

# Sharing creative ideas to keep Zoom groups fun & fresh

February 2021

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## Introduction:

This briefing is based on ideas and information shared by Time to Shine delivery partners in their monitoring returns, and by Cross Gates and District Good Neighbours, one of the 37 Neighbourhood Network Schemes in Leeds.

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020 most Time to Shine partners quickly adapted to online provision and Zoom quizzes became a regular feature. As we approach the one year anniversary we've rounded up some tried-and-tested ideas to help you diversify your offer and attract new people. The names of each project delivering these activities have been included in brackets; contact details for each project can be found on the [Time to Shine website](#) if you'd like more information.

## Wellbeing

- Mindfulness courses (Making a Match and Connections)
- Tai Chi (Connections)
- Reiki level 1 qualification (Connections)

## Exercise

- A telephone conference call enables people to listen to instructions so they can take part in chair-based exercises alongside others on the call (Making a Match)
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- Dance On offers online dance masterclasses and gentle exercise classes suitable for all abilities (In Mature Company)
  - Posting out a DVD of Bollywood dance moves for members who wanted to stay involved but were not online (Small Funds, D Dance Theatre)
  - Using Virtual Reality software gave members of the men's group a great deal of fun and allowed them to get some gentle exercise while enjoying this new VR experience (Don't Call Me Old)

### **Food**

- Partnering with the Ministry of Food to bring online cooking courses to members (Cross Gates)
- Cooking soup together over Zoom, with the ingredients hand-delivered beforehand (Choices)
- A great lockdown Bake Off to help people build friendships and inspire people to keep busy at home and learn new skills (Connections)
- Bake-a-longs (Community Support Project)

### **Music**

- A telephone conference call enables people to listen to someone playing Ukulele and to sing alongside others on the call (Making a Match)
- Zoom singing groups where members share ideas for songs to sing and words are put on the screen for all to see, a song sheet is also posted out in advance of the Zoom group (Cara Too and Connections)

### **Words**

- A book club where members choose what to read and the organisation buys copies of the book and hand-delivers them to members in advance of the book club Zoom meeting (Cross Gates)
- A local disabled writer delivered an Introduction to Autobiographical Writing workshop and carers were invited to produce and share their own writing (Carers Connections).
- A Zoom poetry group (Connections)

### **Arts and Crafts**

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- Sending participants a scrapbook and resource pack in advance of Zoom scrapbooking sessions, with each week focusing on a different theme (Carers Connections)
  - Craft-a-longs, including making a bird feeder and woolly octopus (Community Support Project)
  - A craft course where the tutor creates packs containing all the art materials needed for the 6-week course and hand-delivers them to members on receipt of a payment. Each week the tutor demonstrates the activity on Zoom, members spend an hour making the item and the group reconvenes on Zoom to share their creations with each other (Cross Gates)

### **Socials**

- Choose a member to take part in a TV-style interview and ask other members to supply questions for the 'interviewer' to ask. This helps people to really get to know their peers (Sage)
- Online 'Zooming Lovely' group which runs weekly (Cara Too)
- Cuppa and Chat sessions offer a friendly space to chat about current news and do a quiz (Cara Too)
- Offer 1-2-1 sessions via WhatsApp for members who feel too overwhelmed to leave their home but still want to see a friendly face (Making a Match)
- Regular volunteer team meetings via Zoom (Float Your Boat)
- Fortnightly Zoom chat sessions (Sunshine in Leeds)

### **Games**

- Posting out bingo tickets to members in advance of Zoom Bingo (Cara Too)
- Hosting an Connections Games Evening on Zoom which was attended by carers, volunteers and staff. More details below. (Carers Connections)

### **Shared interests**

- A 10-week men's group linked to watching then talking about films and TV programmes (Cross Gates)

### **Social media**

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- Private Facebook groups help members take the first step in using social media with a small group of friends (The Great Outdoors) and keep in touch with other local members (Carers Connections)
  - Members are encouraged to share contact details and befriend each other on social media (The Great Outdoors)
  - WhatsApp groups enable informal, often light-hearted conversations which can be more difficult to do over Zoom (Sage and Making a Match)
  - A monthly WhatsApp call for people who want to engage in small groups where they can see other people (SELF)

### Other ideas

- [Postcrossing](#)
- [The 21 best games to play on Zoom](#)
- [Being Human: The conversation game](#) from Tea and Tolerance

### More information about the Only Connections Games Evening from Carers Connections

“We used inclusive language to advertise the event, making sure carers feel comfortable to join and they knew their family members could join, especially anyone they were caring for. Then we sent a Zoom invite to everyone interested in attending the games evening with the intention of creating a low-pressure environment for carers to join with their families or support bubbles.

One carer listened and participated in the games evening with smiles and laughter but was able to walk around and clean their kitchen. They messaged to say they weren’t adding up their scores, just having a good time. This really captured the importance of creating the correct environment for Carers Connections events. This allowed the carer to not have their caring role stop them from attending events. There was no pressure to sit at the screen for the whole time and people were open to participating however their situation was on that specific evening.

A low-pressure atmosphere was created through the written information sent out before the event. We began the event by saying you don’t have to count points, we gave out bonus points randomly and nobody had to read out their results. I laughed at myself throughout the evening and admitted I was only getting two letter words on Countdown. Through these methods people felt more at ease and open to just joining in for fun.”

