

# An Evaluation of the Past Times Project: Combating Loneliness in Later Life

UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND HEALTH SCIENCES

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ARCH-WAY PROJECT

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# Executive Summary

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## Background

Health and social care needs rise substantially in older age, often involving multiple mental and physical health problems and social isolation. Loneliness in later life is prevalent in older people, with over half of the over 75 population living alone, and it is associated with poorer physical and mental health.

There is growing realisation of the value of community assets and resources for addressing wellbeing. This can include social networks, facilities, community groups and organisations in the community as well as the time, skills and knowledge of individuals. The Arch-Way Project in West Yorkshire aims to reduce isolation and loneliness in the community through a variety of activities. This includes art groups, film afternoons and their weekly Past Times event. Past Times is aimed primarily at combating loneliness in older people and is held in a Social Club setting on Monday afternoons. It features games, a quiz and a live musician playing music from "Past Times", offering an opportunity for older people to come together, enjoy the entertainment and socialise.

## Aims

This research aimed to establish if and how Past Times benefited attendees, any barriers or difficulties they faced when attending and ways to improve the event. A further aim was to use the findings of the research to produce a User Guide; a handbook for other organisations hoping to create a similar event, and to contribute to understanding of how communities can address the needs of older adults.

## Methods

A mixed-methods approach was used, including questionnaires, participant observations and individual interviews with staff, attendees, carers, and professionals referring people to the Past Times Project to gain a diverse range of views.

## Findings

Quantitative analysis of the questionnaires highlighted the role of Past Times in helping people with feelings of loneliness - 85% of those that took part reported a positive impact on loneliness, suggesting a key aim of the project is being met and this was supported by the qualitative, thematic analysis of the interviews and open-ended questions on the questionnaire. The thematic analysis revealed three main themes: "making a positive difference", "atmosphere of acceptance and enjoyment" and "challenges of meeting diverse needs". Past Times made a difference by helping attendees to become more active and engaged, more connected with other people and by giving them more purpose, structure, and routine to their lives. The analysis also highlighted the importance of the physical environment and social atmosphere at Past Times in supporting a connection between people and reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation. Feeling welcome, safe, accepted, and supported and having somewhere to go to spend time with friends, or make new friends, were all key elements. Attendees reported improvements in their mental health including their

overall mood, and it provided an opportunity to build social skills and forge new relationships. In terms of challenges, there were difficulties in creating an event that suits a diverse range of needs and preferences. Although Past Times is valued by its attendees and is inclusive, it was acknowledged that at times compromise was needed and that the event and entertainment would not suit all cultures, ages, or individuals.

## Conclusion

Past Times, and the Arch-Way Project, is a valuable community asset which utilises the physical building it inhabits and by harnessing the time, skills and passion of a few paid staff and volunteers, it provides a valuable resource for those experiencing loneliness in the local area. Past Times is successful in reducing loneliness and attendees report a range of benefits which have a positive effect on their mental health and wellbeing. Inevitably, because the environment and event mimic the experience of a social club it has obvious cultural and age specific elements. This illustrates a need for a range of community interventions and projects to be developed, so diverse groups and individuals have options and a choice. Whatever projects are supported, Past Times illustrates how creating an inclusive and accepting atmosphere can reduce feelings of loneliness which is likely to have a positive impact on mental and physical health. The research also highlights the importance of seeking feedback in designing and providing a community asset such as Arch-Way.

## Background

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### Health Needs of Older People

Although many people experience a rewarding and enjoyable later life, health and social care needs can rise substantially in older age, sometimes involving multiple mental and physical health problems and social isolation. Older people also require more support from specialist mental health services, with 34% of those seeking specialist mental health support being aged 65 and above despite representing 16% of the population (Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2013). Mental health problems in older people are associated with a range of adverse outcomes when co-occurring with physical disorders (Morris et al, 1993; Hemingway and Marmot, 1999; Holmes and House, 2000) and depression is a significant problem of old age, with 10-20% of people aged 65 and over in the community and 20-30% of those in care homes or on general hospital wards having depression (Copeland et al, 2003). Dementia is also a significant and growing problem of old age, with 7% of people aged 65 and above having dementia, and the risk increasing to one in six over the age of 80. Caring for people with dementia and long-term conditions also creates strain on carers, who themselves are often over 65. For example, common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety are twice as frequent in carers who are caring more than 20 hours a week than in the general population (Smith et al, 2007).

### Loneliness

Loneliness has been found to have a significant influence on the physical and mental health of the population, contributing as much as a 29% increased risk of coronary heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke (National Academics of Sciences Engineering and Medicine, 2020), and a 26% increased risk of premature mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). In terms of mental health, several studies have identified a correlation between loneliness and cognitive impairment and decline (Evans et al., 2019), and with increased levels of depression, suicide, and anxiety (Hulur et al., 2016; Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017). Sundström, (2020) found loneliness to be a factor that increased the risk of developing dementia, with Sutin et al. (2020) arguing that such an increase could be as high as 40%.

Loneliness is a greater problem in old age, with Age UK reporting that almost half of over 75s live alone, 9% of older people feel trapped in their own home, 6% leave their house once a week or less and 30% say they would like to go out more often (Age UK, 2012). Also, 17% of older people reported having less than weekly contact with family, friends and neighbours and 1 in 12 people aged fifty and over in England claimed to have experienced feeling lonely; a figure that represented around 1.4 million people that is predicted to increase to around 2 million by 2026 (Age UK, 2018). In recent years the Covid19 pandemic and associated national lockdowns reduced or removed opportunities for social interaction, and there is evidence that this differentially affected vulnerable groups such as older and isolated people.

Although the number of social contacts someone has may impact loneliness, it is important to distinguish between social isolation and loneliness (Age UK, 2021). Loneliness is a subjective feeling which reflects the perceived quality of a person's relationships and a gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. Weiss (1973)

suggested that loneliness was more effectively explored through two key dimensions namely 'emotional loneliness' brought on by the absence of an emotional attachment and 'social loneliness' shaped by the lack of engagement in any meaningful social networks.

Loneliness is clearly a global social problem, and it has recently been acknowledged as one of the social determinants of health (WHO, 2021). International studies also report high levels of loneliness amongst older people, with 24% in the USA (Cudjoe et al., 2020) and 20% in India (Kotian et al., 2018), and many governments have developed policies and strategies to address the problem. For example, the UK government recently appointed a 'Loneliness Minister', leading to the publication of: '*A connected society. a strategy for tackling loneliness*' (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2018).

Despite growing awareness of the impact of loneliness on health, there are few studies on interventions to reduce loneliness in older people (Courtin & Knapp, 2017) and a need for a more robust evidence base (Mann, et al., 2017). Lasgaard et al. (2022) found that whilst there was some evidence for the overall effectiveness of interventions to reduce loneliness, more research is needed to understand who gains most benefit from interventions and why they are effective.

## Community Assets

There is growing realisation of the value of community assets, resources and strengths, which can be used to improve and maintain the health and well-being of individuals (Morgan et al, 2007). Community assets can include social networks, facilities, community groups and organisations in the community as well as the time, skills and knowledge of individuals. The asset-based approach (Public Health England, 2015; Hopkins, Ripon & Head, 2015) also involves a positive view of the prevention of health problems and improving health and well-being by building on the resilience, interests and skills of people. Commissioners are encouraged to work with local communities and health and social care to identify and support community assets and this is recognised in a National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) quality standard for care providers and commissioners (NICE, 2017). This is reflected in a shift to more community centred ways of working in public health and healthcare, with some evidence of the improvements in health-related quality of life with participation in community assets for older people in the community (Munford et al, 2017).

## Local Perspective

The Age UK Loneliness Map, which identifies areas most at risk of loneliness, shows the Calderdale district to contain areas of high to very high risk. This includes areas served by the Arch-Way Project (see <http://data.ageuk.org.uk/loneliness-maps/england-2016/calderdale/>) whose use of community assets to combat loneliness is the focus of this study. In 2018 the Arch-Way project conducted a short survey of a weekly social event for older people called Past Times, and 98% reported their lives were happier because of the project, 80% said they felt healthier and 35% reported less visits to their GP since they began attending. This was encouraging and led the project to seek external funding and a partnership with the University of Huddersfield to carry out a more robust evaluation. Funding for the evaluation was supported by a grant to the Arch-way project from the National Lottery Community Fund to support the Past Times project and carry out an evaluation.



## Past Times

Past Times is a regular social gathering organised by the Arch-Way Project in Halifax, West Yorkshire. Often described as 'a night out on a Monday afternoon', the weekly event is held in a traditional social club and aims to emulate a nightclub experience from the 1960's era, with entertainment including live music, a quiz, and games of Bingo. The key aim of Past Times is to reduce isolation and loneliness in the community. This is achieved by providing an opportunity for people to spend quality time with family and friends, meet others, make new friends and have an enjoyable afternoon each week. Originally the focus of Past Times was on older adults, though it is now open to anyone within the community who would like to attend and there are often a few younger attendees. Despite the success of Past Times, it was unclear precisely how attending the project benefitted people, how it could be improved or how it could be replicated in other settings. Thus, Arch-Way Project and the University of Huddersfield collaborated to explore what it is about attending Past Times that helps people and why, culminating in the research described in this report.

## Methods

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### Setting

Past Times is held on Monday afternoons in a traditional social club and aims to emulate a nightclub experience from the 1960's era, with entertainment including live music, a quiz, and games of bingo. The event tailors the entertainment to suit its audience; with the musicians performing songs likely to evoke memories and quiz questions on appropriate general knowledge, with no modern cultural questions included. In terms of interior decoration, the vintage 'club' setting is important to the overall atmosphere and sets Past Times apart from other local provisions. Closed curtains, dimmed lights and candles on the tables, along with live music performances, recreate an 'evening' event - quite different to the 'coffee morning' alternatives. Since the Coronavirus pandemic, Past Times has expanded its reach to include not just older people, but also individuals experiencing loneliness, isolation, and physical and mental health difficulties.

There is no charge to attend, and refreshments are provided. There is access to a commercial, but non-profit making bar. A recent addition to Monday's schedule is an optional lunch club where a hot meal is provided for a small fee, enabling attendees to meet sooner and enjoy a meal together. Attendees do not need a referral from a healthcare professional, and, in line with the "club/pub" ethos, no contact or health details are taken from those attending.

### Design

Mixed methods involving a cross-sectional survey and individual semi-structured interviews were employed to address the research aims. The components of the study were:

1. Self-report questionnaire survey of those attending Past Times
2. Face to face interviews with those attending Past Times
3. Interviews with Arch-Way staff
4. Telephone interviews with professionals who refer to Past Times.
5. Limited preliminary observations of staff

### Participants

Adults who attended the Past Times event and with the capacity to provide informed consent were invited to take part in the survey and interviews.

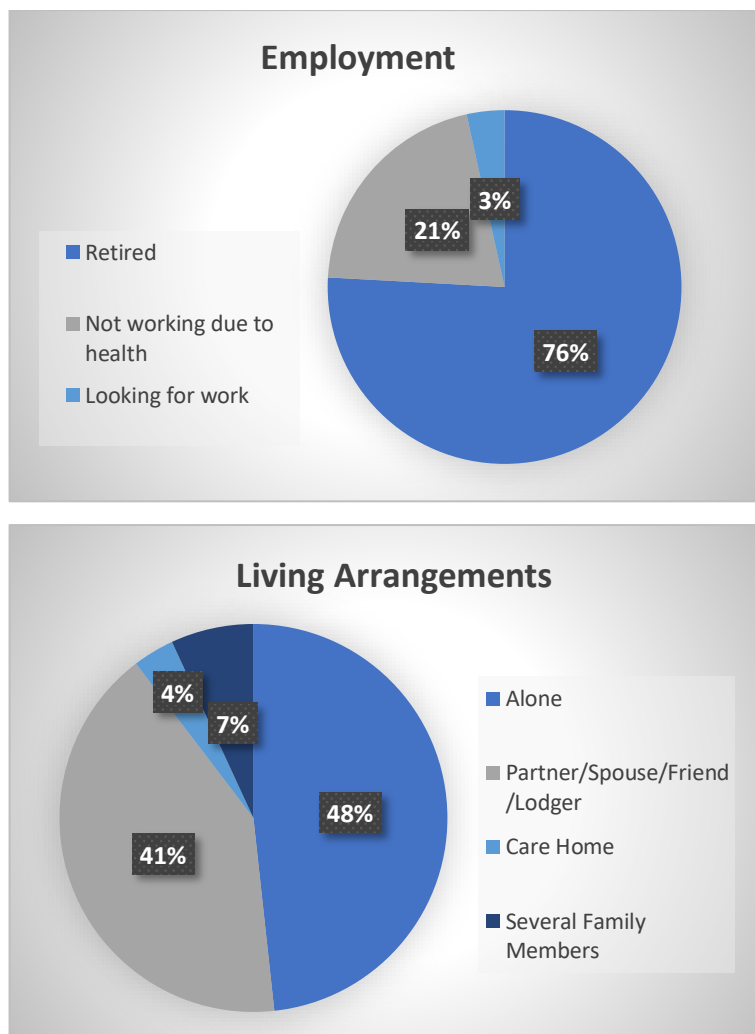
27 attendee questionnaires were completed for the survey and submitted, though some participants omitted answering one or two questions. Four carers also completed a shorter carers' questionnaire comprising mainly open-ended questions.

13 participants were interviewed - six attendees, two additional carers, three members of Arch-Way staff (two members of paid staff, one volunteer), and two professionals who had referred at least one attendee or volunteer to Past Times in the previous six months.

Four of the attendees interviewed, also took part in the survey, so there were 40 participants in total (29 attendees, 6 carers, 3 members of Arch-Way staff and 2 referrers).

## Attendee Demographics

In total 10 men and 19 women took part as attendees. All 10 men and 17 of the women completed questionnaires. Three of the men and one of the women completed both questionnaires and interviews. Two women completed interviews only. The age range of attendee participants was 50-81. Six participants were under 60, three were 60-64 and 20 were 65 or over. All attendees identified as White British. Employment and living arrangements are detailed for the 29 attendees below:



24 out of 29 attended Past Times either "every week" or "most weeks". It would seem, from preliminary observations, that the sample was representative of the people who generally attend in terms of gender and ethnicity, with perhaps a slight over-representation of the younger attendees who were more willing to complete questionnaires. As Past Times aims to emulate an informal "night at the pub", the staff do not collect or keep information on their attendees, so the overall demographics of Past Times attendees are not known.

Establishing the health status of the participating attendees required a non-intrusive approach. There was an optional section where participants could tick a box for any health

services they had used in the last 12 months. The list presented included GP and hospital appointments as well as other physical and mental health support services. 17 completed this section, by ticking at least one of the options. 16 of these were GP visits, with others selecting home care (3), occupational therapy (2), social worker (2) and several selecting a range of mental health outpatient appointments and related specialist services.

## Methods of Data Collection, Recruitment and Consent Processes

### Survey of Those Attending Past Times

The questionnaire was designed by the research team in collaboration with staff at the Arch-Way Project and informed by preliminary participant observations of staff interactions with attendees. It included information on the purpose of the survey, demographics and background information about the participant and their attendance at Past Times (who they attend with, why they attended), and the perceived impact of attending Past Times. The three item UCLA Loneliness Scale (Hughes et al, 2004) was included, as well as further 5-point ratings on how attending Past Times had changed elements of their lives, including motivation, overall mood, frequency of seeing family and friends and confidence mixing socially. Open-ended questions provided an opportunity for participants to explain what they liked about Past Times and saw as its benefits and to give feedback on any improvements that could be made. An optional section queried their use of health and social care services in the past year. The full questionnaire can be found in the Appendices. Attendees were also given the chance to feedback on where they had heard about Past Times, by writing on a slip of paper left out on tables and handing it in to the researcher.

The carer's questionnaire was available to formal and informal carers (family, friends) who were attending in order to bring someone else, rather than for their own benefit. It comprised mainly open-ended questions about carers' experiences of bringing family or clients to Past Times and included questions about what they perceived the benefits of attending to be, what worked particularly well and the impact on the relationship with the person they care for. The full questionnaire can be found in the Appendices.

Recruitment to the survey took place over two to three months. The Past Times event begins each week with announcements from a stage and, during several of these introductions, the lead member of staff explained the research, introduced the researcher and invited voluntary participation. Information leaflets were made available, and the researcher was available on a separate table to answer any questions and provide the questionnaire for those that wished to take part.

The participants were offered three options: 1) complete the questionnaire at the time; 2) take it away, complete it at home and bring it with them next time they attended or 3) think about their participation and let the researcher know the following week (or at a future occasion during the data collection period). The questionnaire included a separate page where the participant could indicate their interest in taking part in an interview, and the preferred way of contacting them by phone or email. The instructions asked them to tear off this page and put this in a box at Past Times. Therefore, the questionnaire was constructed to offer anonymity. However, not all interviewees chose to take advantage of this, and some returned a whole

questionnaire including their name directly to the researcher, which allowed their interview and survey responses to be linked, with their permission.

### **Interviews with People Attending Past Times**

Those who indicated their interest in being interviewed about their experience of Past Times were approached via their preferred method. No-one was under any pressure to take part and attendees were not approached individually by the researcher unless they had already expressed interest. The Participant Information Sheet was shared with attendees, who were offered time to consider participation or agree an interview time and place. Interviews took place at the Arch-Way Project (in a separate area to the Past Times room and on a different day), via telephone or in the interviewees' home. One couple was interviewed as a pair, with both providing consent. All other interviews were individual and lasted between 30-60 minutes.

The interviews comprised two parts. The first part was semi-structured, with open-ended questions asking about their experience of Past Times, how they found out about the event and what benefits they felt from attending. Questions were also asked about how the attendees felt before and after attending and the impact on mood. Any barriers and difficulties associated with attending Past Times were discussed, including a question about the impact of the Covid-19 lockdown closure for those who attended previously. The second part of the interview included closed questions covering demographic aspects (age, gender), home/living situation, health problems and current treatment where appropriate.

### **Interviews with Arch-Way Staff and Professionals Referring People to Past Times**

The Arch-Way lead passed on the study information sheet and consent form to Arch-Way staff involved in organising and/or running the Past Times event and they contacted the researcher by email or in person to indicate their interest in taking part in an interview. The Arch-Way Project also facilitated initial contact with professionals and organisations who refer people to the project. Information sheets and consent forms were sent, and they were asked to indicate interest in participation. Interviews lasted around an hour in all cases and were recorded on secure encrypted devices.

The semi-structured interviews with staff were conducted face-to-face and covered questions on their views of the experiences, benefits and challenges of attending Past Times and organisational issues and difficulties with setting up and running the event. Referrer interviews took place via Microsoft Teams and covered questions on the reasons they have referred people to the Arch-Way project, whether or not they attended, any views on the benefits, problems and barriers to attending.

Informed consent was established at the start of each interview. Subsequently, interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

## **Analysis**

Interview transcripts and open-ended survey data were uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package. These were analysed following the principles of Template Analysis (King & Brooks, 2017). This involved development of a hierarchical coding template from inductive coding of the first few interviews which was then applied to the rest of the data,

being adjusted and further developed in discussion with the project team. Descriptive statistics were used for the quantitative survey data and content analysis of several of the open-ended survey responses enabled quantification of the numbers responding under broad content headings. These content headings were developed inductively from examining survey responses. Reliability of the allocation of responses to content categories was 92% across two independent coders.

## Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Huddersfield School of Human and Health Sciences Research Ethics and Integrity Committee.

## Findings

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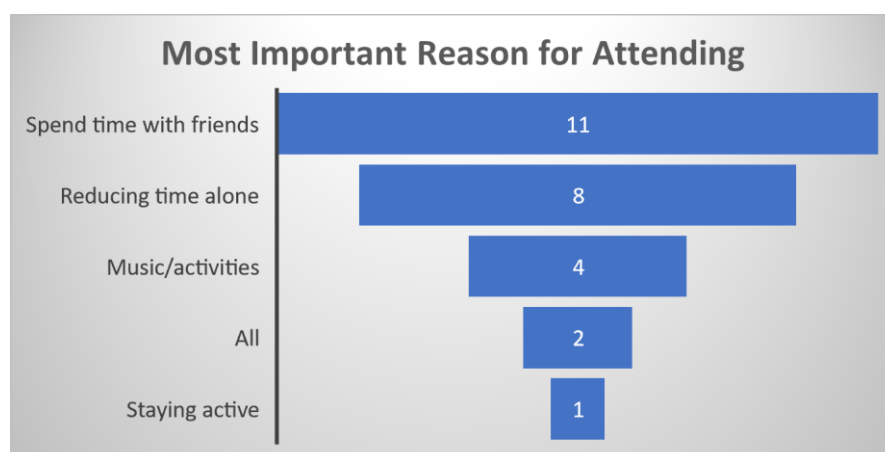
### Quantitative Survey Results

#### Reasons for attending

Possible reasons for attending were presented in a tick-box table, and all 27 survey participants completed this section. There was also a box for participants to write their own reason if required; two commented in this box as well as ticking applicable options (“to help my wife with her dementia”; “friendly atmosphere”). The options, and number of participants that ticked each option, can be seen in the table below, in order of frequency. Participants could select as many options as they felt applied to them.

Reasons for attending	Number selecting option
To get out of the house	27
To enjoy the music	24
To meet new people	24
To have a laugh	23
To reduce time on my own	21
To see friends	21
To be more active	18
To see the people who work here	17
To share an activity with a friend/family member	16
For the lunch	14
To have a drink	12
To bring someone	8

The survey participants were asked which of the above was the ‘most important’ reason for attending. 26 answered this question, with the number selecting each item shown in the figure below:



## Attendance with others

Those who attended with someone else were asked to state who this was. 19 of the 27 survey participants responded and therefore we assumed the other 8 attended alone. 14 attended with a friend, 4 with a spouse and one with a healthcare professional.

## Loneliness

All 27 attendee survey respondents completed the Loneliness Scale (Hughes et al, 2004). This comprised three questions: How often do you feel that you lack companionship? How often do you feel left out? How often do you feel isolated from others? The options for answers were "hardly ever", "some of the time" and "often". Each item is scored from 1 to 3, so the maximum score is 9.

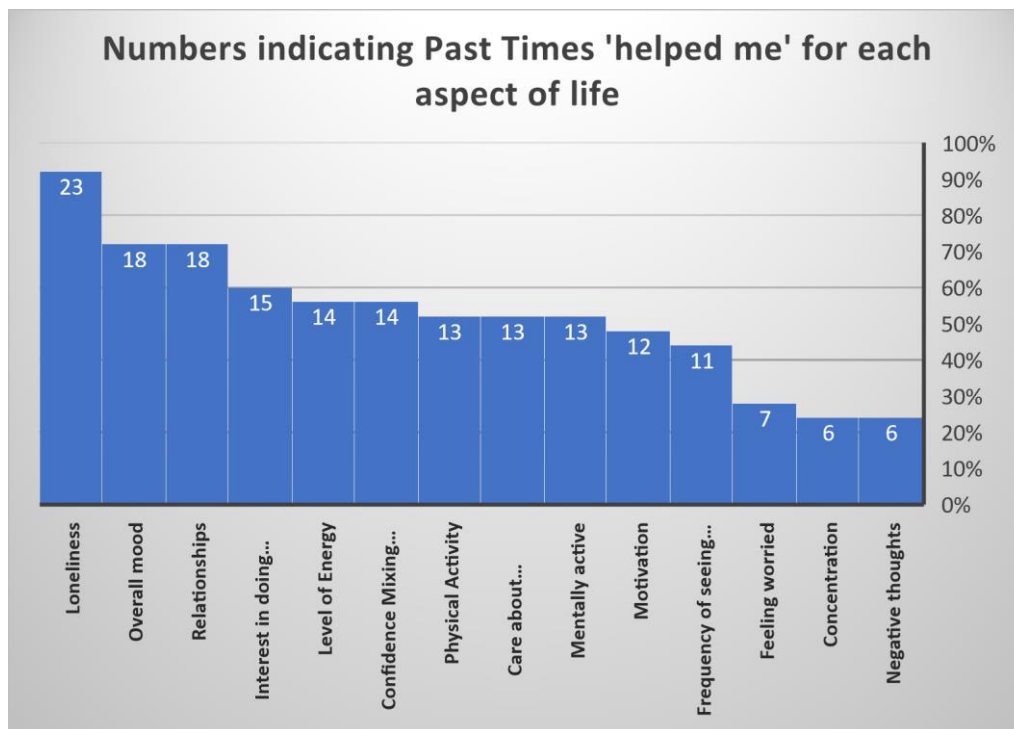
Despite around half of those surveyed living with at least one other adult, 21 (77%) felt they lacked companionship; 16 (59%) felt left out and 19 (70%) felt isolated from others either 'often' or 'some of the time'. 14 answered 'often' or 'some of the time' to all three statements, with only 5 (18%) hardly ever feeling a lack of companionship, left out or isolated. The average total score was 5.82 (standard deviation 2.04), and 15 out of 27 (56%) scored 6 or above, categorised as 'lonely' (Steptoe et al, 2013). This compares to 18% in the lonely category on the scale in a study of 6,500 men and women aged 52 and older in England in 2004-2005 (Steptoe et al, 2013).

To understand the impact of Past Times, attendees rated statements on the extent to which Past Times had helped them- more detail is provided on this below- one of which was "feelings of loneliness". 23 (85%) stated that attending Past Times helped them with feelings of loneliness. Four people who "hardly ever" felt lonely reported that Past Times helped them with feelings of loneliness, whilst two stated that Past Times made their loneliness worse. The two who felt attending made their loneliness worse lived alone and, in both cases, had been attending Past Times for 6 months or less at the point of data collection.

## Impact of Past Times

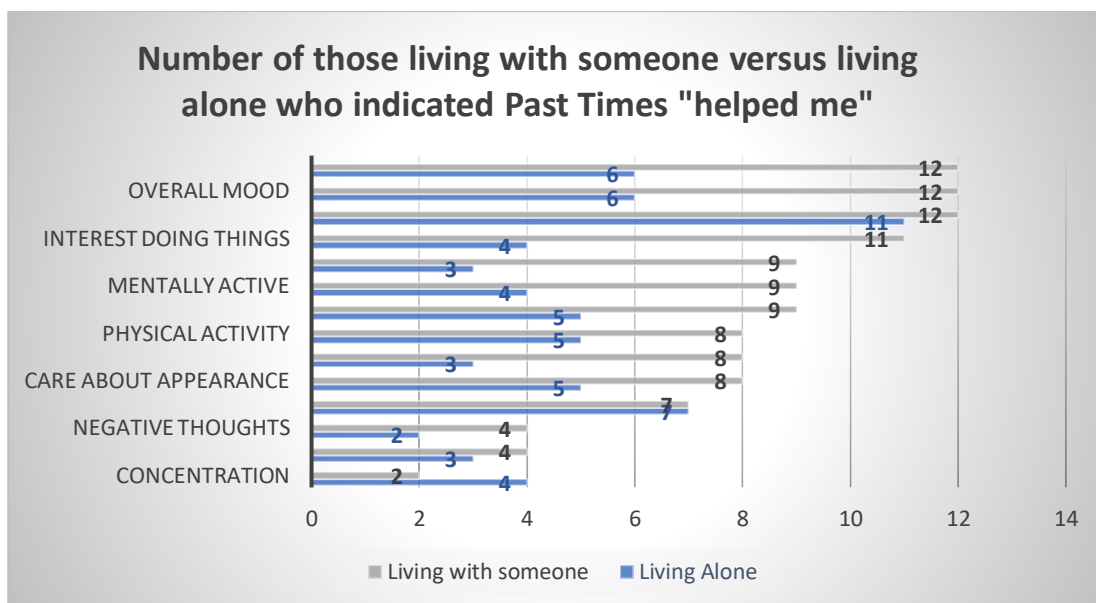
Participants were asked in the questionnaire to rate the impact of attending Past Times on various aspects of their lives by rating several statements by selecting one of the following: "helped me", "made no difference", "made it worse" or "not relevant". The figure below shows (left-hand side) the number of people who selected "helped me" for each statement, with this number represented as a percentage on the right-hand side.





As well as the positive impact on feelings of loneliness, 67% reported that Past Times “helped me” with overall mood and also with relationships. More than half of attendees also indicated a positive effect on interest in doing things and energy. 48% stated that attending helped them to take more care with their appearance; this was an equal split between men and women. 52% felt more confident mixing socially as a result of attending Past Times; of those, 50% lived alone with the remainder living with a spouse, family or in a nursing home.

The chart below breaks down “helped me” responses for each item into those who lived alone (blue) and those who lived with someone (orange), including a spouse, family or in a care home. For all items other than ‘confidence mixing socially’ and ‘concentration’, those who lived with others were more likely to rate Past Times as helpful, than those who lived alone. It should be noted that questionnaire respondents were almost equally split between those who live alone (13) and those who live with someone else (14).



### Finding out about Past Times

32 attendees completed a separate “Where did you find out about Past Times” slip. Their responses fell into 5 categories: word of mouth (14), Facebook advertising (6), community advertising (5), through a healthcare professional (4) and from attending other Arch-Way events (3).

### Content Analysis of Open-ended Survey Questions

The tables below show the main categories of response to each of the open-ended survey questions, and the number of responses in each category. A quote from the questionnaires is provided for each content category, to illustrate typical responses.

#### Question One: *Anything else you would like to say about the impact of Past Times?*

16 responded to this question, as indicated in the table below.

Content category	Number of participants answering in this category	Illustrative responses
Helpful to someone else	2	<i>It helps my wife with her dementia.</i>
Opportunity for socialising	4	<i>It's good to come here and feel like I fit in, talk to people.</i>
Motivation to get out/ structuring week	4	<i>It's good to have something specific to get up, showered, shaved and ready for.</i>
Activities & facilities offered	2	<i>I like to come and see the music with my friend.</i>
Generally enjoyable / atmosphere	4	<i>I find it enjoyable to attend.</i>

**Question Two: *What are the main benefits people get from attending Past Times?***

23 answered this question. They were asked to give up to three responses. The table below shows the first responses only; the emphasis was overwhelmingly on the social aspects. Their second and third responses, where provided, had more equal emphasis between social aspects and activities, though are not shown below. Overall, many appreciated the music, food, entertainment etc., but the social aspects were emphasized more.

<b>Content category</b>	<b>Number of participants with 1<sup>st</sup> response in this category</b>	<b>Illustrative responses</b>
Social contact, connecting with others & getting out of house	18	<i>Being around other people, not stuck at home</i>
Wellbeing & motivation	4	<i>A sense of belonging and self-worth</i>
Activity / facilities	1	<i>Sharing an activity, having something to do that isn't too expensive to do often</i>

**Question Three: *Anything else you like?***

16 responded to this question, within the categories below. What seemed to matter to attendees was the “feel” of the place and the friendly way in which staff and volunteers behaved.

<b>Content category</b>	<b>Number of participants answering in this category</b>	<b>Illustrative responses</b>
Staff attitude/welcome, friendliness of volunteers	8	<i>I like the staff, they're all really friendly and stop for a chat</i>
General atmosphere	6	<i>The general aura/atmosphere is quite uplifting and very important for attendees.</i>
Misc	2	<i>I wouldn't know what to do without it.</i>

**Question Four: *Is there anything that would improve Past Times for you?***

18 answered this question, 7 suggested improvements, as indicated below.

<b>Content category</b>	<b>Number of participants answering in this category</b>	<b>Illustrative responses</b>
No improvements needed	11	<i>No, nothing needs changing.</i>
Environmental & organisational changes	3	<i>Heating.</i>
Developments in what is offered	4	<i>Maybe some different entertainment sometimes.</i>

## Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis of qualitative data from interviews with attendees, staff, carers, referrers and open-ended responses from attendee and carer questionnaires, developed the following themes: *Making a Positive Difference* (becoming more active and engaged, providing connection with others and a sense of purpose); *Atmosphere of Acceptance and Enjoyment* and *The Challenges of Meeting Diverse Needs*. These capture the key issues discussed in relation to the impact of Past Times and the aspects of the event that seemed to matter most to people.

### Theme One: Making a Positive Difference

Attendees, referrers, and carers talked about the difference Past Times made in people's lives, particularly in relation to being more active, improved social connections and providing purpose and routine. For some, the benefits of attending were relatively 'surface level' – they enjoyed the activities and looked forward to Mondays. For others, the event not only distracted them from wider worries, but seemed to act as a vital anchor within the week, giving them a sense of routine, purpose and belonging that they had not easily been able to find elsewhere and that had a longer-term positive impact on their sense of wellbeing.

#### Becoming More Active and Engaged

Most attendees mentioned within the interviews and survey that Past Times was '*enjoyable*' or '*relaxing*' or '*fun*' or that '*it does cheer me up*' (Brenda<sup>1</sup>), with several alluding to the value of laughter. Some appreciated activities which promoted exercise, such as occasional dancing, or which required concentration, such as Bingo and the quiz, and occasional comments were made about the availability of good food and other refreshments at a reasonable cost. However, access to live music seemed to be the activity that was valued the most, with comments about the memories this evoked and the community aspects of shared music, for example:

*a chance for a sing along to some great old songs* (Ray, survey)

Staff noted the trouble that was taken to source good quality musicians who could play age-appropriate music.

Throughout the interviews, the value of this entertainment for some of the attendees became more apparent. Jenny, who had referred several clients, pointed out the importance for people who were not very active of:

*getting people excited, getting them laughing, getting them up and moving*

She also noted how Past Times could provide distraction from other difficulties:

*People are enjoying themselves and forgetting maybe the situation that they're in for a day or half a day or whatever.*

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms were used for all survey and interview participants.

### Becoming More Connected

Many of the survey participants referred to the benefit of 'meeting people' and the staff interviewees commented that these new friendships could sometimes extend to meeting up outside of Past times, even becoming a more significant part of attendees' lives:

*We've even had a couple of romantic relationships start there as well. (Michael, staff)*

Regardless of whether attendees met up away from Past Times, for some, particularly those who had recently lost partners, Past Times was an important connection to a wider world in which they now felt 'a sense of belonging and self-worth' (Kathy, a widow, survey). Several referred to the friendliness of Past Times, and valued the way in which staff made an effort to get to know them, but for a few like Kathy, the social connections at Past Times were valued over and above a 'Nice friendly afternoon out' (Christine, survey). Past Times gave them a place in the world where they felt they belonged:

*It's good to come here and feel like I fit in. (Kathy, survey)*

*I Like the atmosphere. I like socialising with people, and it's like being part of something. And.. I don't know, it just gives you self-worth, being there. (Joanne, interview)*

This sense of belonging to a group, with meaningful connection with others, could reduce a more pervasive feeling of isolation and aloneness, having a positive impact on wellbeing. It could also act as a gateway to further connections. Joanne added:

*It gets you to mingle. When you're sat in, I find, I isolate myself [...] what I used to do was just shut myself away. I'd never tell anybody what was wrong [...] it all opened up... I'd see people that I could, you know, talk about things that had gone on. And then mixing with people. [...] I ended up on the right road, meeting people that were.. It just opened doorways for me.*

Gwen, who completed a survey, noted how the atmosphere of Past Times felt safe, addressing an issue facing older single women in maintaining social connections:

*Losing the feelings of isolation you feel when you've been widowed. It can be hard for women of my age to go out alone - safely.*

The potential of Past Times to restore lost opportunities for social connections was a theme picked up on by other participants. Jenny, a carer who brought a client, noted this in relation to care home residents. She saw Past Times as allowing the return of a 'normal' social life that had perhaps been taken for granted previously:

*The lady I bring has made friends with the two ladies that we sit with every week. That's a completely organic friendship that's occurred just from me taking her there [...] I take her to get her out of the home that she lives in so she can get out and meet people. So she feels normal again. So that's what she gets out of it, [...] a social life in the end. Feeling like she's got one again, and making new friends, and meeting new people.*

Besides broadening their social connections, some attendees also suggested that Past Times could support prior relationships. A regular pattern of attendance with a friend could help to strengthen the relationship:

*It's good to have a routine - a time, place and purpose for meeting my friend. (Tim, survey)*

For carers and those who brought family members, attending Past Times together could support their relationship and provide both enjoyable shared activities and a point of connection they could discuss afterwards, as summarised by one of the staff:

*When they [family] can, when they not working, they'll come along with them and stay for the afternoon. And they feel as though they've had time with their dad or their mum [...] So it's not just beneficial for the people/ Target Group, but also relatives and the carers. (Michael)*

Paid carers elaborated on how bringing clients to Past Times could also supplement some of what they were trying to achieve with the clients and their families, whether that was improving social skills, providing a sense of achievement, helping clients to become more active or supporting clients' relationships with their families:

*and we took one of the residents [...] It was to show her and her husband that there is stuff she can do to interact with him, if she does go home. (Amy, carer)*

So, although there were clearly immediate benefits to an enjoyable afternoon, attendees, staff and carers saw Past Times as having more significant, long-term effects, particularly in the way the event facilitated new relationships and supported current relationships.

### **Gaining Purpose, Structure and Routine**

One further way in which Past Times seemed to make a difference beyond Monday afternoon was that it provided structure and routine to the week and, via this, a sense of motivation. Several attendees who otherwise sometimes struggled with motivation observed that Past Times gave them 'a reason to get up and ready' (Kathy, survey). As Brenda put it:

*Motivates me to get ready and go out. Something to look forward to.*

Ron, who was interviewed with his wife, who also attended, particularly expanded on the importance of Past Times being a regular and predictable event:

*Because we like a routine and you know, I think people our age do [...] Without a routine, you'd drift and you float, and every day is the same. (Ron)*

Later in the interview he explained how the regularity of Past Times therefore had an impact throughout the week:

*I think it transfers itself even if you just go on the Monday. For the rest of the week, you look forward to that occasion on a Monday. And when there isn't one, on a bank holiday, or whenever they're not open, you feel lost.*

### **Combined impact**

From the survey and interviews overall, it seemed that Past Times made a difference in attendees' lives by providing a regular and reliable connection to something they saw not just as enjoyable, but meaningful. It not only provided laughter and music but, for some, also a sense of purpose and self-worth.

For several participants, the therapeutic benefits went beyond entertainment, activity and distraction. Martin, who had lost his wife reflected on how in a relatively short time Past Times, in addition to the other activities at Arch-Way, had made a significant impact on his life:

*If I hadn't had this place, I would have been just probably stuck at home? Just doing nothing and probably just wouldn't have even been this far in life. I don't think. Yeah, to be without this place...I don't even think I would have been here. Yeah, I think I just would've give up. But since I've come here. Like I say, it's really changed me. It's put my life into perspective.*

### **Theme Two: Atmosphere of Acceptance and Enjoyment**

The findings in this theme are distinguished by the tangible elements; those which can be seen, provided and replicated, and the imperceptible; a "feeling", an "energy" which embodies the atmosphere at Past Times but is more difficult to identify.

#### **The Surroundings**

The physical venue was an important factor for attendees in several ways. Firstly, being accessible for wheelchair users was noted as important for making attendance more straightforward by both referrers who were encouraging people to try Past Times, and attendees who were making their own way to the event:

*If you've got a wheelchair or anything, you can roll straight into it and they've got enough space. As a venue, it works really well. (Peter, referrer)*

*[If] I'm going into town, I have to plan where I can go - is it flat?- and it's like coming here, it's easy for me to come here. (Joanne, attendee)*

However, the location presented as an occasional barrier for some attendees. Brenda spoke about needing to catch two buses to access Past Times using public transport, and getting home afterwards could be a problem:

*It's easy to get there, it's harder getting home because they seem to knock buses off for the school children.*

And also, how the weather could influence her decision to attend:

*I won't go if the weather's bad and it's forecast a bit of snow [···] I don't go out if it snows.*

#### **The Interior Décor**

The interior design at Past Times is a deliberate choice; the aim is to take attendees back in time to a nightclub they may have frequented in the past:

*We dress it up like a night [...] It looks like a 1950's nightclub, as close as we can get.*  
(Michael, staff)

The Social Club venue is the primary contributor to this, however staff ensure curtains are closed to add to the evening feel and candles are lit and placed on each table. The bar, the live music and the activities also go some way to creating this feel. The attendees appreciated the general environment: *'I like the atmosphere'* (Joanne, attendee) though didn't comment specifically on the "club" surroundings and indeed there was a mixed response amongst attendees regarding the availability of alcohol. However, it seems that the Club atmosphere facilitates the entertaining, relaxed nature of the event, and in turn helps attendees feel like they are treated as individuals, and adults, in a welcoming environment. This was valued by attendee Joanne:

*You're not just a number that comes in, you're [name] that comes in. You're a name.*

### **Supportive, Friendly Staff**

The supportive nature of the staff and volunteers added to the welcoming and inclusive environment that is so valued at Past Times. Some participants seemed to value the availability of assistance from the staff if needed, for example:

*The staff's brilliant with us they just really...they're there when we need it, if we...we're worried or things bother us. We talk to them.* (Martin, attendee)

Whereas for others, it was simply appreciated that staff were friendly and prioritised time to talk, get to know the attendees and had a personable approach with comments such as *'I like the staff, they're always friendly and stop for a chat'* (Carol, survey) and *'The staff and volunteers make time to talk to you'* (Ray, survey)

With this in mind, staff also tried to get to know the regular attendees. Greeting people by name and asking newcomers what their name was when introducing themselves was noted during the preliminary participant observations. Carers also picked up on this, with Amy saying on her first visit with clients: *'They kept coming over and introducing themselves, and checking if we were all okay'*.

The support offered by Arch-Way staff is not limited to time only at Past Times, for example providing contact and a way to remain in touch over the lockdown closures:

*Even though they closed in the lockdown they gave us a laptop [...] they gave us all laptops, they were constantly ringing every week to see if we were alright, seem very caring.* (Paul, attendee)

Signposting attendees to other events at Arch-Way project, and in the local community, was another way staff helped attendees outside of the Past Times event.

### **Sense of Community and Acceptance**

Attendees spoke about 'having a place at Past Times'; this meant different things to different people and encompassed the different levels of engagement of attendees. For some, Past Times felt like "home", a "family" and they valued the supportive environment:



*We're all just...really good friends and it's like I said, like our family. The Staff's our Mothers, and Gary's like our Dad and the cook is like our Nan. They look after us.*  
(Martin, attendee)

The inclusion of all is a key element of the atmosphere; the event and entertainment are deliberately dementia friendly (appropriate quiz questions, regular routine, familiar faces) and supportive for those experiencing physical and mental health difficulties. This extends to mutual support that attendees share; friendliness and inclusion without judgement:

*She just sat with us one week and she sat with us ever since. It's fine, you know, we don't mind at all. It's what it's all about, bringing people in.* (Ron, attendee)

As noted in the previous theme, some of the women attending regarded Past Times as a "safe space" or somewhere that is easy to go to alone. Feelings of safety were not exclusive to the female participants, with Paul also stating, *'I feel safe and I feel alright you know, I can talk to people,'* and John, who volunteers at Past Times, saying *'I don't have to be on guard. It's not that kind of place.'*

### **Theme Three: The Challenges of Meeting Diverse Needs**

Challenges were faced by Arch-Way staff as well as attendees, and indeed compromises were made by both groups too. Participants recognised that it would be impossible to ensure every session suited every individual attending, and that understanding of the limitations was needed for both staff and attendees.

#### **Limitations to Support**

One of the key benefits of attending Past Times was the support offered by Arch-Way staff, but attendees recognised the limitations to this support; Paul said, *'It can only do so much, you know.'* Staff also commented that, although they do as much as they can for attendees, *'you know, we can't help him go to the toilet, we're not nurses. There's not a lot we can do, if a nurse leaves somebody.'* Amy, a carer, also discussed who Past Times might not be suitable for, and whilst she recognised it was useful for many, she also added:

*We've got some who are more advanced dementia [···] they would like the social aspect because it's different faces and they can smile. But the fact they wouldn't be able to take part because they wouldn't be able to communicate [···] They would feel isolated then.*

#### **Accommodating Needs and Preferences**

Navigating different social norms and the social environment was a challenge some of the attendees faced. For example, some felt uncomfortable with the alcohol:

*I feel a bit uncomfortable around people that drink. I used to drink, it's not very nice for me.* (Paul, attendee)

With this in mind, Paul mentioned that he avoids attending the evening events Past Times occasionally holds, as people are more likely to be drinking.

Different preferences for the entertainment also required compromise that staff and attendees acknowledged; attendee Martin talked about a musician that performed:

*And he was singing really sad songs [···] and (name) said, "Can he not sing anything a bit happier?!" [···] I think a lot of people left after the Bingo and I can't blame them.*

This was also difficult for staff to navigate, with Michael saying: *'We can't change the weather or the fact that we've booked this musician for the first time and it turns out to be absolutely crap.'* Different senses of humour, food preferences and hitting 'the right kind of friendly' were all noted as areas for compromise amongst some attendees.

Accommodating cultural diversity was highlighted in relation to outreach and sustainability. It was understood that, although Past Times places an emphasis on inclusion and being open to anyone, the Past Times event would inevitably not suit everybody. However, although there was recognition that some groups and individuals may not like the setting or the entertainment, staff member Ruby still cited *"reaching other communities of [minority] ethnic backgrounds"* as one of the primary challenges that they were actively seeking to address, including ensuring that people knew about the event in the local area which is ethnically and culturally diverse. Ruby said:

*There's people around the corner that haven't even heard of us.... we had one lady on Monday, she said: I only live around the corner. I've only just heard about this now.*

### **Practical Challenges**

Some attendees faced difficulty with accessing Past Times; it could be limited by weather, transport, distance, individual mobility and funding for those in residential homes - staff member Ruby stated, *'a lot of [care homes] don't have the budget to bring people out'*. Survey participant Henry said, *'I get a lift to and from, I wouldn't be able to come as often if I didn't.'*

The organisation, and adhering to timings, was mentioned as an area for improvement by some attendees and carers. Attendee Ron said:

*It needs a...person to get hold of things and just make sure that everything that's decided by the Committee or the staff who decides "that should happen" [···] They need somebody to make sure that it happens and it's on time and done properly.*

Jenny, a carer, added that adhering to timings was important for her clients from a health perspective, especially the food service times:

*Just that you've got to realise there's some people that are diabetic, they've got to eat between that [time] and that [time].*

As well as being important for individuals with health needs, running the event in the same way, at the same times, each week was helpful for those arranging transport to and from the event, and for the musicians performing to know when they would begin and end their set. Maintaining a routine is also vital for people with dementia, as referrer Peter said, *'obviously, for the people with dementia, consistency is pretty important, isn't it'*.

However, despite attendees noting the challenge of tailoring the event to suit everybody, and the improvements that might be made, they were still strongly supportive of Past Times in its current format. What they gained from the sense of belonging, purpose, routine and entertainment seemed generally to outweigh any perceived negatives.

## Discussion

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This mixed methods study identified various mental and physical health benefits from attending Past Times, and insights into why it is beneficial. Some of the perceived benefits were clearly related to specific activities, such as physical activity and music, and others related to the welcoming, supportive, and accepting environment - the 'atmosphere' which was experienced by most people as conducive to positive and enjoyable social contact.

The wide-ranging health benefits of physical activity are well documented (Cunningham et al, 2020; Schuch et al, 2016; Livingstone et al, 2017; Musich et al, 2017). There is also evidence for the health benefits of music and music therapy (Dhippayom et al, 2022; Wang et al, 2021; Lam et al, 2020; Zhao et al, 2016), although the music aspect of Past Times may not be formally designed and delivered clearly enough to be classed as music 'therapy'. Also, individuals inevitably had their own preferences for the types of music which affected their enjoyment and participation.

Although there is previous evidence of the benefits of physical activity and music, it is difficult to infer specific health outcomes resulting from these activities at Past Times but the attendees in the survey and interviews did attribute a range of mental health benefits to attending Past Times. These included improvements in mood, distraction from physical and mental health problems and "having a good laugh". Other activities with perceived benefits were mental tasks such as bingo and quizzes which also have a social element and provide mental stimulation, social contact and a sense of achievement.

All these activities involved opportunities to mix with others and shared experiences with friends and family or the larger group. It clearly provided an opportunity to connect with others in a meaningful way, not just to be with other people. This is important because there is a distinction between social isolation and loneliness (Coyle & Duggan, 2012); a person may still feel lonely even if they are with other people because they are not connected. There was therefore evidence from the survey and interviews that Past Times does reduce feelings of loneliness, a key aim of the event, and that it helps with both 'emotional' and 'social' loneliness (Weiss, 1973) by providing a sense of belonging for most of the attendees. It is important to note, though, that two participants who had recently begun attending indicated on the survey that Past Times made their loneliness worse, although they still chose to continue attending. No further information was provided, but it may be that some attendees require more support than others to feel a sense of confidence and belonging within a new group, or the social atmosphere of Mondays may highlight loneliness still felt at other times.

None the less, the overall finding of a positive impact on loneliness for most attendees is important given that the scores on the Loneliness Scale suggest loneliness was a significant problem for most attendees completing the survey, and was not limited to those living alone. Other research suggests that a quarter of over 65s report feeling lonely (Chawla et al, 2021) and this is associated with a range of physical and mental health problems, including depression and cardiovascular health (Courtin & Knapp, 2017). There is limited research on loneliness in at-risk sub-groups of older people and of interventions to reduce loneliness (Courtin & Knapp, 2017). The finding that Past Times can help people to connect with others and feel less lonely is therefore likely to be one of the most important aspects of the event in terms of mental and physical health benefits. However, this cannot be taken for granted for all

attendees at events such as Past Times. Therefore, the emphasis placed by Past Times staff and volunteers on actively engaging all attendees individually throughout the session and facilitating their links with others, both within the event and outside of it, seems particularly important.

Where more general and longer-term benefits of attending past Times were reported, it was often related to how attendees looked forward to the event each week and how it contributed to a sense of structure and purpose in their lives. Previous research has also found that structure and routine are important in the self-management of mental health problems (Lucock et al, 2007) and whilst these are important for everyone, they are often missing in the lives of older, isolated and vulnerable people with health problems.

The most striking finding was how attendees benefited from the overall “feeling” - the atmosphere and culture of Past Times. The first and second themes clearly show that most attendees felt Past Times was accepting, not judgemental and they felt “at home”. This is clearly something the staff intend and actively facilitate, and the study suggests this was successfully achieved for the majority. Feedback also showed how efforts were made by staff to make it dementia friendly, which is likely to increase the extent to which attendees become involved and experience a sense of achievement.

In addition to the accepting ‘feel’ of the event, the social club environment and activities clearly helped most attendees feel comfortable, especially if they were familiar with such an environment. On the other hand, the environment's very nature will exclude some people not familiar or comfortable with it. This is not a criticism of Past Times, but it is important to acknowledge it as a limitation. The philosophy of the place is accepting and inclusive but certain individuals and groups may not like the environment. This illustrates the importance of developing and supporting a range of projects and activities in the community that are accessible to minority, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and tailored to meet the needs of individuals and groups. A one-size-fits-all approach would not succeed (Fakoya, McCorry, & Donnelly, 2020).

Past Times represents a good example of the community asset-based approach. It successfully brings together a physical community resource, the social club venue, with the time, skills, energy and passion of staff and volunteers and creates a space where those attending support one another and collectively enjoy the weekly event. It also provides opportunities for individuals to engage with and enjoy activities that fit with their past experience and interests at an appropriate level, reflecting a positive asset-based approach to improving the well-being of individuals.

## Conclusions

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Loneliness in later life can have a significant impact on mental and physical health. Past Times aims to reduce loneliness and isolation in the local community through a weekly event aimed at older people, and according to this research, it is meeting this aim. This study provides convincing evidence that Past Times reduces feelings of loneliness for most attendees and improvements in mood.

A key reason that Past Times benefits people is the atmosphere of acceptance, inclusion, friendliness, and the relaxed nature of the event help people to feel accepted, welcome, and part of something. Connectedness to others was a vital component, spanning the two themes of “making a positive difference” and “atmosphere of acceptance and enjoyment”.

Past Times is a good example of an effective use of a community asset with the passion and time of paid staff and volunteers to create an environment and event that enhances the lives of vulnerable adults in the community.

Community groups aiming to emulate Past Times should note the importance of seeking feedback from attendees; be those existing attendees in an established setting, or potential audiences it is hoped they will reach. This will enable groups to provide the community with a truly useful asset - that is, one that is needed by and benefits the people for which it is intended. A user guide ([Morrow et al., 2023](#)) has been developed, drawing on this research, which will help other organisations to develop similar events and we suggest they should all be informed by feedback from attendees.

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## Appendices

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### APPENDIX I: Questionnaire for attendees



#### **A Research Project Evaluating Past Times**

We would be grateful if you could complete this questionnaire about your experience of attending Past Times. It is part of a research study at the University of Huddersfield investigating the benefits of attending Past Times, any difficulties people have in attending and how the event could be improved. This will not only help to improve Past Times, but also provide information for others starting up similar projects in other parts of the country. The questionnaire will take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete. All responses to the survey will be grouped together anonymously. Past Times staff will not see individual questionnaires, so you will not be identified in any way.

We will also be conducting interviews about people's experiences at Past Times, for anyone interested in taking part. On the final page you can provide your name and contact details on a separate tear-off slip if you wish to be interviewed. Please do not put your name or contact details on the questionnaire. If you are not interested in the interview just leave the final page blank.

When you have completed this questionnaire, you can put it in the box labelled 'RESEARCH'.

**If you have any questions about taking part in the study please contact** Dr Dawn Leeming, [d.leeming@hud.ac.uk](mailto:d.leeming@hud.ac.uk), 01484 257460 or Dr Rosie Morrow, [r.morrow@hud.ac.uk](mailto:r.morrow@hud.ac.uk), 01484 258666. You may also wish to talk to Gary Flowitt at the Arch-Way Project ([garyflowitt@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:garyflowitt@yahoo.co.uk) or 01422 251613).

Thank you for your help, Arch-Way project and University of Huddersfield

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## 1) Why You Attend Past Times

Please tick all the reasons for attending Past Times that apply to you.

To get out of the house	
To enjoy the music	
To reduce the time I spend on my own	
For the lunch	
To meet new people	
To see friends	
To have a drink	
To be more active	
To have a laugh	
To bring someone	
To share an activity with a friend / family member	
To see the people who work here	
Other reason (please explain) _____	

Which of the above are most important to you?

--

If you attend with someone else, please explain your relationship to this person e.g., I attend with my... (son, daughter, friend).

--

## 2) Information about you

**Your gender:** Male / Female / Prefer not to tick either (Please circle the answer)

**Your age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your ethnic group (tick all that apply):**

- Arab    Asian or Asian British    Black or Black British    Mixed Ethnicity  
 White British    Other White    Prefer not to say  
 Other Further details (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**How long, approximately, have you been attending Past Times (time since you first attended)?**

Years  Months

**3) How often do you usually attend Past Times? (Please ignore the lockdown period)**

Every week	
Most weeks	
About once a month	
A few times a year	
Only once or twice ever	

**4) What is your employment status? (Please tick all that apply. For example, you could be mostly retired, still do occasional paid work and also be a carer)**

Retired	
Paid employment	
Unemployed and looking for work	
Not working due to health problems	
Carer (formal or informal)*	
Student	
Other _____	

**\*If you are a carer please tick above, even if you are not formally registered as a carer.**

**5) Who do you live with? (Please tick)**

Alone	
With just a partner/spouse/friend/lodger	
With several family members	
In a care home or nursing home	
Other (specify)	

The following questions are about your own experiences and feelings. There are no right or wrong answers.

**6) Loneliness Scale (please tick).**

	Hardly ever	Some of the time	Often
How often do you feel that you lack companionship?			
How often do you feel left out?			
How often do you feel isolated from others?			

**7) Impact of Past Times on you**

**a) To what extent has Past Times changed any of the following for you? Please tick.**

	Helped me	Made no difference	Made it worse for me	Not relevant
Level of energy				
Confidence in mixing socially				
The amount of physical activity I do				
Concentration on things such as reading and watching TV				
Motivation to do things				
Feelings of loneliness				
Care about my appearance				
Interest or pleasure in doing things				
Having negative thoughts				
Feeling worried about things				
Overall mood				
The quality of my relationship with the people I attend Past Times with				
How mentally active I feel				
How often I see family and friends				

**8a) Please add anything else you would like to say about the impact of Past Times on you.**

**b) If you attended past Times before COVID19, what did you miss about it when it was closed?**

**c) What do you think are the main benefits people get from attending Past Times? Please think of two or three if you can**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**d) Is there anything else you like about Past Times?**

**e) Is there anything about Past Times you don't like?**

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**f) Is there anything that would improve Past Times for you? (e.g. activities, layout of the room, bar/refreshments, access, cleanliness, time of day/day of week)**

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**g) Is there anything that would make it easier for you to attend Past Times?**

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**THIS SECTION IS OPTIONAL**

**9) Which health and social care services have you used in the past year? Tick all that apply  
(Please include any telephone appointments).**

	Tick
General Practitioner (GP)	
Others from GP surgery (e.g. District nurse or practice nurse)	
Medical services at a hospital as an inpatient	
Medical services at a hospital as an outpatient	
Mental health services as an inpatient	
Mental health services at a hospital as an outpatient (for example seeing a psychiatrist)	
Seeing someone from a mental health team (e.g. Community Psychiatric Nurse)	
Physiotherapy	
Memory Service	
Psychological therapy (e.g counselling, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT))	
Psychiatrist	
Psychologist	
Social worker	
Occupational therapist	
Home help / care worker	
Other (please clarify below)	

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP**

## Would you like to take part in an interview to share your views of Past Times?

If you would like to get involved in the research further and be interviewed about your experiences of attending Past Times, we would love to hear from you. You can choose to be interviewed on your own or with the person/people you usually attend with.

Please provide your contact details on the slip below, tear this off and give it to one of the Past Times staff or put it in the box marked 'RESEARCH'. **Please do not leave this slip attached to the questionnaire if you want your replies above to remain anonymous.**

.....

**I WOULD LIKE TO BE INTERVIEWED BY ONE OF THE RESEARCHERS FOR THE PAST TIMES RESEARCH**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE DETACH THIS PAGE and either give it to one of the Past Times staff or put it in the box marked "PAST TIMES RESEARCH".**

## APPENDIX II: Questionnaire for carers



### A Research Project Evaluating Past Times – the views of those who accompany attendees

We would be grateful if you could complete this questionnaire about Past Times, as someone who brings another person to the event. It is part of a research study at the University of Huddersfield investigating the benefits people may gain from attending Past Times, any difficulties they may have in attending and how the event could be improved. This will not only help to improve Past Times, but also provide information for others starting up similar projects in other parts of the country. The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete. All responses to the survey will be grouped together anonymously. Past Times staff will not see individual questionnaires, so you will not be identified in any way.

When you have completed this questionnaire, you can put it in the box labelled 'RESEARCH'. **If you have any questions about taking part in the study please contact** Dr Dawn Leeming, [d.leeming@hud.ac.uk](mailto:d.leeming@hud.ac.uk), 01484 257460 or Dr Rosie Morrow, [r.morrow@hud.ac.uk](mailto:r.morrow@hud.ac.uk), 01484 258666. You may also wish to talk to Gary Flowitt at the Arch-Way Project ([garyflowitt@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:garyflowitt@yahoo.co.uk) or 01422 251613).

Thank you for your help, Arch-Way project and University of Huddersfield.

**1. In what capacity do you attend Past Times? Please tick all that apply:**

- As a paid carer
- As a volunteer
- To accompany a family member
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What do you think are the main benefits people get from attending Past Times?  
Please think of two or three if you can**

- 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3) Is there anything else you think works well at Past Times?**

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**4) Is there anything about Past Times you think doesn't work as well, or needs changing?**

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**5) How do you think Past Times impacts on your relationships with the person/people you attend with, both during the sessions and before/after?**

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**6) Please add anything else you would like to say about the impact of Past Times on you and/or the person you attend with (please avoid identifying the person you attend with).**

**We will also be conducting interviews with older people who attend Past Times.**

**If the person you bring is interested in being interviewed, but would like someone with them in the interview, we would be grateful for your support. We will contact you about this, with the older person's permission, if they ask for you to be involved in an interview.**