

Press release - November 2019

NEWS RELEASE: Under embargo, 00:01am, 26<sup>th</sup> November

## **59 million of us believe we need strong community bonds as The Big Lunch urges the public to thank neighbours for being #ThereForMe**

The Big Lunch is today (26<sup>th</sup> November) launching a new campaign, #ThereForMe, encouraging everyone to thank the neighbours and people who support them as new research highlights that for over 48 million people, life in the UK feels more uncertain now than just 5 years ago.

To counter division and increasing levels of uncertainty, 88% of people surveyed said that strong community bonds were important, equating to 59 million people across the UK. The new research findings suggest that efforts to increase neighbourhood connection, are now more important than ever.

Some 73% of the UK population agree life is more uncertain now than just 5 years ago, with 67% of the UK population believing political instability is contributing to the feelings of uncertainty along with the economy and climate change as other key factors. Worryingly over 80% of those surveyed felt that these feelings meant that people were more likely to suffer from mental illness, and that there is a greater risk of crime in society.

The campaign is calling for the public to go on Twitter and thank a neighbor or someone who has supported them using the hashtag #ThereForMe. In the run up to Christmas, The Big Lunch will then choose some of the most inspiring thank yous to feature in ads locally and choose one to appear publicly, highlighting the importance of stronger communities and encouraging people to bring their neighbours together by organising a Big Lunch next June.

The campaign is supported by Nadia Sawalha, an ambassador for The Big Lunch and the #ThereForMe campaign, and by Steve Barnabis, a Big Lunch organiser, who wants to publicly thank this neighbour Danny Herbert, for being #ThereForMe when Steve was burgled.

Speaking at the launch of campaign, Nadia Sawalha said:

“At a time when the country feels so divided and disconnected, it’s great to celebrate those people who you know look out for you. That’s why The Big Lunch is encouraging all of us to publicly thank neighbours and people who have been #ThereForMe. It could be stepping in to babysit, lending you tools, keeping an eye on your home when you go on holiday – small acts of positivity make the world go round and good neighbours are a real asset, especially when other parts of life are so uncertain. That’s why I’m backing this campaign to encourage us all to say thanks and give our #ThereForMe nominees a big public pat on the back.”

Steve Barnabis believes strong community bonds can really make a difference, he said:

“Our community youth project had to close when developers evicted us from our building. At that time we were also burgled. When Danny and Cleo heard what had happened they rallied the community and held a street party to raise funds so we could plan a future for the project. I want to

thank Danny Herbert and his wife Cleo for giving me hope and being #ThereForMe at a really difficult time.”

Peter Stewart of the Eden Project, home of The Big Lunch, said:

“There are millions of stories of neighbours helping each other out close to home, so it’s fantastic to be celebrating ordinary people who go out of their way to help others. That’s the spirit of The Big Lunch and why we’re encouraging people to share their own special stories. Share your very own #ThereForMe story with us and help us highlight just how important strong bonds in our neighbourhoods and communities really are to you.”

The research also showed that community events like The Big Lunch are seen as powerful ways to strengthen local bonds - 72% think it is more important than ever to organise events that bring people together and 70%/47 million people think shared moments with people in your neighbourhood are very important for your own personal sense of wellbeing and belonging.

An idea from the Eden Project, made possible by the National Lottery, The Big Lunch now attracts millions of people across the UK. Last year over 6.6 million people took part in over 100,000 Big Lunch events. Save the date for 2020 as The Big Lunch will be getting even bigger – join the fun on the first weekend in June.

**To thank a neighbour or someone for being #ThereForMe, visit [www.TheBigLunch.com/ThereForMe](http://www.TheBigLunch.com/ThereForMe) or post a message on Twitter using #ThereForMe.**

**ENDS**