



WELLMCOR

**Let's Get
Connected!**

**An online activity group for
isolated local residents**

August to October 2021

Project Aims:

- To help rurally and socially isolated older people in the local community get connected to the internet
- To help them take part in an online activity group to increase their sense of connection and wellbeing

5 participants

6 activity providers

12 sessions delivered



Activities included art, singing, dance and creative writing, led by Devon-based professionals

Singing with



Listening to performances by local folk musicians and singing sea shanties together.

"Thank you for a very welcome singing session. It really was enjoyable getting the old vocal cords working again!"

- C.K., Let's Get Connected participant



Art with

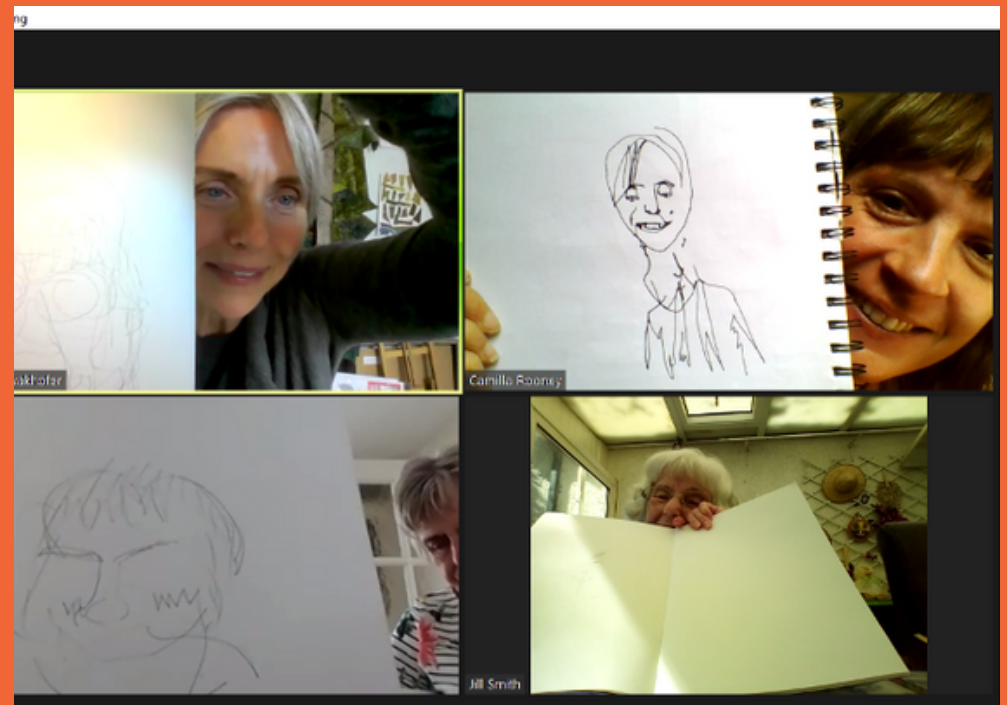


Drawing, collaging and working with pastels with an experienced artist.

"Online sessions are more democratic – allows for a shared space with everyone getting time to contribute. Also people can join the group who wouldn't otherwise have been able to participate due to isolation or mobility issues"

-Melinda Schwakhofer, ArtRaft

A collaging demonstration



Dancing with ALL DANCING

Developing core strength and balance, and learning a dance routine, with a qualified postural stability instructor.

"With dance people can be nervous about trying it – but when it's only a couple of sessions of each activity people are more willing to give it a go."

- Clare Parker, All Dancing



Creative Writing with

JJ
Jackie Juno

Writing short stories and poems using word prompts with a local poet.

A poem about joy written during one of the creative writing sessions



A beautiful yellow sun
A round gentle glowing orb
An enormous light, enveloping,
continuous
A gathering in the light, beaming
A floating of material, silk, chiffon
Waves of light, shades of yellow
A smooth feeling, calm, a gentle
state
A yummy pancake!

- C.K.



Challenges

Recruitment - finding participants for this project was a challenge. We initially approached domiciliary care clients, but often their state of health and the fact that they would need a carer to be with them during the sessions meant that participation was not possible. We then widened the criteria to include anyone over 65 who was socially and/or rurally isolated, which made more people interested in taking part.

Online Sessions - there was reluctance from participants during the recruitment process about the sessions being online, as some preferred taking part in 'real life' groups. Therefore, a Wellmoor facilitator helped to communicate the benefits of online sessions, and assisted those less familiar with technology in getting set up and using a device. Some participants without wifi joined via a tablet connected to mobile data via a 4G SIM card.

Maureen's Story

Maureen is 70, and lives alone in a rural area of North Dartmoor. Prior to taking part in Let's Get Connected, she had never used the internet, relying on a landline phone as the only means of communicating with friends and family.

She describes being 'scared' of technology, and says that it is 'all alien' to her.

"Wellmoor have been really helpful in getting me online... the sessions get me out of myself which is good! I used to be really fearful and suspicious of technology, but now I feel much more confident."

Wellmoor's programme facilitators set Maureen up with a tablet computer that was 4G enabled, so she could connect to the internet and join the Let's Get Connected sessions.

Outcomes

Wellbeing was measured through qualitative data collection (interviews with participants before, during and after the programme) and using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) evaluation tool with participants at the outset and conclusion of the programme.

75%

of participants had an increased WEMWBS score following participation in the programme.

Feedback from participants:

"The sessions worked really well, they were varied and interesting, and it's important to socialise! The session leaders were really good at relating online to all the people taking part" - M.S.

"I felt confident before the sessions that I would be able to do the activities, and found it easy to log in to the Zoom call. I really enjoyed the art sessions" - J.S.

"The whole concept was a brilliant idea – it's been a lovely experience. I have nothing but praise!" - C.K.