



Our Mission

/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.

It has come at a time when we were already struggling with rising loneliness, profound inequality and divisive political debates.

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 renewed sense of community spirit?

Our mission is to foster and support this renewed spirit, to replace social distancing with real connections, to strengthen our communities over the decade to come, and help narrow some of the divisions which have characterised our recent past.

Together, we aim to help build a kinder, closer and more connected country to face the challenges that lie ahead.

The Initiative

/together is a new coalition that invites us all to help build a kinder, closer and more connected society, at a local and national level, in the aftermath of COVID-19.

We aim to do this through three strands of work.

- 1. Building a new narrative of connection based on better understanding:** 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 and build a new narrative based on this.
- 2. Increasing social contact and civic participation:** This isn't just a project to change narratives. It's also designed to bring people together once physical distancing is no longer necessary. 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. Build a strong coalition to promote the practical policy ideas that can make a difference in bridging social divides:** The project will identify some 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. It will build a strong coalition to advocate for these changes, inviting institutions across every sector to support the decade of reconnection by pledging to play their part in building a more connected country.

Who we are

[/together](#) is a coalition that everyone is invited to join, from community groups across the country to some of the UK's best-known organisations.

The steering group includes a broad range of organisations and individuals from the NHS and ITV to the Scouts, Guides, the British Paralympic Association, trade unions and the CBI. It includes representatives from our major faiths; from the worlds of culture, the media and business; from charities and from sport.

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.

This initiative has evolved from dozens of separate conversations across the country. The Archbishop of Canterbury has kindly accepted the invitation to chair the steering group that will oversee its direction and evolution. The project will be independent of party politics and remain neutral on the politics of Brexit, it will be open to everyone who believes we have more in common than that which divides us.

Timing

On January 1st 2020 we marked the start of the Decade of Reconnection with an [open letter](#) signaling our intent.

We are now planning our first public moment on the 5th July 2020. This, the NHS's birthday, will be a moment for us to together reflect on everything our communities have recently endured, stand in solidarity to mourn our losses, and thank those who are risking so much to keep us safe. Thanking everyone from truck drivers and cleaners to doctors and shelf stackers, all of the key workers who have kept us going. It will also be a thank you to our neighbours, the ones who did the shopping, got the prescriptions, kept an eye on each other or simply did their best to stay home and save lives. This day will be the start of the campaign for a kinder, closer and more connected country.

There will then be three phases to the campaign:

- 1) [Talk/together](#) (Autumn 2020): Starting a national conversation about what divides us, what unites us and what would bring us closer together.
- 2) [Sharing/together](#) (Winter 2020): Sharing the stories, ideas and events that connect us.
- 3) [Doing/together](#) (2021): We will get behind existing events and ideas that bring people together and create new ones where there are gaps

Our hope is that together we can kick start a change in narrative, revitalise our connections with each other and galvanise institutions into doing their bit.

How you can be involved

To succeed, this coalition needs to involve people and communities from every corner of the UK. We want everyone, from community groups across the country to some of the UK's best-known organisations, to be a key part of */together*, amplifying their work, feeding their experiences into the *talk/together* consultation to shape future outputs and engaging people to take part. Please contact us at info@together.org.uk to find out more about */together* and how you can be involved.