



# 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 annual accounting year September 1 2015 to August 31 2016 as submitted in our annual accounts.

# A message from Joyce



**Until recently I would certainly spend too much time alone. It's not nice but I'd get used to it in the end. But when South London Cares phoned me up, I thought it would be good to get to know some new people. They introduced me to Emily, a young girl who works just around the corner in Vauxhall.**

Emily's such a lovely girl, she's always smiling. I've become so attached to her. She comes around and visits me, she tells me about her week and we have a good chat. Sometimes she'll bring me little things – but I don't see her as a helper: really we're just good friends. I love her weekly visits, and all the things she talks about. I love hearing about her flat mates, the weddings she goes to, and her work.

I think she enjoys hearing about what I was doing when I was her age. Things have changed so much, the way we worked and the way we lived. I've lived in south London all my life – my patch in Vauxhall in particular is like a different place altogether these days. I don't get out much now, which is a shame. But having these new friends brings so much fun and helps me a lot.

At the end of last year, Emily did something so special for me. She came around with her sister, who I'd heard so much about and had wanted to meet for a while – and together with the two of them and two of Emily's other friends we had a proper Christmas party, five of us girls. We had a right laugh. Can you believe they didn't go home till gone ten o'clock? I slept well after that, I have to say!

The girls brought me chocolate and we had some of my sherry too. The best bit was when we got in a circle, crossed hands, and pulled crackers together.

We have quite a laugh together, and although she's much younger than me, we've got laughing in common. We're like a couple of kids when we get together. She keeps me going, and gives me something to look forward to every week. She's coming round again soon and I can't wait. We talk to each other like we've known each other for years! I adore her company.

**Joyce, Vauxhall**



# A message from Emily



**I know from experience that so many young people in London are always so busy buzzing around between working and socialising. It's really easy to get swept up in all the excitement of new things to eat, drink and do in London, and forget that there are people that aren't able to get out and experience those things or don't have anyone to spend their spend their days with.**

I only moved to south London four years ago, and I started volunteering for South London Cares because I wanted to get to know some of my older neighbours who've been living here their whole lives, to learn about their experiences growing up here and bring a bit of the new excitement of London to them.

It's easy to feel like you are too busy to fit anything else into your life, but actually when I started visiting Joyce I realised how such a small amount of my time, just a couple of hours a week, means so much to her. I'm so glad to call Joyce a friend now.

Joyce also means a lot to me. She's hilarious – she's always making jokes or coming out with expressions that I don't understand, and we spend most of our time together laughing. It's really nice to know that I'm able to give her some of the little things that I take for granted, that she can enjoy too rarely these days – chatting, cooking dinner or having coffee with a friend.

And she really loves her flat, so I can help her keep it lovely by doing little odd-jobs like putting up curtains; little things that she would struggle to do herself.

I love the feeling of community at South London Cares. I've got my friends involved by joining in with pub quizzes to raise money for the activities, and of course at Christmas we had a little party at Joyce's flat. That's something I'll never forget.

I hope that more people will join the South London Cares community, and support their aim of bringing older and younger people together. It's something which I believe is becoming more important as our city and communities continue to change. I hope that more people gain as much from their friendships with their older neighbours as I do.

**Emily, Vauxhall**

# South London Cares' vision

**South 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 Southwark and Lambeth, the rush and pace of the capital can often now feel overwhelming. Getting around can be frightening, and trends including globalisation, gentrification, migration, digitisation and the housing bubble are transforming communities faster than ever before.

The multiplying effect of those pressures is that many older people have deep roots – from Bermondsey to Brixton – but few connections. Meanwhile, young professionals – often graduates from across the country and around the world – can have hundreds of connections including through social media, but fewer roots in their communities.

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

South 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**



**76% of older neighbours involved in South London Cares' activities report feeling less isolated as a result**



**81% say they feel 'less lonely'**

South London Cares works closely with our sister charity North London Cares, which adopts the same approach to reducing loneliness in Camden and Islington. Together, the charities are known as 'The Cares Family'. For more information on North London Cares, please visit [www.northlondoncares.org.uk](http://www.northlondoncares.org.uk).

# The year in numbers

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

**1,691**  
one-to-one  
hours

**6,320**  
attendances  
at social  
clubs

**42,082**  
interactions

**238**  
social  
clubs

**6,243**  
volunteer  
hours



**1,500 young professionals and 1,000 older neighbours are now part of the community network.**

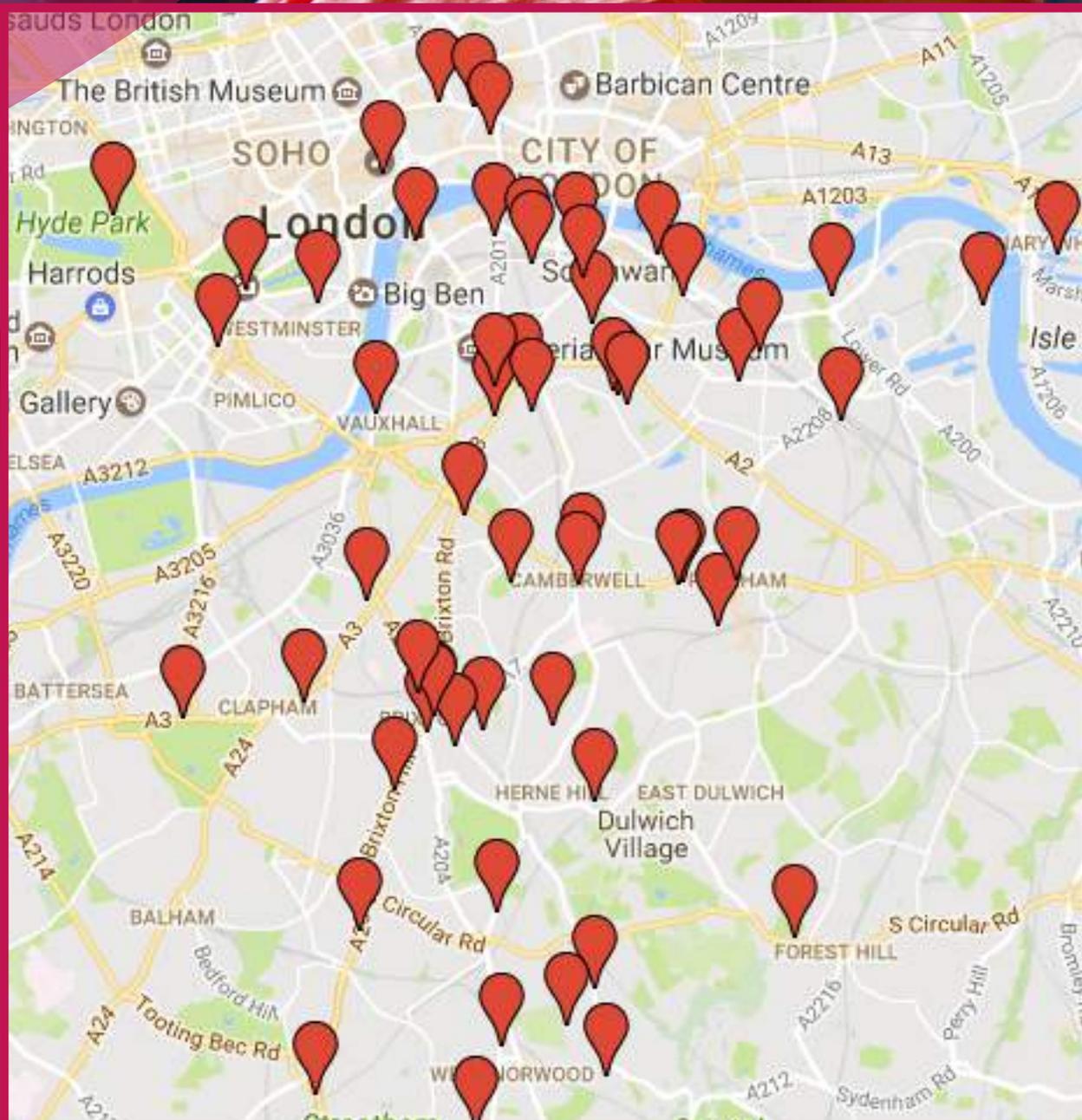
**During the year, we have run activities:**



**Since we began our work in 2014, older and younger neighbours have shared a total of 55,132 interactions, 9,438 volunteer hours, 482 social clubs and 1,980 one-to-one hours.**

# Our patch

South London Cares operates in Southwark and Lambeth. Older neighbours live in those two boroughs, and the vast majority of our activities take place there. In 2016, we also sought to open up more of the city to neighbours in south London with more and more trips to other parts of the capital – including a joint outing with our sister charity, North London Cares.





# Social Clubs

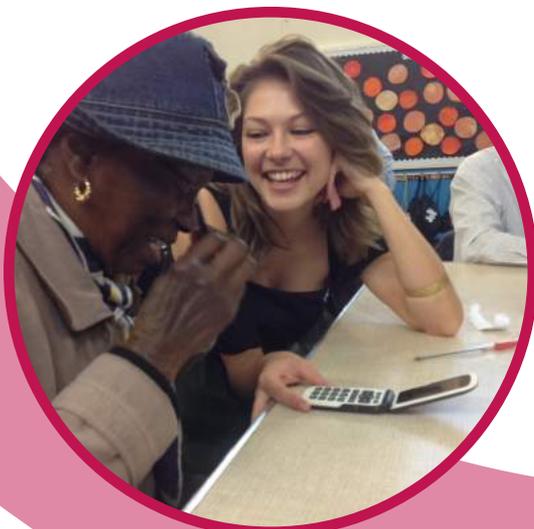
**South London Cares' social clubs are group activities in which older and younger neighbours share time, laughter, friendship and new experiences. We run around 25 social clubs every month – in total, 238 during 2016.**

Each club offers something to look

forward to, and an opportunity for older and younger neighbours to spend time together, build friendships and enjoy what London's amazing people and places have to offer.

In 2016, we ran 32 different types of social club, which were attended over 6,300 times, including:

- ♥ **Dance parties including ballroom, lindy hop, contemporary, jazz, salsa, reggae and swing**
- ♥ **BBQs**
- ♥ **Film evenings and matinees**
- ♥ **Games nights**
- ♥ **Pub Clubs**
- ♥ **Brewery & distillery visits**
- ♥ **Irish, Indian, Caribbean, Latin, American, Chinese, Olympic, Carnival and Euro 2016 parties**
- ♥ **Creative writing groups**
- ♥ **New tech workshops**
- ♥ **Choir**
- ♥ **Desert Island Discs**





- ♡ Line dancing
- ♡ Parlour games
- ♡ Museum and gallery trips
- ♡ Brunch & lunch clubs
- ♡ Concerts
- ♡ Dinner parties
- ♡ Quiz nights
- ♡ Christmas, Easter and Bonfire Night specials
- ♡ Chocolate making classes
- ♡ Script reading sessions
- ♡ Music groups
- ♡ Arts & crafts including bookbinding, felt making, bag making, mug decorating, life drawing, lantern making, bauble decorating & mask making

# Love Your Neighbour



**Through South London Cares' Love Your Neighbour programme, young professionals and older neighbours spend a little time together one-to-one. Friends, like Joyce and Emily in Vauxhall, will normally enjoy a cup of tea together, and have a natter about all sorts – from work to relationships to days gone by.**

The majority of our older neighbours who are part of the Love Your Neighbour programme are housebound or immobile. Many are referred by NHS services and local authority departments.

We hope that while our volunteers may not do the things that make life liveable, like washing, feeding or dressing people,

they will do the things that make life worth living – like offering friendship, connection and new experiences. That way, they can bring a little of the outside world in for their neighbours.

At the beginning of 2017 South London Cares supported 68 such friendships. That's 136 people benefitting from regular interactions across social and generational lines.

As South London Cares progresses and grows, more of those friendships are getting deeper, and lasting longer. Indeed, 50% of friendships have now lasted six to twelve months, while 40% have now lasted over a year.



# Winter Wellbeing

**South London Cares' unique seasonal outreach programme, Winter Wellbeing, helps our neighbours over the age of 65 to stay warm, active, healthy and connected during the most isolating time of the year.**

In 2015/16, we built on our experience running the programme in the previous year – holding more conversations with isolated older neighbours, and making more interventions and connections than in 2014/15.

This year, our team of community outreach officers and young professional volunteers from corporate partners including Octopus Investments and EY, spoke to 1,175 older neighbours face-to-face. 360 were connected to a 'deeper intervention' such as benefits or energy advice from their local council, a boiler repair, or physical or mental health interventions.

Our team also delivered 98 blankets and items of warm clothing to neighbours who were suffering from the cold. And another 27 neighbours who had experienced rapid change as a result of the colder weather received a special grant of up to £100. A total of £2,000 was distributed in this way, thanks to our partnership with London Catalyst.

Our Winter Wellbeing project allows 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.



# Our impact

In 2016, Nesta published a major evaluation into the processes, culture and impact of the South London Cares model. The report was based on 18 months of research, carried out by independent evaluators Renaisi, which started in 2014 and concluded in early 2016. The report showed that:



- ♥ Older neighbours who are part of South 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.

And it adds to the already growing evidence base that our model works. In 2014, for example, an independent study of our sister charity, North London Cares, with whom we work closely, showed that for older neighbours participating regularly in the network:





73% report that their **isolation has reduced**



73% say they are **more active**



86% are **better able to appreciate the world**



76% say they have **access to a greater range of experiences**

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:



The 'oldest old' – 52% of the neighbours we work with are over 80



Older women – 69% of neighbours participating are women



People who live alone – 67% of the neighbours in the Cares Family networks live alone



People who live in social or housing association homes – 59% of older neighbours are social tenants

# Case study:

## Rita, Brixton

South London Cares first encountered Rita in January 2016 through our Winter Wellbeing project. Rita is a young at heart 78-year-old with a vitality that belies recent difficult years. Her deteriorating health and confidence had begun to have an isolating effect – and having lost her partner of many years she felt increasingly lonely.

The idea of meeting new people and making new friends through South London Cares had instant appeal. Rita told us that she wanted more younger people in her life, to have more opportunities to socialise and to go out and to enjoy life more.

Over a few months, Rita had joined our Streatham, Stockwell, Herne Hill and Brixton Social Clubs, sharing time with her neighbours at dances, arts and crafts sessions and tech workshops and making dozens of new connections in her community.

The relationship which has had the biggest impact on Rita's life is her friendship with Laura. Through our Love Your Neighbour programme, Laura and Rita were introduced for quality one-to-one time and company each week. Both Brixton locals, they represent what many Londoners young and old can benefit from through being part of South London Cares: an authentic connection with a neighbour from a different generation that they might not usually get to know.

Within weeks of first going round to see Rita after work, Laura had encouraged her out into Brixton for lunch, coffee and even the odd cocktail. During the coldest months of the year, Rita said that looking forward to Laura's company kept her going:



“There are lots of places which I don’t want to go to by myself. I haven’t got many people to go out with – so Laura’s company is really good for me.

“It makes all the difference. I’m feeling happier since knowing her. When I know she’s coming I feel happy. Sometimes I feel down and lonely, and fed up with everything. When you get old, you sometimes wonder what you’re there for.

“I like to be around people who are much younger than me. I have a lot to contribute and have had a lot of experience. It makes life really enjoyable to know young people! Young people are different – and it’s good to spend time with people different from ourselves. I love South London Cares for the way it brings young and old people together.”

Far from being something only benefitting Rita, the time Laura’s spent with her older neighbour has been one of the highlights of her time in London since moving here a few years ago:

“People look at us and I can see them trying to figure out why we’re hanging out together which makes us laugh. I feel like she’s one of my best friends now. She tells me that I’m a bit like a daughter to her.

“She’s so honest and speaks her mind – I’ve learnt a lot from her. I really love spending time with Rita and helping her to get out and about more. She’s a go getter – and inspires me to make the most of life.”



# Community fundraising

Community fundraising is a key part of South London Cares' community networked approach. It offers a fourth way for young professionals to be involved in supporting their older neighbours and their wider community, in addition to our three core programmes. And of course, it helps us to deliver some of our most ambitious programmes. In 2016, those activities included:

- ♥ Two well-attended pub quizzes in venues in Southwark and Lambeth
- ♥ Our innovative #7DaysToRaise campaign through which people baked, raced and cooked up hundreds of pounds of donations within a week
- ♥ 'Hilarity for Charity' – a comedy night at the Leicester Square Theatre, headed up by Stewart Lee, and attended by 400 supporters
- ♥ The Big Give Christmas Challenge – a match funded online campaign through which we raised £6,321 from 81 supporters



We were also inspired by the efforts of our older neighbour Richard, who in 2016 raised £1,600 for South London Cares with a feat of his own – a 5km run in Brockwell Park to support the community network he's come to value to much.

Thank you to each of the many people who raised money for and donated to South London Cares in creative and ambitious ways throughout 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.



# Our supporters

We're very 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 South London Cares with generous grants, donations and in-kind support.

In 2016, those friends 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. South London Cares wouldn't be what it is without them.

# Our finances

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	15/16	14/15	13/14
	£		
<b>Incoming Resources</b>	<b>286,005</b>	<b>164,345</b>	<b>40,460</b>
Grants	58%	85%	96%
Donations	37%	15%	4%
Commissions	0%	0%	0%
Restricted	76%	84%	91%
Unrestricted	24%	16%	9%
<b>Resources Expended</b>	<b>245,881</b>	<b>134,760</b>	<b>25,933</b>
Direct charitable expenditure	77%	90%	75%
Management, fundraising, etc.	23%	10%	25%
<b>Net Incoming Resources</b>	<b>40,124</b>	<b>29,585</b>	<b>14,528</b>

## BALANCE SHEET

	15/16	14/15	13/14
	£		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
Tangible Assets	3,667	1,440	601
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Debtors	13,956	956	103
Cash at hand in bank	128,893	118,904	49,156
<b>Total</b>	<b>142,849</b>	<b>119,860</b>	<b>49,259</b>
<b>Creditors</b>	<b>(62,279)</b>	<b>(77,187)</b>	<b>(35,333)</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>80,570</b>	<b>42,673</b>	<b>13,926</b>
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>84,273</b>	<b>44,113</b>	<b>14,527</b>

## DETAILED STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE

	15/16	14/15
	£	
Staff costs	165,672	88,792
Direct costs of raising funds	8,168	2,605
Direct costs of charitable activities	21,376	16,118
Rent and office running costs	16,671	8,340
Insurance	677	600
Advertising and marketing	2,798	2,604
Printing, postage and stationary	3,929	-
Other office expenses	66	-
Staff development	2,866	-
Travel and subsistence	8,888	-
Website	113	5,210
Evaluation and consultancy	7,505	7,247
Accountancy fees	2,196	2,096
Independent examination fee	600	600
Subscriptions	1,346	-
Telephone and internet	1,982	-
Depreciation	1,028	548
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>245,881</b>	<b>134,760</b>

# 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 PECKHAM PECULIAR

### “Hitting the right note”

February 2016

“In all parts of London we often have quite polarised societies due to gentrification, digitisation and migration. Change can be an isolating thing for some older people. South London Cares’ new Peckham choir aims to get people of all ages singing together...”



## 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.”



## theguardian

### “How can social care professionals grow the best services?”

March 2016

“A volunteer-led initiative helping isolated older people has recently used evaluation evidence to convince backers to help it open a south London branch.”



## COMMUTE BLOG

January 2017

At the beginning of 2017 our series with Commute Blog shone a spotlight on three older neighbours from South London Cares and three from North London Cares. Frances said:

“I think we can learn from each other dear. I love all you young people. I can learn things that possibly didn't occur to me before, you know? And I hope that we can give something in return, like the stories I can tell you.”



BBC  
NEWS

### “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 South London Cares, having founded the charity in 2013 after the success of North London Cares (established in 2011).



**Tess Young**

is Head of Programmes at South London Cares. Tess leads on South London Cares' relationship management and programme development, and supports the rest of the team to succeed. In 2017 she is moving into a new role supporting the development of 'The Cares Family' model across the whole of London and beyond.



**Rosa Friend**

is Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator at South London Cares. Rosa's role involves identifying neighbours at risk of isolation, and managing our volunteer network including by hosting our monthly inductions. In 2017 Rosa is moving into the Head of Programmes role at South London Cares.



**Charlie Jamieson**

is Senior Programme Coordinator (Social Clubs) at South London Cares. Charlie curates our social clubs and works with stakeholders to make them as exciting and fresh as possible.



**Morgan Burley**

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



**Ruby Shrimpton**

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



**Val Valotto**

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



**Emily Clarke**

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

# Our trustees

## **Josie Cluer**

has been Chair of South London Cares and North 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.

## **Aoife Davern**

is a Consultant in Programme Leadership at Deloitte. She was formerly a Business Development Analyst in the welfare sector, leading on procurement projects to support the long term unemployed. Aoife is passionate about connecting older people in our community through South London Cares.

## **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 South London Cares and North 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 South London Cares and North London Cares, David is on the Steering Committee for the Greenwich Free School and is a mentor on the OnPurpose Social Enterprise Leadership scheme.

## **James Lee**

is a Service Manager for Prevention and Inclusion for the London Borough of Lewisham, where he is on secondment from Lambeth Council.

## **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



**Over the past three years, it's been so wonderful to see the progress South London Cares has made. Through relationships between hundreds of older neighbours and their new younger friends, through the most playful interactions to the most profound, helping people connect to the heritage of this amazing part of our capital, as well as to its future, has been constantly inspiring.**

That vision of connecting people across social, generational, digital and attitudinal divides has now taken us through 8,000 attendances at nearly 500 social clubs and some 2,000 one-to-one hours. Younger and older neighbours have shared over 55,000 interactions in so many community locations.

And as the pages in this report show, it's the stories and the personalities – and not just the numbers – that sustain so many wonderful relationships. Those moments have always focused on helping everyone feel valued, vibrant and visible – so that people can feel a part of their rapidly changing city, rather than left behind by it.

As we head into 2017, the context is changing. Division has metastasised from our politics and media, to our streets, and back again. The problem of 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 – for the good of all parties, and the wider communities we live in.

We believe that South London Cares is an example of quite how much building bridges across those divides matters. As Joyce and Emily show at the beginning of this report, spending time together builds trust, it builds understanding and it builds community. And most importantly, it gives people a meaningful sense of identity.

At just two years old, South London Cares itself learned so much in 2016. We've added four new members to our committed staff team. We've published our first major impact evaluation, to add to growing evidence from our sister charity North London Cares, which shows that our model works at reducing isolation. And in early 2017 our new Director of Operations, Tess Young, who has been at South London Cares since day one, will begin to help us increase our impact even more not just in Southwark and Lambeth but beyond.

We're also so proud that donations already make up 37% 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 south London, and the people who make it what it is.

In 2017, while we continue to develop – with fresh new social clubs, more Love Your Neighbour friendships, and our third Winter Wellbeing project – we will also redouble our efforts to make sure that our older and younger neighbours remain at the centre of South London Cares' vision.

Thanks to everyone – all the wonderful older and younger neighbours who share tales of love and loss, hope and heartbreak, mischief and misadventure – and to all of our funders and supporters 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 into the future.

**Alex Smith**

Chief Executive, South London Cares



# Chair's message

**The past year has been one of further rapid development for South London Cares, building on a great first year in 2014/15. It's also been a developmental year 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 created all the time; and with awareness of the crisis of disconnection growing, we collectively find ourselves at a moment of great challenge but also of great opportunity.

Our job at South London Cares is increasingly changing from merely seeing, understanding and tackling those issues at a local level, in Southwark and Lambeth, 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 ultimately save the NHS and local authorities money; and for the very real issues of loneliness and isolation to be taken ever more seriously.

We're proud of our model, because it works; independent research in 2016 has shown that again. Our older neighbours report feeling closer to their community as a result of being part of South 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 through our core programmes.

And 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 explore ways to expand The Cares Family model further. Based on the experience of building South London Cares, we're ready to replicate again – and we're looking at whether the approach we've developed can work in additional 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. Older people themselves, local authorities, private care firms, voluntary sector organisations, communities and families will all need to think differently in the future.

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 to an end.

Starting in 2017, we look forward to working with more partners to make more progress than ever, in Brixton, Bermondsey and beyond. If you feel that your community could benefit from a little more togetherness and connection please do contact us or visit our website at [southlondoncares.org.uk](http://southlondoncares.org.uk).

**Josie Cluer**  
Chair, South London Cares

