



End of Grant Report. 23/3/2021

## The National Lottery Community Fund: 'Additional Needs Yoga'

### *What was the funding for?*

A 6-month programme of yoga sessions aimed at people with additional needs.

The primary aims were to:

- provide relaxation
- improve mental wellbeing
- improve physical wellbeing
- reduce isolation
- promote healthy routines



### *How many people benefitted, and who were they?*

**A total of 120 yoga sessions were delivered, with over 400 people taking part in at least 2 sessions.** Due to lockdown restrictions, the vast majority were delivered on-line. We delivered sessions in collaboration with the following 'host' organisations:

- Women Centre
- Connect Day Services
- The Basement Recovery Project
- Carers Count / Parents of Children with Additional Needs (PCAN)
- Support 2 Recovery
- LS2Y
- Homestart
- Waves Day Centre
- Gaddum (yoga sessions for staff wellbeing)

We also established two groups independently (Walking and Yoga with Laura / Wellness with Sally).

### *Feedback from beneficiaries:*

We asked participants what they thought of the programme. (A full summary of comments is included at the end of this report). 34 people responded to our survey.



- **88% of people thought the yoga sessions helped them physically** (e.g., with any feelings of tension in the body, energy levels, or any muscular pains). 3% said they did not help physically, and 6% were unsure.
- **91% of participants said the yoga sessions helped them mentally?** (e.g., with feelings of stress or low mood). 3% said they did not help them mentally and 6% were unsure.
- **78% of participants said the the yoga sessions helped them to feel connected to other people.** (i.e., reduced isolation). 19% said they did not help them feel connected and 3% were unsure.
- **86% of participants indicated that they would like to continue with their session if it was available.**

Our day centres for adults with complex learning disabilities told us the following:

*Have the sessions helped the participants physically?* Many of our members have some form of physical impairment and can lack the confidence to engage in public sessions, Ellie has enabled them to become more confident in a space they are comfortable in.

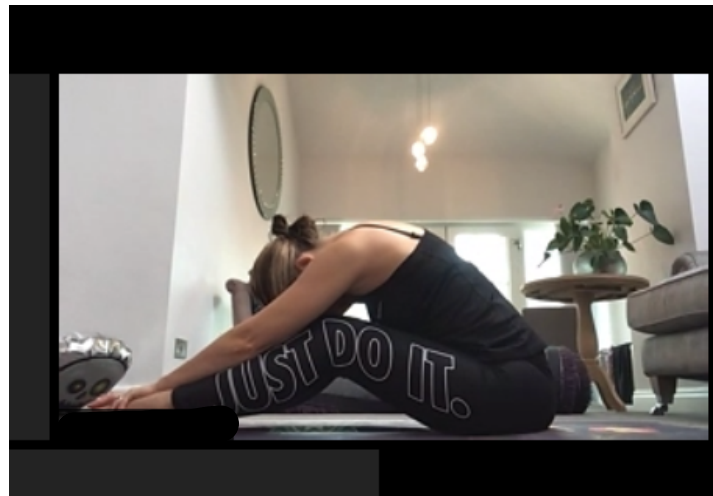
*Have the sessions helped the participants mentally?* Many of our members struggle with anxiety and during such uncertain times completing sessions run by an instructor has had a very positive impact on their mental health, especially for those no longer attending college

*Have the sessions helped the participants feel connected to others?* Though it is a virtual session exposure to new people and situations within the safety of the current social distancing practice has been very beneficial to our members.

*Have they enjoyed the sessions?* Our members will discuss the session throughout lunch, what they enjoyed and what they struggled with, it has been a good way to encourage group discussion and develop communication skills.

*Other comments?* Ellie is a considerate and creative instructor who has overcome several technical difficulties on our side with grace.





## *Comments from beneficiaries*

In response to the question, “Do you think the yoga sessions have helped you physically? (e.g. with any feelings of tension in the body, energy levels, or any muscular pains)”, the following comments were provided:

- My shoulders and back have been very stiff - either through the computer based work I am now doing or because I am just very tense at the moment. I have found that I am even doing some of the yoga moves at my desk to try ease my shoulders.
- I slept so well after the session, for the first time in months!
- I am trying to keep myself limber during lockdown, but also to prevent looming backache
- Helped me unwind and relax, lovely quiet time just for me. It showed me some stretching exercises in particular with my legs where I have arthritis
- Helped to keep me active especially on days when the weather was bad. Also, the repetition in each session helped correct my posture and movement in general.
- Especially helps me with my tensed shoulders and helps me handle stress better
- A real treat to be able to do this in an interactive way from home
- Relaxation... relieved muscle tension
- It's great to get some movement, a class is more engaging and supportive than trying to motivate alone
- Energy levels improved, feel less stiffness afterwards and neck tension reduced.
- definitely. it also relaxes the mind. it has been new to me and I recommend it to everybody
- It makes me spend that time focusing on myself.
- Helps to Keep me going and not cease up



- This course has helped me to tackle my anxiety and carve out some quiet time for my mind and also helped me with physical tension and stress in the body.
- I had lots of back pains from sitting at the desk all day and found the yin yoga really healing.

In response to the question **“Do you think the yoga sessions have helped you mentally? (e.g., with feelings of stress or low mood)”** our participants provided the following comments:

- Really struggling with mental health at the moment, the yoga helps me relax and turn my head off for a bit
- I felt elation at taking time out for me, but it was for my health also! I felt calm and grounded
- I feel a sense of accomplishment and joy from doing the sessions
- Just having something good on the calendar to look forward to was very important when everyday is the same.
- I am able to manage stress better and stay calm
- Feel very calm afterwards. On a number of occasions was feeling very stressed before the yoga and afterwards felt more able to cope with the day and what was causing the stress / anxiety.
- definitely! I feel relaxed in mind and refreshed after
- Just knowing there are others doing yoga is uplifting.
- I've not been able to attend from Feb, really feeling it physically and mentally
- They have helped me manage my anxiety and stress and I am utilizing the techniques in my everyday life.
- I would always feel in a clearer state of mind after the session





In response to the question **“Have the yoga sessions helped you to feel connected to other people?”**, our participants responded:

- Though I am quite self-conscious so think I prefer doing a live class at home alone...
- It was nice to see and hear a friendly face / voice
- It is nice to see other people doing the practice at the same time, instead of just watching a yoga video on my own.
- (No) Its via Zoom, no interaction
- I have met new local women, important as I'm still putting down roots here.
- Be nice to have online chat during lockdown from friendly people
- Just good to see different faces each week
- As I am on my own for long periods during the day it has been good to connect with others. Feel I have a rapport with the teacher Ellie.
- It's been nice seeing other people and hearing Ellie's voice
- I don't see anyone outside of my family do lovely to see other People
- I enjoy attending a weekly 'group' it makes me feel less alone.
- very Relaxing
- Other people from the team joined who I had not met.

We asked participants **“Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience of the yoga?”** and they responded:

- I and my wife feel so rejuvenated after few sessions , Alicia has been wonderful
- Keep up the good work!
- I think Ellie is a good teacher, who pitches the yoga at the right level for beginners and improvers
- I look forward to it every week thank you. It's particularly good in winter and in lockdown.
- I am enjoying it, but miss the interaction with people
- Gentle movement, under a good instructor, a bit of gossip, exercise and something to look forward to divide the week up. What more can I ask for? :-)
- Enjoyed the exercises and the time for myself
- Really loved this class throughout lockdown, it's helped me feel connected to other and has brought some much needed structure to my days.
- I did the chair yoga, it was great, although I couldn't get to every session due to work commitments
- Not just exercise, social , motivating, support network
- I hadn't done it before and really like it. It helps with relaxing and is good with stretching body parts that don't get stretched in general. Like it a lot
- I have loved the sessions and a real mental boost, it would be good to share with people outside of Huddersfield

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- These sessions are excellent - I'm hypermobile and this gentle exercise really help to keep my joints strong whilst calming my mind and helping me to feel more grounded. I look forward to the sessions each week.
- The Chair Yoga suited me the most. Have managed the other yoga sessions with adaptive positions or support suggested by the teacher, Ellie, occasionally sitting out some positions. Missed a few sessions when not physically well enough.
- I hope it continues
- It's harder than it looks, but good for my balance and mobility.
- Fantastic class, I'd be lost without it. it keeps me going physically And mentally thank you
- I will definitely keep up with the yoga after the course has finished and am looking into more complicated yoga and mindfulness too.
- It was a new experience. I'm enjoying the sessions... I hope they can continue...
- Very grateful for the sessions.
- Very professionally run
- I thought the classes were very well delivered and really relaxing.

**Finally, when we asked people if they would like the sessions to continue, they said:**

- Good and satisfying
- I would definitely like to keep having yoga lessons, during and after the lockdown.
- Oh I would miss it as become part of my life and something I look forward to
- Definitely, I really hope the sessions continue
- Definitely!
- Yes definitely!
- It's helping me physically and mentally.
- Excellent session
- Yes please the sessions are so enjoyable.
- Thanks Alicia for such a great 6 sessions
- The time of this class unfortunately has clashed with work commitments.



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