



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023

Registered charity number 1192175

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# OUR STRONGEST YEAR TO-DATE

## Welcome to our annual report, a lookback on The Together Project's work and impact in 2023.

On page 6 you can read Arthur's Story, a moving reflection on the transformational effect of our Songs & Smiles programme on a gentleman living in a supported housing scheme, written by his granddaughter.

"It's the only day of the week I look forward to" is bittersweet feedback. On the one hand, it demonstrates the powerful, uplifting effect of our work. On the other, it highlights the heartbreaking impact of loneliness.

It also brings with it an enormous sense of responsibility. Like hundreds of other small charities across the UK, The Together Project works tirelessly at expanding our scale and reach so that we can support more people like Arthur, but we're fighting against a tide of rising costs and an incredibly challenging funding landscape.

Despite this, I'm extremely proud to say that 2023 has been our strongest year to-date, with a record turnover, new funding partnerships and an expansion of our services. We also moved into a fantastic new office - our first since we gave up our previous lease at the start of the Covid outbreak - made affordable thanks to a substantial rate reduction from our new landlords Peabody Housing.

We're also blessed with a tremendous staff team and an inspiring board of trustees. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each one of them for the part they've played in our many 2023 successes. I can't wait to see what we achieve in 2024!



**Louise Goulden, Founder & CEO**



# A JOURNEY OF COLLECTIVE DEDICATION & PASSION

**I am honoured to be sharing my reflections in my first year as Chair.**

This past year has been a journey of collective dedication and passion, and I am humbled to be part of such an inspiring team. One of our key achievements this year has been the strengthening of our board. We welcomed diverse and experienced individuals who share our commitment to fostering intergenerational connections. This infusion of talent has invigorated our discussions, enriched our perspectives, and fortified our ability to drive positive change.

In tandem with our renewed board, we proudly initiated the inaugural phase of our five-year plan. Guided by a commitment to fostering understanding and unity across generations, we have laid the foundation for further impactful programmes and initiatives that will enhance the lives of those we reach. This milestone marks the beginning of a transformative journey following the uncertainty of the pandemic, and I am confident in our ability to realise the ambitious goals we have set.

The success of The Together Project is a testament to the unwavering dedication of our team, volunteers, and supporters.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, let us remain steadfast in our mission to bridge generational gaps and create a society where every age group thrives together. With heartfelt gratitude to you all, here's to a 2024 full of Joy!



**Kelly Keating, Chair of Trustees**

# INTRODUCTION



## The Together Project exists to tackle social isolation through intergenerational experiences.

**Social isolation, and the loneliness that goes with it, is unfortunately not going anywhere in the UK.**

The Campaign to End Loneliness carried out research in 2023 that had 7.1% of people in Great Britain (3.83 million) saying they experience chronic loneliness, meaning they feel lonely “often or always”. <sup>1</sup> Many have never recovered from the isolating effects of the pandemic, with over half a million more people lonely last year than in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Among these are older adults living in care settings, whom we work with every day at The Together Project. Studies published in 2023 have given scientific backing to what we experience first-hand: that social contact (and the lack of it) is critical to the health and well-being of older adults. A study of 9000 adults over 65 without dementia, published in the journal *Neurology* in July 2023, showed that social isolation and loneliness have the effect of shrinking brain size.<sup>3</sup>

But by facilitating friendships between older adults in care homes and younger people, we work to counteract these effects.

A qualitative study published in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing* in October 2023 concluded that, although there is a “high prevalence” of loneliness among older people in care homes, this can be alleviated by engaging in activities and strengthening social ties.<sup>4</sup>

For every child that makes a new friend in an older person, there is a parent or guardian who brings them along. One of the joys of our work has been seeing the glow of positive intergenerational experiences radiate out to parents, who are often experiencing social isolation themselves. A 2019 study of 529 parents of children under 5 found that 56% felt lonely at least some of the time, with twice as many mothers as fathers saying they often felt left out.<sup>5</sup> In a 2021 meta-analysis of 133 studies carried out relating to loneliness in parenthood, there was evidence that “parental loneliness has direct and indirect impacts on parent and child mental health.”<sup>6</sup> Not only this, but combatting loneliness has been shown to help limit the impact of post-natal depression among new mothers.<sup>7</sup>

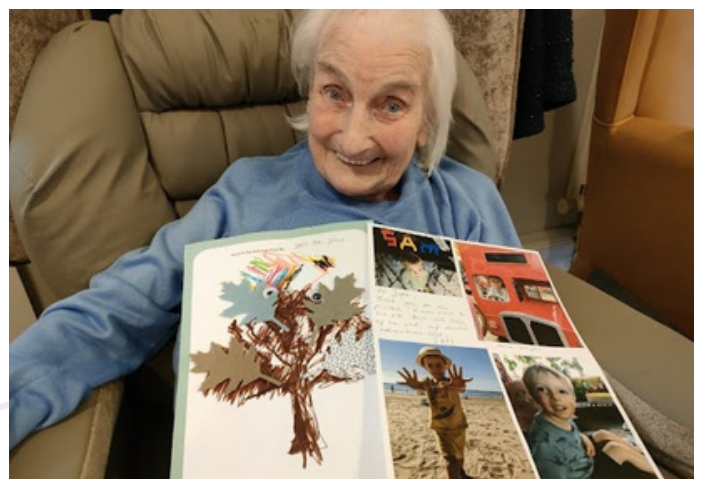
# We're proud to work in partnership with dozens of care homes across the UK.

By brightening the days of older adults, we aim to do our bit to ease the load on carers at a time when workforce shortages, decreases in funding and high energy costs are making these spaces increasingly hard to run.

The number of registered care home beds shrank by 0.6% in the year to July 2023 due to staff shortages,<sup>8</sup> while Care England reported that a third of care homes in England had considered closing due to rising energy costs in the year to March 2023.<sup>9</sup>

It was a hard year for the small charity sector too, with tighter budgets affecting donations at the time when they are needed the most. The general public, which donated an amazing 51% of small charities' income in 2019/20, has found itself with less money to give due to the cost-of-living crisis.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the Government, which typically accounts for around 20% of the sector's income, made major cuts to charity sector funding, with 86% of charities saying they would be worse off following the Government's Spring Budget 2023.<sup>11</sup>

This context makes us even more grateful to all the donors who believed in The Together Project in 2023. It is thanks to them that we managed to have such a successful year despite the odds: increasing our income after a tricky post-COVID period, moving into a beautiful new office, and expanding our operations to reach many more beneficiaries. It is thanks to them that we are moving into 2024 with optimism, feeling lucky that people are as excited by the potential of intergenerational experiences as we are.



# 2023 IN NUMBERS

# 3,006

## BENEFICIARIES

### 3 Core programmes

- [Songs & Smiles](#)
- [Crafting Connections](#)
- [We are Friends](#)

### 5 Team staff

### 17 Group leaders

### 7 Volunteers

### 3 New trustees

### 5 Award nominations

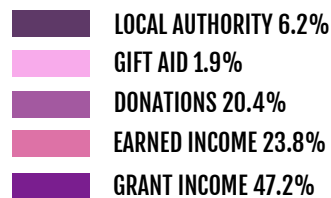
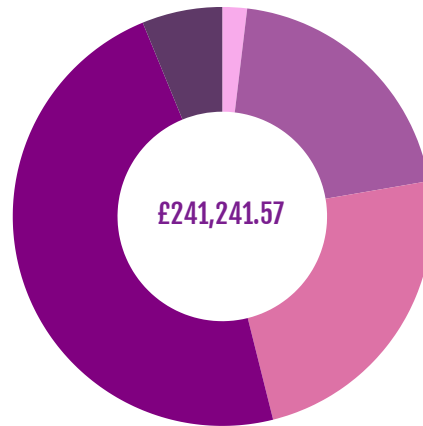
## Winner

- **Xero Beautiful Business Fund** - Strengthening Community Connection (UK)
- **GrandNanny:** Intergenerational Innovation Award

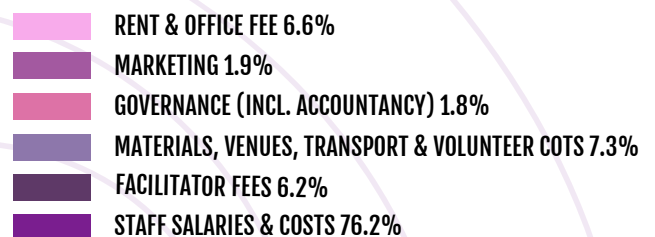
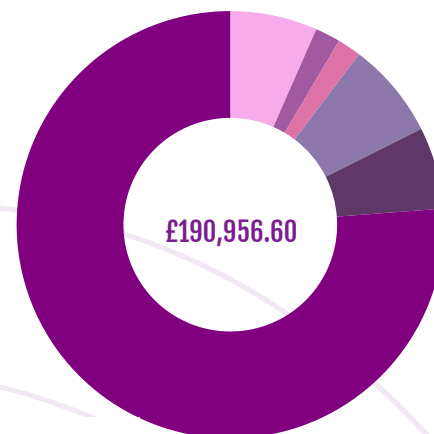
## Finalist

- **Youth Music Awards:** Social Action category
- **Women Achieving Greatness in Social Care:** Third Sector Leader category
- **Advantages of Age Awards** Pro-Ageing Not-For-Profit category

## INCOME



## EXPENDITURE



**“The Together Project is a perfect example of a small charity that punches well above its weight, delivering real value to its service users and wider stakeholders, and driven at its core by a hugely committed and passionate team.”**

Graeme Marsh, Head of Foundation, McCarthy & Stone Foundation



# SONGS & SMILES



**Songs & Smiles is an intergenerational music group for 0-4 year olds, their grown-ups and older people, held in care homes and assisted living schemes.**

During 2023, 2,021 people joined our Songs & Smiles sessions, held weekly in the 27 locations shown on the map above. After each term we send out experience surveys to parents/guardians and care homes/assisted living schemes. Here is a round-up of the data and feedback we received.

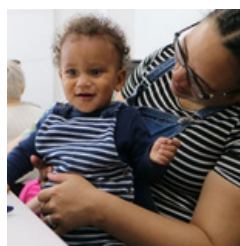
**[Read our full Songs & Smiles 2023 Impact Report](#)**



**“What a wonderful idea Songs & Smiles is, just the look on our residents' faces – complete joy! It really lifts the mood in our home.”**

Care home manager

**[Read Arthur's about heart-warming new friendships](#)**



**[Find out about Paris' Songs & Smiles journey](#)**

# 2,021

## UNIQUE BENEFICIARIES

# 78%

Residents agreed/ strongly agreed that:

**"Songs & Smiles makes me feel less lonely/ socially isolated"**

**"The most heartwarming and wholesome group. The highlight of our week!"**

Parent/guardian



# 779

1 hour sessions delivered

# 17

New groups launched

**"I live for Wednesdays when our babies and toddlers come to visit."**

Resident



# 92%

of parents/guardians  
agreed/strongly agreed that:  
**"Songs & Smiles makes  
me feel more connected  
to my wider community"**



# 100%

of residents agreed/strongly  
agreed that:  
**"Songs & Smiles  
brightens my week"**

**"Songs & Smiles is a real  
highlight of our week. It's  
such a lovely way to connect  
and interact with our  
community, building lovely  
relationships week on week  
that transcend generational  
barriers."**

Parent/guardian



# CRAFTING CONNECTIONS



"Our residents love it, they look forward to getting their packs monthly but it's not just about the artwork, it's about the friendships they've built up."

- Activities Coordinator



**Find out about Florence and Joyce's blossoming friendship**

**Read how Charlie and Judith find more in common than they ever thought**



**Crafting Connections is the arts & crafts exchange pairing children with older adults receiving care across the UK.**

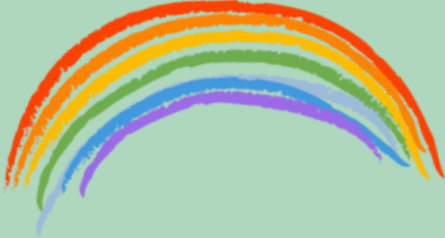
Every month, each participant creates a piece of artwork and fills out a questionnaire to send to their partner. As the months go by, their creativity is explored and their friendships deepen. 713 people took part in 2023, from Lochgilphead in Argyle & Bute to Redruth in Cornwall!

# 713

**UNIQUE BENEFICIARIES**

**Read our full Crafting Connections 2023 Impact Report**

# 460



Friendships made in 2023

“Crafting Connections really speaks to my own values of displaying kindness. And it supports us in having those conversations as a family.”

Parent/guardian



# 35

Care homes involved

“The emotions that come along with Crafting Connections have been surprising. Being so important in someone's life – enough for them to make and give you a special gift, is of great importance to someone who has never had that in their life.”

Activities Coordinator

**"I really enjoy the crafts \*and\* the connections. As a result my children are demonstrating more empathy."**

Parent/guardian



**360**

Residents signed up



Florence made the paper  
because we nursing  
when she showed me she  
said "let's do it"  
she was nursing the same  
you and your mom her  
friend Joyce has lots of  
books and books!

**"Keeping the residents busy, involved with small children, involved in the community – makes them far happier."**

Activities Coordinator



**"As someone who doesn't have any grandchildren, Joyce cherishes her friendship with Florence and finds it truly wonderful."**

Activities Coordinator

# WE ARE FRIENDS



“The residents absolutely love it. For some this is the highlight of their week, knowing that they can bring joy to the children as they read them a story.”

- Care home staff



[Read about Winnie our storytelling hero](#)



‘We are Friends in Libraries’ was funded by Waltham Forest Council’s Best Start in Life initiative.

It was delivered in collaboration with Chit-Chat Pitter-Pat and Waltham Forest’s Libraries service.

We united older residents, young children and their parents/guardians in libraries across the borough through the magic of storytelling and song. Initially launching in four libraries for an eight week spring term, the programme was so successful that it was extended to a further four libraries in the autumn, leaving a joyful intergenerational legacy as several libraries have continued with the programme.

[Read our full We are Friends 2023 Impact Report](#)

# 272

## UNIQUE BENEFICIARIES

**“My Dad has dementia and quite limited speech. Each session he’s been full of positive words – ‘fantastic, amazing, wonderful, brilliant’ – and his mood is always lifted. Thank you so much.”**

Parent/guardian



**82%**  
of older residents said they:  
**“Enjoyed interacting  
with other generations”**



**“It's very uplifting  
and gives you a sense  
of wellbeing, meeting  
different people and  
seeing the children  
enjoying themselves.”**

- Older resident



# 100%

of older residents agreed/  
strongly agreed that:

**“We are Friends in  
Libraries’ has made me  
feel less lonely/socially  
isolated”**



**“This is amazing  
and should be a  
staple in all  
boroughs/libraries.  
The program is  
doing huge work  
for the mental  
health and  
loneliness of older  
generations and  
the education of  
our new  
generation.”**

- Parent/guardian



# LOOKING FORWARD

After a bumper 2023, we're really excited to develop our work, reach and impact even further in 2024.



## Our 2024 plans include:

- Expanding our current national programmes into new areas and increasing our beneficiary numbers.
- Piloting a new programme focused on supporting the mental health of new parents who don't currently have a 'village' around them.
- Piloting a new programme that connects older adults attending day centres with local families through the power of storytelling.
- Developing new partnerships with other third sector organisations.
- Expanding our newly-developed corporate volunteering programme, inviting more teams to our office and to our partner care homes to enrich the lives of their residents.
- Working with new funders, partners, businesses and individuals who want to support our mission.



# CAN YOU HELP US?

As this report demonstrates, it's a really exciting time for The Together Project and there are so many ways you can get involved.

You can **take part in a sponsored challenge** to raise funds (we've got everything from 5k runs to cycling through India!) [Click through for more details.](#)



Join us with your colleagues for a **group volunteering day**, where you'll split your time between our London office and a partner care home, contributing to our Crafting Connections programme and brightening the day of the residents. For more information email [Louise@thetogetherproject.org.uk](mailto:Louise@thetogetherproject.org.uk)



**Connect us with peers, colleagues or contacts** who might want to get involved in our joy-filled mission. For more information email [Louise@thetogetherproject.org.uk](mailto:Louise@thetogetherproject.org.uk)



Make a donation to help us do even more! As a small charity, gifts of every size are hugely valued.

**DONATE NOW**

Spread the word (share this report) inspire others and lets make a BIG impact together.

**Thank you!**

# THANK YOU

Your support means more than just money, it's a pledge to nurture intergenerational friendships and spread joy.

## Grants & Donations in 2023

Astor Foundation  
Attend  
Barratt Foundation  
Childwick Trust  
Comic Relief Community Fund  
Guinness Partnership  
HS2  
L&Q Foundation  
Lord Barnby's Foundation  
National Lottery  
The Charles S French Charitable Trust  
The McCarthy & Stone Charitable Foundation  
Youth Music Recharge Fund

## Individual support

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals who generously supported our work throughout 2023. Whether through named or anonymous one-off donations, or regular gifts, your contributions are deeply valued and appreciated. Thank you for your unwavering support

## In-kind support

Accenture - Corporate volunteering  
Cream - Catalyst Programme  
Digital Candle - advice  
Ellison - arts & craft materials  
Gardiner & Theobald - Corporate volunteering  
JP Morgan Chase - Force For Good  
Peabody - reduced office rent  
PressPlus - reduced rate print



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