



Case studies: How can the arts and creativity support people who are shielding or vulnerable during Covid-19?

Project: Covid-19 response: Friendships and relationships by Luv2meetU

Organisation: Creative Minds / Verd de Luv2MeetU

Region: Yorkshire & Humber

Introduction

Due to the current coronavirus outbreak, Luv2meetU (friendship and dating agency for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism) have suspended all of face to face meetings with members. However, we are acutely aware that our members still need our support and that the current situation could result in many of them becoming increasingly socially isolated. Many of our members have underlying health conditions including having received kidney transplants, brain injury/ disease, diabetes and angina, and a number of them are shielding; making them at higher risk of becoming isolated.



Members usually pay a membership fee to access activities, but at present we have stopped charging as we are unable to offer face to face events. We are therefore providing a free service during the crisis period for our members.

This includes the provision already described above which are combination of online activities, support and help with using the technology which enable people to engage and reduce social isolation.

Funders

Creative Minds (funded by SWYPFT) match funded the project with funding from hft (Luv2meetu's parent organisation)

Who is it for?

Luv2MeetU operates across West Yorkshire as a **friendship and dating agency for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism**. This is a project aimed at adults with learning disabilities and/or autism in the Kirklees area of West Yorkshire. During the pandemic, Luv2meetU had to suspended face to face groups. Due to concerns about group attendees feeling lonely or isolated, Luv2meetU received funding from Creative Minds to provide its services in a different way during the pandemic.

Based on the current interests of Luv2MeetU members, the project worked to deliver virtual events this included:

- **Staying connected**
 - Skype group calls – to chat, catch up and also to see friends often with weekly themes such as cooking, films, TV, pets etc.
 - Daily live video check-ins
 - Conference calling

- Closed Facebook group acting as a safe space
 - Post cards/letters/pictures within the already established pen pal group
 - Prompts and discussion topics for members during calls.
- **Social activities**
 - Virtual quiz nights
 - Virtual game nights e.g. Pictionary online
 - Virtual craft sessions
 - Virtual online spas
 - Online fitness class
- **1:1 support**
 - Calls from staff at agreed time each week
 - Texts on a regular basis to members who don't like to talk on the telephone
 - Buddying members up with one another, to call and check in during the week and on an evening
 - Suggestions and advice to help staff to support communication.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

- Reduced need to access primary/secondary health care
- The project will link with learning disabilities services and other Creative Minds partners
- Reduce the negative impact of social distancing on people with learning disabilities, who are already more likely to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Increase individuals confidence and knowledge of using telephone and digital technology to engage with others and maintain relationships
- Reduce the pressure on family and carers of participants.

Where is it happening?

Kirklees, West Yorkshire

Are you working in partnership?

This is Creative Minds project delivered by our Creative Minds partner - Luv2meetU

How many people took/are taking part?

60

For how long has it been happening?

June 2020 – December 2020

What were/are the main outputs?

- Over the six months we will deliver 20 virtual group sessions/ social activities for up to 60 people
- Each session will be for one hour in length
- We will run a live closed Facebook page to encourage interaction amongst members outside of the Luv2meetU events
- Weekly calls will be provided to all members, with additional calls to those we have identified as being most isolated

- To go for a walk with people on a 1-1 basis who have been identified as being extremely lonely and isolated. These people have been fully risk assessed and all walks will adhere to social distancing guidelines
- To provide peer support.

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Members are enjoying the virtual events and the opportunity to link up with other people online and join in with new activities; which has resulted in new friendships being developed. There will always be the need for face to face social events when it is safe to do so, however we plan on continuing some level of virtual activities within Luv2meetU following the pandemic, as this has been hugely beneficial to our members.

Further information

www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/creative-minds/home/
www.hft.org.uk/our-services/empowering-individuals/friendship-and-dating/luv2meetu/luv2meetu-membership/

Creative Minds is an award-winning charity hosted by South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT). We develop and fund creative activities to support people with their mental health, wellbeing and recovery. Our initiatives cover arts, leisure, recreation and sports/physical activity. We work closely with SWYPFT services and our Creative Minds partners in the community to develop projects which benefit our public and staff. Since its launch in 2011, Creative Minds has enabled over 500 projects, facilitated over 100 sports events and benefits over 6,500 people per year. We have around 130 Creative Minds partner organisations from across all our localities in Barnsley, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield.

Creative Minds is a linked charity hosted SWYPFT with 4 core workers, with the use of bank and sessional staff as required.