



Our vision

/together, we are facing one of our country's greatest tests. It is causing unimaginable hardship and suffering – many of us have lost loved ones, are struggling with our own physical and mental health and are facing acute financial pressures. We are all having to adapt to a new reality, one which feels very uncertain and unsafe. And it has come at a time when we were already struggling with rising loneliness, profound inequality and divisive political polarisation.

Yet the scale of the challenge we now face has in some ways brought us closer together. It has made us more grateful for each other, indebted to the workers who put themselves at risk to keep our country running and protect the vulnerable. We are counting down the days until we can reconnect with families, friends and neighbours. It has shown people at their best – volunteering, helping neighbours, protecting those at greatest risk, pulling together as communities to support one another. The question now is how can we best harness and build on this?

Our vision is of communities that are kinder, closer and more connected.

That means ones where people are connected with their community and feel a part of it. Ones in which increased contact builds deeper relationships and enhanced understanding, especially of those we previously saw as different. Ones where connecting ideas, events and institutions underpin our communities and help us tackle loneliness and prejudice. Where our increased connections improve our well-being, our health and our social capital. And where our communities are equipped to face the challenges that lie ahead.

If we are successful, we will still disagree with each other but in a context of better mutual understanding and respect. Institutions will invest in supporting communities and build a reinforcing cycle where communities gain more agency and power. And we will have created a clearer sense of who we are and what brings us together.

The Initiative

/together is a new coalition that invites us all to help build kinder, closer and more connected communities in the aftermath of COVID-19. We aim to do this through four strands of work.

- 1. Building and popularising a positive narrative about commonality and togetherness that replaces one of hate and division:** We will start by talking to people across the UK about what unites us, what divides us and what we share. We want to find out how different people experienced lockdown, what we missed and how our communities responded. We'll ask people about our commonalities and differences to help develop a better understanding of what connects and divides communities - then build and propagate a new narrative based on this. Our aim is to create a usable and insightful narrative that resonates with the public and that others can adopt and adapt.
- 2. Increasing meaningful social contact through participation in activities that bring people together, especially across divides:** This isn't just a project to change narratives. It's also designed to bring people together. Our aim is to increase meaningful contact in our communities both in general and in particular between different groups and in communities where contact is low. We will amplify existing events and ideas that bring people together and create new ones where there are gaps. We will also help to harness the massive upsurge

in volunteering during the COVID-19 crisis to create a lasting legacy of community connectors working locally to bring their communities closer post COVID-19.

- 3. Securing the policy changes from Government and key institutions needed to increase social connection and heal divides:** While we will seek to create a new level of salience for the policy area as a whole, we will also get behind specific ideas that have high public support but low salience. An expert group of organisations will help us identify these key priorities for greater social connection, possibly including ideas such as supporting connecting organisations; promoting contact in education and work; and shared public spaces in our neighbourhoods. Then, we will build a strong coalition to advocate for these changes, inviting institutions across every sector to make the changes we need to see.
 - 4. Building and strengthening a wider movement committed to connecting communities and bridging divides, encouraging network effects:** We want to be part of networking and building the power of a sector, enabling individuals, community groups and organisations to do more in this area and help give it coherence, helping to turn thousands of disparate activities into a movement with momentum. We want to leave a legacy of a powerful coalition and a new volunteer network of community connectors, ensuring that long after the focus and excitement of the campaign has faded, the progress we make is deep rooted in our society over the long term.
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Who we are

[/together](#) is the most powerful and diverse coalition ever assembled in the UK, which has evolved from dozens of separate conversations across the country. Open to those of all faiths and none, the project is independent of party politics and will remain neutral on the politics of Brexit. It is open to everyone who believes we have more in common than that which divides us.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has kindly accepted the invitation to chair the Steering Group that will oversee its direction and evolution, which brings together a broad range of organisations and individuals including:

- The head of ITV and the former head of the BBC, our two biggest broadcasters.
- The editors of the Sun and the Mirror, two of the best-selling newspapers.
- Our biggest membership organisations including the Scouts and Girlguiding.
- Trade Unions including the GMB and the National Association of Head Teachers.
- The Confederation of British industry
- Our most high-profile sporting bodies including, UK Sport, Sport England and the British Paralympic Association.
- Digital connectors including the heads of Facebook and Google.
- Organisations representing women, refugees, migrants and all major faiths.

We have also built a strong group of experts who will focus on policy, advocacy and legacy, calling on the Government and other institutions to prioritise social connection. Their remits include organisations working with migrants and refugees, on inter-faith relations, inter-generational connection, loneliness, online civility and other areas relevant to healing social divisions.

Crucially, the scale of what we seek to achieve can only be achieved through partnerships and sparking a genuine movement. Indeed, [/together's](#) strength is its coalition members and the open source model have adopted. Our aim is not to build a command and control structure but to create assets, ideas and opportunities that people can use in their own sectors, communities and organisations. We want to enable individuals, community groups and organisations to do more in this area and help give it coherence, helping to turn thousands of disparate activities into a movement with momentum.

Activity so far

On 1st January 2020 we marked the start of a **Decade of Reconnection**. In his New Years' message, the Archbishop of Canterbury called for the UK to "start healing some of the divisions that we've seen over recent years". The Archbishop's call was echoed in an open letter by leaders of prominent British organisations - including figures on both sides of the Brexit debate, who said the 2020s should be a "decade of reconnection" and that people should resolve to "to start rebuilding connections between neighbours and fellow citizens".

Our first major public engagement was **Thankyou/together**, a national moment around 5th July 2020, a date which marked the birthday of the NHS but also came at the end of the first wave of the pandemic. Our aim was to help solidify the feeling of community spirit that had got us that far through the crisis by asking people to light a candle, applaud all those who helped us and connecting with our neighbours at a distance. So, we worked with partner organisations to bring the country together in remembrance of those who have died, celebration of the heroes who have helped us, and renewed solidarity in facing the challenges to come.

An ICM poll following 5th July found:

- 28% of GB adults say they took part in Thankyou/together on 5 July, this equates to 14.3 million people.
- 68% of GB adults said they were aware of Thankyou/together, around 35 million people.
- Participation was high among groups less likely to take part in national events, such as 18-24s (39% participation) and socio-economic grades DE (27% participation).
- And participation in Scotland was also high, at 26%.

In August, we then launched the next stage of the campaign. Unlike most campaigns, our aim is to start with questions rather than answers. **Talk/together** is a UK-wide conversation about what divides us, what unites us and what will bring us closer together. Almost 100,000 people have already taken part in a consultation which is on track to be the largest in our nation's history. The outcomes of Talk/together will help to decide what /Together does next, from campaigns for change to activities that bring people together.

Looking ahead

The next stage of the campaign will depend on the outcomes of Talk/together, but we intend to get behind existing events and ideas that bring people together and create new ones where there are gaps. We are testing the idea of a new national Neighbours' Day that brings communities together, using the Olympics and Paralympics in 2021 and working around the Queen's 75th Jubilee and Commonwealth Games in 2022 to build a series of national events that resonate and connect at the community level.

Alongside these events we're working with media and social media, arts, sports and cultural organisations on an ambition plan to engage the public in a retelling of who we are as a country; convening a strong coalition of expert organisations to promote the practical policy ideas that can make a difference in bridging social divides; and looking at how we might collectively facilitate the recruitment and engagement of a movement of local community connectors.

From community groups, clubs and societies of all sizes, to the UK's best known and most trusted organisations and businesses, we are joining /together. If your organisation would like to become a partner, please sign up via www.together.org.uk. Of, if you would like to find out more about the coalition and how you can be involved, please email info@together.org.uk.