

Christmas Cheer

2024 Report



Marmalade Trust is a registered charity no: 1174217 and a company limited by guarantee no: 10879370
www.marmaladetrust.org



About us

Founded in 2013, Marmalade Trust is a Bristol-based charity offering a vital link between lonely people and the communities and resources that can help them. We're determined to reduce the stigma of loneliness and help people form new connections.

Christmas Cheer

We know that Christmas can be a difficult time of the year for those struggling with loneliness. For the 12th year running, we wanted to make it a festive season to remember by bringing people together for companionship and cheer. As part of our delivery we provided:

- Pre-Christmas calls and visits
- Gift boxes with messages from local pupils
- Boxes of Christmas presents
- Christmas Day doorstep visits or a Christmas lunch at a local venue

We aim for all project members over Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire to enjoy moments of connection this festive season. Read more on our website: www.marmaladetrust.org.



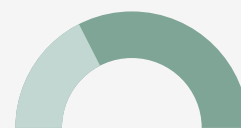
"It was the most
tension free and
relaxed Christmas I
have had for many
years."

Project member

Contact and referrals

Existing project members

In August, we started our outreach to identify and contact those individuals who most need our support. We began by reaching out to those who had previously been on their own and had participated in our Christmas Cheer project last year. We also reached out to those who had participated in our latest Marmalade Companions project. We checked-in with each person where we were able to make contact and asked about their plans for Christmas. Where they had no other options, we invited them to join the Marmalade family for Christmas Day 2024. In this way, we try to ensure we are reaching those who are still experiencing significant loneliness and will be alone on Christmas Day. 68% of our project members on the day, had experience of using our services within the previous 13 months.



We supported 69 **new project members** (32% of the total supported) through Christmas Cheer 2024

New project members

Connecting with those who are experiencing significant loneliness but have not yet been identified by a previous project, is one of our greatest challenges. We reach out to a network of over 600 incredible referral contacts working within the health, care and charity sectors across the BNSSG area to identify those individuals who would benefit most from participating in a Christmas Cheer project. Often, there is no next of kin, no friends and a GP surgery as an emergency contact. The nature of long-term loneliness and the additional, often complex, needs of those experiencing it can make it challenging to reach and engage with them. This year, we were able to connect with 84 new project members, 69 (82%) of whom were able to participate on Christmas Day.

Pre-Christmas visit and gift boxes

November 2024 saw the creation of 196 gift boxes, put together by 15 UWE Year 1 Paramedic students. The gift boxes contained a festive chocolate bar and an invitation to either the lunch or doorstep visit as well as a decoration and Christmas card, handmade by local school children, with messages of connection inside. Gift boxes were hand delivered as part of a planned programme of visits by the Paramedic students. Visits were made in pairs or threes and 91% of project members who were onboarded by mid-November were successfully visited in this way. Gift boxes that could not be hand delivered were sent via post.

As further project members were onboarded throughout later November and December, the remaining gift boxes were assembled in-house and posted.

In total **223 project members** received a pre Christmas gift box (some of these project members then cancelled).

56% of those responding felt the gift box made them feel less lonely.

In addition to visits, project members received phone calls from volunteers in the lead-up to Christmas to get to know each other and agree on meet-up times on Christmas Day (for pick-up or visiting). These calls helped project members feel connected to someone else during the festive season.



"It was a nice feeling knowing that we made someone smile. I feel proud that we helped others."

Project volunteer

Christmas Day Lunches

Marmalade Trust hosted Christmas lunches for 130 project members and 45 volunteers at 6 pubs and restaurants across BNSSG: 3 venues in Bristol, 1 in South Gloucestershire, and 2 in North Somerset. All guests had a 3-course festive meal and shared conversation, smiles and meaningful connection.

Out of all total votes across all venues :

93% project members felt the venue they attended had a great atmosphere.

85% agreed with the statement that their lunch was delicious.

For 26% of lunch feedback respondents, it was the only time in the last month that they had left the house for a social event.

"Brilliant, and it has inspired me to offer to volunteer as a driver and host next Christmas and also be a Marmalade Companion volunteer, so I can give back to others. At the meal I exchanged numbers with 4 other people on the table, we got on really well and had a great time."

Project member



**"Thoroughly enjoyed the experience
and very grateful to everyone
involved."**

Project member

Doorstep visits

88 project members were visited by one of our 66 doorstep volunteers for a friendly chat, helping them feel more connected and less lonely. Along with the visit, each project member received a thoughtful box of Christmas gifts. Many of those visited face significant mobility or other challenges that make leaving their homes difficult.

The volunteers made the day as special as possible for the project members they visited — sporting Christmas jumpers and tinsel, singing carols and Christmas songs and bringing plenty of Christmas Cheer! Several visits were done as families with children, enabling some great intergenerational conversations.

69% of doorstep project members who completed the feedback form said the most important part of the project was getting to see someone on Christmas Day.

"It was lovely to make contact with my doorstep visit. On the day we had a lovely conversation and she was so touched by the gift of the Christmas hamper. Her gratitude and pleasure was a joy to witness and certainly left me feeling buoyed for the rest of the day. I'm sure I gained as much from the experience as she did. I can't wait to do it all again next year if you'll have me! - Project volunteer

96% of project members who received a doorstep visit said they enjoyed taking part in Christmas Cheer



"It's lovely as it makes me feel like I am not forgotten."

Project member

Christmas Present Boxes

For many of our project members, the gifts they receive from us are the only ones they'll open at Christmas. That's why we go the extra mile to make them meaningful, thoughtful, and special.

This year, present boxes were put together with the help of some amazing volunteers from JLL and The Crescent Club across two days. Present boxes were distributed to our 218 project members. Marmalade Trust had many generous donations of items for the present boxes this year, including the boxes themselves, handmade coasters, mugs, coffee sachets, individually wrapped teabags, pie plates, soaps and bath bombs, toothbrushes, large print puzzle books, chocolate oranges, Werther's originals and a number of mini marmalade jars!

Thanks to monetary donations, we were also able to purchase a variety of additional items, including marmalade coloured tea towels and biscuits. With the support of 7 local schools, children handmade bookmarks and calendars as additional gifts as they learned about loneliness.

"Very thoughtful and special, I can imagine the children making the bookmarks and calendars, all sitting in their classrooms."
Project member



"Lots of useful and lovely things in the hamper."
Project member

Christmas Cheer overview

Across Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset, Marmalade Trust brought companionship and festive cheer to **218 people** experiencing long-term loneliness (our project members). 130 project members attended a meal event at one of 6 venues and 88 received a doorstep visit.

154 trained volunteers provided support on Christmas Day in a variety of roles. 26% would also have been on their own on Christmas Day and many of these also joined a meal, helping to host a table.

Including volunteers, we helped to bring connection to **372 people** on Christmas Day across the BNSSG (Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire) area.

The Christmas Cheer project also included connection opportunities in the lead-up to Christmas through visits in late November and phone calls from volunteers in December with further 'Happy New Year' calls made in Jan 2025.

“You are all fantastic; you people made my day, you really did.”

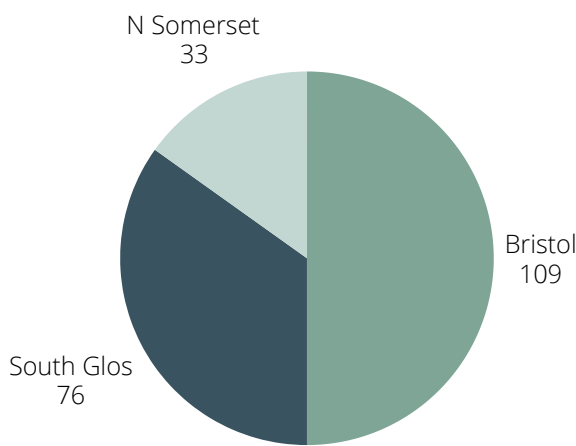
Project member



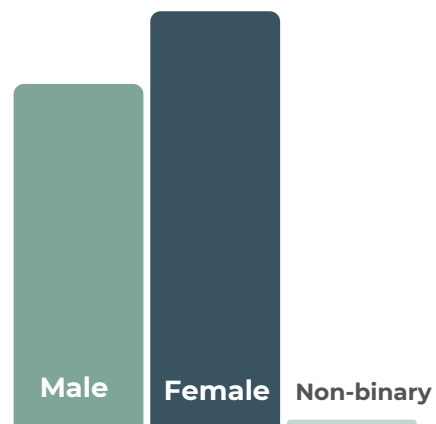
Our project members

Our project members experience significant loneliness and would otherwise be on their own at Christmas. 44% declared a mental health issue, 45% used some sort of mobility aid to help them mobilise and 45% state that they have no next of kin.

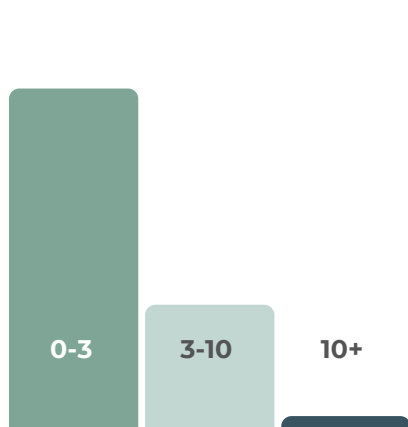
This year, we connected with **257** project members, welcoming them to the Christmas Cheer project and linking them with a volunteer. Of those, 22 project members cancelled more than one week prior to Christmas Day. For many, this was because they had found suitable connections for themselves and these places were allocated to individuals on a waiting list. A further 17 project members were unable to participate on the day.



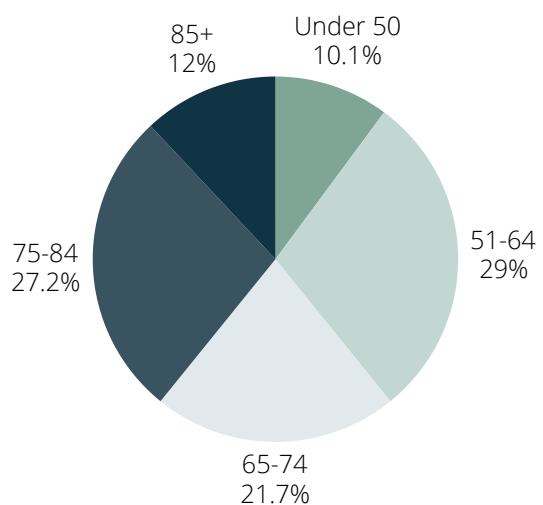
Geographical split of members



Gender



Average social contact in a fortnight * of 146 respondents to this question



Age categories (%)

Our volunteers

We want to say a huge thank you to the **154 volunteers** who supported Christmas Cheer 2024 including:

- **88 volunteers for the Christmas Day lunches**, including those who drove, those who also stayed for the meal to help on a table, and those who were in charge of the smooth running of a particular meal venue.
- **66 doorstep volunteers**, visiting project members who were unable to get out.

We welcome in volunteers, offer training and make them feel valued and part of something too. Many volunteers want to connect with others at Christmas, make a difference or challenge the materialistic side of the day. One volunteer told us: "It was lovely to feel part of something so positive and uplifting. Spreading a bit of happiness with people who would otherwise have been alone and not being lonely myself. It was as much for me as it was for the project members and was a truly rewarding experience." Volunteer ages ranged from 25 to 91, and we also had younger children with their parent(s) involved in some doorstep visits.



96%
of volunteers
said they
enjoyed taking
part in
Christmas Cheer



"The overall event never ceases to amaze me, with the overwhelming kindness of the volunteers."
Project member



"The dedication of the volunteers left me with such a warm feeling."
Project member

Volunteer feedback

We received some incredibly affirming feedback from volunteers about their involvement in the Christmas Cheer project this year.

“It was lovely to see everyone open up through their time together.”

“I found myself potentially being alone this Christmas at times and decided to stand up and do something positive with others. The Trust was completely welcoming and supportive through training, updates and reassurance.”

“It was good to be part of something bigger and to see people enjoying themselves.”

“The best part was when I phoned them up to tell them I was picking them up to take them out for Christmas Day. I could see then how much it meant to them and it made me really humble and glad I volunteered.”

“It felt meaningful to have a connection with 90 year old L, alone at Christmas. L’s partner of 30 years died earlier that year, so it was his first Christmas without her or anyone besides his Home Help.

L was sad and tearful when reflecting on his life and some of his regrets. I felt privileged to be invited into his world and offer conversations that focussed on fond memories, and some positives that he could remember in his late partner’s voice.

L was keen to open the Christmas hamper and he thanked the Marmalade Trust. He had a little smile!”

Connection matters

Through Christmas Cheer 2024, we aimed to help project members feel less lonely and more connected both during the run-up to Christmas and on the day itself. We also hope to use Christmas as a catalyst for change, a chance to start an engagement which leads to the Marmalade Companions project for new referrals.

"The Marmalade Trust is one of my most important Christmas traditions. I also enjoy being invited to other events throughout the year (although I can rarely make it, I appreciate it) and appreciate being recognised by you all, it does help me to feel important and a sense of purpose." - Project volunteer

"I found the whole time very
uplifting and joyful."

Project member



"The volunteers are all kind and
wonderful. I cannot thank the
Marmalade Trust enough for this day."

Project member



"Very thankful for it as it avoids
people like me being alone on
Christmas Day! Thank you."

Project member



A big thank you

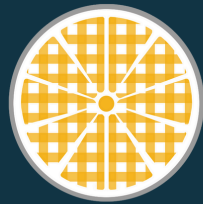
So many organisations, funders and referring agencies supported Christmas Cheer 2024. Thank you to all the trusts, organisations and people who have provided financial and 'gifts in kind' support. Thank you also to the other donors and supporters who wish to remain anonymous.

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|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Alex Beckett, KJ Beckett Limited* | Karen Taylor, Lush* | St Michael's CofE Primary School* |
| Alison Price and tennis club members* | Laurel Molly* | St Nicholas Church, Yate* |
| Bark | Leaf Trust Cadbury Heath Primary School* | Storck* |
| Ben, Home Choir* | Leonard Laity Stoate Charitable Trust | Sue Gough, Marmalade Trust* |
| Burden Trust | Lewis Hyden* | The Bridge Inn, Yatton |
| Burgess Salmon | Lucy Kirk* | The Mill House, Emersons Green |
| Charlotte Bonham Carter Trust | Mabboo* | The Whitchurch, Whitchurch |
| Crescent Club, The* | Malago, Bedmister | Totes* |
| Crochet Connection Coasters team* | Medlock Charity, The | Triodos Foundation |
| David Rowe* | Motability Operations | Truemark Trust |
| Dolphin Society | Nisbets | USTUDIO* |
| Douglas Arter Foundation | Olly (Trustee)* | Waitrose, Keynsham |
| Gloucester Community Foundation | Pieminister* | Willow Park Primary* |
| Grateful Society, The | Richard Davies Foundation | WO Street Charitable Foundation, The |
| GWP* | Roake & Cook* | Wrendale Designs* |
| Hamiltons Pre School* | Royal Oak, Horfield | |
| Helen (Sarah Boyd's neighbour)* | Salford Primary* | |
| Holymead Primary* | Severn Beach Primary* | |
| India Rawlin, True Start Coffee* | Sky* | |
| John James Foundation | | |

**indicates Gift in Kind
Host venues shown in green*







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