



THE JO COX  
FOUNDATION

---

# MOMENT TO MOVEMENT REPORT



THE GREAT  
GET TOGETHER  
INSPIRED BY JO COX



MORE IN COMMON  
NETWORK  
INSPIRED BY JO COX

# KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE MOMENT TO MOVEMENT PROJECT

---

1. Participating in community events and volunteering makes people happier and less lonely
  2. Attending and organising community events inspires people to go on and engage more deeply in their local community
  3. There are barriers to engaging people to both attend events and take on long-term volunteering in their community
  4. Bigger isn't always better! Smaller events can have a deep impact, and the type of event makes a difference to the experience of participants
  5. Training and peer networks are important when building long-term sustainability into volunteer projects
- 



This project was made possible by the generous support of **Spirit of 2012**.

Spirit of 2012 is the London 2012 Games legacy fund. Spirit awards grants for inclusive arts, sports and volunteering activities in communities that bring people together to improve their wellbeing. The National Lottery Community Fund founded Spirit in 2013 with a £47 million endowment to continue

and recreate the spirit of pride, positivity and community that inspired people across the UK during the London 2012 Games. Spirit of 2012's grant holders range from national to small, hyper-local organisations.

For more information, visit:  
[www.spiritof2012.org.uk](http://www.spiritof2012.org.uk)

## PROJECT SUMMARY

When The Jo Cox Foundation embarked on the Moment to Movement project in February 2020, we had two main aims. The first was to strengthen and grow the nationwide More in Common Network, and the second was to grow the Great Get Together and the Great Winter Get Together as major community-building initiatives.


Our overall vision for these projects was for a society of stronger, happier communities where everyone has a sense of identity and belonging, and in which we are proud of our diversity and the things we have in common. Since the project began, the UK has faced many unforeseen challenges which have undoubtedly had an impact on the project. The Covid pandemic kept us physically apart to some degree for the first 18 months of the work, and the cost of living crisis has added additional barriers to people getting involved in their communities.

Despite these challenges, we end this phase of the project, and our time partnered with Spirit of 2012, confident that we have met those two key aims, and that we have indeed contributed to stronger communities, where people know their neighbours, have deepened their own sense of belonging, built social connections and feel happier and less lonely.



## Through the Moment to Movement project, we have:

- Run four **Great Get Together campaigns**, bringing communities together each June.
- Run three **Great Winter Get Together campaigns**, focusing on addressing loneliness at what can be a difficult time of year, tackling the stigma around loneliness and encouraging connection.
- **Supported and learnt from our organiser community**, including offering opportunities to learn new skills, to learn from each other, and to connect.
- Seen a growth in the **More in Common Network**. Before the project started, there were five informal groups. We currently have ten fully incorporated groups and twelve potential groups on the development pathway.
- **Supported four More in Common groups as they have decided to wind up.** Though we're always sorry to see the end of a group, we understand that volunteer groups exist in a life-cycle, which sometimes involves making the difficult decision to close.
- Pioneered a new format of the More in Common work through **More in Common partnerships**, bringing organisations, not just individuals, together to work to make change. We have two active partnerships (in Cardiff and Nottingham), with two on the development pathway and interest expressed in another three areas.



We believe that what we've learnt during the process is even more important than explaining what we've done, which is why this report is presented as a **series of key learnings from the project**. These learnings will continue to influence the work of The Jo Cox Foundation as we continue to evolve this project, and we hope will also be helpful to the wider communities sector and all those who are striving to make their communities stronger and more cohesive.

## Participating in community events and volunteering makes people happier and less lonely

The vision for this project was for stronger, happier communities, so understanding more about whether taking part in community events increases individual wellbeing, and if so, why, was a key learning that we set out to explore. Throughout the project, data has shown consistently that both organising and taking part in a Great Get Together improves happiness, wellbeing and mental health. This was even the case during the pandemic, against a general backdrop of increased anxiety and uncertainty. In fact, participating in community activity took on a particular importance during the pandemic. In 2020's Great Get Together survey, 66% of people said 'it makes me feel good to do something positive' and 45% said that the pandemic made them want to do something positive in their local community.

The Great Winter Get Together has a specific focus on loneliness, and has consistently shown that participating helps increase participants' understanding of loneliness. Survey respondents tell us that they also see improvements in their mental health, and increased levels of social connection.

When we look deeper at why participation has an impact, we can see a number of potential reasons. This includes the importance of belonging in our local communities. We also see that participation increases confidence, increases connections with others and helps to build friendships.

As well as increasing levels of happiness, we also have examples of the genuinely life-changing impact that participation can have. We hear from Martyn below, but also know of people who have got a job because of their involvement in the Great Get Together, and who have been inspired to seek political office after being motivated by the More in Common Network.



It was clear that some people in my area are really beginning to feel cut off and needed to see others folks in a positive environment.

**- Great Get Together organiser in 2020**



# CASE STUDY:

## Martyn, a participant in the project in 2022



Martyn at the first project workshop, sharing his perspective on belonging ▶

**“The whole idea that I could be involved with this would have, at times, in the last decade been a fanciful notion to me. I have had a difficult decade. My own mental health seeing me often in despair and hospitalised, feeling helpless and optionless. I spent five whole years trapped in the house, agoraphobia biting deep. I guess though, despite still often being hugely anxious, I am emerging from the debacle that was the life lost to the cursed mental breakdown.**

**Personally, I still feel a little shocked at how I felt in those planning meetings, so engaged and driven. There was so much healing and recovery and reconnection with skills and experience I thought I no longer had, thanks to the encouragement, engagement and positive endorsement I got from those six or seven weeks being on that planning group. To all of the team involved, I feel I owe so much to them.”**

Through the Belonging in Batley and Spenningsdale project, Martyn found friendship and healing. After their ‘Great Create Together’ event, his creative writing group (‘Serendipity’) went on to establish themselves as a CIC, received funding to be able to continue their work, and are now working on their 5-year business plan.



Martyn with the rest of the group at the final project workshop ▶

## Attending and organising community events inspires people to go on and engage more deeply in their local community

At the start of this project, we knew that the Great Get Together could provide the 'spark' which leads to longer-term engagement in community volunteering. Our existing More in Common groups, most notably the group in Batley and Spen, had successfully used the Great Get Together since 2017 as a focal point for bringing people together, and inspiring ongoing social action. Through the project, we wanted to deepen our understanding of the motivating factors that inspire event attendees to become organisers, and organisers to become active year-round in their community.

When we collected data for our baseline report, we were surprised to find out that 48% of More in Common members had not joined their group because of a Great Get Together; instead there were a wide range of inspiring factors, including a desire to tackle problems that they saw locally, knowing other members, and being inspired by Jo Cox's legacy. As the project has developed, we have continued to grow our understanding of the role that events play in motivating people to volunteer. However, this has been impacted considerably by the pandemic, with in-person events either impossible or severely curtailed in Y1 and Y2 of the project.

As we have been able to return to in-person events in Y3 and Y4, we have understood more about the relationship between the Great Get Together and participant's motivation to go on to take further action in their communities. As well as proactively encouraging Great Get Together organisers to become involved in the More in Common Network, we've also understood more about the avenues to volunteering that people take.

As the project has progressed, we've heard powerful stories about how being involved in the Great Get Together has inspired people to explore ways to be engaged in their communities, including volunteering with local projects.

97% of attendees of 2023's Great Get Together told us they felt motivated to attend more community events, with 66% looking to volunteer with local projects.

**"I have been made aware of so many projects and people to get involved with. I didn't really know much about events and get togethers which is very nice to have events like this to engage in the communities".**

- Great Winter Get Together attendee in 2023

## There are barriers to engaging people with both attending events and long-term volunteering in their community

---

Though we know that Jo Cox's 'more in common' message remains a powerful and persuasive call to action for community groups, we also know that there are significant barriers that stand in the way of people getting involved both in attending community events and becoming a volunteer.

Our understanding of what the barriers are, and how to overcome them, has increased as the project has progressed. We have always known that we wanted the Great Get Together to be an event that is inclusive and available for everyone. However, we better understand that saying everyone is welcome doesn't actually mean that everyone feels that they are welcome. While we've seen a real change in the diversity of the participants at Great Get Together events, associated with a reduction in barriers to participation, it has been a slower process to increase the diversity of the More in Common groups and Great Get Together organisers.

The baseline for the project showed that the majority of our Great Get Together organisers and More in Common members were middle-aged women who were predominantly white.

One of the outcomes for the project was to deepen the age profile of organisers, increase the number of people from minority ethnic backgrounds who take part, and to ensure that participation is inclusive of disabled people.

The pandemic was a new and significant barrier to engagement during the course of the project. While we saw high engagement with the campaigns in Y1 and Y2, the small-scale nature of the activations, many of which were online, made it more difficult for participants to connect across lines of difference. More in Common participants in particular found it difficult to maintain the momentum behind their groups when they weren't able to bring people together in person. The pandemic remains a barrier, with potential participants still telling us that they have not been involved in the Great Get Together because of concerns about health and social mixing. The cost of living crisis has added additional barriers, with respondents telling us that increased costs for transport, for example, have impacted their ability to be involved.





## Bigger isn't always better! Smaller events can have a deep impact, and the type of event makes a difference to the experience of participants

During the course of the project we've understood more about the benefit of the flexibility of the Great Get Together model, in that it allows a really wide variety of events. As part of this, we have also learnt more about the impact of different kinds of events - whether that be the size or the type of event. Our developing understanding has enabled us to learn more about how to reduce barriers to participation and make events more inclusive.

We have always been clear that Great Get Togethers come in all shapes and sizes, and since the inception of the project we have celebrated the range of events that organisers plan. When we ran the 2020 Great Get Together under full Covid restrictions, we had to support organisers to get really creative about what type of event they were organising. At the time, up to six people could meet outside, with social distancing in place, but many still also felt anxious about being close to others. We saw a huge range of inventive events, including street Zumba sessions, plant swaps, community gardening and online quizzes. We have continued to encourage this inventiveness because we were seeing encouraging signs about the impact that a range of events were having.

In Y3's Great Winter Get Together we specifically encouraged online events, responding to feedback from those who were still shielding or unable to attend in person.



We also implemented some new campaign initiatives designed to encourage events that were not a typical street party or fete. In Y2 we started the Great Walk Together in collaboration with Refugee Week, which asked communities to welcome refugees, or reflect on the experiences of refugees, through the simple act of a walk. This has carried on since then, with 22 walks taking place in Y4. In Y4 we also put in place the Great Watch Together (with Cinema for All), the Great Train Together and the Great Read Together. The wider the range of events increases the ability to attract a more diverse audience who have different interests.

# CASE STUDY:

## Healing after loss at a Great Winter Get Together event, 2023



Participants enjoying the Soup Lunch Great Winter Get Together event

**"On the first Soup Lunch we met Annie whose partner had died 10 weeks earlier. Recently bereaved and with no family or friends locally she was feeling very alone. She found out about the Bee Friends Coffee Morning and Great Winter Get Together Soup Lunch event at the local library through Healthwatch. Annie had led a career in catering and was immediately interested in the Soup Lunch, she said she'd never been so happy as when she was serving food.**

**Bee Friends have a policy of meeting and greeting so Annie was immediately given a warm welcome and taken to a table where there were friendly faces and a cup of coffee. It takes courage to walk into a large hall not knowing anyone, but Annie did it.**

**Annie watched as we served the soup – as this was our first time it wasn't elegant! But the atmosphere was wonderful, with everyone engaged and chatting as bowls were passed and seconds served.**

**After the last of the soup had been served and it was slightly calmer, we invited Annie into the kitchen and she said it was like coming home. As an experienced caterer, she was eager to help and use her skills to be of value and use. We all need to be needed. By Annie's own admission she does not have a lot of self confidence and as such no desire to be "front of house" but she is VERY at home in the kitchen and is now volunteering with us (as caterer in chief!). None of us have any catering experience and we will be looking to her for guidance.**

**Annie needed us but we needed her too. Because the Soup Lunch was so successful we are now holding one every month. Imagine our delight when last Thursday Annie came to a coffee morning, just for a chat. She was welcomed as a friend and joined a table of people she had sat with the previous week."**

## Training and peer networks are important when building long-term sustainability into volunteer projects

During the period of the grant, we've learnt a great deal about what works (and what does not) when it comes to supporting volunteers - both Great Get Together organisers and More in Common Network members.

After running a training event for existing organisers in 2019, before this phase of the project started, we had built an understanding of how much the volunteers valued the opportunities to be able to connect with each other to learn and share, as well as how motivating events like this could be. After that day, 100% of participants were motivated to join or start a More in Common group, and 90% felt they were better prepared to organise a Great Get Together.

Therefore, we began this project with a desire to bring organisers together regularly, building an empowering and supportive network. This became particularly acute during the pandemic, when maintaining momentum was a particular issue, especially for More in Common members.

We also wanted to support organisers to acquire new skills, increasing their capacity and confidence. This upskilling has a role in making sure that both the Great Get Together and the More in Common network are inclusive and attract a diverse range of participants. We understand that it can often be difficult to become involved in community organising, and wanted to offer opportunities, particularly to those who had not previously participated.

All of this supports making the Great Get Together and the More in Common network more sustainable. By developing the skills of organisers, and by building networks for them to support themselves, we reduce their reliance on a centralised organising team, increasing the likelihood of the groups continuing in the long term.



Organiser training event in 2019 ►

# ONGOING IMPACT

---

We are sharing this report with the wider communities sector, political stakeholders and funders as we believe that the learnings are applicable to many stakeholders. Some of the key areas include:

- **Emphasising the power of events to bring people together and how to make events spaces for connection.** For funders and policymakers, understanding the value of supporting projects that bring people together is important, as is further deepening the understanding of how we can support people, particularly those who do not currently take part in community activities, to engage.
- **Sharing challenges and good practice around effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation** of community events and projects. We have learnt a considerable amount from this project, and would welcome the opportunity to talk more with partners to share our learnings and ideas for how we do this work in the future.
- **Emphasising the power of collaboration.** The past four years have been challenging for all of those organisations working in the community sector, and we believe that by collaborating even more in the future, we can help each other to build resilience, and better support the communities we serve.





THE **JO COX**  
FOUNDATION