

## WHAT IS THE VIRTUAL VILLAGE HALL (VVH)?

VVH was launched on the 28th April 2020 and is an online platform 'Hall' of activities people can enjoy at home. Sessions are led by expert tutors, Royal Voluntary Service activity coordinators, volunteers and some celebrities.

There is a wide range of sessions and activities, such as creative arts and crafts, music and singing, cooking and baking, dance and exercise, and technology skills.

During the pandemic VVH aimed to support people to stay physically and mentally active, and socially connected. Participants can join live sessions or catch up on demand whenever suits them. All sessions are free, thanks to the players of People's Postcode Lottery. Over the past 14 months VVH has gained over 40,000 followers and this continues to grow.

### What is the aim of the survey?

The aim of the survey was to better understand the health and wellbeing impacts of those participating in the VVH during the pandemic. The survey took 5-7 minutes to complete and had approximately 18 questions. The survey was promoted on the VVH website and Facebook page. In total 400 surveys were completed between the 11th to 31st May 2021.

### Participant characteristics

Those surveyed were predominantly female, white, were aged 45 years and over and lived with a partner/spouse.

**96%**

were female

**95%**

white (British and other) and

**44%**

stated they had a long-term health condition of which **76%** felt it reduced their ability to carry out day to day activities

**64%**

lived with a partner/spouse, **25%** lived alone, and **8%** with children, other relative, friend

**89%**

were between the ages of **45 to 74 years**

**3%**

were from Black, Asian or other ethnic minority groups

*"I think the variety of classes is amazing. Something for everyone. I look forward to every class. Those I don't participate in I still enjoy watching. I love everything about this programme, please keep it going. It has done wonders for my mental health. Thank you all so much"*

*Female, shielding during pandemic, aged 65-74*

## HIGHLIGHTS

The aim of the VVH survey was to understand the impact of these activities on the health and wellbeing of those who participated over the past year. The survey was completed by 400 people in May 2021. The survey asked questions on frequency of use, types of activities people participated in, perceived impact on their physical health and emotional wellbeing, improvements to be made, and future use.

### Amongst those surveyed:

**64%**

use the VVH frequently  
– weekly/daily

**73%**

participated in exercise and  
dance classes – these were the  
most popular activities

**74%**

stated they decided to join the  
VVH because they wanted to  
‘keep active during the various  
local/national lockdowns’

**84%**

agreed that VVH has a positive  
impact on their physical health;  
for those individuals who were  
shielding this rose to 88%

**62%**

of those with long-term health  
conditions (n=156) agreed that  
it helped them to better manage  
their health

**97%**

agreed that VVH had a positive  
impact on mood and emotional  
wellbeing

**3 in 4**

participants stated that VVH  
helped them to feel less lonely

*The survey findings demonstrate the vital role VVH has played in keeping people active and socially connected during the pandemic.*

*Participants also see significant value in VVH beyond the pandemic – as 75% stated that ‘nothing will change’ in their use of VVH as restrictions ease and community classes open.*

The survey also asked about improvements to the VVH. While 80% felt that ‘no improvements’ needed to be made, 20% made helpful suggestions; most of the comments related to:



Having more classes in the evenings and weekends and/or extending the range of classes (e.g., language, history, etc.)



Having notifications or reminders  
before the start of a class



Making it easier to search and find  
previous classes

## FULL SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey asked participants to respond to questions on frequency of use and type of activities/classes they participated in, the reasons for participation, future use, and impact of VVH on health and wellbeing.

### 3.1 USE OF VVH:

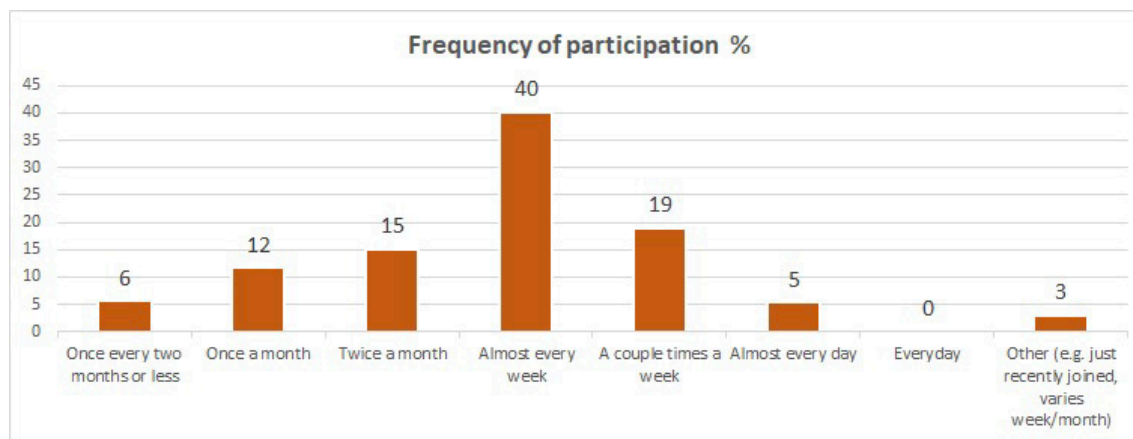
#### a. How did you hear about the Virtual Village Hall? (n=370)

- o 87% of those surveyed heard about VVH from social media – e.g. Facebook
- o 8% via friends and/or neighbours
- o 5% via Royal Voluntary Service communications

#### b. Approximately, how often do you participate in an online activity/class? (n=369)

Those surveyed stated that they use the VVH frequently – 64^%:

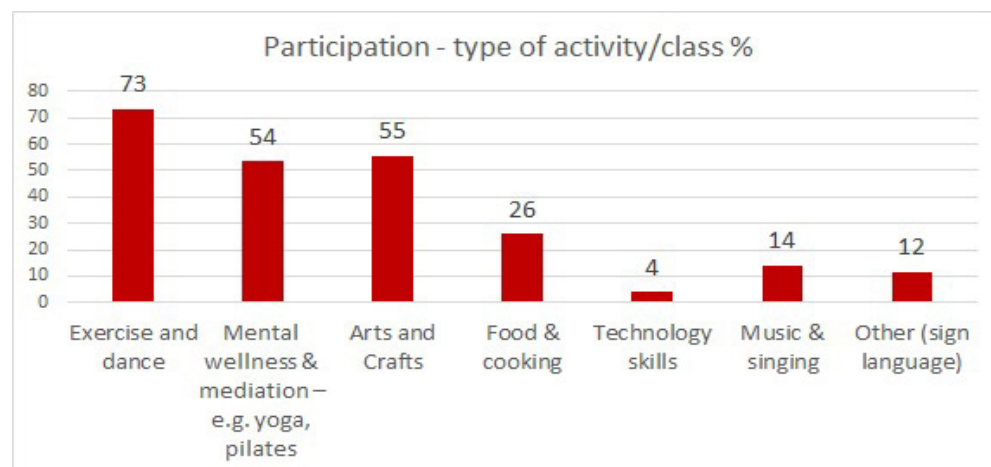
- o 24% used it a couple times a week or almost every day,
- o a further 40% use it almost every week.



## FULL SURVEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

### c. What activities do you participate in? (Tick all that apply) (n=366)

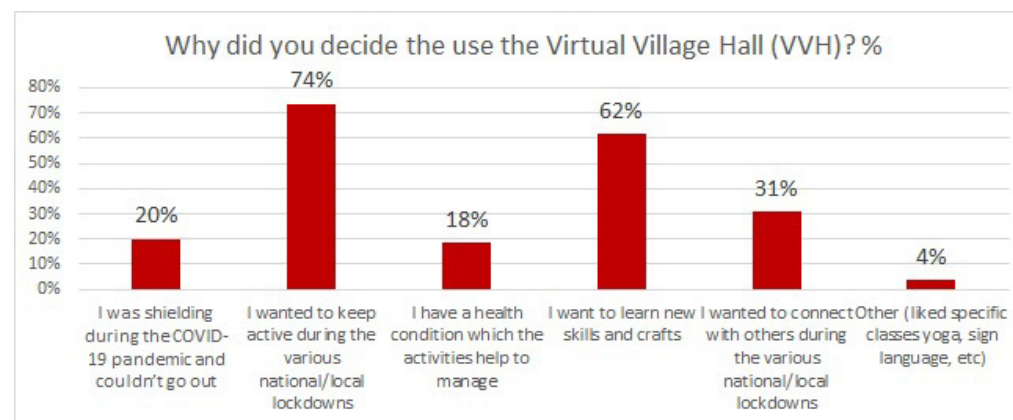
- o The most popular activities were exercise and dance classes (73%) followed by mental wellness/meditation and arts and crafts.



### d. Why did you decide to use the Virtual Village Hall (VVH)? (n=370)

We asked participants why they decided to use the VVH - some gave health related reasons and/or others joined for new learning/entertainment opportunities.

- o The majority joined because they wanted to stay physically and mentally active during the pandemic (74%) and others wanted to learn new skills/crafts (62%).
- o One in three stated they decided to participate in the VVH because they wanted to connect with others during the various lockdowns.
- o For one in five (20%) the VVH was important because they had to shield during the pandemic and hence were unable to leave their home.
- o Similarly, almost one in five wanted to manage a health condition through the activities offered by VVH.





## FULL SURVEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

e. As restrictions ease and community classes start to reopen will you continue to use the Virtual Village Hall? (n=368)

Overwhelming, people plan to continue using the VVH.

**75%**  
stated that  
'Yes, nothing will change'

**24%**  
stated that  
'Yes, but likely less  
frequently'

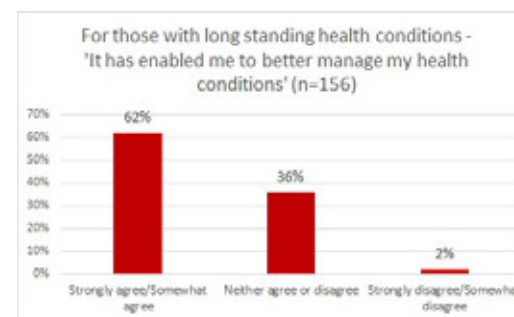
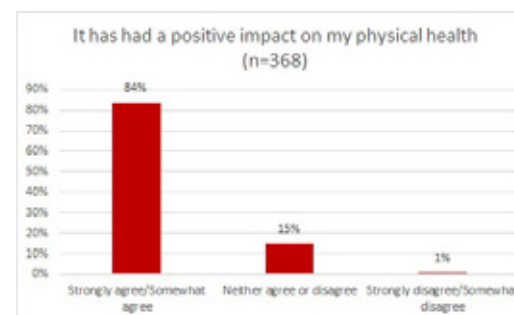
**1%**  
stated that they  
'do not plan to use it in  
the future'

### 3.2 IMPACT OF VVH:

#### f. Impact on health

The impact on physical health, emotionally wellbeing and loneliness is encouraging. Participants were asked to respond to a series of statements about the VVH:

- 84% agreed that VVH has an impact on their physical health with over half (52%) stating that they 'strongly agreed'.
- For those who used VVH frequently (i.e., a couple times a week, almost every day, week) - this was slightly higher - 88% agreed that it had a positive impact on their physical health.
- For those stating they had a long-term health condition (n=156) – over 60% agreed that it helped them to better manage their health; with 33% or one in three stating they 'strongly agree' with the statement.

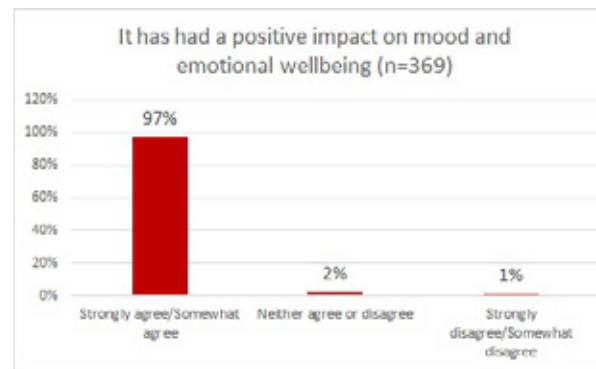


## FULL SURVEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

### g. Impact on emotional wellbeing and loneliness

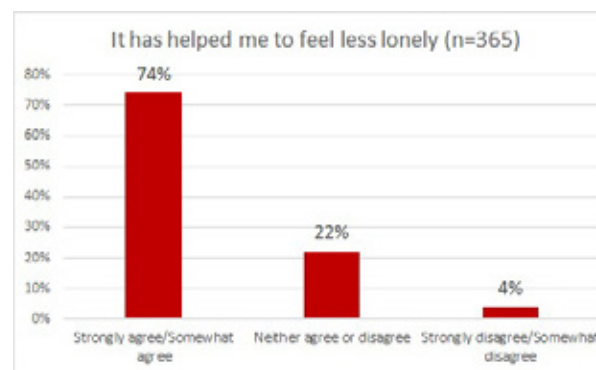
The survey found a strong positive impact on people's mood and emotional wellbeing and appeared to tackle loneliness – particularly for those unable to leave their home during the pandemic.

- 97% agreed that VVH had a positive impact on mood and emotional wellbeing – with substantial numbers - 77% 'strongly agreeing'.
- If we look at the data by those who said they were 'shielding and couldn't go out' (n=74) and hence more vulnerable:
  - 96% agreed it had a positive impact on mood and emotional wellbeing – with 82% 'strongly agreeing'.
- For those who participated frequently (i.e., a couple times a week, almost every day, week) - 98% agreed it has a positive impact on mood and emotional wellbeing – with 83% 'strongly agreeing'.



Similarly, for tackling feelings of loneliness.

- Almost three in 4 participants (74%) agreed that VVH helped them feel less lonely.
- If we look at the data by those who said they were 'shielding and couldn't go out' (n=74); 85% agree it has helped them to feel less lonely.





## FULL SURVEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

The impact of the VVH on the lives of those who participated are further supported by these comments - and these are only a few of the many comments from the survey:

***“I wanted to connect with others now I am widowed”***

*Female, aged 75-88*

***“Wanted to keep active in mind as well as body”***

*Female, aged 65-74*

***“It has been a life saver at times, I appreciate whatever’s on offer”***

*Female, aged 45-54*

***“... the variety of classes is fantastic - and every presenter has been brilliant”***

*Female, aged 55-64*

***“It’s been wonderful I have told friends and family about it”***

*Female, aged 55-64*

***“I love it. Lots of variation. Many done in people’s homes. Making it all seem more human. I’ve been really enjoying the sessions. Thank you”***

*Female, shielding, aged 55-64*

***“Friendly, like welcoming a friend in, I don’t drive and have very little money and I would never have been able to benefit from these wonderful sessions if I had to pay or get to anything like this”***

*Female, aged 65-74*

***“For me it’s great - if I can’t make the class, I can watch it on catch up which is great - please keep in with the classes as I am not ready to go back to f2f classes for quite a while and I enjoy the flexibility the catch-up classes give me”***

*Female, aged 55-64*



## FULL SURVEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

### 3.3 IMPROVEMENTS:

In the survey we asked if there were any improvements, we could make to the VVH. Almost 80% felt there were 'no improvements' to be made and 20% provided some useful feedback.

The most common suggestions for improvements were:

- i) More classes
  - o "I'd like more classes in the evenings or weekends"
  - o "Some educational classes. Languages maybe?"
  - o "More arts and crafts please"
  - o "Perhaps something like tai chi your belly dancing"
- ii) Reminders and notifications before classes would be helpful
  - o "Yes, make each activity a Facebook event so I get a reminder when it's coming on and can Pre book myself. I don't do more because I forget about them"
  - o "A regular diary of events to see what's available and when maybe a reminder too as my memory is rubbish"
- iii) Easy search function for past classes
  - o "I find searching for the videos difficult sometimes, and they are not easy to pause and rewind"
  - o "It took me a while to work out how to view them when not live. Maybe just me but perhaps clearer instructions"
- iv) Promote VVH more
  - o It's fantastic. I shared the link with elderly housing association to keep them connected too.
  - o It's been wonderful I have told friends and family about it
  - o Advertise it more widely
- v) Make donating easier (participants are signposted to ways they can make a donation to Royal Voluntary Service)
  - o "Strangely, I think people value things more when they pay for them - I love dipping in and out of sessions but tend only to stay for yoga, I think it's because it's one I pay for. I'm all for a contribution link on Facebook - last time I used it I had to go off site which was more time consuming than I'd expected."
  - o "Make it easier to donate not just by text"

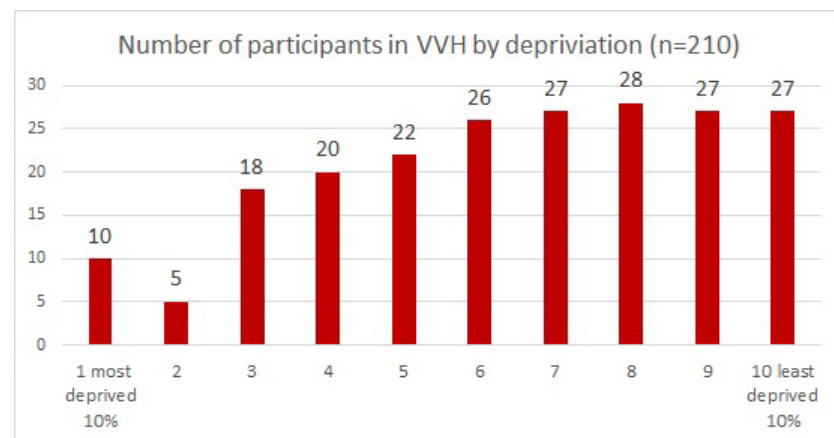


## FULL SURVEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

### 3.4 REACH:

We wanted to understand the geographical reach of VVH, so we asked people to supply postcode data. Unfortunately, we were only able to understand the reach in England, as the postcode data supplied in Wales and Scotland was too small to properly understand the reach.

- There appears good geographical reach across a range of Index of Deprivation - IoD 2019<sup>1</sup> - ranked neighbourhoods – however, more could be done to reach those in the poorest neighbourhoods; specifically, those living in the neighbourhoods 1 (10% most deprived) and 2 (10% to 20%) most deprived.
- 15% of those participating in VVH come from areas classified by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as in the 20% most deprived.



<sup>1</sup> - (Index of Multiple deprivation classification – see section 9 page 10)

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## FULL SURVEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

### 3.4 NEXT STEPS:

As we move from crisis to recovery, we should consider the role of VVH in this. We should consider how we continue to build our content and grow our participant base given the positive impacts of this survey. Those participating in the survey made some useful suggestions for improvements and it might be helpful to consider their comments and further reflect on what the survey results tell us about the next steps for VVH.

Here are a few things we might want to consider:

- **DONATIONS AND CONTENT:** Approximately 3% of those participating donated over the past year and more might be inspired to do so if we make it easier to donate and highlight Royal Voluntary Service's wider work.
- **BUILDING OUR OFFER INTO LOCAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS:** If we want to grow our participant base we need to look at promotion opportunities beyond social media. It appears from our survey that most of our participants heard from us via social media (87%); no-one came to the site from a GP or other health professional or Local Authority. This might be a missed opportunity to support more people – particularly given current health reforms and the roll-out of social prescribing link workers.
- **ENSURING INCLUSIVITY:** As part of our EDI work, we should look at how we reach those not currently participating in the VVH. Based on the survey there appears limited numbers of men, those from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups, and those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods. As an initial step we could look to target social prescribing link workers in areas of deprivation and/or diverse communities and/or look at how we target our social media.

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