Impact Report 2024-25

Discover how play is helping children build belonging, confidence and connection in Brick Clubs around the world

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Welcome

We build belonging through play – scaling Brick-by-Brick® globally, strengthening quality and community, and listening closely to children to shape what comes next

Welcome to our Impact Report 2024-25 and thank you for taking the time to explore the difference play can make. We lead **Play Included®**, a community interest company with a clear purpose: helping all children thrive through the power of play. Grounded in psychology and neurodiversity-affirming practice, our work champions play as essential to how children understand themselves and others, build relationships and develop confidence.

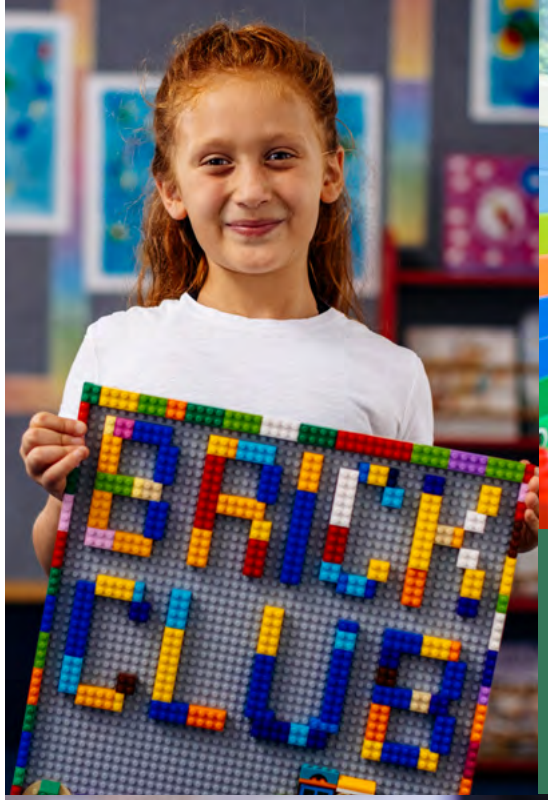
We exist because too many children – particularly neurodivergent children – experience loneliness and exclusion. We seek to change this through our evidence-based Brick-by-Brick® programme, which empowers health and education professionals to deliver Brick Clubs where children collaborate and grow their communication, turn-taking, problem-solving and teamworking skills in ways that feel natural, enjoyable and respectful.

This year we trained more than **700 new facilitators**, bringing our global network to over **5,200 professionals** in **30+ countries**. We've also deepened our ecosystem: launching a comprehensive digital platform, setting up our register of practitioners, supporting new partnerships, innovating with fresh ideas and progressing child voice research with the University of Cambridge PEDAL Centre.

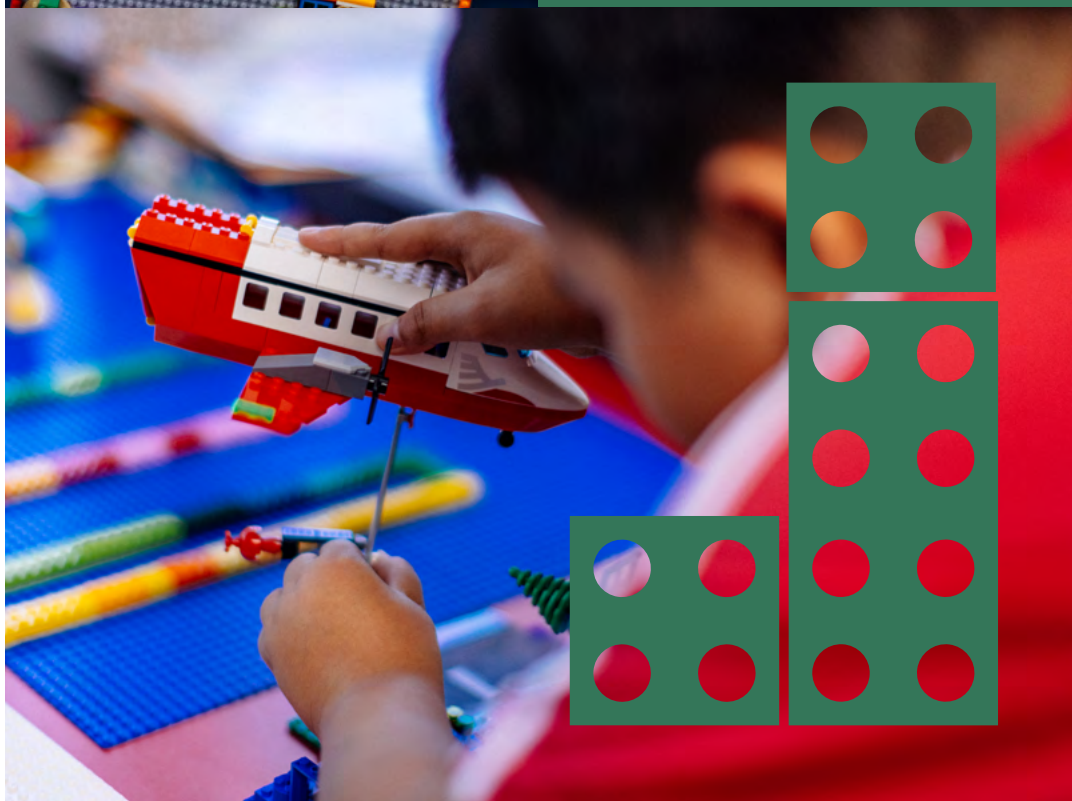
We are grateful to **The LEGO® Foundation**, our partners, facilitators and – of course – the children and families who keep building with us.

Dr Gina Gomez de la Cuesta

Dr Elinor Brett



From facilitator workshops, to Brick Clubs and beyond – Dr Gina Gomez de la Cuesta and Dr Elinor Brett champion the power of play through the Play Included ecosystem



Creativity and collaboration come to life through play

Play Included® C.I.C. is a Community Interest Company

Company number
11429775

Directors
Dr Gina Gomez de la Cuesta and Dr Elinor Brett

"I love building LEGO® and Brick Club has helped me with communicating with confidence."

Brick Club member aged 8, UK

"I really like building things and Brick Club lets me build without being judged."

Brick Club member aged 9, UK

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Brick Clubs in action

We asked children what they enjoy most about Brick Club. Their answers highlight fun, friendships and feeling a sense of belonging. Facilitators confirm that sessions are welcoming and inclusive. **Children told us that – at Brick Club – they:**

94% have fun

91% make friends

92% feel happy

"Brick Club has been such a positive experience all around. It creates a safe, fun and inclusive space where children can build social skills while doing something they love – playing and building with LEGO®."

Victoria Goode – Learning Assistant, Nelson Central School, New Zealand

97%

of facilitators rate the impact of the Brick-by-Brick® programme as **positive or very positive**, describing Brick Club as "a calm, safe space where [children] feel accepted and valued". They tell us that sessions help children relax, express themselves and leave "happier, more confident and less anxious."

9 in 10

children say Brick Club has improved their ability to play better with others.

Our impact survey indicates that each trained practitioner supports an average of 15-30 children every year. Based on our global network, we estimate that **415,000 to 830,000** children have participated in Brick Clubs since Play Included® began.

≤830k

"Kids feel better and more positive about themselves and school."

Nicolette Hall M.Ed – Belleville Christian School, Ontario, Canada

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Impact Report 2024-25
Summary

“Usually in [the] afternoons I find it hard to concentrate, Brick Club helps me relax and concentrate.”

Brick Club member aged 10, UK

Facilitators report that children develop new skills and express abilities they wouldn’t usually show. One shared: **“We even had a child say their first word in one of our sessions as LEGO® is their special interest.”**

82%

of children say Brick Club is helpful, describing it as a **safe, welcoming space** where they can focus and be themselves.

“It contributed to her being confident, encouraged play and social interaction.”

Parent of Brick Club member, UK

Play Included has reached children around the world in **more than 30 countries.**

30

“Brick Club has provided a space where children with diverse needs feel included, capable and confident. [It] fosters not only creativity and problem-solving, but also a strong sense of belonging and mutual respect among peers.”

Sarah D’Urzo – Coordinator for Innovation and Design, Intermediate Unit 1, Pennsylvania, USA

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From research roots to global impact

Play Included® is dedicated to helping children thrive through play. Starting with academic foundations and the development of the Brick-by-Brick® programme, we've grown from a small, experimental initiative into a global movement that supports educators, communities and families.

Late 2018
Gina and Eli begin working together

Gina founds Play Included CIC with support from Cambridge Social Ventures. Eli joins the shared vision of using a play-based approach to support children.

2019
Laying the foundations

We established our first office, launched scalable 'train-the-trainer' workshops across the UK, and began working with The LEGO® Foundation.

2020
Responding to the pandemic

COVID-19 halted in-person training, prompting a rapid shift online. We adapted and, in doing so, expanded global access while strengthening business strategy, sustainability and long-term organisational resilience.

2021
Driving new growth (and a rebrand!)

Launching our partnership with The LEGO® Foundation, meant we secured an 18-month grant to scale our team and evolve LEGO therapy into the Brick-by-Brick® programme.

Early 2021
Encouraging play at home

We launched Play at Home, a tried and tested set of activities to help neurodivergent children and their families build playful relationships.

Late 2021
Supporting children post-COVID

Whole class well-being activities launched to support every child in the aftermath of COVID-19, with grant funding from the LEGO group.

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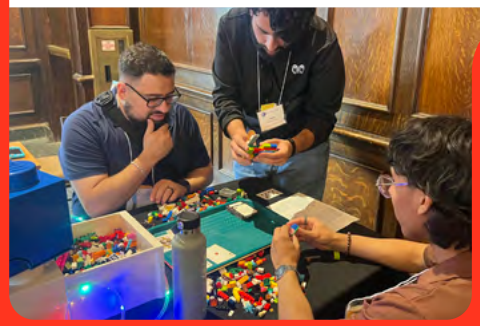
Impact Report 2024-25
Timeline

Late 2023
Brick-by-Brick® University partnership

We partnered with Carnegie Mellon University to bring Brick-by-Brick® to the United States.



2024
Accessibility gets a boost

We redeveloped the website and moved e-learning onto Moodle in three new languages, strengthening inclusion and accessibility.

Late 2024
We built an island!

Our friends at Carnegie Mellon University helped us to create a LEGO® Fortnite island, aimed at helping children understand neurodiversity through play

Early 2025
Back in the USA

Our Innovate UK funded Global Explorers grant enabled us to travel to the US to meet partners and explore new learning and research opportunities.

2025
Supporting our community and exchanging ideas

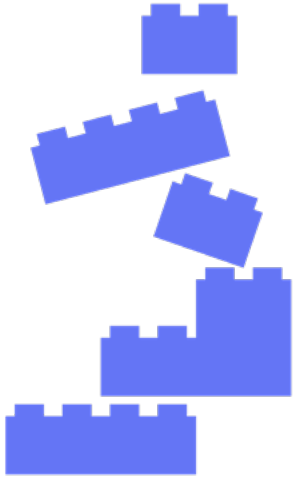
We unveiled our digital platform, introduced annual memberships, and expanded our facilitation toolkit. In October we conducted a training 'swap' with Care for Education, exchanging playful ideas with the Six Bricks team in South Africa.

Early 2026
Conquering Cambridgeshire

Launched a sponsored Brick Clubs project with Stobbs, offering free LEGO bricks and training into the hands of local children who need it most.

We're committed to growing high-quality, inclusive Brick Clubs worldwide, empowering children, supporting facilitators and creating lasting opportunities for play

Building the future



We plan to scale Brick Clubs globally while supporting facilitators, listening to children and ensuring equitable, barrier-free access

Over the next three to five years, Play Included® aims to become the globally recognised home for high-quality, neurodiversity-affirming Brick Clubs. Our goal is to grow our reach while preserving the integrity and evidence-based approach that makes Brick-by-Brick® effective. We'll strengthen the ecosystem that supports delivery – this includes tools, training pathways, partnerships and evidence – so that Brick Clubs can thrive in real-world settings and reach more children.

Listening to children will guide every decision. We'll complete and share learnings from our child voice research with the University of Cambridge PEDAL Centre and use these insights to continually refine Brick Clubs. This ensures that children's experiences and feedback directly shape the programme's evolution.

Equity and accessibility are central to our mission. We aim for a world where children can attend Brick Clubs for free, facilitators can access training at no cost and clubs receive LEGO® bricks regardless of geography or income.

As we expand across the UK and internationally with the support of trusted partners, we'll continue to provide practical resources for parents and carers. This includes beta testing and rolling out our Progress Monitoring Tool and integrating goal-based outcomes and child feedback to ensure we focus on what matters most.

Ultimately, we'll build a sustainable, scalable model that allows Brick Clubs to have a positive impact on children's lives for generations to come.

Want to join our mission? Get in touch to learn more about becoming a facilitator, hosting a Brick Club in your community or supporting children through play.

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