

# Journeying Through Dementia; Occupational Therapy innovation through a global pandemic

Kate Lowson, Care Group Lead Occupational Therapist  
Michelle Murray, Sharon Logan & Paula Graham, Occupational Therapy Team

## The ask.....

The Inverclyde HSCP Occupational Therapy Team for older peoples' mental health services were invited, by Professor Elaine Hunter, National Allied Health Professions Consultant, to participate in a national pilot (stage 2) of the research based group intervention called Journeying through Dementia in September 2019.

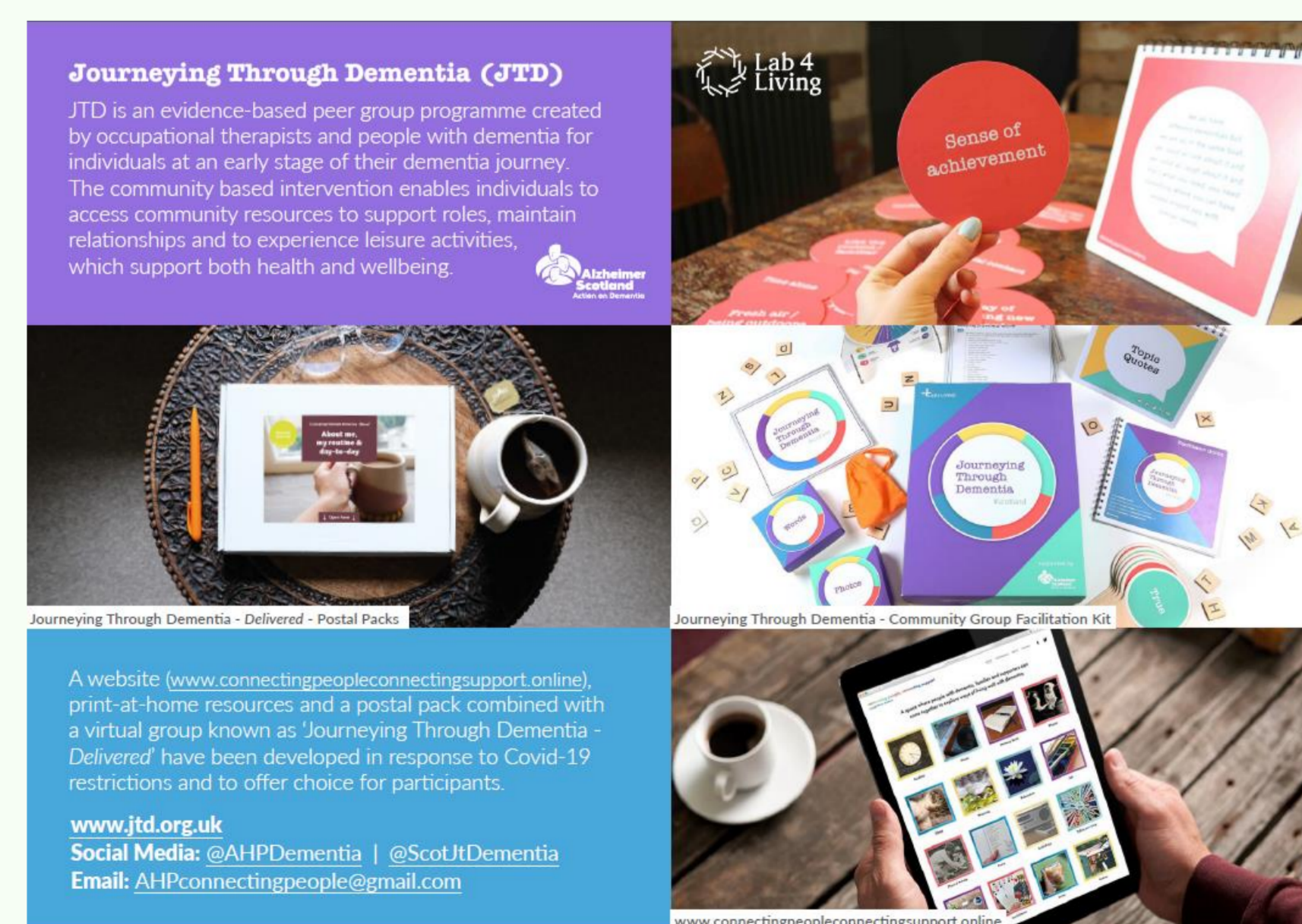
Inclusion in the pilot involved participation in a national planning group tasked to evaluate the phase 1 national roll out, modify the programme as a result of service user feedback and design course materials to enable face-to-face or virtual engagement.

## About the group.....

Journeying through Dementia is an occupation-based group programme that aims to support people at an early stage of their dementia journey to engage in meaningful activities and maintain community connectedness.

The programme was developed in partnership with people with dementia who spoke of the value they attached to continued participation in everyday occupations and in new learning. Throughout all the co-creation activities, people with dementia were clear that they wanted to have the opportunity to access groups that did not just talk about the diagnosis but that offered practical advice and support of how to continue to live well with the condition.

The group promotes continued engagement in meaningful activity through equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and understanding of ways to continue to do the things they enjoy for as long as possible.



"I have referred a number of people I support into the Journey Through Dementia group I personally have seen the difference the group as made to many of them. From when I first refer them, where they are nervous shy and apprehensive to when they finish the group where they have a new lease of life and seem so much more positive." PDS Link Worker

## What we did.....

Despite the difficulties and potential barriers of COVID-19 our service has excelled in providing Journeying through Dementia face-to-face. Our first cohort started between two national lockdowns in September 2021.

## How we did it.....

- Locate a warm, welcoming and safe community venue.



"The place is  
nice, comfortable  
and welcoming"



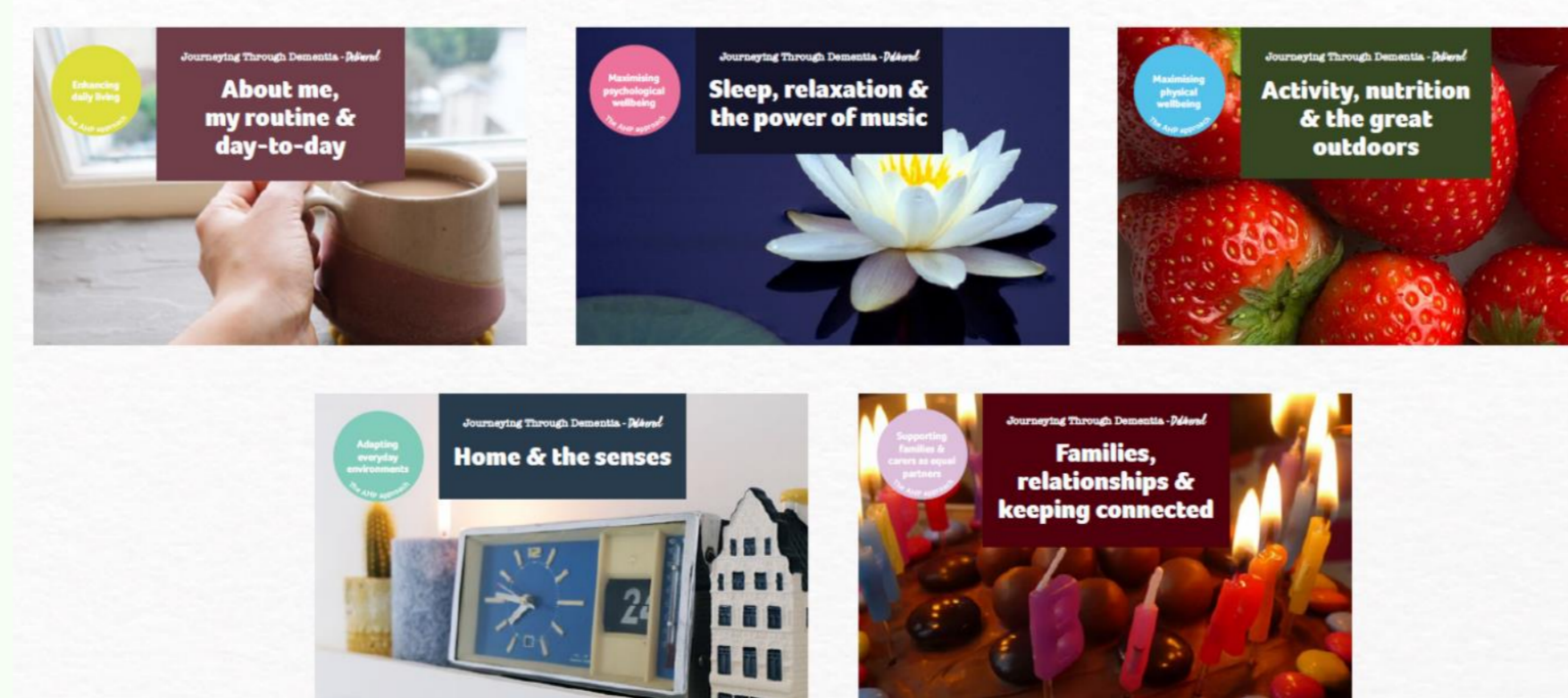
- Prepare for virtual engagement through loan of iPads and home packs.



"Lovely printed booklets and cards helped me follow  
the session and could take them home."

- Make connections and develop referral pathways.
- Re-assure participants of safety of group environment.

"Each cohort is unique as participants select the course topics  
most relevant to them."



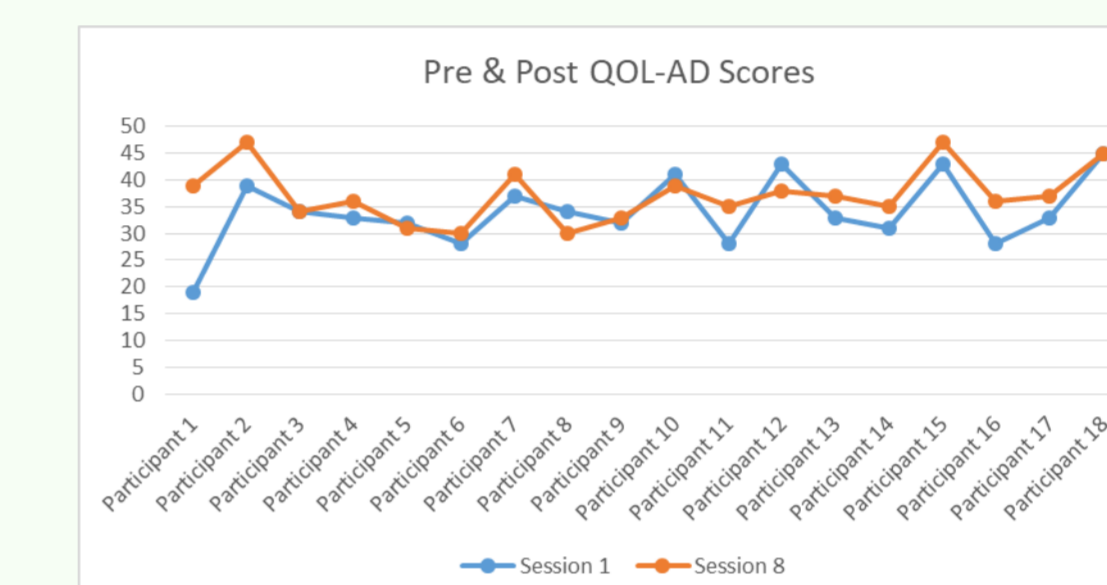
- Actively involve family and carers.
- Link participants with community connectors.

<http://www.connectingpeopleconnectingsupport.online/>

## Results so far.....

Initial results through outcome measures and qualitative data show that participants experience improvements in all aspects of healthy living and wellbeing.

All participants completed the Quality of Life – Alzheimer's Disease (QOL-AD) tool. Emotional indicators and functional measures demonstrate increased knowledge in the condition and development of coping mechanisms.



Overall results show a 4% improvement in quality of life



Positive feedback from participants  
and families

"I loved every minute of the group,  
attending each week made me happy and  
content knowing I had support"

"My daughter comes from  
Glasgow to provide transport  
and works on computer while  
having a coffee"

"If I hadn't attended I would be where I am now  
enjoying company, friendships and helpful  
people"

"My husband is brighter after the group, he looks forward to  
going each week. It gives me a rest and time to talk to my family,  
enjoy coffee knowing my husband is safe and well"

Following the 10 week course participants voiced an interest in staying connected. The Memory Lanes Community Group has been launched.

"I feel better about my life, look at life better. It has opened  
a whole new avenue, improved my self esteem."

## Next Steps.....

Cohort 7 has commenced with further participants on the waiting list.

Our team have taken part in a film co-ordinated by Professor Claire Craig, Sheffield University. Premier showing due in the Autumn.

We have introduced the use of an Occupation Based Question for group evaluation.

"Has Occupational Therapy enabled you to continue with daily activities?"

**Acknowledgements;** Professor Claire Craig, Sheffield University; Professor Elaine Hunter, National AHP Consultant; Helen Fisher, Lab4living; Ashleigh Gray, Specialist Occupational Therapist & all our group participants & carers.

## References

Journeying through Dementia Designing Post Diagnostic Support with People with Dementia, Dr Claire Craig, 14 March 2019.