



Annual Report

2015/16



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Delivery figures in this report cover the period January 1 2016 to December 31 2016. Finance figures cover the accounting year September 1 2015 to August 31 2016 as submitted in our latest annual accounts.



A message from Maria



For a long time, I'd felt I didn't have family in London. The city has always been wonderful for younger people, with friends and colleagues all around. But it can feel like a lonely place if you don't feel part of that busyness.

North London Cares have become my family. The young people who I've met – who I spend time with regularly, throughout the week – have brought humour, kindness and friendship into my life. They give me so much to look forward to, on such a regular basis.

That's what North London Cares is all about – so many opportunities to learn new things, to meet new people, to experience London and everything it has to offer, all in the company of some of the young people from all over the world that make this city so wonderful.

Those friendships have helped me to rehabilitate. Before I started coming to social clubs, and having a younger neighbour join me once a week at home, I wasn't very well. I was alone. But North London Cares phoned and invited me to so many activities. It's really got me back on my feet again.

In the last year I've been to a wonderful gathering of music, food and fun at the Jazz Café. It's right on my doorstep but I'd never been before. We had a blast!

I've been to classic movie nights, tea parties, pub quiz afternoons, and even visited the Sky Garden for the most amazing view over London.

Each session was with people from so many interesting places sharing one another's company, learning from one another, and forming friendships.

But my absolute favourite was the 5-week puppet making course. Along with my new friend Corinna we crafted our puppets from scratch. It helped me to get out, to communicate with my neighbours, and to feel more confident.

North London Cares is my family now. The young people have lifted me back onto my feet. Thank you for everything and I can't wait to spend time with you all throughout 2017.

Maria, Holloway

A message from Nicola



Most Tuesdays, at 11am, I attend North London Cares' Men's Cooking social club in Kilburn. Along with my friends Chris, Paul, Victor, Kevin, Moses, Norman and the gang – and Jeremy, our volunteer master chef – we make some delicious meals.

In the last year, we've tried it all: lamb, chicken and fish; pies; different cuisines from around the world; traditional old dishes – often healthy and sometimes indulgent.

I've learned so much from my friends, and not just little cooking tips. I've heard stories about the war from Paul, movie reviews from Chris – and so much in the way of resilience, patience and humour from everyone in the group.

Because while all of us who attend the Men's Cooking group know that we're there for some good grub and to learn something, we're also there for social time – to share something.

The men have built such an amazing bond, of camaraderie and togetherness. More than just classmates, we've become firm friends. And everyone has something to bring to the table.

Many of these older gents – my friends – live alone. Some are in difficult circumstances – caring for loved ones, for instance, or still mourning a loss. For them, the cooking group is a place to find respite, and also a place to find fun. And it's exactly the same for me.

While I have made the Men's Cooking group my weekly routine, North London Cares runs so many other activities too, especially during evenings and weekends when I know young people can have free time, and when older neighbours who often live alone can feel most isolated.

And as volunteer, North London Cares make it easy for me – I don't have to be in the same place at the same time, week after week (although I normally choose to be!).

They communicate brilliantly, including through the internet – and that makes it so simple to be involved, and to feel part of the community. I've never felt closer to my neighbours before. For me, that really matters.

London is a busy place, and it can be quite a tough place. But through my friendships gained as part of North London Cares I've taken the time to appreciate the experiences people all around me have, and my life has improved as a result of those friendships. Here's to another year of new connections.

Nicola, Kentish Town

North London Cares' vision

North London Cares is a community network of young professionals and older neighbours hanging out and helping one another in our rapidly changing city.

We do this because London is a place of social extremes. While our capital is one of the most dynamic places in the world, full of cultural and economic opportunities and a hotbed of innovation and change, it can also be anonymous, lonely and isolating.

For our older neighbours in particular, many of whom have spent a lifetime in their home neighbourhoods in Camden and Islington, the rush and pace of the city can often now feel too much. Getting around can be frightening, and trends including globalisation, gentrification, migration, digitisation and the housing bubble are transforming our communities faster than ever before.

The multiplying effect of those pressures is that many older people have deep roots – from Kilburn to Kentish Town – but few connections. Meanwhile, young professionals – often graduates from across the country and around the world – can have hundreds of connections in the social media age, but no roots in their community.

The separation of those parallel worlds wastes human potential, entrenches loneliness and isolation, perpetuates social division and is ultimately corrosive for our society.

North London Cares seeks to address this modern blight of disconnection in our capital by harnessing the people and places around us for the benefit of all. Our objectives are to:



Reduce isolation and loneliness amongst older people and young professionals alike



Improve the confidence, wellbeing, skills, connection and power of all participants so neighbours can feel part of our rapidly changing city, rather than left behind by it



Bring people together to reduce the gaps across social, generational, digital, cultural and attitudinal divides



40% of older people say the TV is their main form of company



17% see friends and family less than once a week; 11% less than once a month



73% of older neighbours involved in North London Cares' activities report feeling less isolated as a result



86% are better able to appreciate the world around them

North London Cares works closely with our sister charity South London Cares, which adopts the same approach to reducing loneliness in Southwark and Lambeth. Together, the charities are known as 'The Cares Family'. For more information on South London Cares, please visit www.southlondoncares.org.uk.

The year in numbers

Between January 1 and December 31 2016, older neighbours and young professionals shared:

763

one-to-one
hours

7,470

attendances
at social
clubs

40,828

interactions

322

social
clubs

5,669

hours of
time



2,250 young professionals and 2,000 older neighbours are now part of the community network.

During the year, we have run activities:

in
23
community
centres
across Camden and
Islington

with
30
businesses,
corporations and other
institutions across
London

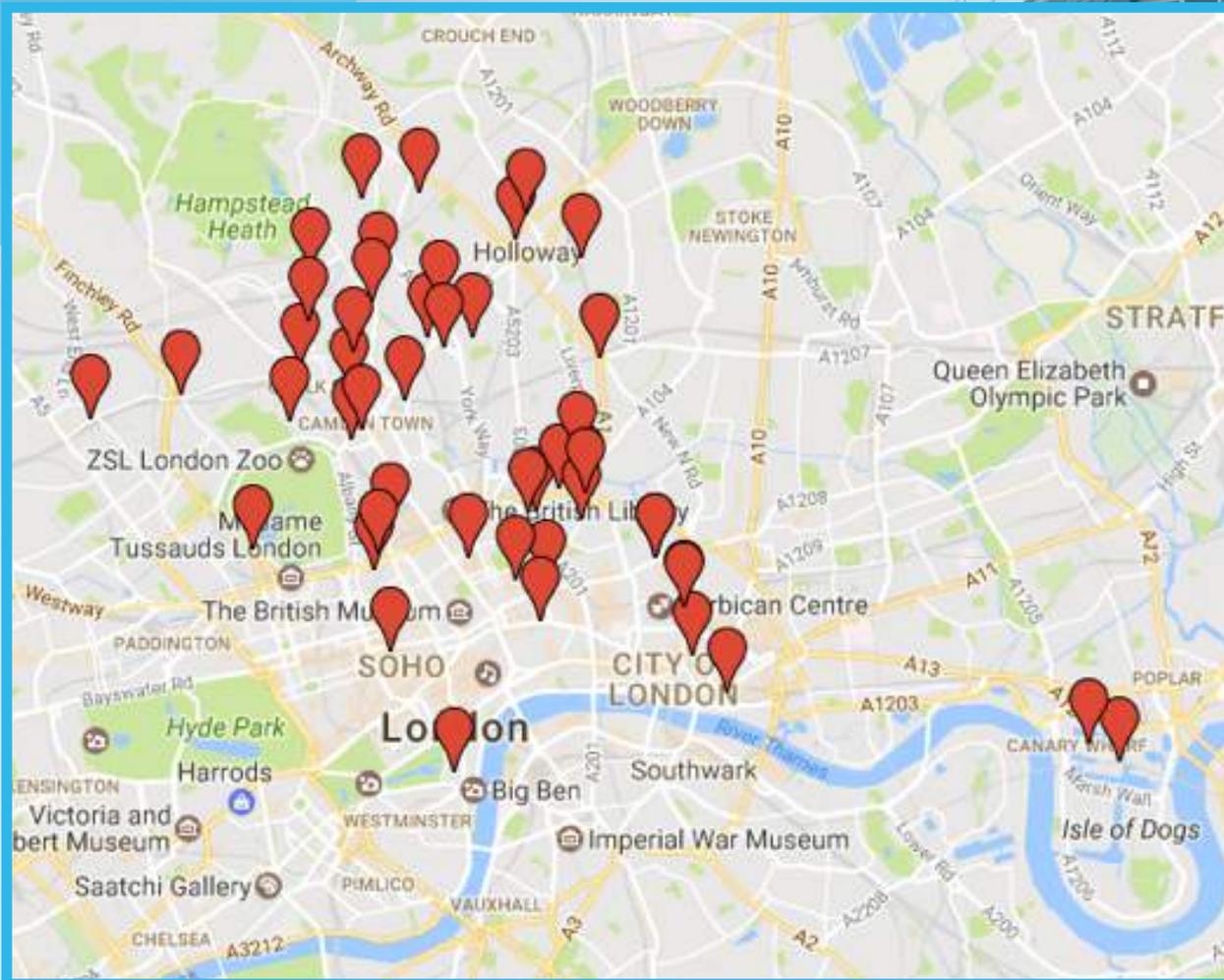
with
25
other
community
partners

Since we began our work in 2011, older and younger neighbours have shared a total of 97,645 interactions, 19,557 volunteer hours, 1,175 social clubs and 3,069 one-to-one hours.



Our patch

North London Cares operates in Camden and Islington. Older neighbours live in those two boroughs, and the vast majority of our activities take place there:





‘We live in a fractured society and people like me have no contact with young people. At North London Cares there’s almost a sense of family between the people who do the clubs. You belong.’

Paul, 88, Kilburn

Social Clubs

North London Cares' social clubs are group activities in which older and younger neighbours share time, laughter, friendship and new experiences. We run around 30 social clubs every month – 322 in 2016 in total.

Each club offers something to look forward to, and an opportunity for older and younger neighbours to spend time together,

building friendships and enjoying what London's amazing people and places have to offer.

In 2016, we ran 50 different types of social club, which were attended over 7,400 times by some 500 older people in Camden and Islington.

Those activities included:

- ♥ Dance and Ceilidh parties
- ♥ Sing-a-longs
- ♥ Film nights
- ♥ Yoga sessions
- ♥ New tech workshops
- ♥ Storytelling nights
- ♥ Camden SINGS! (choir)
- ♥ Podcasting clubs
- ♥ Puppet-making groups
- ♥ Men's games sessions
- ♥ Book clubs
- ♥ Concerts
- ♥ Cocktail nights
- ♥ Girls' nights





- ♥ Flower arranging sessions
- ♥ Italian, Swedish, Spanish, Japanese, Greek, American, Indian and Olympic-themed parties
- ♥ Christmas, Easter, Shakespeare and Bonfire Night specials
- ♥ Summer shindigs
- ♥ Jazz parties
- ♥ 'At the races'
- ♥ Pottery painting workshops
- ♥ Men's cooking
- ♥ Arsenal FC tours
- ♥ 'Judge and jury' games
- ♥ Street art workshops
- ♥ Brewery tours
- ♥ 'Discover science' lessons
- ♥ Quiz nights

Love Your Neighbour



Through our Love Your Neighbour programme, young professionals and older neighbours spend a little time together one-to-one. Friends will normally enjoy a cup of tea and have a natter about all sorts – from work to relationships to days gone by.

A majority of our older neighbours who are part of the Love Your Neighbour programme are housebound. Many are introduced to us by our partners in the health and local government communities.

We hope that while our volunteers don't do the things that make life liveable, like washing, feeding or dressing people, they do the things that make life worth living – like shared friendship and new experiences. That way, Love Your Neighbour brings a little of the outside world in for people, and helps people feel part of their changing city rather than left behind by it.

At the beginning of 2017 North London Cares supported 41 such friendships – that's 82 people benefitting from regular interactions across social and generational lines.



Winter Wellbeing

North London Cares' 2015/16 Winter Wellbeing project, the fifth that we have delivered consecutively, was the most ambitious and comprehensive to date.

Supported by Camden and Islington Councils' joint Public Health departments and our partnership with Octopus Giving, our unique seasonal outreach programme helped neighbours over the age of 65 to stay warm, active, healthy and connected during the most isolating time of the year.

This year, our team of community outreach officers and young professional volunteers knocked on 4,000 doors, speaking face-to-face with 1,710 older neighbours, and a further 527 people over the telephone through partnerships with Age UK Camden and Age UK Islington.



In total 441 people received further help such as a referral to the local Council for a boiler repair or energy advice, guidance on benefits or how to keep warm, or other physical or mental health interventions.

Our team also delivered 71 blankets and 51 items of warm clothing to neighbours who were suffering from the cold. And another 30 neighbours who had experienced rapid change as a result of the colder weather received a special grant of up to £100. A total of £2,500 was distributed in this way, thanks to our partnership with London Catalyst.

The project allowed us to reach some of the most isolated older neighbours in our home boroughs, including people who might otherwise fall through gaps in the provision of mainstream services, as well as to provide reassurance and build community at an otherwise difficult time.



Special projects

In 2016 we also delivered some special projects, building on our three core programmes and unique position at the intersection of the public, private and community sectors in Camden and Islington.

Through our partnership with Ageing Better in Camden, we began work to include children and teenagers, as well as young professionals, in interactions across the generations.

Meanwhile, we also focused in on one of the most isolated groups in the country: older men. Our BBQs, Concerts, Arsenal trips, Pub Clubs, Games sessions and Brewery tours all contributed to North London Cares increasing its proportion of men engaged in social clubs – from a previous average of 30% to over 50% in some instances.

One of those special projects is our ongoing “North London Stories” podcasting club, which through the power of storytelling and the internet helps older people to feel more valued, vibrant and visible than ever. The first eight editions of the podcast are available to listen to at www.soundcloud.com/northlondoncares.

And one of our best-loved special programmes was our puppet-making series. This 5-week programme through the autumn of 2016, in partnership with Little Angel Theatre, allowed older and younger neighbours to create beautiful puppets – and even more lasting friendships.

Through these interactions, characterisation and the build-up of trust over time, some of our normally more withdrawn older neighbours were able to perform through their puppets and grow hugely in confidence.



Michael: “So much fun, so much enjoyment. When you go home you think, ‘I’ve done something I’ve never done before.’”

Lisa: “This class and the other North London Cares activities I’ve been involved in had a really great mix of people you might not have a chance to meet otherwise, of all different ages and backgrounds.”



Viv: “It’s been nice having all these lovely volunteers to get to know.”



Our impact



In 2016, our supporters Nesta published a major evaluation into the processes, culture and impact of the North London Cares model. The report was based on 18 months of research which started in 2014 and concluded in early 2016. It showed that:

- 📍 Older neighbours who are part of North London Cares' activities generally feel **an increase in wellbeing**, particularly in their **levels of happiness**
- 📍 There is an increase of older neighbours saying they have plenty of **people around to rely on** when they have problems
- 📍 There is a **decrease** in the number of older neighbours reporting that they **miss having people around**
- 📍 Neighbours feel a **greater sense of community** as a result of their participation

The report also showed that people over 75 are the loneliest demographic of people in the UK, while those between 21 and 25 and 25 and 35 are the second and third loneliest groups respectively. This highlights the importance of our mutually beneficial model, bringing together older people and young professionals in rapidly changing communities.

This adds to the already growing evidence that our model works. In 2014, an independent study showed that for older neighbours participating regularly in North London Cares' network:

- ① **73%** report that their **isolation has reduced**
- ① **86%** are better able to **appreciate the world**
- ① **73%** say they are **more active**
- ① **76%** say they have **access to a greater range of experiences**
- ① **77%** report an improvement in their relations **with young people**
- ① **24%** do not attend any social activities **apart from those put on by North London Cares**

The same study showed that of the young professional volunteers who participate with the charity regularly, 98% say they have a greater connection to the community and 97% feel that they are better able to appreciate older people.

And we know that our activities engage people who are most at risk of loneliness, and therefore most at risk of the health and social consequences of that loneliness. For instance, the loneliest groups in the UK include:

- ① The 'oldest old' – 52% of the neighbours we work with are over 80
- ① Older women – 69% of neighbours participating are women
- ① People who live alone – 67% of the neighbours in the Cares Family networks live alone
- ① People who live in social or housing association homes – 59% of older neighbours are social tenants

Case study:

Audrey (86) and Polly (30)

Audrey lives alone. For several years, she loved coming to North London Cares' social clubs with her younger neighbours. Film and storytelling nights in the Cally were her favourites but she also enjoyed weekly sessions in Kentish Town – games clubs, discussion groups and more.

Now, though, Audrey finds it very difficult to get out of her home. Her health is deteriorating, and she often spends evenings on her own. That's where Polly comes in. Polly is 30 years old and works in an entertainment brands company. Originally from Suffolk, Polly now lives with her husband, just down the road from Audrey in Holloway.

Polly visits Audrey at least once a week, and the friends speak on the phone regularly. For Audrey, their relationship has been "like magic". At Christmas time, in particular, when the cold, short days can feel more isolating, Polly gave Audrey so much to look forward to:

"I've had a little wrapped Christmas present every day from Polly and her husband Charlie. Today's was a tin of macaroons. Charlie also bought me and Polly a shared gift – a crossword puzzle book, because we both love crosswords. I can't praise North London Cares enough for the work they do."

Meanwhile, Audrey's friendship has also been wonderful for Polly:

"I've always wanted to spend time with an older person in the community as I'm so aware of the unnecessary isolation they can feel which is purely through circumstance. There are so many older individuals who have so much to offer, are fun to spend time with and who you can learn a lot from. If I can help offer some company and help in any way, I want to do that.

"I love visiting Audrey every week. Audrey and I have struck up a great, easy-going friendship. Just because there's an age gap doesn't mean we don't have a lots in common. For example, we both love theatre, reading, ginger biscuits and car boot sales. We also listen to each other's problems (Audrey always has great advice) and most importantly we make each other laugh."





“I love visiting Audrey every week. Audrey and I have struck up a great, easy-going friendship. Just because there’s an age gap doesn’t mean we don’t have lots in common.” **Polly**

Community fundraising

Over the past two years, community fundraising has become a key part of North London Cares' community networked approach. As well as helping to finance our work, it offers a fourth way for young professionals to be involved in supporting their neighbours and their community, in addition to our three core delivery programmes. This year, young professionals have supported their neighbours in so many ways, including through:

- ♥ Twice yearly pub quizzes in popular venues in Camden and Islington
- ♥ Our innovative #7DaysToRaise online campaign through which people baked, raced and cooked up several hundred pounds of donations within a week
- ♥ The Big Give Christmas Challenge – a match funded online campaign through which we raised £5,108 from 92 people
- ♥ Dozens of challenge events, including the London 2 Cambridge walk, in which 15 people trekked 50km and another three walked 100km to raise money for North London Cares



Thank you to each of the more than 100 people who raised money for North London Cares in 2015/16.

And thank you, too, to all the businesses and individuals who donated raffle prizes for our various fundraising initiatives in 2016. There are too many to name here, but the generosity we receive from so many local people is inspiring, and we're so grateful for all that support and encouragement.

Over the past year North London Cares also invested in a new Development Coordinator to support our Head of Development to increase and diversify the number and ways in which local people can help us to raise even more money to support more friendships in 2017. We're so excited to see the results of those new campaigns.

Our supporters

We're so grateful to all our major funders, who help make our ambitious activities a reality and who support all the social clubs and relationships that occur through North London Cares with generous grants, donations and in-kind support.

In 2016, those supporters included:



We also receive hugely generous donations from a number of donors who wish to remain anonymous. Their humility is matched by our gratitude for their support. North London Cares wouldn't be what it is without them.



Our finances

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	15/16	14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12
	£				
Incoming Resources	334,525	190,485	152,235	102,929	46,969
Grants	52%	62%	65%	66%	72%
Donations	31%	23%	19%	0%	0%
Commissions	12%	15%	15%	34%	28%
Resources Expended	306,274	179,606	131,069	74,011	32,314
Direct charitable expenditure	86%	93%	92%	N/A	N/A
Management, fundraising, etc.	14%	7%	8%	N/A	N/A
Net Resources	28,251	10,879	21,166	28,917	14,655

BALANCE SHEET

	15/16	14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12
	£				
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	1,376	1,321	1,531	1,151	830
Current Assets					
Debtors	1,300	-	372	364	216
Cash at hand in bank	122,955	80,191	70,912	45,138	15,826
Total	124,255	80,191	71,284	45,502	16,042
Creditors	21,674	5,896	5,896	3,081	2,217
Net Current Assets	102,491	75,616	64,737	42,421	13,825
Total Funds	103,867	75,616	64,737	43,572	14,655

DETAILED STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE

	15/16	14/15
	£	
Staff costs	181,050	111,586
Direct costs of raising funds	13,473	3,066
Direct costs of charitable activities	61,553	38,501
Rent and office running costs	10,920	7,657
Insurance	1,156	1,053
Advertising and marketing	1,086	3,406
Printing, postage and stationery	6,640	-
Other office expenses	479	-
Staff development	3,273	-
Travel and subsistence	10,077	-
Website	684	4,884
Evaluation and consultancy	7,195	6,620
Accountancy costs	2,550	1,330
Independent examination costs	750	700
Subscriptions	1,972	-
Telephone and internet	2,388	-
Depreciation	1,028	803
Total Expenditure	306,274	179,606

In the press

For much of 2016 we had a moratorium on press opportunities in order to focus on building the most sustainable, relatable community network possible. We did, however, enjoy the stories that featured some of the wonderful older and younger neighbours we work with:



the guardian

“Cocktails and cabaret bring the generations together for Christmas”

December 2016

“Polly Keane, 30, from Suffolk, volunteers with North London Cares, a charity connecting older and younger people. “I love visiting Audrey every week,” she said. “We’ve struck up a great, easy-going friendship. We also listen to each other’s problems – Audrey always has great advice. And most importantly we make each other laugh.”



The Observer

“Ten ways to beat loneliness”

February 2016

“It’s easy to become isolated in a big city like London, but charity North London Cares is working to build a sense of community by bringing together young professionals and their older neighbours at regular social events and through one-to-one activities. Founder Alex Smith is adamant it’s not a “befriending” scheme as the benefits are two-way, with the younger volunteers getting as much out of the interactions as the older participants. A similar scheme has been launched in south London.”





“Nine great things to do in London”

February 2016

“Ever wondered who your neighbours are? North London Cares organises meet-ups between young professionals and their older neighbours in Islington and Camden. Try out one of their cooking clubs or pottery painting classes, where you can hang out and learn from those who need a bit of laughter in their life.”



COMMUTE BLOG

January 2017

“Through the club I’ve met young people again and it’s wonderful, just wonderful. We tell you about our experiences and our life. Sometimes you’re quite amused by it, sometimes educated by it. In turn we ask you about technology because generally we don’t know a bloody thing about it. It’s lovely to talk to you youngsters, you keep us clued in.”



“Being creative with time”

January 2017

“I realised I didn’t have many stories from older people as they don’t tend to travel by Tube. I spent a day with North London Cares and South London Cares, two charities which bring together older Londoners and their younger neighbours. We went on the Tube to the London Transport Museum for a day out. It really opened my eyes to how challenging the Tube is for people who aren’t as mobile.”



Our team



Alex Smith

is the Chief Executive of North London Cares, having founded the charity in 2011. Alex also runs our sister charity South London Cares. He was born and raised in north London and still lives in the community. He is governor at Holloway School, and was formerly editor of a popular website and worked in communications for Ed Miliband.



Indie Shergill

is Head of Programmes at North London Cares (maternity cover). His role comprises curating content for social clubs, managing relationships with our partners in the community, and supporting the rest of the team to succeed. Indie was co-founder of Rootless Garden, a social enterprise working with older people, before joining North London Cares.



Emily Clarke

is Head of Development at North London Cares, as well as our sister charity South London Cares. Emily works with individuals, companies, charities and other stakeholders across London to help raise money to make our activities possible.



Victoria Buckle

is Development Coordinator at North London Cares. That means she works with volunteers, partners, local businesses and neighbours to help make our fundraising as engaging as possible.



Laura De Souza

is Head of Programmes at North London Cares, on maternity leave until mid 2017. Laura is responsible for managing relationships and curating our programmes, including by managing our team. Laura previously worked in TV production and in nursing homes.



Joe Cox

is Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator at North London Cares. Joe's role involves identifying neighbours at risk of isolation, and managing our volunteer network including by hosting monthly inductions.



Mike Evans

is Senior Programme Coordinator (Social Clubs) at North London Cares. Mike runs a big proportion of our social clubs, and supports the rest of the team to keep activities as fresh and engaging as possible.



Rosie Clewlow

is Programme Coordinator (Social Clubs) at North London Cares, hosting many of our social clubs and making sure they run smoothly and with vibrancy at their heart.



Helena Kipling

is Programme Coordinator (Love Your Neighbour) at North London Cares, managing our one-to-one programme and supporting neighbours to get the most out of their friendships.

In 2016, North London Cares also benefitted from the hard work and creativity of Roger Duffy and Rebecca Serra. We're very grateful for their contribution to North London Cares and wish them all the best in the future.

Our trustees

Josie Cluer

has been Chair of North London Cares and South London Cares since 2013. She is a Director at EY, focusing on transforming local public services. Josie is an adviser to the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, was a Special Adviser in Gordon Brown's government and trains women who aspire to public office. Josie was formerly a school governor and a trustee of Alcohol Concern.

David Hayman

is Team Leader at Bridgespan Group. As a strategy specialist, David has previously expanded charities across regions in India and the UK. He was formerly Senior Head of Operations at The Prince's Trust and before that a consultant at Accenture. David also helped set up educational charity Future First and was a trustee at Tackle Africa.

Ben Wilson

is Business Manager EMEA at Noble Group and, as a qualified accountant, has twelve years' financial experience under his belt. He was formerly at Mitsubishi UFJ Securities, Nomura International and Reuters. Ben holds an MBA and supports North London Cares and South London Cares' financial planning and management.

David Easton

is an Investment Manager at CDC Group, responsible for investments in Africa and South East Asia. David was previously at Bridges Ventures and before that worked for the Tony Blair Africa Governance Initiative and McKinsey & Company. As well as working with North London Cares and South London Cares, David is on the Steering Committee for the Greenwich Free School and is a mentor on the OnPurpose Social Enterprise Leadership scheme.

Nick Wigmore

is a sports coach with 10 years' experience in youth work and social enterprise. He was a Programme Officer at Future First and co-founded goalkeeping school Safe Hands.

Chief Executive's message



It's hard to believe that, in 2017, North London Cares will turn six years old. Ever since we first began our work connecting people who don't normally interact, amid the social seizure of rioting on London's streets in summer 2011, we've worked hard to develop a vision that makes a difference.

That vision has now taken us through 10,000 attendances at 1,175 social clubs and over 3,000 one-to-one hours. Younger and older neighbours are now approaching 100,000 shared interactions across social, generational, digital and attitudinal divides.

And as the pages in this report hopefully show, those interactions have always focused on helping people feel valued, vibrant and visible – so that people can feel a part of their rapidly changing city, rather than left behind by it.

Heading into 2017, of course, our context is different from that in 2011. Division has metastasised from our politics and media, to our streets, and back again. Disconnection in our connected age has raised new questions about how we understand and interact with one another. And it's raised ever more urgent questions about what people from different life experiences really can gain from one another.

We believe that North London Cares is an example of quite how much building bridges across those divides matters. As Maria and Nicola show at the beginning of this report, spending time builds trust, it builds understanding and it builds community. It also helps people to improve their health. And most importantly, it gives people a sense of identity. Or, as Paul puts it on page 11: "you belong".

North London Cares has undergone some significant changes itself over 2016. We've added four new members to our committed staff team. We've published our second major impact evaluation which shows that our model works at reducing isolation. And in early 2017 our new Director of Operations, Tess Young, will begin to help us improve our impact even more.

We've also significantly increased our budgets, for the fifth year in a row and we're particularly proud that donations now make up 31% of our income: that's young people running marathons and taking on inspiring challenges to help their older neighbours stay connected; it's corporations investing in their communities; and it's local people making donations online because they identify with north London, and the people who make it what it is.

But, as the old adage goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. So in 2017, while we continue to develop – with fresh new social clubs, more Love Your Neighbour friendships, and the most targeted Winter Wellbeing project we've ever completed – we will also redouble our efforts to make sure that our older and younger neighbours remain at the centre of North London Cares' vision.

Thanks to everyone – all the thousands of people – who are a part of this community network. You make it what it is, and we can't wait to spend more time with you in 2017 and beyond.

Alex Smith

Chief Executive, North London Cares





Chair's message

The past year has been one of transformation, for North London Cares, for The Cares Family as a whole, and for the issue of loneliness and disconnection across our communities more generally.

With drastic changes in local and national government, and more oncoming; with new evidence about the impact of loneliness on people's health and the health service being created all the time; and with awareness of the crisis of disconnection growing – we collectively find ourselves at a moment of great challenge as well as great opportunity.

Our job at North London Cares is increasingly changing from merely seeing, understanding and tackling those issues at a local level, in Camden and Islington, to banging the drum at the multi-regional and national level – for more initiatives like ours that bring people together and create community; for new investments that will save the NHS money; and for the very real issues that we identified six years ago to be taken ever more seriously.

We're proud of our model, because it works; independent research in 2016 has shown that again. Older neighbours report feeling closer to their community as a result of being part of North London Cares' activities. They have more people to rely on in times of need. They feel happier, and better connected. They miss having people around less than they once might have, because they have new friends and new experiences.

With loneliness shown to be as bad for people's health as obesity or smoking 15 cigarettes a day, with one in ten GP appointments taken up by an older person with no other condition than that they're lonely, and with "The Age of Loneliness" ruining lives, we know that our model can do more to help connect more people.

That's why, beginning in 2017, we will seek to expand our work. In 2013/14 we began that process by building South London Cares. Three years on, we're ready to replicate again – and we're looking at whether our approach first developed at North London Cares can work in additional big cities around the UK.

The Cares Family model is not the whole answer to this crisis of loneliness. The challenge may get bigger and more difficult before it is solved: we're alert to that. Local authorities, private care firms, voluntary sector organisations, communities and families will all need to do more.

But because we know that our model is effective, and because we know that for every £1 invested in initiatives to tackle loneliness, £3 is saved to the state, we feel passionately that The Cares Family's local, identity-based approach can be a vital part of a bigger picture – especially in communities experiencing rapid change – to help bring that most heartbreaking scourge of loneliness to an end.

Starting in 2017, we look forward to working with more partners to make more progress than ever. If you feel that your community could benefit from a little more togetherness and connection please do contact us, or visit northlondoncares.org.uk.

Josie Cluer

Chair, North London Cares



