UNLOCKING OUR SOUNDS HERITAGE (UOSH) SOUNDS FAMILIAR & SIMPLY SOUNDS PROJECTS EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared for:

Leicestershire County Council Participation Team

By:

Adam Billson (Billson Consulting Ltd)

Sara Mair (Mair Education)

Dated:

April 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report presents key findings from the evaluation of Unlocking our Sounds Heritage (UOSH) Sounds Familiar and Simply Sounds Projects. Special thanks are given to all the participants, volunteers, group leaders and project team members who were so generous in giving their time to share feedback and for welcoming us to the sessions and allowing us to observe and join in the fun!

For more information, the authors of this report can be contacted at:

Adam Billson, Billson Consulting Ltd (#09656433)

Email: adam@billsonconsultingltd.com

Telephone: 07921 841 004

Sara Mair, Mair Education

Email: sara@maireducation.com

Telephone: 07944 911 093

ABSTRACT

Leicestershire County Council's Participation Team were commissioned to create sound resources for use in reminiscence work with people living with dementia (PLWD) through the delivery of two local projects, Sounds Familiar and Simply Sounds.

Sounds Familiar Project

The Sounds Familiar Project was interested in the creation and delivery of sound reminiscence sessions for people living with dementia (PLWD), with a view to stimulating memories and improving their well-being. Further, the development of a delivery model for the use of sound resources in activities / sessions which could be replicated by other community leads.

In terms of the overall sessions and activities that were delivered, it was evident that the guests were enjoying themselves as they voted with their feet. Both groups saw largely the same people attend week-on-week and for Group #2 the group grew as the weeks progressed. Feedback about the sessions / whole project were positive.

> "It's the highlight of the week."

> (Participant)

In line with other research, our findings show that sound resources are useful in stimulating reminiscence with PLWD and their carers. The use of sounds in a short (a few minutes) activity led into group conversations lasting an average of 11 minutes and sometimes up to 16 minutes linked to the theme of the activity. In both groups, the sound clips prompted reminiscences, with participants sharing a lot of memories and experiences. The feedback from guests and group leads revealed that the activities and sessions enabled participants to learn new things about one another and how people used to live. This included the areas where they grew up, their dialect and language, and cultural / community traditions. Feedback from the group leaders and carers also revealed that the sound resources had enabled participants to create new shared experiences. It offered something different to do together. Feedback from Group #2 revealed that the content stimulated conversation that carried on after the sessions. In addition, all 11 of the participants who completed a feedback form also confirmed this.

> "M and M who were new to our group and came along to the session for the first time had both really enjoyed it. She said that he was talking a lot about things she never knew about during the session!"

> (Volunteer)

The sounds typically stimulated connections to memories linked to place and past family life – holidays and leisure pastimes as well as working life. The topics that resulted in the greatest degree of engagement were linked to the great outdoors, holidays, childhood, and the world of work – universal touchpoints in a group of this size. The engagement was particularly meaningful where the sound stimulated a memory connected to the local area. This had the potential to really elevate the mood of the group. One such example was of a Doll's Hospital or the Dominoes Toy Store in Leicester City Centre – a landmark for local children over the years.

It was difficult to ascertain a change in guest well-being as a direct result of activities. However, what we can evidence, particularly for Group #2 (which was a series of dedicated Sounds Familiar sessions) is that participants, both PLWD and their carers, found the experience enjoyable and stimulating. All participants who completed a feedback form confirmed that the sessions improved their wellbeing and 8 out of 9 said it made them feel happier. At the end of every session with Group 2 they were asked if they had enjoyed themselves. All said they enjoyed listening to the sounds. One example was an activity involving the sound of the sea (waves lapping and dragging stones back with the tide) which prompted a varied discussion of stories about the sea and one guest, a PLWD who to this point had been non-verbal other than whistling (a sign of enjoyment and engagement) offered that he had done his apprenticeship by the sea – this was with no encouragement from their carer. Smiles and laughter were evident throughout all the sessions, along with a real genuineness and humour to interactions. There was a definite feeling that the sessions enabled people to share aspects of their personalities and bring their very own gifts to the session. The activities and sessions could also be seen to have a positive impact on the well-being of the group leads, volunteers, and ourselves. Whilst not explicitly stated we believe this is due to the timeliness of the sessions within a national lockdown where any interaction is savoured and used to stave off feelings of loneliness and isolation.

There was evidence of new digital skills being used and people being supported by their peers to improve their competencies. However, the results from the feedback forms indicated that overall guests did not feel they had made developments with only one saying they felt the sessions gave them new digital skills or improved existing digital skills. The pandemic has factored into this, but even without our experiences over the last 12 months, digital skills are likely to grow in importance in the future. They will serve this group well, a group that can struggle with mobility, accessibility, opportunity and where (depending on the level of dementia) the carer may feel overwhelmed at having to take their PLWD outside into the community. In no way do digital interactions replace face-to-face interactions in terms of maintaining strengthened well-being or combating isolation, but they do help; and sessions such as that offered by the Sounds Familiar Project are a timely and accessible gateway to social support and developing technology skills.

In our view the approach and toolkit created by the team should be adopted by others working with PLWD and their carers.

Simply Sounds Project

The Simply Sounds Project was primarily interested in the creation of new audio material with the help of the community, including BAME that is representative of the Leicestershire population.

Milestones for Simply Sounds Project were not entirely met due to setbacks caused by COVID (and the initial national lockdown and local tier restrictions) and the unexpected retirement of the project coordinator. However, the engagement efforts that did take place were inclusive and to a high quality. The activity was well-received by participants who agreed that it was enjoyable, easy to take part, improved their well-being, and made them feel part of a community.

> *"What I loved about the project was how accessible it was, the idea that we could use our phone to record and just click send it, is accessible to all, genius."*

(Participant)

The project capitalised on the adoption of technology and quiet of lockdown and opened more community members up to the idea of digital provision. With the process and materials already created, it would be simple to build on the project in the future with additional rounds of promotion for new material.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Unlocking Our Sound Heritage

The Unlocking Our Sound Heritage (UOSH) project aims to preserve and provide greater access to the nation's rare and unique sound recordings. It is a partnership led by the British Library, with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund which involves ten regional hubs across the UK. The Midlands Hub for the project is based at the University of Leicester and is preserving sound recordings from across the Midlands. They commissioned Leicestershire County Council's Participation Team to create sound resources for use in reminiscence work with people living with dementia (PLWD) through the delivery of two local projects, Sounds Familiar and Simply Sounds. With a focus on person centred care, the projects aimed to pioneer the use of digital cultural engagement for well-being and empower people to discover their interests and connections to heritage.

The projects' aims were to:

- Bring the medium of sound to the forefront of the heritage agenda.

- Raise the profile of the effectiveness of sound in reminiscence work.

- Expand the range of communities who have access to its potential.

- Involve diverse communities in our resource creation.

- Design and explore meaningful new archive material and develop a legacy for use and replication nationwide.

The projects' outputs were to:

- Create audio material from digital archive chosen with the help of the community.

- Develop new resources for people living with dementia (PLWD).

- Deliver training programmes to enable people to access material (Simply Sounds)

As part of the project, an evaluation was commissioned to explore (in order of priority):

- How useful sound resources in reminiscence work are (participant and carer viewpoint).

- How effective the project is in involving and responding to the needs of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) participants.

- The potential for resources to be adapted for a range of communities.

- Any reported improvements in well-being on the part of participants.

- The perceived level of involvement in resource creation by community stakeholders

Sounds Familiar Project

The Sounds Familiar Project was primarily interested in the creation and delivery of sound reminiscence sessions for people living with dementia (PLWD), with a view to stimulating memories and improving their well-being. Further, the development of a delivery model for the use of sound resources in activities / sessions which could be replicated by other community leads.

Draft milestones for Sounds Familiar included the delivery of 10 reminiscence sessions and work with 30 people. In response to COVID, these milestones were adapted to working closely with 6 digitally engaged households, and the delivery of 4 sound-based activities for use over a two-week period.

The Project Team ended up recruiting two existing groups working with PLWD to pilot the sessions between November 2020 and February 2021. The groups worked closely with the Project Team to plan the structure and format of the pilot sessions, using two quite different approaches. Both were underpinned by activities based around sounds that were skilfully designed to be inclusive, allowing participants to connect in a digitised format using the sound clips to stimulate reminiscence. The sessions consisted of open opinion-based content which did not place too much emphasis on memory, or putting pressure on people, instead asking participants to give an open opinion on what they were.

Mind for You, Joy Inside (https://mindforyou.co.uk/digital-services/the-joy-inside/)

The first programme of sessions (between November and December 2020) was delivered with this established dementia group over 6 weeks at their Friday afternoon and Tuesday afternoon sessions. The hour-long sessions covered different themes (Sounds of a Summer Garden, Sounds of the Sea, Sounds of the Cinema, Sounds of Travel, Sounds of Christmas, Sounds of Winter / winter sports, Sounds of Christmas Day activities) in small groups of six households through activities and music, with the Sounds Familiar Project activities slotted into existing content and delivered by the group lead.

The Sounds Familiar Project clips and activities tended to comprise around 15 minutes of the overall session.

Leicester Musical Memory Box (https://leicestermusicalmemorybox.co.uk/)

The second programme of sessions (between January and February 2021) was delivered with this established group over 4 weeks on a Thursday afternoon. The hour-long sessions with members of this group were a dedicated Sounds Familiar Project session with structure and content developed in collaboration between the Project Team and group leaders. The sessions were hosted by the Project Team with group lead and a volunteer supporting.

Simply Sounds Project

The Simply Sounds Project was primarily interested in the creation of new audio material with the help of the community, including BAME that is representative of the Leicestershire population.

Draft milestones for Simply Sounds included the engagement of 20 community leaders, the creation of a short film about the creation / submission process, 4+ workshops, 200 printed flyers, 100 recordings added to the Community Curators website.

BACKGROUND

The following section provides some additional information to help understand the purpose and context of the project in respect to dementia, person-centred care, sound reminiscence, and the COVID pandemic.

Dementia

Dementia is not a specific disease but a term for the impaired ability to remember, think, or make decisions that interferes with doing everyday activities. There are many types of dementia, the most common and well-known being Alzheimer's Disease. The symptom most associated with dementia is difficulty remembering recent events (such as a conversation) with difficulty remembering more distant memories occurring later in the disease. However, other symptoms can include problems with attention, communication, reasoning, judgement, problem-solving, and visual perception. Treatment for dementia is dependent upon the underlying cause. There is no medical cure for neurological degenerative dementias, like Alzheimer's Disease. There are medications that can help to protect the brain or manage symptoms, behaviours, and emotional states such as anxiety. It is possible to live well with dementia, although what 'live well' is differs for people. Often this includes the support and understanding of a carer.

The Alzheimer's Society provides a useful bookcase analogy for dementia on their YouTube channel which can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkvyGrOEIfA.

Person-centred Care

Developed by Tom Kitwood, the concept of person-centred care argues for a "new culture" view of dementia, where dementia is redefined as a disability, the nature and extent of which can be largely determined by the quality of care received. This new culture perspective rejects models of care which position PLWD as little more than decaying shells, and instead emphasises their capacity to lead full and enjoyable lives. The key points of person-centred care include:

- Treating the person with dignity and respect.

- Understanding their history, lifestyle, culture, and preferences, including their likes, dislikes, hobbies, and interests.

- Looking at situations from the point of view of the person with dementia.

- Providing opportunities for the person to have conversations and relationships with other people.

- Ensuring the person has the chance to try new things or take part in activities they enjoy.

<div align="right">

(bullet points from Alzheimer's Society website)

</div>

Reminiscence Therapy

"The principle of reminiscence therapy is to assist people who have dementia to interact and converse in a natural way by stimulating their long-term memory with material from the past. It is often the case that long-term memory can still function when the person's working (short-term) memory is degraded. Tapping into long-term memory can make it possible once again for them to enjoy interacting with others, through their stories."

<div align="right">

(BBC Reminiscence Archive)

</div>

Various reminiscence systems have been developed to support PLWD based on photos, videos, objects / materials, and sound. With minimal prompting such as simple questions or the presentation of the object itself, PLWD may recall memories from childhood or young adulthood (studies show that PLWD's strongest memories are from when they were aged between 14 and 40 years old). Sharing memories can help PLWD feel more connected and grounded to the present, leading to positive feelings and strengthened well-being, with less agitation and feelings of isolation.

COVID-19

As the project took place during the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), plans for delivery had to be significantly altered to accommodate national and local social distancing guidelines. The implications of the lockdown and ongoing Government guidelines meant rather than taking place in face-to-face sessions, interactions across both Sounds Familiar and Simply Sounds were delivered online, using the Zoom video communication platform.

It is our belief that COVID compounded the need for projects of this type, a mezzo-level social intervention, seeking to strengthen the well-being, connections, and personal development of PLWD and their carers during a time of unease.

Online delivery also led to some challenges with evaluation that are explored in the next section 'Methodology'.

METHODOLOGY

The following section outlines the approach that was taken to complete the evaluation.

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

1)   Evaluate the **Sounds Familiar Project** activities in respect of the usefulness of using sound resources in reminiscence work, and their impact on the well-being of PLWD and their carers.

2)   Evaluate the **Simply Sounds Project** activities in respect of the creation of new audio material by community stakeholders that involves, and responds to, the BAME community.

Several conversations were undertaken with the Project Team in advance of project delivery to establish a clear sense of shared purpose and mission in respect of the evaluation. An evaluation framework was created for each of the projects that balanced the needs of the evaluation and the needs of the participants.

Sounds Familiar Project

The evaluation framework created for the Sounds Familiar Project was informed by the four elements of a person-centred care approach and the psychological needs – love, comfort, attachment, occupation, identity, and inclusion – promoted by approach author Tom Kitwood. The four elements are:

1)   Valuing people with dementia and those who care for them.

2)   Treating people as individuals.

3)   Looking at the world from the perspective of the person with dementia.

4)   A positive social environment in which the person living with dementia can experience relative well-being.

Consideration of these elements were woven into the different data collection methods alongside various indicators of well-being (feeling good and functioning well). Evaluation methods included:

•   Pre- and post-project interviews with the project team.

•   Pre- and post-project interviews with the group lead and / or volunteer(s).

- Observation of PLWD and carers by the evaluators within the sessions.

- Post-project feedback form completed by the PLWD participants / carers (adapted from the core evaluation form used by the Culture Leicestershire team to focus on the intended outcomes of the project). **x12**

- Session debriefs that included:

  o Session reflection by the group lead / volunteer(s). This was particularly useful because of the existing relationships they had with the guests where they could pick up on the subtle tells that otherwise would have been missed.

  o Session reflection by the Project Team (project lead and facilitator).

- Verbal summary of conversations that took place among the group leads and PLWD / carers each week between each session (their check-in telephone calls).

The way the evaluation was undertaken differed slightly depending on the group delivering, i.e., Mind for You or Leicester Musical Memory Box, and was informed by their guests' level of dementia, and carer ease with technology / evaluation (something that was explored with the group leads in advance of the first session). We were extremely conscious of being sensitive, and responsive to the group leaders' and their guests' needs with the evaluation. Of note, not creating an approach that compromised the session delivery, or could risked causing distress to participants or adding undue pressure to the carers.

One solid positive of the sessions being delivered through Zoom was that the evaluation team were able to attend every session to observe and become more familiar with the groups, the guests, and their nuanced responses. However, the quality of their connection and framing within their webcam meant that a lot of detail and non-verbal communication outside of the 'talking head' space was lost.

Discounted Methods

There were lots of conversations throughout the lifetime of the project on the evaluation and whether more formal (traditional) evaluation could be undertaken, or whether we could capture a scored 'change' in well-being. Ultimately, we erred on the side of caution, with the comfort of the PLWD and their carers always at the forefront of our minds.

In-depth evaluation conversations immediately following an activity / session.

Given the nature of dementia and the average age of the guests, we felt that the closer we could get to undertaking evaluation after the session would be beneficial in terms of their ability to recall thoughts / feelings, and overall strengthen the findings. There were a handful of factors that stopped us having conversations with guests immediately following the session:

1) We did not have a strong relationship with the guests and delivering the sessions online was not conducive to building those relationships in the given time to the extent where we could feel comfortable having a more in-depth conversation.

2) Guests were also tired after an hours' session and following up with them so soon after would not have had their health and well-being in mind.

Instead, we looked to the group lead / volunteer(s) who had already established relationships to follow-up with guests for feedback as part of a broader conversation they had in the week between sessions.

Post-session feedback forms.

The main reason for discounting post-session feedback forms was whether they would offer any additional insight, over-and-above that gained from other evaluation methods.

Online forms using a link to SurveyMonkey or built in using the Zoom Poll function were considered but discounted due to the technological barriers that are created – this is an audience that traditionally have a low level of digital literacy and we needed to work towards the lowest level of that competency.

Hardcopy forms were considered but also discounted due to complexities in administration. For example, making sure that carers had received everything they needed in advance and were clear of what they were completing and when, and then returning it.

Well-being measures.

Lots of validated well-being outcome measures were appraised as there was a hope to capture a change in score pre- and post-activity. However, there are lots of indicators / aspects of well-being that would not be relevant to the project – for example, whether a PLWD or their carer was well-rested that day – and it would be challenging to attribute any change in score to the activity or session. In addition, the same challenges in respect of administration present with the post-session feedback forms are also present here.

Lastly, PLWD are not often in a position, due to their level of dementia, to self-report on their well-being so the score would come via their carer and in these instances the surrounding narrative to the score, captured through other methods, is more important.

One tool we had hoped to use was the UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit which was developed to measure changes in mood and emotion as these are more likely to change because of a short intervention such as the project activities. It is a very visual, colourful, and tangible tool that we believe would work well should the activities be delivered in a face-to-face session in the future.

Open conversation on well-being within the session.

We also explored having an open conversation on well-being within the session using a tool like the Blob Feelings Tree from the Blob Dementia book that can be used to draw out feelings and emotions. Ultimately, to do justice to an activity like this would have taken too much time within the session and taken away from the focus of the sessions. Also, even smaller conversations specifically about well-being had the potential to 'open something up' that we would not be able to deal with due to the distance created by delivering the session virtually.
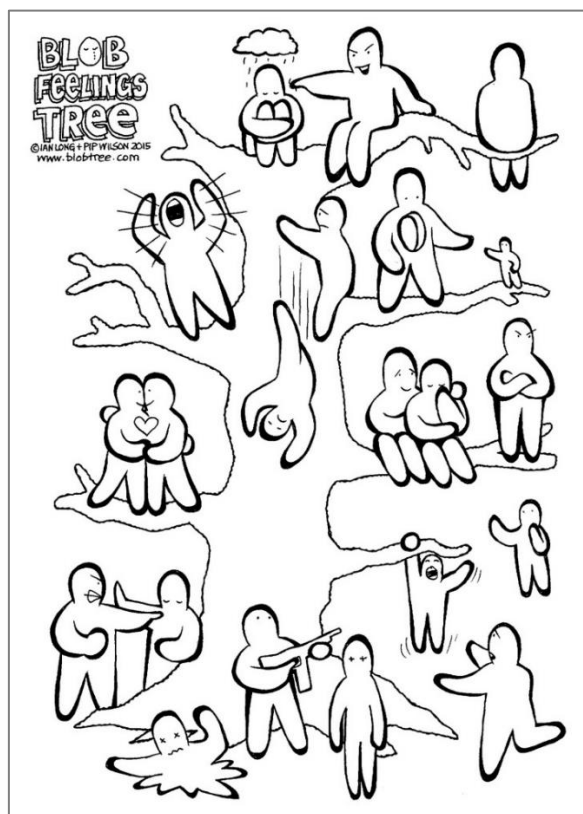
Simply Sounds Project

Given the level of participant involvement in the project activity (i.e., the submission of a 2-minute recording) it was decided that a soft-touch approach to evaluation was required – any evaluation that took more than a couple of minutes to complete would have been excessive. With that in mind, evaluation methods for the Simply Sounds Project included:

- Pre- and post-project interviews with the project team.

- Post-project feedback form completed by the participants (adapted from the core evaluation form used by the Culture Leicestershire team to focus on the intended outcomes of the project). This was built into the submission process with a prompt to complete the form using the Survey Monkey platform. Multilingual surveys were considered but discounted due to the prohibitive costs for translation and hosting. **x7**

- Post-project interviews with community participants. **x1**

It was intended that the demographics response within the feedback form and the subject of the submitted recording would help determine whether it was a recording of relevance to the BAME community. Additional evaluation in the form of a community leader focus group or participant focus group was considered during the planning stages but did not come to fruition due to low interest.

FINDINGS

This following section presents key findings to emerge from analysis of all data relating to the Sounds Familiar and Simply Sounds Projects.

Sounds Familiar Project

"Amazing."

"Fantastic."

"It was absolutely brilliant, wasn't it?"

"It breaks up the monotony of the day."

"It's the highlight of the week."

"It was nice to think of holidays when the weather is so cold outside."

"Well thought out and a good structure."

(Participants)

Milestones for the Sounds Familiar Project were met with the delivery of a project activity at 10 Mind for You – Joy Inside sessions, and 4 dedicated sessions with the Leicester Musical Memory Box group. Both groups saw largely the same people attend week on week with an average of 8 participants (PLWD and their carers) attending Joy Inside sessions and for LMMB the group grew as the weeks progressed, peaking with 20 attendees for the final week. It was a case of people voting with their feet. Refer to Appendix A for a full record of attendance and a demographic breakdown of participants based on the completed evaluation forms.

The activities were skilfully designed to be inclusive, allowing participants to connect in a digitised format using the sound clips to stimulate reminiscence. The sessions consisted of open opinion-based content which did not require too much emphasis to be reliant on memory - asking participants to give an open opinion on what they were hearing.

"Asking questions that don't pressure but engage, that's the skill."

(Group Facilitator)

Usefulness of sound resources in reminiscence work

> *"We know there is a need for it [activities that stimulate conversation with PLWD], we've heard it from carers' mouths that it would help in situations where families stop coming round because they don't know what to say. This is a national need."*

<div align="right">**(Group Facilitator)**</div>

The evidence collected indicated that sound resources <u>are</u> useful in stimulating reminiscence with the PLWD and their carers.

> *"Participants were interested in the material. There are many benefits of interaction and engagement using sounds in a digital session. Both the content and the social aspect have been wins."*

<div align="right">**(Group Facilitator)**</div>

> *"It's surprising what you remember!"*

<div align="right">**(Participant)**</div>

In both groups, the sound clips prompted reminiscences, with participants sharing a lot of memories and experiences. The feedback revealed that people enjoyed learning new things about each other and how people used to live.

The use of sounds in a short (a few minutes) activity led into group conversations lasting an average of 11 minutes and sometimes up to 16 minutes linked to the theme of the activity. The conversation was often varied and stimulated other memories from plucking chickens to tractor raffles the seaside to cycling and picking potatoes during World War 2.

All 12 participants representing PLWD and their carers who completed feedback forms felt the sounds inspired reminiscence. Of these, 8 felt they would be more likely to use sound resources for reminiscence in the future.

The feedback from guests and group leads revealed that the activities and sessions enabled participants to learn new things about one another and how people used to live. This included the areas where they grew up, their dialect and language, and cultural / community traditions. One of the carers said she had learnt something about her husband that she had not previously known.

> *"We found out things we didn't know [about each other]."*

<div align="right">**(Participant)**</div>

"M and M who were new to our group and came along to the session for the first time had both really enjoyed it. She said that he was talking a lot about things she never knew about during the session!"

(Volunteer)

Feedback from the group leaders and carers also revealed that the sound resources had enabled participants to create new shared experiences. It offered something different to do together. When people can visit could be helpful for family members who may find conversation with the PLWD difficult.

Feedback from the group at the dedicated Sounds Familiar Project sessions revealed that the content stimulated conversation that carried on after the sessions. In addition, all 12 of the participants who completed a feedback form also confirmed this.

The sounds typically stimulated connections to memories linked to place, past family life including holidays and leisure pastimes as well as working life. The topics that resulted in the greatest degree of engagement were linked to the great outdoors, holidays, childhood, and the world of work. The engagement was particularly meaningful where the sound stimulated a memory connected to the local area. This had the potential to really elevate the mood of the group. One such example was of a Doll's Hospital or the Dominoes Toy Store in Leicester City Centre – a landmark for local children over the years.

"I really enjoyed hearing the clips of people in Leicester talking about the past and how the town used to be. This generated some great discussions during the sessions and sometimes outside them and I felt that I learnt a lot about the group. I also shared memories with my own family as a result of the content of the sessions. It has been so lovely to see people showing genuine enjoyment when listening and taking part."

(Volunteer)

Another notable example within a session was an activity involving the sound of the sea (waves lapping and dragging stones back with the tide) which prompted a varied discussion of stories about the sea. One guest, a PLWD who to this point had been non-verbal other than whistling (a sign of enjoyment and engagement), offered that he had done his apprenticeship by the sea. This reminiscence took place with no encouragement from their carer.

How the sounds are introduced was important to how they were received. They worked best where they had an explanation of what they are and what people needed to do after listening to them, a *"are you sitting comfortably then I'll begin"* approach. It worked best if the sounds were played individually (in groups of 3 or 4 soundbites) and guests were given a chance to respond before moving on to the next.

How the sounds were put together was effective, they had a story to them and were considered immersive where there were accompanying images. The use of curated images alongside the sounds also aided reminiscence, particularly for those with a hearing impairment.

Group leaders were given confidence on how to use sounds as part of their sessions, and both groups' leaders expressed their intention to use sound going forward with a readiness to use the sound archives. Both group leaders felt they would use sounds resources again in the future and commented on the value in using them and how they added a different element to the session.

> *"It has improved my confidence and I have felt very proud to be a part of this. It has been great to feel that I have been involved with something to help improve well-being at what has been a very difficult time for many people. I have felt valued during this pilot and this has raised my self-esteem."*

(Volunteer)

Impact on well-being

As the challenges to the methodology covered earlier highlight, it was difficult to ascertain a change in guest well-being as a direct result of activities. Well-being is broader than happiness, but positive emotion and engagement are essential elements within it. During the observation of sessions, the evaluation team looked for indicators pertaining to participants' well-being throughout the session, i.e., changes in well-being at different points in the session and example indicators such as moments of joy evident through body language / movement, verbal feedback, movement facial expressions, engagement such as sharing stories or responding to someone else's story. Throughout the sessions it was possible to see when participants appeared to be engaged in the activity or when they because disengaged or distracted and fell asleep. What we can substantiate, particularly for the dedicated session group, is that participants (both PLWD and their carers) found the experience enjoyable and stimulating.

> *"It's lovely remembering these things."*

(Participant)

All participants who completed a feedback form confirmed that the sessions improved their well-being and 9 out of 10 said it made them feel happier. At the end of every dedicated session, they were asked by the group lead if they had enjoyed themselves. All said they enjoyed listening to the sounds. Using carefully selected music in between the sound activities was an effective approach in re-engaging participants, especially those who are non-verbal. It encouraged movement, breathing, and swaying and acted as an emotional outlet.

"All agreed that listening to the sounds had made them feel good and some said that they were still talking about it after the session had ended."

(Group Facilitator)

Smiles and laughter were evident throughout all the sessions, along with a real genuineness and humour to interactions. There was a definite feeling that the sessions enabled people to share aspects of their personalities and bring their very own gifts to the session.

Feedback confirmed that the sessions had given people a break in their week. Feedback from the group leader indicated that it was a normalising experience for PLWD, one that did not put them under pressure.

"There's lots of laughter. It's ok to be silly."

(Group Facilitator)

"[PLWD] is isolated so it's not been an easy time for her, and [Carer] said that things that distract [PLWD] and take [PLWD] back to a happier time were ideal and this fitted the bill."

(Group Facilitator)

The activities and sessions could also be seen to have a positive impact on the well-being of the group leads, volunteers, and ourselves. Whilst not explicitly stated we believe this is due to the timeliness of the sessions within a national lockdown where any interaction is savoured and used to stave off feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Relationships are at the heart of strengthened well-being and the sessions were full of moments of warmth and beautiful moments of connectedness between PLWD and their carers, as well as participants within the wider group. These interactions were evident throughout with lots of positive body language, for example:

- People turning and leaning toward the screen to see and hear one another better.

- Sharing humour and moments of joy.

- Showing warmth to another person as a response to the content. For example, a PLWD getting up and dancing with their carer.

> *"Today's session was quite upbeat, and it was so lovely to see [PLWD] get up and dancing with [Carer]. They are clearly getting a lot out of attending the sessions and the sound activities seem to be prompting good reminiscence for them in particular."*

- Sharing stories and aspects of their personality.

- Enabled PLWD to give gifts to their carers / the group. Moments of authenticity that included sharing stories of their past, telling jokes, playing the harmonica for the group, showing a much-loved Action Man toy from their childhood.

- Participants drawing other participants into the conversations by asking them questions.

All participants who completed a feedback form confirmed that the sessions helped them feel more connected to others.

"A dementia diagnosis can make you feel invisible. You weren't invisible, you were part of the group and your opinion is worth something. You are making a contribution. They are validated during the session. Flips their normal life on its head."

(Group Facilitator)

Impact on digital skills

There was evidence of new digital skills being used and people being supported to improve their technology. For example, the observed comfort of participants using Zoom as the sessions progressed, and when one participant had their screen facing the ceiling and he was encouraged to move it to show his face. However, the results from the feedback forms indicated that participants did not feel they had made developments with only one saying they felt the sessions gave them new digital skills or improved existing digital skills.

The pandemic has factored into this, but even without our experiences over the last 12 months, digital skills are likely to grow in importance in the future. They will serve this group well, a group that can struggle with mobility, accessibility, opportunity and where (depending on the level of dementia) the carer may feel overwhelmed at having to take their PLWD outside into the community.

Simply Sounds Project

The Simply Sounds Project was primarily interested in the creation of new audio material with the help of the community, including BAME that is representative of the Leicestershire population.

Milestones for Simply Sounds Project were not entirely met due to setbacks caused by COVID (and the initial national lockdown and local tier restrictions) and the unexpected retirement of the project coordinator. The project was restarted with a new coordinator in December but due to the Christmas break and second national lockdown which commenced in January 2021, promotion and engagement with community leaders was an unexpected challenge.

Of the intended four plus workshops on 'How to Simply Sounds', two were planned, and one was delivered on Wednesday 24 February to an audience of 12. Of the 12 attendees, seven were 'community leaders', five were from BAME backgrounds, and represented groups such as Charnwood Arts, Leicestershire County Council Learning Service, Millgate School (a Special Educational Needs school), the Loughborough Male Voice Choir etc. Each of the attendees were keen to learn more about the project and cascade the information to their members.

The workshop was well-received with a real passion and interest shown from the attendees.

> *"No one was excluded - everyone at the Simply Sounds event had a voice. Even if you don't think of yourself as someone knowing much about digital media it was explained really simply. Everyone was treated the same. It was absolutely inclusive in the way it had been delivered and explained."*

(Participant)

The Project Team capitalised on the opportunity by sharing within the event, a designed flyer to promote the project (left) and a short film about creation / submission process, a copy of which can be found on the Culture Leicestershire website and YouTube channel[1]. The digital flyer was also circulated in five languages to other community leaders (early January) and to individuals in the community through various channels e.g., Local Area Coordinators (LACs), Leicestershire Adult Learning Service (LALS), Community Managed Libraries (CMLs), all primary schools in the City and County, other Leicestershire County Council networks including the Participation Team contact list, in addition to two radio interviews, and promotion using the Culture Leicester social media channels[2].

---

[1] https://www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/projects/simply-sounds/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOH2vDeYFyA
[2] https://twitter.com/CultureLeics/status/1363458666817544193

Simply Sounds Promotion Flyers in English (left) and Guajarati (right)

37 contributions were received, 9 of which were from members of the BAME community. The smaller than expected number of submissions is surprising given the effort made for promotion. Submissions covered a range of topics with participants wanting to share the sounds of the great outdoors – a key characteristic of the time during the pandemic where people valued and found comfort in outdoor spaces.

Of those submissions, seven feedback forms were completed, and one follow-up participant interview was undertaken. Refer to Appendix B for a demographic breakdown of participants based on the completed evaluation forms. In general, participants responded well to the activity giving a mean response of 'Agree' to each of the statements asked:

- I enjoyed the activity.

- I would recommend this activity to others.

- It was easy to submit my recording.

- It made me feel part of a community.

- It made me feel a sense of pride in my own cultural heritage.

- It improved my well-being.

- It gave me new, or improved existing, digital skills.

Notable comments from participants included:

- How the project was important for enabling communication through sound:

  "[The recording] tells use about the person who recorded it."

  (Participant)

- How the project was great to undertake during lockdown:

  "A great activity for my daughters during lockdown … They thought of what sounds they missed when they weren't in school … I enjoyed watching the children put it all together … It has made the children discover a new talent"

  (Participant)

- How the project demonstrated a high level of inclusivity.

  "What I loved about the project was how accessible it was, the idea that we could use our phone to record and just click send it, is accessible to all, genius."

  (Participant)

  "[The project] made me think about my life using senses other than sight."

  (Participant)

Sharing Event

On 18 March 2021, the Project Team held a sharing event aimed at professionals to raise awareness of the sound archives and share their resources / knowledge more widely. This included a toolkit to replicate the delivery of the Sounds Familiar Project session – a supplement to the project's original plan to hold train-the-trainer CLS workshops which could not be delivered as COVID secure conditions could not be met within the original timescale.

There were over 50 attendees made up of professionals from a range of roles and national organisations alongside the group lead, volunteers, and clients from one of the Sounds Familiar Project sessions. For example:

- Community Engagement Officer, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.

- Meaningful Activities Facilitator from University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) NHS Trust Specialising in Dementia Care.

- Senior Museums Officer, Archives and Heritage, Staffordshire County Council.

- Senior Archivist (Collections), Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

- Sector Specialist Officer, Community Arts, Barnsley Arts, Museums and Archives.

- In-TanDEM Project Manager, Torbay Memory Café Coordinator.

Participant responses shared during the event highlight how much value it offered, particularly with the Toolkit (and included Top Tips) acting as a legacy to the PLWD sessions that were delivered:

"I've been working on a project for reminiscence about our dementia patient's past motorcycles and the era of mods and rockers. this is very close to my family as we are all bikers. it would be brilliant to include sounds as well, I never even thought of it until today :) thank you :)"

"What fantastic resources you have produced! Incredible achievement. Every carer needs to hear about these wonderful activities! LOVE this!"

"At Leicester City Community Trust we run a couple of dementia projects where we use music to evoke memories. The use of other sounds opens up so many new ideas and opportunities for our participants. This has been really useful. Thank you."

"Just wanted to thank you for explaining and highlighting these excellent and practical projects. I feel more confident in understanding what they are and how they may be used and look forward to encouraging my residents in using them and as well as community groups. Need to thoroughly check your resources. Thank you."

"Thanks so much for this presentation very useful to know in supporting people living with dementia. It's really interesting to think about the local specificity of sound heritage when thinking about its efficacy."

"Huge thank you to all involved in this project. Really interesting and impressive to hear and see what you've all achieved. This has demonstrated the importance of the Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project and preserving sound archives. Well done to everyone."

"Thank you for a really fascinating session, and hearing about so many interesting examples, and ways of using sound, this has been inspiring!"

"Excellent session. Thank you very much all. I have loads of new ideas to talk to my colleagues about."

(Sharing Event Participants)

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Sounds Familiar Project

In no way do digital interactions replace face-to-face interactions in terms of maintaining strengthened well-being or combating isolation, but they do help; and sessions such as that offered by the Sounds Familiar Project are a timely and accessible gateway to social support and developing technology skills. Further, the evidence collected indicated that sound resources are useful in stimulating reminiscence with the PLWD and their carers.

- Partnering with established groups helped make the project a success.

- The skill of the group facilitator to put together and run the sessions is key. Of note, the facilitator needs to be able to recognise the validation of the individual and the gifts they bring to the session, in addition to asking questions that do not put pressure on people which may cause anxiety in the given group.

- The facilitator understood the importance of giving people time to reflect and talk, and the pace of the sessions and activities lent themselves well to this. The facilitator made the point that we can underestimate the value in sitting and giving people time like this – the power of pause to support mindfulness and draw our focus to the task at hand.

- A person-led approach to designing the sessions is important. The debrief after each session allowed for timely reflections by those involved, which fed into the design of the next session. This enabled the facilitator to be responsive to the individual needs and interests of the group week-on-week.

- The personal interests, preferences, and experiences of each PLWD determines their response to the sound reminiscence activity content, so content must be adapted to meet the person. People with dementia are still people, and different people like different things. Group sessions can be accommodated by using content that cuts across ages / genders / culture / background etc. and is accepted to be universally positive (e.g., shared experiences).

- Even without our experiences over the last 12 months, digital skills are likely to grow in importance in the future. They will serve this group well, a group that can struggle with mobility, accessibility, opportunity and where (depending on the level of dementia) the carer may feel overwhelmed at having to take their PLWD outside into the community. However, accommodations must be made in terms of those that are hard-of-hearing and / or have a low level of digital literacy.

Simply Sounds Project

Whole projects can be run remotely, and the pandemic has opened more community members up to the idea of digital provision. In one sense the timing of the Simply Sounds Project capitalised on the adoption of technology and quiet of lockdown. However, the impact of COVID (specifically the second national lockdown) and retirement of the Project Coordinator during the early stages of the project were significant hurdles to generating interest and submissions.

- High quality promotional materials (flyer, 'how to' video, 'how to' workshop) are an asset to the process.

- Do not underestimate the effort and time required for promotion.

- Some communities may benefit from more hands-on support to record and submit sound recordings.

APPENDIX A

SFP Attendance Data.

Joy Inside						
Session	Hours	Leaders (not LCC)	Volunteers	PLWD	Carers	TOTAL
06.11.20	1	2	3	2	5	12
13.11.20	1	2	3	3	6	14
20.11.20	1	2	3	2	4	11
27.11.20	1	2	2	4	5	13
04.12.20	1	2	3	3	3	11
11.12.20	1	2	3	4	4	13
15.12.20	1	2	1	1	3	7
17.12.20	1	2	3	3	4	12
22.12.20	1	2	2	4	4	12
TOTALS	9					95

Leicester Musical Memory Box						
Session	Hours	Leaders (not LCC)	Volunteers	PLWD	Carers	TOTAL
14.12.20	1	2	2	7	7	18
21.1.21	1	2	2	9	11	24
28.1.21	1	2	2	9	8	21
4.2.21	1	2	2	10	10	24
11.2.21	1	2	2	11	9	24
TOTALS	5					111

SFP Demographic Data

What is your age?		
Answer Choices	**Responses (%)**	**Responses (n.)**
15-24	0.00%	0
25-44	0.00%	0
45-64	25.00%	3
65-84	33.33%	4
85 or over	41.67%	5
TOTALS	**100.00%**	**12**

What is your gender identity?		
Answer Choices	**Responses (%)**	**Responses (n.)**
Male	45.45%	5
Female	54.55%	6
Prefer to self-describe	0.00%	0
TOTALS	**100.00%**	**11**

What is your ethnic group?		
Answer Choices	**Responses (%)**	**Responses (n.)**
Asian or Asian British	0.00%	0
Black or Black British	0.00%	0
Mixed	0.00%	0
White	100.00%	12
Other	0.00%	0
TOTALS	**100.00%**	**12**

What is your religion or belief?		
Answer Choices	**Responses (%)**	**Responses (n.)**
No religion	33.33%	4
Christian	66.67%	8
Hindu	0.00%	0
Jewish	0.00%	0
Muslim	0.00%	0
Sikh	0.00%	0
Other	0.00%	0
TOTALS	**100.00%**	**12**

Do you consider yourself to have a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity?		
Answer Choices	**Responses (%)**	**Responses (n.)**
No	25.00%	3
Yes	75.00%	9
TOTALS	**100.00%**	**12**

If yes, describe the nature of your disability.
Osteoporosis.
Alzheimer's.
Hearing loss, affects hearing of fast speech and focusing on different accents.
Bronchiectasis, Alzheimer's, glaucoma, prostate cancer.
Alzheimer's, physical disabilities, and Diabetes Type 2.
Vascular dementia.
Hearing loss and dementia.
Autism.
Early onset dementia.

What is your postcode?
EH14 1AH
LE4 9ET
IP33 1NH
LE10 0EL
SO31 6PB
LE4 5AF
LE3 2UB
LE7 9HD
NN5 5PQ
LE3 2YB
LE67 9RY
LE3 8HL
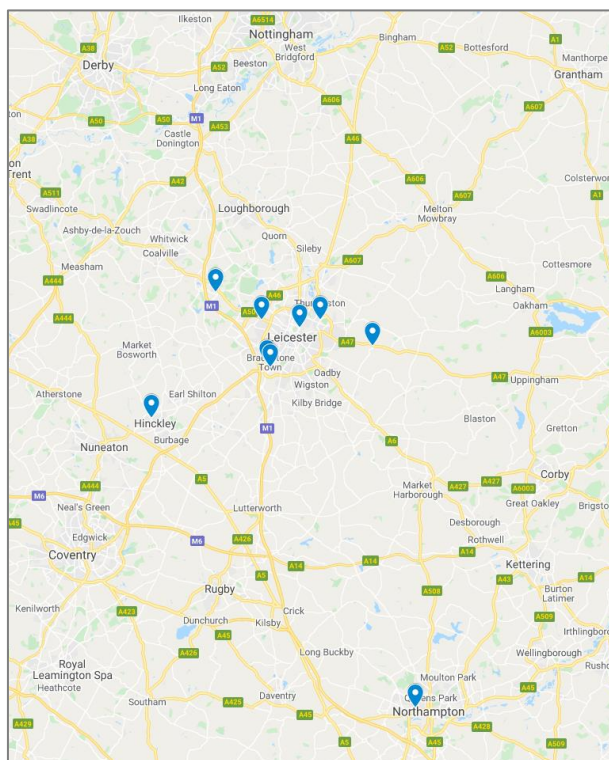
APPENDIX B

SSP Demographic Data

What is your age?		
Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n.)
15-24	0.00%	0
25-44	57.14%	4
45-64	14.29%	1
65-84	28.57%	2
85 or over	0.00%	0
TOTALS	100.00%	7

What is your gender identity?		
Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n.)
Male	0.00%	0
Female	100.00%	7
Prefer to self-describe	0.00%	0
TOTALS	100.00%	7

What is your ethnic group?		
Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n.)
Asian or Asian British	14.29%	1
Black or Black British	0.00%	0
Mixed	0.00%	0
White	85.71%	6
Other	0.00%	0
TOTALS	100.00%	7

What is your religion or belief?		
Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n.)
No religion	57.14%	4
Christian	28.57%	2
Hindu	0.00%	0
Jewish	0.00%	0
Muslim	14.29%	1
Sikh	0.00%	0
Other	0.00%	0
TOTALS	100.00%	7

Do you consider yourself to have a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity?		
Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n.)
No	57.14%	4
Yes	42.86%	3
TOTALS	**100.00%**	**7**

If yes, describe the nature of your disability.
Mild learning difficulties and Asperger's.
Mild Asperger's. Learning difficulties.
No thanks.

What is your postcode?
LE5 0TA
LE65 4NR
LE12 8NU
LE7 9GT
LE8
LE12 8NU
LE7 9GT