

THE IMPACT OF THE VIRTUAL VILLAGE HALL ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING



ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The Virtual Village Hall is a free, online activity hub and community developed by Royal Voluntary Service. It helps people stay physically and mentally active, connected and having fun, and supports people with long-term health conditions.

Activity sessions are livestreamed daily on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, and are led by expert tutors and presenters, including some well-known faces. Followers can take part in real time or can view on-demand. No sign up required.

There are more than 1,500 sessions available to view, from exercise and dance to arts and crafts, upcycling, meditation and cooking, with new content added regularly. Where activities require equipment, ingredients or materials, these are low-cost and easy to source.

The Virtual Village Hall is free and open to everyone. It is also used by health and social care professionals such as social prescribers.

Search @VirtualVillageHall.

The UK's health and social care system continues to be under extreme pressure, exacerbated by more than 7.3 million people waiting for elective surgeries/care (BMA, 2023). The Virtual Village Hall can help relieve that pressure by supporting people to better manage their health. In March 2023, we surveyed Virtual Villagers to understand why and how they use it.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS



95% felt the VVH had a positive impact on their mood & emotional wellbeing



84% felt the VVH had a positive impact on their physical health



70% felt the VVH helped them feel less lonely



47% use the VVH frequently (more than daily or weekly)



60%* felt the VVH helped them better manage their health (*70% for those with LTHC)



38%* waiting for an operation felt the VVH helped them stay active while they wait (*50% for those with LTHC)



83% felt the VVH enabled them to stay active, despite their cost of living challenges



93% plan to continue using the VVH at their current level or more

>55,000 followers

>12 live sessions per week

>1,500 on-demand sessions, free to view at any time

>20,000 unique individuals engage with sessions every month

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HERE'S WHAT SOME VIRTUAL VILLAGERS HAD TO SAY



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*"I took ill with anxiety inside a MRI scanner, so the scan had to be cancelled. I have dreaded returning but have been able to have a scan today using the meditation shown to me by your Laughing Yoga leader. This will make **an important difference to my health**. Thank you!" (Female, 55-64)*

*"I think the VVH is a godsend. It has **helped me prepare for surgery and accompanied me as I heal**. It has helped me manage physical ailments ... It is creative and exciting (I now do burlesque and have been introduced to the stunning beauty of harp meditations) and this has opened up my rather limited world as I don't go out too much. The VVH hosts and the class tutors are all fantastic and create such a warm, welcoming environment, **I feel part of something** even though I've never met you. I can't believe I didn't discover you earlier, but now I have, **I feel more hopeful for an active, accompanied future**. I can't thank you enough." (Female, 45-54, using VVH a couple of times a week)*

*"I feel the VVH has been **a real lifeline** to me as I have suffered with Long Covid for over 2yrs - because of the variety of events there is always something interesting and varied to do to help me **feel less isolated** and more inspired. You have been an amazing resource for my Community Support Group for people living with a neurodegenerative disease and their families - thank you so much for all you do!" (Female, 55-64)*

*"I just want to thank everyone for providing these sessions, especially as they are free of charge, as they have **built my confidence** in times when it's been difficult. I especially enjoy April's Pilates classes. They are something I had never tried before and wouldn't have had the nerve to go to a class, but the regular sessions have **helped my flexibility** and mindfulness enormously. Thank you so much." (Female, 55-64)*

"Really enjoy the sessions and look forward to them each week. Great teachers." (Male, 55-64)

"I live alone & have poor health so really appreciate the sessions." (Female, 65-74)

*"I am under 50 but have MH problems. I sometimes can't leave my home. Virtual village makes me **feel less isolated** and gives me something to distract myself with and enjoy." (Female, 45-54)*

*"I love the flexibility that I can watch the sessions when convenient to me. The variety is brilliant and **when I struggle with mental health I find the sessions really help**." (Female, 35-44)*

*"Please keep it going, wonderful teachers and such enjoyable classes. I have anxiety and depression and **it's really helped me to exercise and helped with my mental health**. Thank you so much for providing such a fantastic resource for us all" (Female, 35-44)*

"They offer everything from Crafts to Workouts which can all be done from home. I ❤️ Virtual Village Hall .. they have made my life much better." (Male)

"The Virtual Village Hall is a wonderful idea for helping those in isolation stay connected to those outside of their homes." (Male)

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS

"It's a fantastic resource and I refer it on to my patients" (Healthcare professional)

"One of our activity coordinators regularly links into various activities whether it's exercise, craft or cooking. The important thing as mental health wards is that we offer more than just medication and this gives us something really practical that people can do on the ward and take home with them, both to give them structure to their days and something to engage with when they feel they cannot get out. It's a resource we are really grateful for. Thank you"

Hannah Pile, Consultant Nurse / Trainee Multi-Professional Approved Clinician, Cornwall Partnership NHS Trust

"What a great site it is too. I support people to improve their emotional, mental and social wellbeing. I signpost and share this resource out regularly. There are loads of great fun things to learn and connect up to. I'm sure it's been a lifeline to so many. Thank you so much!"

Sarah Baldwin, Social Prescribing Link Worker, The Central Surgery Barton, South Humberside

