

BJF

Newsletter

Spring / Summer 2024



Looking back, thinking forward...

Contents



- introduction by CEO Sue Read
- message from BJB Patron Joan Walley.

Project Updates

(Website links)

- [Dementia advocacy](#)
- [Bereavement](#)
- [Digital Inclusion: Tea & Tech](#)
- [Centre for Intergenerational Practice, Research & Development \(CIPRD\)](#)
- [Even Better Together](#)
- [Community Hub Library](#)
- [Creative Lives](#)
- [Make It Happen: Storytelling Project](#)
- [Keele Institute for Social Inclusion \(KISI\): Parks, Playtimes, Working Together](#)
- [Patient Information Education Resource \(PIER\)](#)
- [Social Prescribing](#)
- [Volunteering](#)
- [Linking Generations Northern Ireland \(LGNI\).](#)

Introduction

As Sir Winston Churchill reminded us, *'The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you can see'*, in other words, the past has a pivotal role in informing and shaping the present and the future. For this Spring issue of our newsletter, we will reflect on what has happened during 2023 and briefly introduce what is currently happening now at the [Beth Johnson Foundation](#) and how it has been informed by our past. It is indeed a challenging time for the



charity sector, as we all compete for reduced funding pots and many older community members have to make difficult daily decisions about priorities in their day to day lives.

On reflection, during 2023 we had to make many decisions, but we also maintained our focus around helping local older members to

have a good later life. Whether this was through our monthly unfunded yet popular Tea and Tech sessions; or through developing partnerships with others to extend our reach for members to access even more creative activities to reduce isolation and loneliness. We continued to ensure that our cosy library facilities were regularly available, further extended by our story writing and poetry sessions with local authors and poets; and our bereavement friendship groups continued to flourish, with additional Lottery funding until March 2025. We were determined that our dementia advocacy support project would continue and are delighted to announce that we have now secured [ICB](#) funding until March 2025.

Our intergenerational projects continue to flourish, working with our partners at [St John's Primary School](#) and [Keele University](#), and we launched our collaborative network the [Centre for Intergenerational Practice, Research, and Development \(CIPRD\)](#) in November 2023. Whatever the activity or project, what underpins all our work is our passion and determination to support a great later life for our ageing communities, doing the best we can with the resources we secure. Our volunteers remain important



to us, helping us to extend our quality provision to as many older members as possible and helping to inform what we deliver. I want to thank our Patron, Joan Walley, and our Trustees Board who continue to freely steer the Foundation through choppy waters. Our staff are largely part time and continue to work together to ensure that the Foundation does as much as it can within the confines of the funding secured.

Sue Read, CEO, BJF

Sue Read

A message from BJF Patron, Joan Walley

It's good to be in touch with all of you who do so much for the Beth Johnson Foundation. I can't believe that it's spring again already and another year has flown by. The years certainly speed up as you get older! As the snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils buds begin to bloom, a symbol of energy and hope. We at the Foundation are determined to bring that same sense of renewal into the work that we do and the support that we offer.

This year I'm all too aware that both local councils and our wonderful NHS are operating under enormous financial pressures. The public sector is seeing its budgets squeezed. That means two things. Firstly, the voluntary sector has an even bigger part to play in reaching out to older people and secondly, we have a huge responsibility to make sure the services we do provide are delivered as efficiently as possible and to maximum effect. Against this background we have been fortunate in being able to retain our NHS funding for the dementia advocacy services we provide.



I am only too aware that receipt of this money comes with a commitment on our part to make sure that we find new ways of working alongside our NHS and social service colleagues to make sure that the people who rely on our work get the best possible service. As spring turns into summer, I hope that we can forge new partnerships and new ways of working so that the NHS commissioners are fully assured that they can depend on us to go above and beyond in the work that we do and the support that we offer to our ageing communities.

Joan Walley, Patron, BJF

Dementia Advocacy

The [Dementia advocacy](#) project has recently celebrated 25 years of providing support for people living with dementia to have their voices and wishes heard,



and their rights upheld. Since it started, the project has supported thousands of people living with dementia, with the benefits of advocacy support cascading to many others involved in the lives of the people we have worked with. The last year has seen some changes; a completely new team and an expansion to three advocates – all of whom have settled into their roles well and embraced the opportunity to be part of

such a vital support service. The success of the project is due to the hard work and diligence of the staff involved.

“I've found my first year working as an advocate for people living with dementia an incredibly rewarding experience. I have been surprised by how quite often, what service providers or family members deemed as being the 'right' support for a client, was the opposite of what the client wanted. Every client's experience of living with dementia has been different and their perspective unique in how they perceive the world around them. Working in a personal centred way has really helped me to ensure that their voice has been heard and that crucial decisions about their health and social care have been made with a clients' involvement, even when they have been assessed as lacking capacity.” – **Clare, Dementia Advocate**



We also offer our clients the opportunity of joining our Dementia Advocacy Peer Support (DAPS) group, which is facilitated

by the project team. This group meets once a month in the community room here at BJJ and offers a safe space where people living with dementia can meet and support each other, without their carers or family members, and talk freely about the things on their minds. “I’ve had such a lot of support from the people here. The family don’t accept that I have dementia, they say it’s just my age and that

makes it very hard for me to talk to them, I know the people here understand.” - **DAPS member**

As well as being a helpful, supportive environment for the members, the group provides valuable insights into the life experiences of people with dementia. “It has been a privilege to support the members of the DAPS Group. It has given me valuable insight into the experiences of living with dementia and I continue to learn from the group.” – **Jackie, Dementia Advocate**

For more information of our project contact the team on 01782 844036 or visit <https://www.bjf.org.uk/dementia-advocacy/>

Bereavement Friendship

Here at the [BJF](#), we recognise that there is no guidebook for grief; everyone is different, and no two people will experience grieving in the same way. Equally, we know that when it comes to support, what one person finds helpful, another may



find overwhelming. Having options is key.

People who join our [Bereavement Friendship](#) project can choose from a

range of free group peer support opportunities across Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire, or our short term 1:1 telephone befriending offer. Finding the courage to join a group can be hard, and for people who rely on public transport, having local options for support is vital. So, we are working hard to establish our groups in a range of accessible, community venues.

For people who find the thought of meeting in a group too daunting, our volunteers can offer short term one to one telephone befriending, giving people the opportunity to talk about their grief from the safety of their own home. Our project has been hugely successful. Since our first group session in September 2022, we have supported 85 people at our groups in Harthill, Biddulph, Leek, Weston Coyney and Loggerheads, and a further 75 people have received support from our telephone befrienders. “You sit at home thinking you are the only one going through this awful time. But to come here today and realise there are so many others – all of

Bereavement Friendship Groups



Support for bereaved people aged 50+
Groups meet **once a month**, 10.30am—12noon at

- St Andrew’s Church, Weston Coyney
(1st Monday of the month)
- Beth Johnson Foundation, Harthill
(1st Wednesday of the month)
- Loggerheads Fire Station (1st Friday of the month)
- Biddulph Town Hall (2nd Wednesday of the month)
- John Hall Wellness Gardens (2nd Friday of the month)

us just doing what we can to get through such sadness... It has made me feel much less lonely, and now I have people I can talk to who understand. I'm not alone anymore." – **Group member**. The need for this this type of bereavement support is evident. Grieving people have told us they need a safe space which provides empathy and understanding of the effect that losing a loved one can have. So, we are delighted to share that thanks to funding from the National Lottery, we are now able to continue to offer this vital and much needed support for people who are living with loss until March 2025. For more information or to make a referral please contact Amanda on 01782 844036 or email bereavement@bjf.org.uk

Digital Inclusion: Tea & Tech

Following our involvement in the successful, Stoke-on-Trent City wide, [Discover Digital](#) project in 2022, alongside Staffordshire University, VAST and Wavemaker, we continued to develop our digital offer including technical support and digital assistance to our local 50+ community. [Tea & Tech](#) is a digital friends initiative in collaboration with the OLGBT Stoke group. Tea & Tech started in January 2023 as 10-week programme led by BJF Volunteer Manager Patsy Corcoran and supported by BJF volunteers. Over the last 12 months we have continued to offer Tea & Tech sessions at Parkfield House (on the last Monday of each month) supporting between 12-20 people per session and engaging with over 200 people during 2023. We offer help and guidance from operating smartphones and computers to using Google and social media.



BJF volunteers have provided some one-to-one digital support to people outside of the group sessions when needed. We are building strong links with local colleges, care homes and local community groups to ensure our digital offer continues to grow in 2024. Tea & Tech is about providing opportunities for conversations over a cuppa and biscuits in a warm, safe, welcoming space, helping to develop confidence, and reducing the digital divide.

Centre for Intergenerational Practice, Research & Development (CIPRD)

The Beth Johnson Foundation, in partnership with Apples and Honey Nightingale are resurrecting the [Centre for Intergenerational Practice, Research and](#)



[Development](#) (England)

Intergenerational activity is about more than bringing younger and older people together. It is a systemic approach to community development and wellbeing that recognises and values the contribution of all generations who live there. We all have a role in supporting the growth of intergenerational approaches collaboration.

We are in the process of:

- exploring funding to support the necessary infrastructures for our work.
- undergoing a rebranding exercise
- establishing a Steering Group to help support the development of the vision and direction of the national organisation
- developing a membership for England of people and organisations keen to develop and further intergenerational approaches in their work
- developing a network across England which could be led by key organisations across the country and then feed into an English network to share. The network could be a mixture of online and in person meetings (possibly 3 times each year per area)
- critically exploring several advisory groups to strategically capture the developing themes across the current intergenerational arena and work in partnership with organisations leading in this area
- establishing connections with National Government and policy directives
- developing a model of good practice to integrate the voices of people (younger and older members) throughout the Centre
- creating a social media platform.



Even Better Together

Beth Johnson Foundation (BJF) along with [Father Hudson's Care](#) (FHC) and [Methodist Homes](#) (MHA) are working together for three years, to support older people living with dementia in our communities. We share ideas, skills, and knowledge to help older people to stay well and to improve their wellbeing where possible. We understand that social connections are an important part of good health and wellbeing. We help older people to stay in touch with friends and family, make new social connections reducing loneliness in our community.

We help staff, volunteers, and communities to learn new skills and grow a deeper understanding of dementia and advocacy. Learning Together is our training programme for staff and volunteers who want to be dementia champions in our community. We focus on understanding dementia,



developing our advocacy skills, and making sure our groups and activities are dementia friendly. We share stories of supporting older people in our communities and we listen to the voices of people with lived experience. FHC now have more than ten volunteers and carers who are Dementia Champions leading and supporting lunch clubs and activity groups in our community. MHA staff joined our Learning Together programme in 2023 and we are busy planning more sessions for MHA managers, staff and volunteers including online sessions in 2024.

Community Hub Library



At the start of 2023 we were pleased to welcome an addition to our Community Hub room, at Hartshill, a free library service. With support from our BJF volunteers, Sue Humphries and Mariet Schepers took charge of cataloguing all the donated books and overseeing the lending and returning of them. Every Thursday the Community Hub Library is open to the public between

10-2pm to come sit, read, chat, and take away a book. Our BJF library also formed a foundation and staging area for our Storytelling programme of workshops between April and October.

Creative lives

[Creative Lives](#) have funded a unique opportunity for four local charities to work together to develop a creative programme to benefit diverse marginalised older populations. This included isolated older people who live alone; intergenerational groups; people from deprived areas; [LGBTQ](#) groups; people from ethnically diverse communities; people with poor mental health; and people from low-income households. Four charities collaborated to provide various sessions, where any member from across the four charities could join in any of the sessions across the different activities.



The BJF focussed on pottery and polymer activities to help members to feel good. We provided eight half-day workshops for participants to create variations of pottery (plant pots, small plates, polymer figures etc.) and to have a hand massage or Indian Head massage. These activities would help to reduce social isolation and enhance engagement for local older communities and young students from St Johns Primary School. These were delivered at Parkfield House by local ceramicists and clinicians.

Make It Happen: Storytelling Project

In April of last year, we were fortunate to secure funding from the second round of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's 'Make it Happen' fund, to run a project with [creativity and storytelling](#) at its heart. Working alongside project partners OLGBT and local writer and poet Alan Barrett, we put together a programme of eight community sessions over four months. These regularly attended workshops were each held in the Community Hub Library at our home in Hartshill. With the aim of bringing people together from the local community, to improve social inclusion and promote adult literacy, in total programme sessions were attended by 72 people. Wordsmith and programme facilitator Alan worked with the groups, taking



them on a journey through the art of storytelling both written and verbal through poetry and prose. Over the weeks the community grew and so to do their confidence, which led to many of those involved contributing to a published paperback book of 'Spilled Words' filled with poems representing themselves, launched at an end of project celebration in October. The lasting hope is that this project and the community hub library will act as a catalyst to support the local community in having access to a warm, safe, and friendly space to access books, be creative and make friends.

KISI: Intergenerational 'Pebble Project'

Last year saw us work in close collaboration with the Keele Institute of Social Inclusion on an [Intergenerational project](#) involving local primary school children from St John's. The project titled Parks' Playtimes and Working together, brought young and older generations in contact for a series of sessions. These three interactive occasions were designed to share experiences and memories of play. Together the groups who painted pebbles with images of games and playtimes visited Hanley Park for a day of activities which were captured in a film charting the projects impact.



PIER

Despite the many challenges over the last few years, we continue to achieve significant engagement with patients through this project, which offers support, information, and signposting for patients with arthritis and related conditions. While the [patient information and resource centre \(PIER\)](#) at the Haywood Hospital had to close in March 2020 due to Covid, the service was able to continue online. Following this our base at the hospital closed suddenly due to structural issues with the roof. However, the [PIER](#) has now reopened and is currently based at Bradwell Hospital. With help and support



from our loyal volunteers we have rebuilt our programme of work as well as continuing our work in the community with partners, for example, with Keele University to link arthritis research with practice and the offering of Tai Chi classes at [Port Vale FC](#), [Brough Park Leisure Centre](#) in Leek, and [Audley Village Hall](#).

The rebuilding of the Haywood Hospital is now underway, and we look forward to working, once again, at our former base, to deliver this successful programme of work.

Social Prescribing

Over the last year our social prescriber Lianne Burton has worked closely with Communities, GPs, and clinical staff across the Staffordshire Moorlands. She has supported people to tackle Social isolation, signpost people to services, supported onward referrals, attended groups, delivered face to face and home visits, provided short term and longer term support, and delivered presentations to community groups to introduce the [Social Prescribing](#) role, and introducing herself and colleagues. This has opened options for self-referrals and more community referral pathways. The impact has led to

reductions in social isolation, people becoming more physically active with this impacting positively on mental and physical wellbeing, people regaining independence, boosting self-esteem and confidence. Enabling people to work through barriers to improve their overall wellbeing, allowing them to move forward and take control of any difficulties, connecting people to each other and appropriate services which can provide specialist support.



Working in conjunction BJJ and other Social Prescribers we have overseen the successful set up of the Leek and Biddulph Bereavement groups. Over the past year, Social Prescriber Lianne has set up support through community drop-ins at Leek Foodbank which has proven very successful in engaging with a cohort of the community that do not attend their GP practice regularly. It has proven very beneficial for promoting the service and embedding the SP role into the community.

Volunteering

BJF Volunteers are passionate about [volunteering](#) and are committed to supporting the BJJ to thrive. This year the team have worked with us on our engagement and inclusion work, to help us reach more people in our



communities. Volunteers joined the BJJ Awayday with staff and Board members to think about what we are doing well, what we can do more of and what we want to do in future. As well as providing office support, volunteers lead and support our BJJ Community Library, Tea & Tech sessions, and community activities. These include promoting our activities

online and delivering leaflets across our local area. Volunteers provide regular support to community members in the BJJ Bereavement Friendship Groups and provide some telephone befriending calls. Some volunteers helped to deliver training on the Even Better Together project - Learning Together, by sharing their lived experience as carers for people with dementia.

Our Creative Lives and Creative Storytelling programmes were supported by our volunteer team, and they had lots of fun joining in too. Always ready to help, our volunteers make sure everyone that visits Parkfield House receives a warm welcome, a listening ear and lots of smiles. The team suggested we organise an event in January for the Great Winter Get Together, a [Jo Cox Foundation national](#) initiative. Volunteers led plans and preparations helping local people to connect and to achieve a successful event together.



We are recruiting new volunteers to help our activities to grow. To find out more visit our website and watch our short film 'Thank You Volunteers'

<https://youtu.be/ZM4Msdf59EM?si=FYK8LWZdjgoozEog>

Linking Generations Northern Ireland (LGNI)



Over the past year the [Linking Generations NI](#) team have been working hard to promote and develop intergenerational approaches across NI. LGNI are delighted that their network has recently reached a membership of 900, creating a strong community of practice across the country and beyond. It's great to see the increasing support and enthusiasm for connecting

generations in the

communities where we live, work, and go to school and the contribution that this makes to creating a truly 'Age-friendly' society! LGNI are looking forward to joining 14 other countries across the globe to celebrate [Global Intergenerational Week 2024!](#) As part of the campaign in NI LGNI will be supporting 40 intergenerational activities and events and lots more!



Here are just some of the things we've been involved in over the past year:

- LGNI network meetings – over 60 people attended to discuss everything intergenerational
- LGNI's Across Borders & Generations Project – Our fab intergenerational trip to Carlingford involving young and old north and south of the border.
- LGNI Arty Generations Project – Older and younger people in 3 communities are taking part in intergenerational arts activities
- UK Creating Intergenerational Communities project – LGNI joined UK partners in Glasgow to discuss their new quality programme involving 5 pilots in NI
- Mid & East Antrim Age Well Awards – LGNI were delighted to sponsor and present the Intergenerational Partnerships Award.

Beth Johnson Ramblers

The Beth Johnson Ramblers have been connected to the Beth Johnson Foundation for many years and still hold their regular meetings here. We want to identify reciprocal ways to support each other, exploring fruitful ways of working together, as we move forward. Please note, they are a separate organisation, and anyone interested in joining can do so with the information provided below.

The Beth Johnson Leisure Association (BJLA) which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2023, promotes walking as a recreational activity for those over 50 years of age. It encourages fellowship to improve the quality of life for its members, whilst enjoying our beautiful countryside. The events are organised by the members themselves, co-ordinated by a committee of volunteers. We have a programme of weekly walks departing from various points. There are currently five walking groups representing different levels of walks depending on the length and assessment of difficulty of the terrain. For example,



the A group generally walk up to 10 miles and travel further out of the area to their start point. The B and BX groups walk to a maximum of 7 and 9 miles respectively and the C groups, of which there are two, walk up to 5 miles.

There are occasional social events organised for/by members and we are considering a small number of coach rambles for the 2024 walk programme. There is an annual membership subscription - currently set at £5.00 per person. We recommend that all walkers wear the appropriate footwear and clothing. Your own transport is required to get to the various start points and unfortunately, we cannot welcome pets on the walks.

Check out our website – bethjohnsonramblers.co.uk. You can contact us by email at info.bjlaramblers@gmail.com or by telephone on 07435 873 838.

Thank you from the BJF team!



You can find out more about BJF by visiting our website www.bjf.org.uk, telephoning 01782 844036 and find us on social media.



If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please contact admin@bjf.org.uk or ring 01782 844036.

