



**THE GREAT GET
TOGETHER.**

INSPIRED BY JO COX

**Impact of the
Great Winter Get Together 2023**



THE **JO COX**
FOUNDATION



SPIRIT OF 2012
INVESTING IN HAPPINESS



Introduction

The Great Winter Get Together, inspired by the late Jo Cox MP, brings people together every winter to make new connections and tackle loneliness.

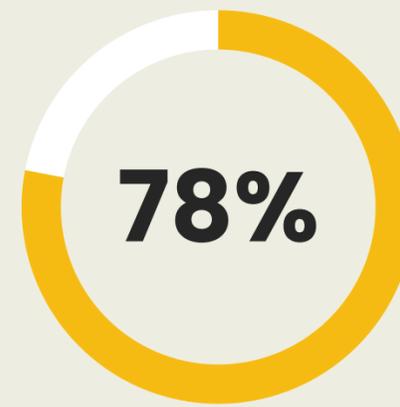
In January 2023 this was vital. **Our research showed that 27% of Brits felt more lonely due to the cost of living crisis** and many were struggling to afford to attend their usual social activities. As a result, the Great Winter Get Together was about creating places for connection for little or no cost all around the UK. **In total, 1100+ events took place around the UK.**

In this report we'll share some of the findings from our surveys, and evaluation – showing the wide impact that the Great Winter Get Together is having on people and communities.



1100
events

LESS LONELY PEOPLE



FELT LESS LONELY
AFTER PARTICIPATING

"The people who came were mostly single and live on their own. **One lady whose husband died recently sat, knit and chatted to lots of people and she said she would have been on her own all morning.**"

"One person we know hasn't been to an event since covid and **felt comfortable to socialise with us again.**"

"I felt less lonely as I live alone and **it gave me the chance to speak to people I have never met before** and discuss our lives, likes and dislikes & to find out what else is going on in my area."

"I have for the past 6 years organised every Tuesday at our local pub a coffee and chat morning - holiday times and all. **Most of the people who come to my group helped put it on.** Sort of an example of the lonely helping the lonely."

Less lonely people

Healing after loss: a Great Winter Get Together story

Frodsham Bee Friends Soup Lunch, Chesire



"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.

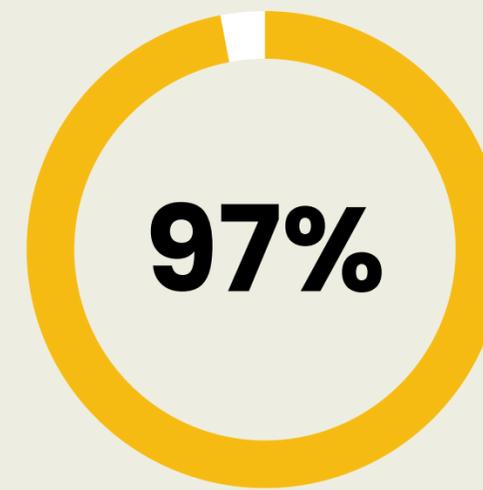
Annie watched as we served the soup - as this was our first time it wasn't elegant! But the atmosphere was wonderful, with everyone engaged and chatting as bowls were passed and seconds served.

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 catering 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."

IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FROM PARTICIPATING



"Being in a nice secure social setting **made me feel there's more to life.**"

"I felt like I had organised something that helped others **so I felt useful for once.**"

"I suffer from illness and depression, and **this event helped with my mental health.**"

Improving mental health and wellbeing

Bright future: a Great Winter Get Together story

Eat Sleep Ride CIC, Berwickshire



"Ivy is 18 and a carer for her younger brother who is in remission of a brain tumour. At aged 14, she was diagnosed with a condition which causes overgrowth of cartilage and bone, leading Ivy to need an operation that took 3 years to recover.

She struggled at school due to bullying, which caused anxiety and depression and suspected generalised anxiety disorder.

Ivy lives in a remote rural location with limited transport and job opportunities. Her dad had to retire early after a back injury and now cares for her brother and also her aunt who is diagnosed with autism – so Ivy's mum is the sole bread winner with Ivy and her dad as the main carers in the family.

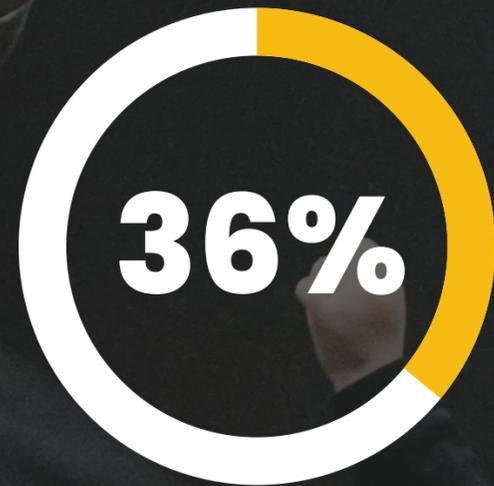
Ivy recently joined us at Eat, Sleep, Ride as a volunteer. We provide opportunities in equine and outdoor learning, accreditation, and certification, enabling young people to learn to work in a team whilst receiving one to one wellbeing and counselling support. She has since began employment through a local authority scheme which aims to develop young people's true potential.

She said she really enjoyed getting out of the house and socialising at the Great Winter Get Together event and that she felt happy, relaxed and proud at being able to give a tour of the yard and provide information about the horses.

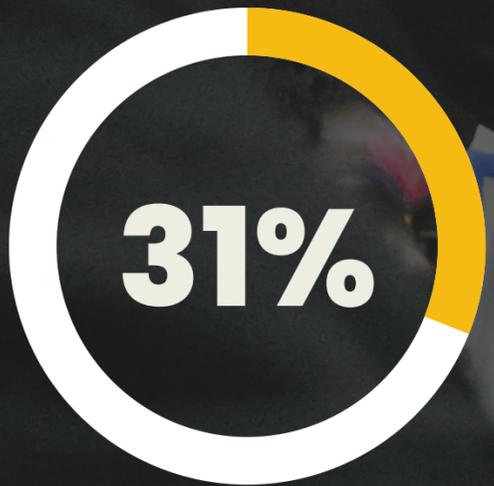
Ivy is now meeting friends regularly and looking to start a practical equine training and online university course in equine management. **She is looking forward to being part of other events and what her future holds."**



MORE ACTIVE COMMUNITIES



OF PEOPLE GOT INVOLVED WITH A NEW COMMUNITY ACTIVITY AFTER ATTENDING A GREAT WINTER GET TOGETHER



INCREASE IN VOLUNTEERS FOR LOCAL EVENTS

"I really enjoyed learning about poetry and I signed up to the write a few lines initiative. **I volunteer regularly and would only do it because of the more in common initiative.**"

"People who do not leave their home very often came as did a recently bereaved woman who is going to volunteer with us."

"We are going to have a soup lunch on the last Thursday of every month, this was so good."

"Found something that I can do - write to others to brighten their day. (I'm now planning on) writing cards or letters or colouring pictures to post to cheer up others."

More active communities:

What it means to feel part of your community: a Great Winter Get Together story



“It was lovely to connect with other women and start to make connections with them.

I felt so much happier – more like people wanted to spend time with me and less isolated.

Now that I know there are more organisations in my local community, I am going to make an effort to get involved with some others.

I have been told about the WI and am planning to join that group, but I want to see what else is happening too, so I can get to know more people locally.

It sounds odd to say that, considering I have lived in this town all my life and I am now in my 60s.

Because I work outside my local community, I have been unaware of the groups that exist and the chances to make connections. I have felt shy of getting involved but it has been really good. I want to build on this now.”



BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER ACROSS LINES OF DIFFERENCE

"It was great to see the community coming together despite their different cultural backgrounds."

"It was an amazing afternoon where residents, parents and grandparents were given the opportunity to eat, drink, chat and get to know one another. We invited residents from our local care home too, to tackle loneliness. **Intergenerational work with our children at school and elderly residents was very powerful in supporting mental health and wellbeing.**"



Bringing people together

All are welcome: a Great Winter Get Together story

Healey School, West Yorkshire



"People were invited from all different backgrounds, culture, religions, ages. We invited residents from our local care home too, to tackle loneliness. Intergenerational work with our children at school and elderly residents is very powerful in supporting mental health and wellbeing.

We regularly make reference to Jo Cox and the great work that she did to leave a lasting legacy and we wanted to celebrate the Great Get Together with continued intergenerational work to tackle loneliness.

The event had a hugely positive impact on the children, they loved helping with setting up the hall for our visitors and took great pride and joy in hosting the event and showcasing the school to their families.

There was a new family to the area who did not know many people locally and whose grandchildren had just started at Healey School. They were extremely happy to be a part of the afternoon as they made new friends with other families.

We plan to celebrate the Great Summer Get Together with the care home and to invite the residents to our Summer Fayre too. We will continue to build relations and offer partnership programmes with the care home, where the children will write cards, do performances and sing with the residents."



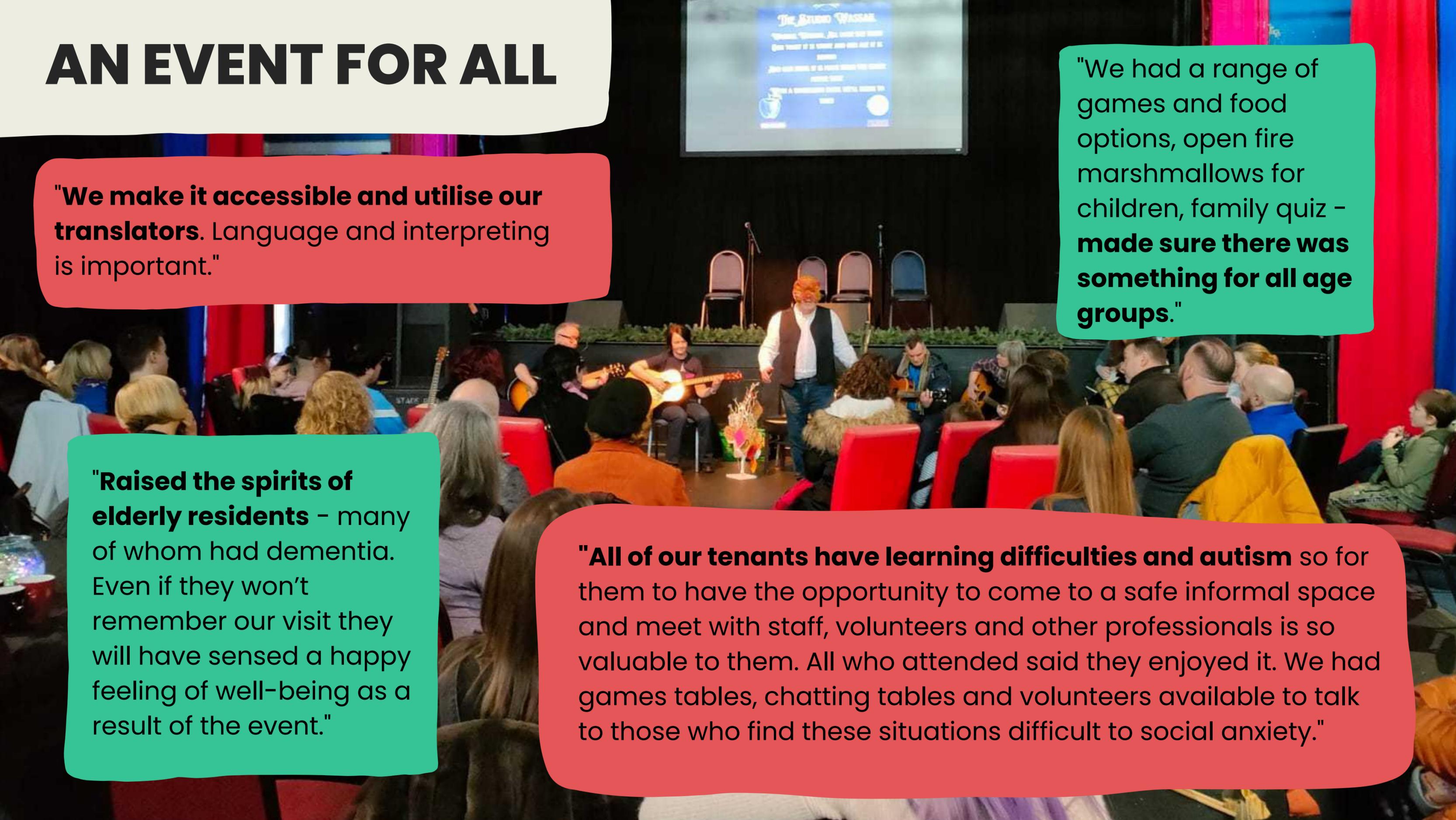
AN EVENT FOR ALL

"We make it accessible and utilise our translators. Language and interpreting is important."

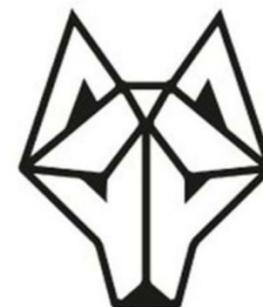
"We had a range of games and food options, open fire marshmallows for children, family quiz – **made sure there was something for all age groups.**"

"Raised the spirits of elderly residents – many of whom had dementia. Even if they won't remember our visit they will have sensed a happy feeling of well-being as a result of the event."

"All of our tenants have learning difficulties and autism so for them to have the opportunity to come to a safe informal space and meet with staff, volunteers and other professionals is so valuable to them. All who attended said they enjoyed it. We had games tables, chatting tables and volunteers available to talk to those who find these situations difficult to social anxiety."



Thank you to our Great Get Together partners



Get involved!



Sign up to our newsletter

To learn more about the Great Get Together and receive our latest updates **[sign up to our newsletter here.](#)**



Run a Great Get Together

Celebrate that we have 'more in common' this summer by running a Great Get Together this June. **[Get involved.](#)**



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