

# Music therapy initiative is continuing online following COVID-19 restrictions

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An important initiative to provide music therapy for those living with dementia is continuing despite the COVID-19 restrictions, with participants instead making music from the comfort of their own homes.

Together in Sound, a partnership between Saffron Hall Trust and the

Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), has been delivering [music therapy](#) for couples—those living with dementia and their partner or carer—in Saffron Walden since 2017.

Because of recent social distancing measures introduced to help tackle COVID-19, the team behind Together in Sound have switched their weekly sessions to online.

Recent sessions have also involved musicians from the London Philharmonic Orchestra's Future First scheme—the LPO has a residency at Saffron Hall—and the couples taking part have been delighted to be able to continue their weekly [music](#) therapy over the internet.

Caroline Halsey, who accompanies her dad, Don, said after the first online session:

"That was brilliant! Well done on being bold enough to try a completely new approach. Thank you so much. It will be great to stay connected with our Together in Sound community in this way."

Claire Molyneux, Senior Lecturer in Music Therapy at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) who leads the sessions, said:

"It was incredibly heart-warming and encouraging to witness our Together in Sound participants access the online music therapy sessions. At these difficult and uncertain times, it feels imperative to try and find a way to enable connection, provide stimulation and a sense of community.

"It was very moving to observe participants recognize, engage with each other, and respond to the various musical interactions we offered via their screens. This continuation of the bonds they have made with each

other in the music [therapy](#) sessions is vital in the face of the increased isolation that COVID-19 has brought."

Katie McKinnon, Saffron Hall's Learning and Participation Coordinator, added:

"Running Together in Sound sessions online, via online video conferencing software, worked better than any of us expected. We were able to provide support and guidance to help everybody get set up to access it online, and once we got up and running it was business as usual.

"We wondered whether some of the [social aspect](#) would be lost due to the barriers of cameras and laptops, but via our devices we were able to wave to and greet each other as usual, make music, share jokes and stories and cheer each other on.

"It seems Together in Sound will be a beacon of hope and something to look forward to in these isolation months, just as it is described by our participants in its usual form. Together in Sound are a community who rely on each other and lift each other up, and ensuring the high quality of life and well-being created by being part of a supportive community is more important than ever in these uncertain times."

Professor Helen Odell-Miller OBE, Director of the Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), said:

"I am very proud of the members of the Together in Sound team, who have responded to the COVID-19 situation so quickly, therefore benefiting many people living with dementia, and their families, who may feel isolated at this time."

ARU's Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research is also currently adapting the five-country research project [Homeside](#), which is funded by

Alzheimer's Society UK and aims to recruit over 400 couples, so that music and reading activities can be delivered online as part of the research.

Professor Odell-Miller added:

"Our teams here are working tirelessly, both internationally through the Homeside research project and nationally with Music4dementia 2020, which is an organization rolling out the Commission for Music and Dementia recommendations, launched in 2018 in the House of Lords, to prioritize access to music for anyone living with dementia."

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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