



The Great Get Together 2024

Impact Report



THE GREAT
GET TOGETHER
INSPIRED BY JO COX

The infographic features a solid orange background. A large white semi-circle is positioned on the right side. A string of colorful bunting flags (red, blue, yellow, and green) hangs across the middle of the white semi-circle. On the left, there are two teal-colored circles. The top circle contains the number '626' and the word 'Events'. The bottom circle contains the number '97,600' and the text 'Estimated attendees'.

626

Events

**The Great Get Together,
inspired by the late Jo Cox
MP, brings people together
every year to celebrate what
they have in common.**

From sing togethers, street parties and
living history events, to refugee walks and
brews and chats between neighbours,
over 626 events took place
around the UK.

97,600

Estimated
attendees

IMPACT:

BRIDGING DIVIDES

A key aim of this year's Great Get Together was to bridge divides between communities.

During times of division and polarisation, the events brought together people of diverse faiths, cultural backgrounds, ages and experiences.

In creating a safe and fun environment, people were able to find common ground and build friendships.

85%

of organisers set out to bring people from different backgrounds together through their event.



It created a sense of unity. ”



Asylum seekers, afghan refugees, police and fire service, members of the wider community – **I wanted people to see what services are available for ALL residents in town.**





The event restores faith in human kindness and confirmed the need to connect and interact with others.

It reminded everyone no matter what race, religion, ethnicity we belong to, humanity comes first. We are all humans and everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect.

When you start talking and interacting you realise we all have more in common then we think.

We need to put everything aside, and come together to support anyone in need. ”

Event Organiser



Our aim was to create an occasion where money was an irrelevance so that people of all social means could take part on the same terms.

We wanted it to be an event which made people feel better about their neighbours, and encouraged a generosity of spirit between people.



Many of our local community were involved in welcoming refugees from Swansea. **Some locals said they'd never before felt so welcome themselves in this community.**



We especially wanted to bring together people of different faiths whom we have links with.



HEALING AND UNITY – BANKSIDE + SE1 LONDON

A GREAT GET TOGETHER STORY

The charitable organisation Living Bankside in central London, run a thriving programme of events and community projects. Their Great Get Together SE1 is the largest of these events and brings people together on a massive scale every year.

Here we speak to Joseph Bonner and Amir Eden about what the event means for the area.

“The ‘more in common message’ is something that sits very naturally with Living Bankside’s work. Whilst London is cosmopolitan and diverse as a city, it’s always important to bring people together, to help them feel inspired and valued.

We pick as many organisations and groups as we can work with, we have performances from people aged four to 94. The event has volunteers, attendees and performers from over 45 different ethnic backgrounds. Irish dancers from across London, Catalan and Welsh choirs, human towers, wacky races, dog shows – everything. **These events help build trust. It’s a chance to celebrate everything in the community.**

UNITING COMMUNITIES AT TIMES OF DIVISION

In 2017, the London Bridge terrorist attack had a profound impact on the neighborhood.

There was concern about whether The Great Get Together in Bankside should go ahead that year. But it became even more important because when an attack happens, it’s all about division and hatred. It drives people apart. So Jo Cox’s more in common values and the event that was organised back then was especially important. It was all about bringing people together.

We have a motto at living bankside, *whoever you are, whatever your background, we want people to feel valued, loved and able to shape the neighbourhood around them.* We are passionate about making people feel welcome.

At times of adversity we are focussed on collective healing, unity, compassion. We want to make people feel hopeful, valued and loved.





THE DOMINO EFFECT

We do events and activities across the whole year. We hear stories of people getting to know each other and then partnering and working together to make a positive impact. **We've seen a huge increase in volunteering and it's changing lives. It's a domino effect of positive change.**

It's important to continually inspire people, to motivate people to just have a conversation, to meet someone new, because **if you get to know them, you'll find that you have much more in common with them than that which divides you.**

You read the stories about how The Great Get Together changed people's perceptions of people from different backgrounds. Thousands of heartwarming stories from the events, as well as the domino effect of positive things happening as a result of the events that we just don't hear about.



During times of division it's important to continue to inspire people, to motivate people to just have a conversation ”

MORE ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

One specific area of impact we see is around volunteering – people get involved and feel valued and then see that they can shape the neighbourhood around them and get stuff done.

Over the years, we've seen sustained numbers of volunteers. People get involved and want to be in the service of others – which subscribes to Jo's values.

People get involved with projects in the community, like volunteering in community spaces and gardens – helping with events, helping connect people, just being there for different things like that or just helping someone that needs support with something.

Whether they're volunteers or business owners people are having fun and they can see great things happening.

Sometimes people think that they don't have the power, the ability, the time or resources to make a change. But when we share our experience, people get it. We are a micro-charitable organisation but with significant in-kind support from people and by everyone playing their role or contributing what time they can, we are able to positively transform lives. This year the event was held across 6 venues with 30,000 people attending. The entire event was delivered by volunteers, with a small budget of £3000 to pay for local performers.

When people get involved in their community they can see that they have decision making power. That they can contribute. They can feel a sense of pride and ownership over their neighborhood.

It's the feeling that you're with other people doing it, you're not alone.

You can do it all together. You can share the load.”

IMPACT:

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Great Get Together events brought together thousands of people that had never met before.

People described how 'neighbours met up and got to know each other better', making new friends and feeling inspired to stay more connected to each other.

High numbers of inter-generational events took place this year. Over 70 schools ran an event that connected children to older generations in the community.

We also saw a huge increase in community volunteering:

40%

Increase in volunteers for local projects after a Great Get Together event

WE'VE GOT
MORE IN COMMON



When I first moved into my last address, there was a lady in her 80s living alone in one of the houses in our street and although there were only 13 houses in our road, no-one really knew her or each other.

I started organising get togethers at Christmas and street parties in the summer and after I moved out 14 years later, everyone knew each other **and the older lady had a support system from her neighbours that didn't exist before that.**

The tradition lives on and so new people who have moved in become included in the get togethers.





People met for the first time even though living on the same street.

They made plans to meet again.



It's such a pleasure to enable people to meet and make friends



They enjoyed meeting others in the community and felt inspired.





WALKING WITH FRIENDS – ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE MALVERN HILLS

As part of the Great Get Together, Worcester Amnesty International and Worcester City Welcomes Refugees took nine asylum seekers walking in the Malvern Hills. We spoke to Wendy, a Volunteer who helped organise the event.

“We had already thought of taking the asylum seekers on a walk on the hills and as I have begun supporting them as a volunteer with Worcester City Welcomes Refugees, it was easy to coordinate. A hotel in Worcester has had a large number of young men from different countries, all hoping to have ‘Leave To Remain’. They all want to get on with their lives, but are not able to until they receive permission to stay.

9 men accepted our invitation. Seven from Eritrea, two from Iran. The weather for the walk was perfect and because of the good ratio we were able to talk to all the guys individually. We had a picnic on the top and it was very relaxed. They were very interested in everything. **The weather, views and countryside were a tonic for us all.**

They are now being moved away from Worcester, but hopefully we can do something similar another year.”

Wendy Clark, Worcester Amnesty and Volunteer at Worcester City Welcomes Refugees



Enjoyable, adventurous...I would do it again and again. It's amazing and I'm glad that I can walk with my friends and the organisers through the historical Malvern Hills.



Participant and asylum seeker from Eritrea

IMPACT:

IMPROVED WELLBEING

Event organisers described how running an event positively impacts their mental health. For some, it made them feel less lonely, or gave them a "sense of purpose".

Organisers told us that their biggest motivations for organising an event were to 'help connect people who are feeling lonely' and to 'help people in their community get to know each other better'.

As a result of running a Great Get Together:

49%

Of organisers felt that their mental health had improved

"We had about 40 people attend, half of whom knew each other from a community choir the others from our local community and encouraged them to mix which worked.

One widow said how she had enjoyed meeting others and it encouraged her to think of joining others."



BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER IN WEST BELFAST

A GREAT GET TOGETHER STORY

The Spectrum Centre in West Belfast is a buzzing Arts and Cultural venue. Providing locals with classes in everything from Hip Hop dance and Local History to Tea Dances.

They decided to run a Great Get Together as an opportunity to bring people from all their programmes and groups together, and to invite new people to come for a taster of what goes on at the centre.

We spoke to Sally Young, the organiser of the event:

“Really the need was for a social event that would bring people out of their homes and residential settings, meet new friends and try something new in a non threatening, “easy” atmosphere. Social isolation and poor mental health are big issues in our area.

We have connections with a local nursing home, day centre and assisted living so it was a chance to get people from there for a day out.

“ Social isolation and poor mental health are big issues in our area. ”





A MIX OF PEOPLE

We had mainly women over the age of 40 coming, some older people living with dementia, some younger people from a Day Centre; about 45 people in all.

The event was noisy, but in a good way with lots of chat and banter, and the tea flowed like a river!

ART ACTIVITIES

Art activities were arranged on three tables, people were welcome to rotate round the tables, or stay at one spot. Each table was supervised by an artist who was there as much to keep up the conversation as to instruct on craft. A member of staff was "floating" and in charge of welcoming in people and serving refreshments. All the people who visited joined in with the crafts and seemed to enjoy themselves.



Two women who are normally too nervous to join group activities came along for the first time.



OVERCOMING ANXIETIES

What I was really touched by was how a few of our regular group members took it upon themselves to help those who needed it and to welcome the new people to their table.

Two women who are normally too nervous to join group activities came along for the first time.

I made sure they felt welcome and am contacting them about joining some classes in the Autumn.

THE IMPACT OF THE EVENT

It allowed the regular participants to meet and socialise with those from other classes whom they might just know in passing. It gave the nursing home, assisted living and day centre staff the opportunity to learn a few new art techniques and a nice reason for residents to have an afternoon out of their normal day-to-day settings.

WHAT NEXT?

We were persuaded to run a Summer Social class over the summer by special request from some of the event participants. This will tide people over until regular classes start mid September, it also gave me the opportunity to reconnect with assisted living, nursing home and day centre staff and plan future art sessions in their own settings, as part of our outreach. We are already talking about the Great Winter Get Together!"



THE GREAT
GET TOGETHER

INSPIRED BY JO COX