

Digital Access for All and JOS's Wellbeing Impact

The Covid 19 health crisis, the largest the world has faced in living memory, changed the lives of hundreds of millions of people. The WHO (World Health Organisation) declared the Covid-19 pandemic on March 11th 2020.

Joy of Sound closed down all face-to-face workshops on March 13th, started rapid response with online workshop delivery, and had its first online Zoom session, Dance and Movement, on March 27th. This quickly increased to 6 different interactive creative wellbeing sessions a week with: Adventures Here, There and Everywhere, Seated Mindful Breathing, Seriously Silly, Ever-new Stories, Song and Sign.

Lockdowns caused an abrupt, broad scale shift to working from home, and many workplaces went remote, using digital technology.

We quickly found that many of our core participants, including those with PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities) and LD (Learning disabled), elders and people with mental health challenges, faced unique barriers to accessing internet based activities, especially those living in residential homes.

We took action to resolve issues as far as we could, but our work revealed a general need for access and equipment provision for disabled people to be improved.

Joy of Sound's Covid response programme created a wide range of inclusive artistic approaches to combat isolation and stimulate the imagination, and to encourage socialisation, physical activity and self-care. It lasted more than a year, and is ongoing, engaging hundreds of Londoners by enabling them to playfully participate in our sessions via Zoom.



Image: Maria Tashkinova

Ever-New Stories and Covid-19 Legacy Project

We created stories and poetry using words, but also importantly by working with JOS methodology which uses improvisation techniques, gestures, movements, sounds, mirroring as contributions to co-create in a session so everyone can participate.

[View the illustrated stories and narrated videos here](#)



Image: Shane Wheatcroft

Creative Writing 19/20/21

Joy of Sound was one of 20 community organisations to have been awarded a London Community Story grant to present and share its experience of Covid-19 with a wide audience.

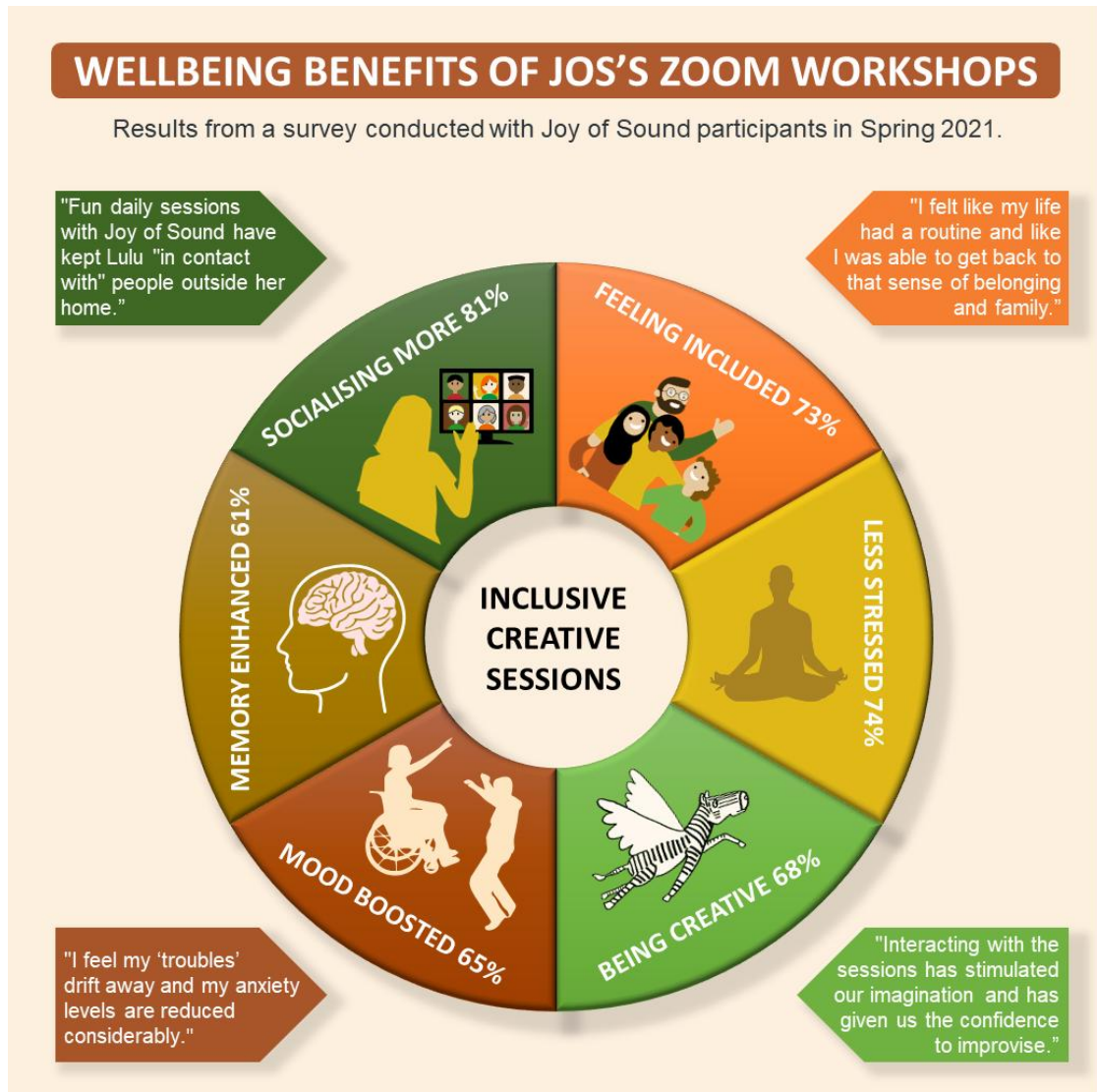
From the beginning of the pandemic the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and his team at City Hall, the London Recovery Board, have been working with city's boroughs, voluntary organisations, business groups, and health and care bodies to minimise the impact of the pandemic on communities in London, co-ordinating the planning for London's wider long-term economic and social recovery post Covid-19.

The Community Led Recovery Programme launched two grant programmes, Community-Led Action and London Community Story, to support communities to share insights that relate to 9 'missions' set out to steer London's recovery: A Green New Deal; A Robust Safety Net; High Streets for All; A New Deal for Young People; Good Work for All; Mental Health and Wellbeing; Digital Access for All; Healthy Food Healthy Weight; Building Strong Communities.

Our Impact

We found that throughout our beneficiaries' creative materials, and in feedback, session reflections, observations and surveys, several themes emerged around inclusion, creativity, reduced stress and uplift in spirit. We chose to illustrate these wellbeing benefits in an infographic.

In the stories and poetry created, we found themes of sharing, learning, humour, travel, escapism, and food. Beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to have structured, uplifting play and creative stimulation during this challenging time. (Infographic Creator: Vesna Marich, Graphic Design: Darko Predanic).



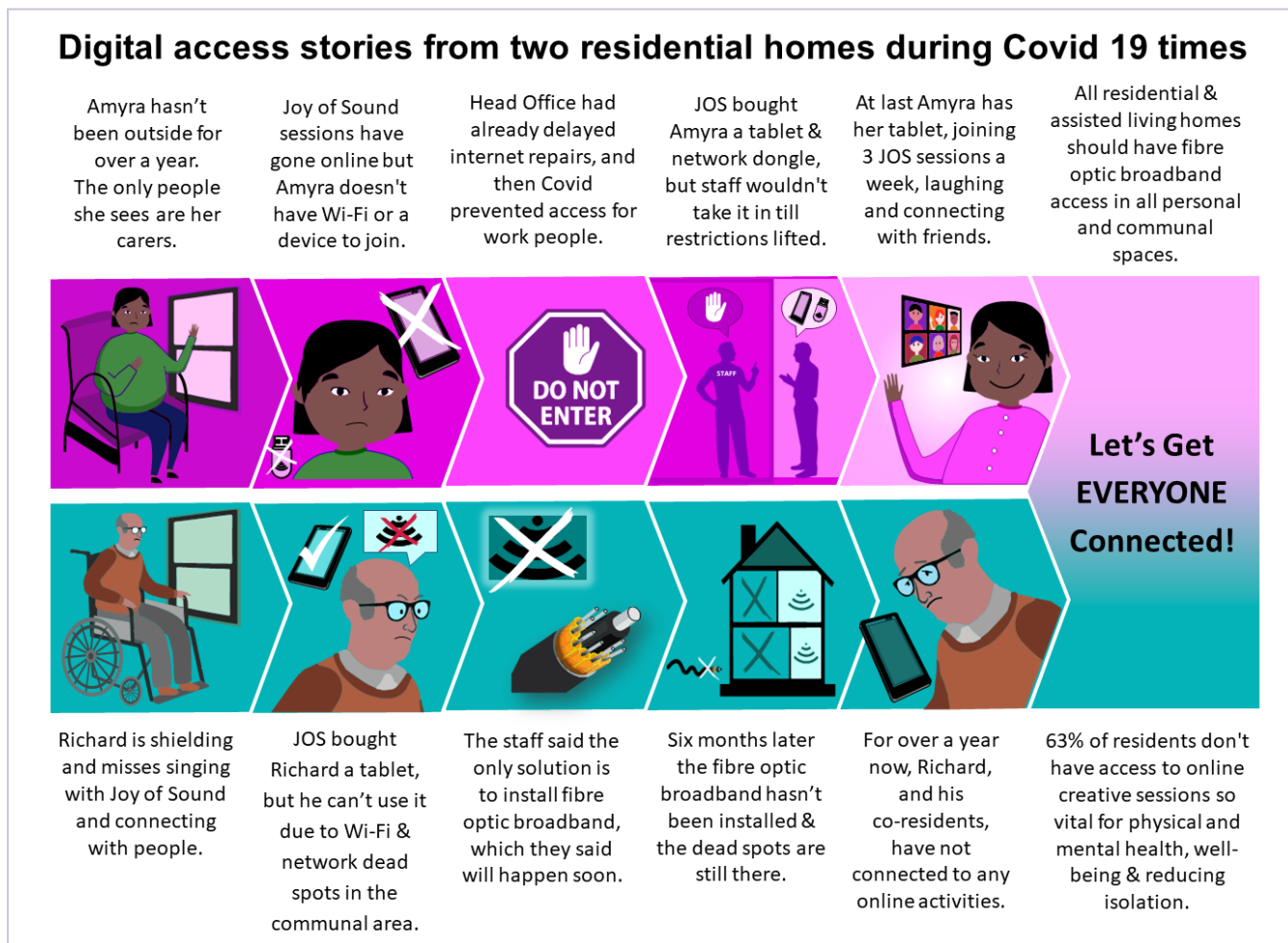
"The activities have allowed people to socialise with their peers even if it has meant to do it differently and at a distance. JOS Staff's positivity and effort to include everybody and to reach out to the most vulnerable ones, have meant that everybody can participate and feel less isolated...The sessions have been extremely important for my daughter Lisa because they have helped her to come out of her shell and make her progress significantly, helping to develop the way she communicates with others, her vocabulary and an interest in stories, songs and exercise. Furthermore, the sessions have helped the whole family to have fun and make this time less stressful."
(Loretana Contucci)

JOS's inclusive creative zoom sessions brought a new perspective for many participants who have been coping with mental health issues. The lockdown made it hard for participants, family members, support workers and volunteers to have something in the week to look forward to.

JOS's interactive creative sessions enabled them to see familiar faces on a regular basis, ease the pressure of isolation and enhance a feeling of connection and empathy.

Digital Access

To illustrate the Community Led Recovery Programme's mission "Digital Access for All" – we created this infographic presenting JOS's experience with two different residential homes, and their real-life challenges and barriers to gaining digital access, staying connected, creative, and reducing the effects of isolation during lock downs. (Infographic Creator: Anna Franklin, Graphic Design: Darko Predanic).



Whilst building new connections and experiencing the advantages of meeting new people online, where distance became no obstacle, there were some people who attended our live sessions that could not always be reached. There were frequent problems due to lack of access to technology or inadequate equipment. Insufficient / unstable Wi-Fi that didn't reach the communal spaces of participants that wanted to attend online sessions became a common occurrence. With funding we were fortunate to overcome some of the challenges by purchasing tablets with protective covers and screens for example, or supplying a dongle to enable basic internet connection in a residence.

However, overcoming the Wi-Fi issue was one of the greatest barriers. Sometimes we found that there were social rooms that had dead-spots that Wi-Fi dongles would not resolve.

"So, my question for the GLA is: Is there a policy and programme which checks that all residential homes, private and public, are applying for the grants to help their residents, and checks that their Wi-Fi that is installed really reaches the people who need it?"

It is brilliant that there are organisations using reconditioned devices to meet the mission to provide technology for all. However there is a serious need to provide specialised devices for people with different access needs, especially when they don't have a voice to ask for what they need, such as inclusive adaptive controls and interfaces to help them get online and navigate the internet in a way that meets their unique requirements." (Anna Franklin).