1 Social Isolation



UK society is increasingly age-segregated, with stark and concerning generational gaps creating more social isolation and less social cohesion.⁽²⁾

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.⁽³⁾ The leading cause of depression is social isolation and lack of purposeful activity.⁽⁴⁾

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.⁽⁵⁾

1 Wellbeing



Spending time engaged in meaningful activities in intergenerational groups has proven benefits to the wellbeing of participants.⁽⁶⁾

2 Life Chances



Children's life chances are significantly enhanced through regular interaction with those over 65.⁽⁷⁾

3 Social Cohesion



Intergenerational learning encourages greater understanding and respect between the generations and helps to bridge the 'generational divide'.⁽⁸⁾

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 education.



3. Bespoke Training

Our Session Facilitators and our volunteers supporting 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

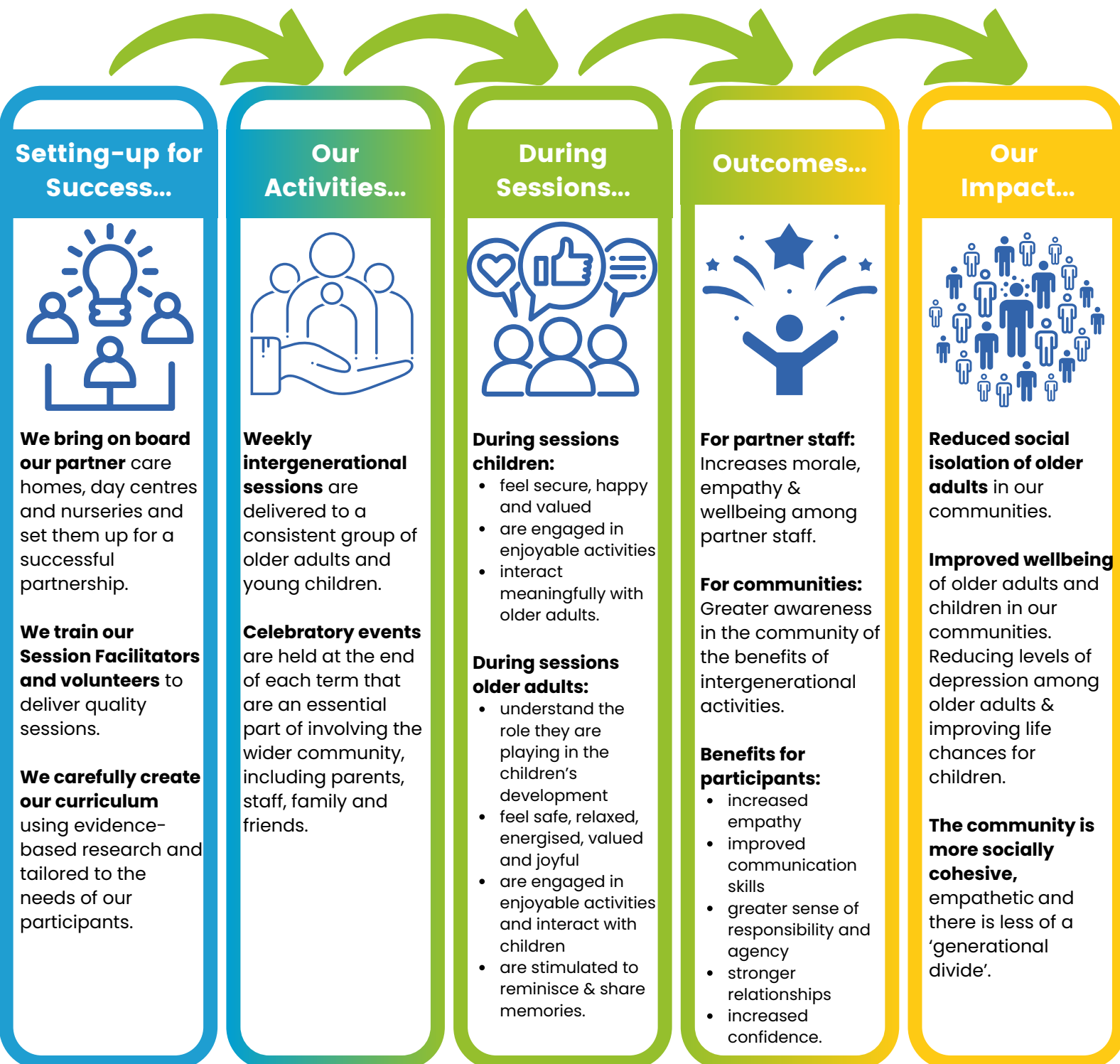
The activities build up to a celebratory end-of-term event to showcase the work of the group to friends, family, and staff. This is an essential part of engaging the community, bringing a much wider range of people into the care home.



Creating Transformative Change

From the outset, Brighter Together had a clear vision for what we want to achieve. Creating a theory of change has helped us understand the steps that we need to take for our intended impact to be realised.

This process has also helped us measure what is important and use that information to improve our programme for all our stakeholders.



Our year in numbers



168
sessions
delivered



179 participants

This year we worked with:

96 Early years children

83 older adults



84% of care home residents participating **had no regular contact with children** of any age before Brighter Together sessions.



66% of children participating reported **had no regular opportunities to spend time with grandparents.**

“The children all had a really positive response to the sessions, asking each day if they can visit again. The children remember the names of the adults and talked positively about the sessions to their parents and adults at the setting.”

Katie Tidy, Pre-School Room Leader,
Kindred Twickenham Nursery

Our impact for children



SOCIAL WELLBEING



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

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



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

“The children have the opportunity to practice and develop skills of compassion and kindness as well as learning about history from the residents.”

Claudia Neves, Headteacher, St Margaret's Montessori Nursery



CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT



of children made significant or very significant improvement in their development (against the characteristics of effective learning)⁽⁹⁾ as a result of being part of the programme.

Case Studies

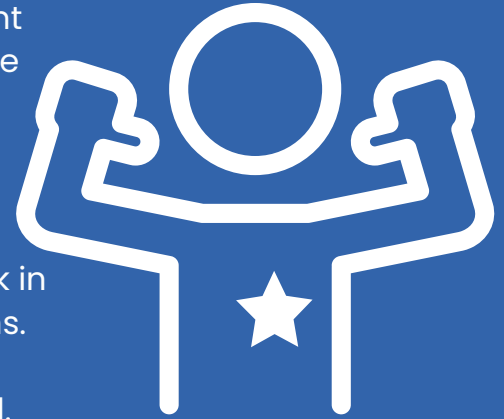
Growing confidence in children

Where we started...

Child A is a very shy child, even in front of his peers, who he has known since he was very young. He often would not feel confident to speak at circle time when the group shared ideas and could be reluctant to try out new activities.

After just 6 weeks...

Throughout his sessions with Brighter Together I watched his confidence grow. He now more regularly feels confident to speak in front of his peers, adding his thoughts and opinions to discussions. He has enjoyed the sessions greatly and would request to attend any time there was a spare spot if another child could not attend. His parents also speak very positively about the sessions and the difference they have made for their child.



Katie Tidy, Pre-School Room Leader, Kindred Twickenham Nursery



“Our son absolutely loved his time on the project. It’s quite hard to get out of him what he does at nursery each day but he would always talk about his Brighter Together sessions and his friends there”

Parent, Twickenham Day Nursery



Our impact for older adults

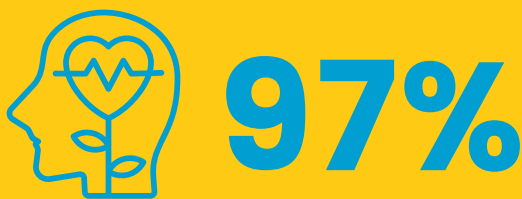


SOCIAL WELLBEING



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

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



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

“The children's visits bring joy to the home. We all look forward to seeing them and their confidence growing. The children are spoken about frequently in the home and I am always asked if they are coming in. The residents are always happier after the children have been.”

Teresa, Manager, Nightingale House Care Home



PHYSICAL HEALTH



of older adults made significant or very significant improvement in their physical health as a result of being part of the programme, as reported by care home & day centre staff.

Case Studies



Thriving not surviving

D lives with dementia, but during the Brighter Together sessions, he can come alive. He watches the children with intense focus, their energy and joy pulling him into their world. When it's time to sing, especially songs with actions, D will always try to join in the actions, his movements deliberate and engaged. Yet, there are moments of struggle – when offered an object, uncertainty flickers across his face, and he needs gentle help to know what to do.

During one session, we introduced a simple balloon game to encourage movement and connection between the children and residents. Something magical happened: D caught the balloon, and in an instant, he lit up. His confusion melted away, replaced by a burst of laughter and understanding. Surrounded by four small boys, he grinned and joked, “Hmm, who should I throw this to? Who is the most important? Who is the tallest?” He became a part of their world, tossing the balloon with delight, fully immersed in the game. In that moment, it was as if a switch had flipped – D wasn't just participating, he was thriving.

This beautiful moment inspired us to introduce more ball games and net-based activities into our sessions, tailored especially for D, to nurture these sparks of joy and connection.

“It's happy days when the children come, it's my happy place. It shows life goes on.”

Care home resident.

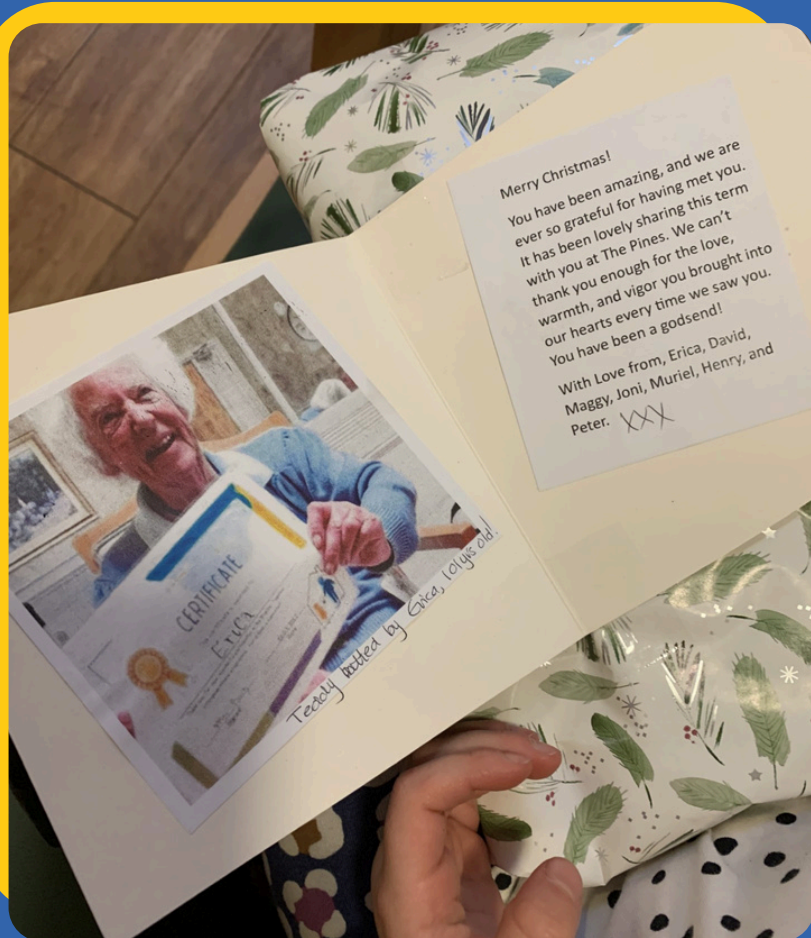
Impact on our communities



“

"The staff member attending the sessions finds it very moving to see the connections that the children build with the residents. It makes her feel a sense of wellbeing and how the love they bring into the home can change everyone's lives for the better, for all those involved."

Claudia Neves, Headteacher, St Margaret's Montessori Nursery



"I've been volunteering in a weekly session since January and it's the highlight of my week. I love being able to give back to my local community and it gives me an enormous sense of happiness.

I work full-time, but will always fit this into my week as it's become such an important part of my life. Seeing the little ones connect with the residents and the joy it gives both of them is honestly magical."

Funda Calba, Session Volunteer



“

"The families of our residents are so happy for their loved ones to take part. The sessions really lift the mood and bring joy to our care home, staff and residents alike."

Carmen Earhart, Activities Coordinator, Atfield House Care Home

Innovation in action

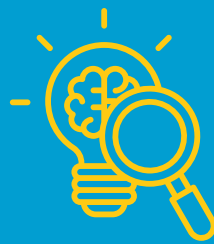
In summer 2023, we ran a pilot of an innovative and immersive intergenerational play between one care home and nursery school. This was a joint venture between acclaimed actor, Amanda Root, and Brighter Together to leverage the benefits of the arts to tackle social isolation and boost wellbeing.

The pilot was so successful that we were awarded funding from the Mayor of London and Richmond Council to deliver the explorative workshops and a performance to four of our projects. From January - July 2024 we had the joy of working with a talented cast of actors and over 100 older adults and young children to explore and perform a beautiful play written by award winning playwright, Nick Warburton.

WE DELIVERED:

12

WORKSHOPS
EXPLORING THE
THEMES OF THE PLAY



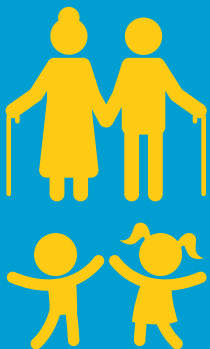
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IMMERSIVE
PERFORMANCES



109

OLDER ADULTS &
EARLY YEARS
CHILDREN WERE
INVOLVED



WORKING WITH

8

PARTNERS



Wellbeing
uplift of:

20%

Involvement
uplift of:

30%

Children and older adults on the play project were observed to have made an average improvement to their wellbeing by 20% (from 72% in the first workshop, to 92% by the final performance) and 30% in their involvement in activities (improving from 62% in the first workshop, to 92% by the final performance).

Therapeutic Arts - Impact

Finding a sense of belonging...

N has advanced dementia, which is characterised by significant anxiety as she often feels uncertain about her surroundings. Her anxiety has led her to bite her fingernails and fingers to the point where they regularly bleed and sometimes require medical care.

During this project, we observed a remarkable transformation in N when the children arrived for the rehearsal workshops and performances. She was filled with smiles and laughter, no longer biting her fingernails, but instead opening her arms to welcome the children. N joined in every activity fully, always observing and engaging with the children.

The project provided N not only with entertainment and joy but also with a renewed sense of belonging. She found a role in teaching and helping the children, reminiscent of her life before dementia when she regularly volunteered to help others. This project gave her the chance to feel useful and part of the community again, highlighting the profound impact of intergenerational interaction on her well-being and reducing her social isolation.

“

It was wonderful to collaborate with Brighter Together. The drama was character led, so the action was immediate and relatable. Interactive activities connected the audience in surprising ways, making it a very immersive, dynamic experience.

It was wonderful to witness the joy and amusement the play brought to all and the beautiful ways the activities encouraged relationships between young and old and bypassed many of the challenges associated with dementia.”

Amanda Root, Director and Actor



Building self-esteem & confidence...

L is 3 years old. When she attended the first workshop, she entered the room tentatively, clinging to the nursery worker accompanying her and climbing onto their lap for reassurance. Over the course of the rehearsal workshops, she bonded with one of the older adults from the setting. Eventually, she would run into the room to sit with her older friend, no longer requiring support from the nursery staff.

The older person supported the child emotionally and practically, enabling her to grow in confidence and engage more fully in the sessions. This support led to a noticeable improvement in her self-confidence, with them both joining-in the games and dancing with enthusiasm and joy, reflecting significant personal growth and the positive impact of this relationship.

Awards



WINNERS 2024

The whole team were delighted that Brighter Together was the winner of the Intergenerational Activity Award at the Dementia Care Awards this year.

This award is testament to the unwavering work that our team and volunteers put into getting to know each individual in their sessions. We tailor our work to support every participant's ability to contribute, share their passions and be valued for what they can bring to the group, be that music, gardening, sport or a great love of Pictionary!

We are very fortunate to have Teresa Keegal on our Advisory Board. Teresa is a highly experienced Community Dementia Practitioner, and she has delivered Dementia Friends training to all our team. This year, Teresa has also provided additional cutting-edge dementia training to our staff. This has helped us deepen our knowledge and understanding and refine our programme to have the maximum benefit for our participants.

“Congratulations to Polly and the Brighter Together team. The award is well deserved for their work bringing older and young people together. They were up against a large field of entries from across the country and beat off an excellent group of finalists. This recognition should encourage others to find out more about Brighter Together.”

Stephen Burke, Director, United for All Ages



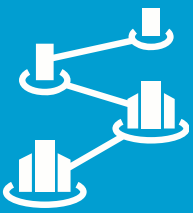
Looking Ahead

Our plans for 2024-25

We're building on solid foundations and have ambitious plans, but we are also navigating a challenging landscape of reduced funding and stretched budgets of those we work with.

We will be looking for partner care homes, day centres and nurseries as well as Session Facilitators, volunteers and funders.

We would love to talk more with anyone who wants to help us achieve our plans over the next year and beyond.



GROWTH

Our aim is to continue our trajectory of expanding our reach and create a further 11 intergenerational projects this year.



INCREASING OUR IMPACT

Research about how young children develop and the ageing process for adults is continually being updated. Our aim is to use this knowledge to refine our programme and make it as beneficial as possible.



USING OUR KNOWLEDGE

We now have breadth and depth to our experience of working in a variety of settings creating impactful intergenerational connections. We want to use this knowledge to advocate for the importance of intergenerational activities.



INVESTING IN OUR TEAM

People are both at the heart of what we do and how we do it. We've built an incredible team of trustees, staff, session facilitators and volunteers which has enabled us to improve quality whilst growing. We will continue to invest in strengthening our team.

Our Supporters

OUR FUNDERS

We are very grateful to the following funders for the generous support they provided to the programme during 2023-24 which enabled us to benefit more children and older people.



CITY BRIDGE
FOUNDATION



HEATHROW
COMMUNITY
TRUST



Hampton
Fund

SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON

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.



With Thanks

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 Nursery Twickenham
- Nightingale House
- Lynde House
- Laurel Dene
- Brinsworth House
- Atfield House
- St Mary's House
- Little People
- Mini Me's
- Tic Toc Nursery
- Greenwood Nursery Wandle
- Kindred Twickenham Nursery
- Homelink Day Respite Centre
- The Pines

OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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

OUR ADVISORY BOARD

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

OUR DELIVERY TEAM

- Katy Heale
- Anna King
- Laura Power
- Polly van Marken
- Freya Ward

OUR VOLUNTEER TEAM

- Funda Calba
- Archana Merle
- Lottie Morley - Fletcher
- Ryan O'Meara
- Pepe Plummer
- Lisette Reilly

End Notes

PAGE 6:

- (1) 'Together in the 2020s', (2020), United for All Ages.
- (2, 7) 'Healing the Generational Divide', (2019), All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration.
- (3) 'Coronavirus and depression in adults, Great Britain: June 2020', (2020), Office for National Statistics.
- (4) 'Common mental health problems: identification and pathways to care', (2011) NICE guideline CG123.
- (5) 'Starting Young: Lifelong Lessons from Intergenerational Care and Learning', (2017) Lorraine George.
- (6) 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.
- (8) 'The Next Generation. A policy report from the Early Years Commission.' (2008), The Centre for Social Justice.

Page 10:

- (9) 'Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five.' (2024), Department for Education, 1 November 2024.



Brighter Together

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

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