

Manchester Memories:

The COVID-19 Era

A triumph over adversity,
of humour and tragedy



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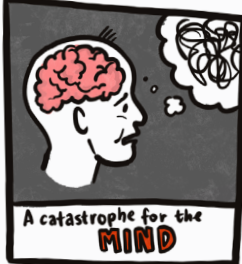
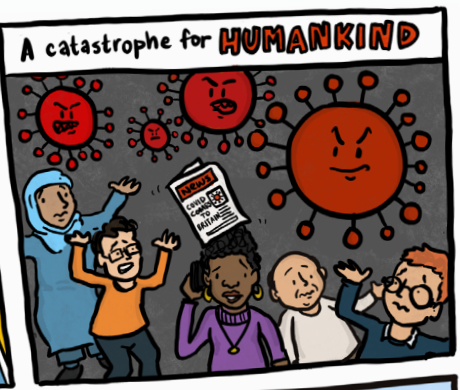
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Manchester Memories: The COVID-19 Era



Picture by Jon Super for UNP

A triumph over adversity,
of humour and tragedy.



@mrtombailey

A Triumph of Humanity

A triumph of human spirit
A catastrophe for humankind
A triumph of resilience
A catastrophe for the mind

A catastrophe of epic proportions
A triumph for tenacity
A catastrophe of innocence
A triumph for humanity



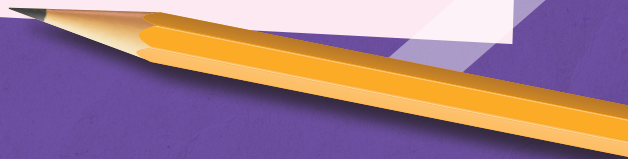
Greeting

During 2023 a group of local Greater Mancunians came together to create this book about our experiences, our struggles, our losses, our insights and our triumphs during the dark days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This book is as much a celebration of life as it is of life lost, an account of sacrifices and achievements. It is also a book that we believe will inspire hope and showcase the spirit and camaraderie of Mancunians during those times.

We the creators of this book shared many laughs and there were tears of sadness as we each recalled our own personal stories. We are sure you will have your own and we hope this book helps you, maybe share yours too.

It is also a book that honours those we left behind, as it honours those who through our shared Mancunian spirit are still here and whose resilience and compassion make our great city region a place we can all be very proud of.



Understanding the experiences of local communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic

In 2021, a team at the University of Manchester, along with members of local communities, began a research study exploring the experiences of Greater Manchester local communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the context of healthcare, unmet need, and the public's response to the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The study was developed and undertaken in partnership with members of diverse local communities that had been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. They identified the need for the research to explore the experiences of these communities during the pandemic. The team undertook primary research with 35 participants from across Greater Manchester, revealing numerous testimonies, stories, and deeply personal and emotive narratives that transcended a number of different areas of people's lives during the pandemic.

Some of the data is reflected in academic outputs, which can be freely accessed and read here <https://arc-gm.nihr.ac.uk/projects/understanding-experiences-GM-covid-vaccination-programme>. With accessible lay summaries provided here <https://arc-gm.nihr.ac.uk/projects/understanding-experiences-GM-covid-vaccination-programme>.

However, it was thought that some of the additional things people said in interviews could be shared more meaningfully in a different way.

Since then, we have worked with numerous charities and local community groups to create this book. We held creative workshops where we painted and shared stories of life before, during and after the pandemic, a poetry-writing workshop hosted by a professional poet to help the authors express their ideas in different ways, and a creative design workshop where we came together to storyboard the overall design and format of the book. Please be aware that there is strong language and potentially triggering stories throughout.

This book is the work of a multitude of individuals from diverse communities, varied social backgrounds at different life stages, who came together to create something to honour the experiences of the people of Greater Manchester, and to highlight some of these experiences amongst those most greatly impacted by the pandemic.

Stephanie Gillibrand, Researcher, The University of Manchester

Foreword

“The idea is to write it so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart” Maya Angelou

Stories, poems, and images are powerful ways of capturing and conveying moments in time. They are a way of expressing emotion and generating empathy whilst reflecting the most personal of experiences. The pages of this book do just this. As each page turns, we are brought head on with stories of loss, hardship and triumph in the face adversity. There is humour and comfort too, side by side with stories of fear, experiences of racism, and personal journeys through sickness and recovery. The stories are collected together in different forms, with poems and pictures sitting beside a recipe, or a quote from someone talking about what happened to them during the long days of the pandemic. The collection also prompts us to think about the lessons learned that might stimulate further positive action and change.

As a researcher who often uses interviews to research topics related to health and care, I am used to hearing stories of experience and analysing these to write a journal article. However, there is something quite different about writing and reading an academic journal paper, compared to the creative ways of bringing stories of experience to life that are featured here. The book has been a shared venture led by researcher Stephanie Gillibrand and a large team of authors and wider contributors. It is especially satisfying to see the original idea come to fruition.

This came from Nasrine Akhtar, a member of our Community Research Advisory Group (CRAG) and lead for a community organisation called ‘Awakening Minds’. When we met together for one of our regular meetings to discuss the research findings and the writing for this, Nasrine inspired us to think about a creative way to bring these stories to life in a way accessible to all. We talked about inspiring stories that appear in raw form, such as the inspiring short stories that feature in the popular series, “Chicken Soup for the Soul”¹. We talked about the potential for different creative forms to sit side by side to simultaneously reflect experiences of sadness and despair, as well as joy and community resilience. Here it is, a bountiful collection reflecting triumph over adversity, humour and tragedy that goes straight to the heart.

Prof Caroline Sanders, The University of Manchester & NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Greater Manchester

1: <https://www.chickensoup.com/>

During COVID

Alexa! Alexa! Stop the alarm,
Alexa put Capital Manchester on,
As this will help me stay calm
Ready for school and warming up for my GCSEs
The fear of sitting my GCSEs.
But the excitement of my prom
And Disneyland Paris
Which had been the moment of my life I had been waiting for

The note to the teacher arrived
A warning for a whole year assembly
We all wondered what was going to happen

The News was said....telling us we have to leave.
Not knowing we will never be coming back
Within a blink of an eye everything changed,
Covid started.

-Shuhaney Lad

Starting with school, getting ready for GCSEs and prom but also a trip to Disneyland Paris.

Seeing/hearing all the news of Covid starting. Having an assembly to tell us that we will have to leave school. Thinking it will only be for 2 weeks, not knowing we will never be back.

Within the blink of an eye everything had changed, not being able to see my brother. It felt like I had fallen down...but I got back up slowly with adapting to this new world.

Seeing my brother 2m apart and wearing PPE, doing classes online, not being able to see family properly.

The changes have changed me, making me realise that every day is a present, not taking what I have for granted.

- Shuhaney Lad

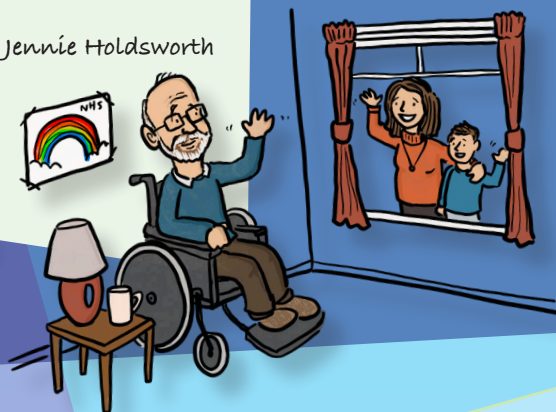
Today is the day
The day the Earth stood still
I made my own.
The real world still called for me - it
needed me,
And I liked it.
But, the real world was too much for me.
I had no control.
So I became God.
I made a new world.
 A new story
 new life.
I could create a princess
 A king
 An alien
It was my world.
Nothing bad could happen in my world
Unlike the real one.
It all came true in my world.
In the real one it all withered and died.

Tomorrow is another day
Then tomorrow came and it was the same
as the day before yesterday.
The real world taught me tomorrow never
comes.
My world taught me
Today is the day.

- Jennie Holdsworth

“
Everything I touched
I sanitised. And
that for me was
a lot of anxiety.
And even to a point
where I'd drive home
sometimes thinking,
did I sanitise that,
did I do that. It was
like playing games
in my head: did I
sanitise mum's door
before I felt; did I
do this; did I touch
anything near her
bed; did I touch any
of her medication. It
was just too much.”

Research study
participant



Banana Bread

- 100g butter softened
 - 175g castor sugar
 - 2 eggs
 - 2 ripe bananas
 - 225g self raising flour
 - 1 tsp baking powder
 - 2 tbsp milk
-
- Mash bananas
 - Add everything together
 - Cook in oven at 180 degrees C



My experience as a carer and mum in covid the highs and lows

A carer A mother

The world has shut down no contact with family friends colleagues, staff My family, friends, colleagues are my support as mum to 2 boys with physical disabilities. It

was all taken from us more so I was worried how my boys are going to cope as they're very

independent and outgoing and don't let their disability get in the way.

We had to stop carers coming to the house, family and friends too. It was just me my husband and daughter. We took extra measures to keep our family safe especially the boys due to their condition.

To keep them busy they started doing blogs posting on Facebook motivating people on how to keep busy, updating people on current situation to keep their mental health positive. That

time we learnt skills we never would've tried: my sons started cooking, and they enjoyed it, and built their confidence by doing blogs.

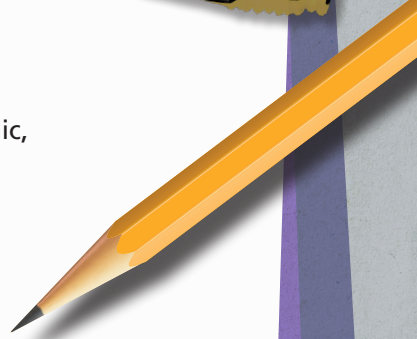
My boys stayed healthy and didn't have any issues thankfully. The weather was good all throughout this period, and being outdoors helped us a lot otherwise we would've had a difficult time.

Ghazala

I can't catch up,
can't sprint fast enough,
to knock it down,
and grapple the mystery disease that's ruining me.
That's forcing me to rot for days on end.
That's choking me.



I wasn't always like this before the pandemic,
but now this black dog is my best friend.
We grew together,
it rooted itself by my side,
and forced me to face its ugly head.



I never caught COVID,
but I somehow caught a side effect,
I caught something that no vaccine can protect.

– Ashgan Mahyoub

Over the garden fence
Was my new best mate
He had a water pistol
Aimed at my face

He stood there giggling
I was stood their soaked
Next he threw a tennis ball
Dressed in his batman cloak

He thought it was hilarious
I was laughing too
That is my new best mate
He is only two.

–Russ Cowper

I need to mention that people who had immigration status, that they wanted visas to go to see their families, for example, say in Turkey or Jordan or any other, or even in Europe or other places, because of the restriction in travel, that also puts so much pressure on them, people who have been waiting for their passport, for example, to go and say maybe, goodbye to their family member because they're dying, they couldn't see them.

Research study participant

Key Workers grafting
Everyone is clapping
A shadow legacy

Shortages unity
Importance of postman
Xenophobia
Full time caring
Talking through the window
Visiting family

- Russ Cowper

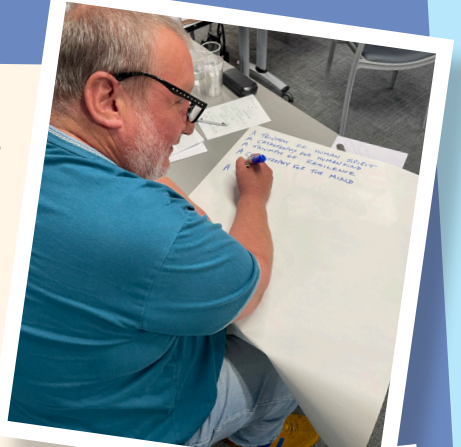


Raised voice
Trying louder
Shouting
Voice never got heard

Hearing
Death, death, death
Travel restrictions
Fear & anxiety grip
Feeling pushed down
Lifting myself up

— Rev Enock Mayanja

Experiencing the dreaded pandemic
Having covid: body is aching, cough is
Killing me: my chest is
Hurting: fever-warm cold
Feeling
Help Lord Help
What am I going to do
Is this it for me?



Feelings: Isolating in bedroom with ensuite
Days longer, don't know what to do
Crying, thinking of not recovering,
Even thinking of death
Thank goodness for family support
Only saw them when they brought food for me
Recovery: alas!! I thought I might not get
through this
How did I manage
Thank you Lord for strength
To get through this pandemic
I was so near yet so far from my family



- Nahida Parveen

I know, not a large number, but quite a considerable number of people who lost their first relative, like mother or father or brother, whether due to COVID or another illness, and they couldn't go and say goodbye all they planned to do it. And that affected them deeply. I know a lady who lost her mother, she hasn't seen her for ten years, and I think she lost a year and a half, until now, she's just broken....It was both travel restrictions and that they couldn't leave the UK, but also because many of them, their passports were held or they were renewing their visa and it was stuck at the immigration office, and they couldn't get permission to leave, even when they were allowed to travel for special circumstances, but they couldn't get their documents in time. Many people were closed.

Research study participant



Stuck

The hardest part was coming out from the bottom
Of mattresses and mattresses on top of each other
I pushed the first one out and another one fell
So I would keep pushing pillows again and again
Eventually I would get to the mid of the structure
And these layers would turn into blankets and covers
I can see the sky now and the sun hits my head
One day soon I will get out of bed

Reeling

I woke up in full fever, blood hot and head wet
Shaking and screaming
Veins pulse with sickness, steeped in weakness
I make my way towards the door
I have to get out of this warped reality

- Lucy Porte



Living in a box

Before: waking up to a normal day routine

Feeling tired from the previous day working

Visiting family and friends

Going out and coming in freely

Planned to start a Masters

During

Living in a box

Zoom was the word in all homes

Women dance group

Online shopping, video calls

Pregnancy

Home-schooling

Isolated

Mixed feelings, overwhelmed, sadness, happy

The world became so small and smaller

Death was knocking on people's doors everyday

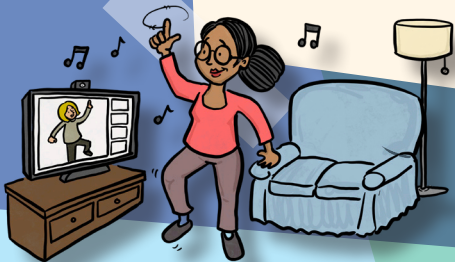
All hope for the future was lost

Waking up to a new day was a blessing

Watching TV was the most scarring time

Became more religious

- Nusrat Acheampong



Last goodbye

My sister is in hospital
COVID is the cause
I cannot visit her
All I can do is call
At least we have video
I can see her face
You are there with a mask on
In an awful place
My dearest sister
Still making snide remarks
I so wish I could hold you
Touch you, with all my heart
This time it feels stolen
We are so apart
Our shared precious moments
Close but so afar
As life faded from you
I ached to hold you close
Feeling so hopeless
All I could do was video phone
What were your final thoughts?
Did you have some fears?
We were so blessed to have you
As we brushed away the tears
To feel so hopeless
Thinking could I have done more
Hurts my blessed sister
As you passed through the death's final
door
Wish you peace
And higher rank in heaven
We miss you more each passing day
We loved you blessed sister
Rest in peace 'til we meet again

- Nahida Parveen & Russ Cowper

“...we weren't just worrying about those people but we were worrying about ourselves because do I go and break the law so I can go and help my friend; which isn't something you'd usually think of: oh I just need to go and have a conversation with them and that was breaking the law. And it did become that scary because at a point a lot of people had to choose: do I break the law or do I save someone.”

Research study participant

Restrictions, restrictions, restrictions
What a hassle?
Isolation, isolation, isolation
What such grief?
Queues, queues, queues
What a misery?
Death rates, death rates, death rates
What a shame?
Who to blame, who to blame, who to blame?
There is no shame!

Families unite, families unite, families unite
There is such joy
All in the past, all in the past, all in the past
BUT TRY NOT TO FORGET ALL

-Manoj

one of the things that the COVID left me with is not just mind fog, but not remembering what I'm saying. It's an awful feeling to try and find a word that you know very well, and you can't find it. It's frightening, actually. One night I tried to have a conversation with my friend and I was like a babbling idiot. I couldn't finish a conversation, I had to put the phone down. It really is an awful feeling, and on top of that, you can't breathe. Do you know, it's like drowning, it's a really awful feeling

Research study participant





I got COVID and I don't know how, because from the March, from the first time the lockdown started, I didn't go outside, and in November last year I ended up in intensive care and was in intensive care for three weeks, and came out like a dribbling idiot, pains everywhere, it's just...it was awful... I came out of... I don't know, I don't think I had ventilation, because I would have had a tracheotomy or something silly, but I had pains in my chest as if they were thumping my chest. I haven't been told what sort of intensive care treatment I got, but I remember waking up from unconsciousness with plasma going in my arm, and sort of knowing the ropes, I think I would have been given a whole heap of steroids, from which I'm suffering right now. And I came out...I left the intensive care, went into the ward for treating palliatively, and came home only to find I started developing clots in my lungs a few days later and was taken back into hospital for anticoagulants. So it's been rough, it's been quite rough.

Research study participant



The cult of Whitworth Park

My friend's room was longer than most,
painted in texture and draped in colour. We read
Each other poems in a garland of tongues;
we read other's poems, and we read
each other. Right out of an old poem, a boys'
cave by candlelight. We named ourselves in its honour,
pride in cheek: the Fruit Poets Society.

My friend's room opened on a porthole,
glass and hinges on a slant. Fresh to the small city
I climbed two stories up on red-brick
Toberlone, and she quickly got used to it.
We laid on the tiles by her window as
spring breathed life between our lips,
as midnight turned to twilight,
and we counted the stars.

-Jack So

I've got long Covid now, because it's made my chronic fatigue twice as bad. I even joined... It doesn't have to be stressful situations, I can just... even a normal work day is very debilitating for me by the end of the day. Mentally it's very exhausting and if I'm actually in the office and out and about doing, not out and about but if I'm in the office doing things, then physically I'm tired as well. So, you know, even a working day for me is very tiring. And I've had to go back to my chronic fatigue team. I've gone back under them again because it had got to the point, by Christmas, I was literally crawling out of bed to get to work. I was so physically tired. Mentally I couldn't even function a lot but I was going in because I was not classed as being vulnerable.

Research study participant

KINTSUGI

When handled without care,
wholeness is scattered and dismembered

falling off the shelf you sit comfortably on,
the ground beneath becomes a graveyard

of

broken

pieces.

Unrecognisable

from the rubble and remnants of before,
courage mixed with powdered gold
glues back the pieces.

Reformed into something new,
placed back on display;
on the family mantelpiece that
holds up the fragile things
from the barefoot floor.

Break and repair moulded into history

Scars. Shine. Golden

- *Skye Radford*

Captured in a glass frame
that reflects the only acknowledgment
That I exist
Mount on the wall
Carrying the wait of truth
Only ever seen when looked through
Yet I visit you every day
Exchange brief conversation with myself

Anticipated screen
Zoom, visor masks,
And now your fragment frame.
2 Metres apart
Don't breathe too heavy
The sensation of touch is only for the sinful
Unless it's your elbow, let them collide
God will turn a blind eye

Eyes fixated, times tallies against the wall
Staring competition with myself
I look unfamiliar, unrecognisable
Deflected anger
projected to the only sense of unity I stumble upon
A cluster of imperfection that dominate my delicate skin
Beauty is a betrayal when you're forced to face it
Now I practise the simplest of communications

Deep breath
Holds hand out slowly
No touching remember
Try again
Deep breath
Hello



- Kyia Binnall

RACIALISED EXPERIENCES

she said, you know, you Asians, you're not social distancing. she made a few comments in regards to us Asians being the worst and how in the headlines the BAME community are unable to, you know, stop social distancing. They keep breaking all the rules and the laws and they're the reason that this country is on the, kind of on the back foot

Research study participant

When I was in Aldi, I was shopping, so if I took three cucumbers I was looked down at: why the has this Paki got three cucumbers when she could only be doing with one. And you know what I had to do? Seriously, I got so fed up, in the middle of Aldi I said, excuse me, before you look at my trolley - I was that fed up - do I have to friggng label it on my forehead to say I'm friggng helping your white people because you bastards can't get off your arse to help them because I have to fucking, as a Paki, go and help them. That pissed me off because they were looking at my trolley because th[at] I were fucking my money, my money because I have earned it since the age of 16. I bloody pay taxes. I have worked all my life and this is what we get. All my life I have worked from the age of 16 when I left school. And I can't buy three cucumbers without being bleeding victimised.

Research study participant

this COVID gave them a free for all. It gave them a form of expression, which we've seen and are like, whoa, we can't say anything to them now because it's all over the telly

Research study participant

when does that stop? When can we say, it's okay to say I'm not okay and be respected and validated for that? Why, because we carry our trauma, our community's trauma, our mums, our dads, our grandparents. When does this stop? And that's the scary bit.

Research study participant

“

relay the message on that we're human beings, we're just like everybody else. And the ramifications of what you say, you think you're saying something for five minutes and that's the end of it, soundbites, the ramifications, if you throw a stone the ripple effect, of what it does to our community and the targets that they placed on us by what they said, that they have to be very, very, very, very careful in how they express themselves....what ripple effects and ramifications it had on my mum, my dad, my brother, my sister, my auntie, my niece, my nephew. Just like everybody else has relationships and relations, what it did for us, what it did to us, and what it allowed other people to do to us. Because it was a green light for people. It was a free for all. It was these people are to blame, go hell for leather, love, because no matter how many times you phone the police, no matter how many times you've made a complaint, nobody came. I don't think we even ever got phone calls back half the time the abuse that we got, from the police. This is how insignificant we were made to feel.

Research study participant

“

[there was] complete disregard that the MPs had for the BAME [communities], the way they threw us under the bus made us walking targets. We're already targets... [I] Then when you add in the BAME community is the reason why COVID is rising and COVID is not disappearing and COVID is not, he threw us under that bus.

Research study participant ”

“

it was very heart-breaking when it was mentioned that it was the BAME community who were not going for the vaccination, it was the BAME community it was spreading in. We were put in a category.

Research study participant ”

“

Damage to community cohesion has been caused by the emotionally-charge[d] labels given to ethnic minority groups, which has fuelled already existing stereotypes 'i.e BAME groups are law breakers, they are defiant, they cause and create harm'. Inevitably it's created stigmatised representations and divisions amongst communities, where we are seen as criminals and uncivilised. Even though behind the scenes our elders fed hundreds of vulnerable, where our people supported isolated individuals putting themselves at risk, emotionally, physically, financially. Where we provided care packages for our care home patients AND the NHS staff. This was all through a language of compassion and humanity, without a 'need to speak English'. But our actions will continue to speak volumes no matter how much we are silenced

Research study participant ”

**After COVID-19:
the legacy of
the pandemic**

Mother and Son

- 1 A failure of the heart
Rapid reaction
The medics were awesome
Off in an ambulance
- 2 I could not go
Mum didn't understand
all that she wanted
was to hold my hand.
- 3 She went on her own
I felt the pain
I might not see
My mum again.
- 4 I cried that night
My mum was alone
I had not kissed her
It chilled my bones
- 5 Everyday
I rang the ward
I could not attend
Covid accords
- 6 Asked how Mum was
Said give her my love
A kiss on the cheek
From her son Russ
- 7 Finally I got
The news, I was pleased
- Mum can go home
She was being released
- 8 I went to the ward
The door was barred
I rang the bell
A nurse appeared
- 9 I'm here for my mum
minutes passed by
The door swung open
My mum started to cry
- 10 She was pushed out
the door was locked
Had you forgotten me
I was shocked.
- 11 not one message
was passed to my Mum
she was scared and alone
I was numb
- 12 I rang everyday
expressing my fears
Forget you never
said through my tears
- 13 Mum genuinely thought
I had left her to die
alone and abandoned
In the strangest of times

- 14 We shared a big hug
I took her home
I promised her then.
She would not die alone
- 15 a few weeks later
Mum was back in
a different ward
they listened
- 16 It was obvious
Mum was dying
we said our farewells
everyone crying
- 17 I went home
Could not sleep
Dozed on the bed
Out on my feet
- 18 Then this feeling
overcame me
get to the hospital
immediately
- 19 Didn't rush
drove normal speed
parked up
felt no urgent need
- 20 The nurse let me in
saying it's time
go straight in
the compassion shined
- 21 I'm here Mum I said
I kissed her cheek
held her hand
as she fell asleep
- 22 moments later
Mum passed away
a promise was kept
on that day
- 23 she didn't die alone
I was there
no tears flowed
I had shown I cared.
- 24 Covid brought pressure
like we have not seen
not all was perfect
as it seems
- 25 on Mum's final day
they were fantastic
thank you nurses
you were magic.

– Russ Cowper



Space for reflection: journal page





The New Normal

Covid has certainly made us question what is normal. Indeed will life ever return to normal or are we now in the age of the new normal.

At Health Innovation Manchester our meetings changed from the old normal of face-to-face at the office, the ritual of the pre-meeting chat, a coffee, a how are you or four to the other panel members all in a relaxed informal manner. We would sit around the large table, usually in the same seats with paper copies of the meeting agenda and the lead would kick us off and it was very very normal. We would break for a coffee and a biscuit, the naughty ones would make an excuse and sneak off outside, the panellist's would mingle engaged in the idle chit-chat brought about by a familiarity that was normal in every office across the land.

Then came Covid

The old normal was made redundant overnight and we had to create a new normal.

Humans thrive on social interaction, Yuval Noah Harari credits humans' ability to gossip and tell stories as being central to the rise in prominence of the human race. Interaction however was going to change in ways some of us never imagined.

Instead of the bustling office meetings we became connected through the wonders of technology. Myself a techno novice became competent enough to use Zoom.

Soon Zoom meetings became the new normal. From Cro-Magnon man we became the homo erectus of Zoom learning how to interact all over again. At first meetings were strange, we were hesitant, yet it is a measure of the adaptability of humans that these changes to our circumstances soon became the new established normal.

The old normal didn't die though, it adapted, it overcame the barriers and panel members quickly lapsed into the etiquette of the old normal whilst existing in the new normal. The comfort blanket of the old normal helped the adaptation of the new normal. Habits returned, actions were resumed and we act on Zoom as though the old normal still exists. A summation of a panellist's involvement with a project was met with applause, the applause though was silent, it was pictorial as the new normal has a mute button. We are like Zippy from Rainbow, zipped away until asked to comment or unzipped to interject in the discussion. We seek attention by old normal means, we raise our hands and hope to be noticed, a lesson the old normal taught us at primary school when we tried to grab the teacher's attention.

In some ways the old normal prepared us well for the new normal, we are after all creatures of habit and we value etiquette, oh dear! I have been muted.

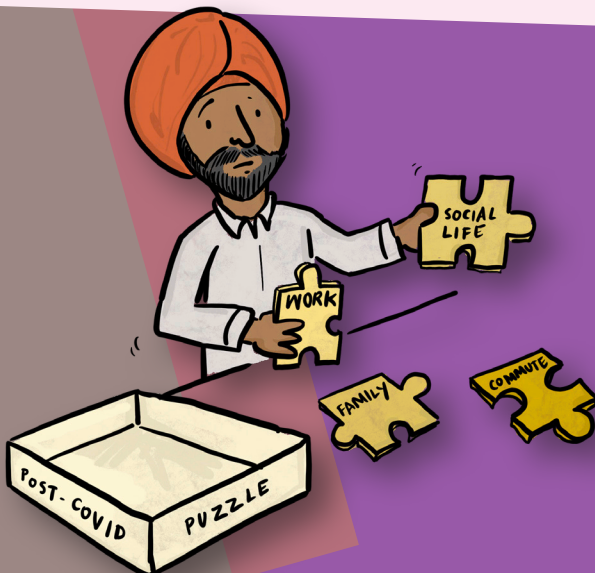
— Russ Cowper

Source: <https://arc-gm.nihr.ac.uk/news/blog/PCIE-Panel-Contributor-Adapting-to-normal-Blog>



Money. Work. It's all on you.
Money overwork Its all you
Money. Overworked. There is no more you.
You gave the wrong change and that's the true issue
It didn't matter that you fainted and that you couldn't feel you.
Pieces. No work. Just you
Picking up pieces. Working on you.
Maybe we pieced back together wrong,
The universe made you start again.
Covid came and you were fired from work. Stuck with you.
Covid came you started new work. Still stuck with you.
Healthier, eating, thriving.
Then money, work, its all on you.
Money. Overwork. Overworked. Crying. No off switch
Nightmare is my laptop. And mum said
"Just leave, why are you working? Just leave." Money? Work? It's
not all on you.
There's people out there who care for you, you care for them.
Happiness. Experiences. Very little work. It works for you.

- Sadia Mir



Letter to my Present Self

I can't wait
For the day
I put machines
In the bin.
No more sin
From my blood
Because the good
Only stay

To guide the way
To a new
Neighbourhood.
The rest are few
And truly knew
What I went through
Without them.
Never again.
Goodby pain.
Hello health.
My real wealth.

By Doctor Sumaira Khalid Naseem

Resilience

In the realism of life, a tapestry unfolds
A virus un-seen
A world turned upside down
Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny.

Through the trials and tribulations,
Resilience is found.

A profound sense of global unity
Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny.

Silence is so loud.
A whisper to the heavens.
In the stillness a prayer
Softly spoken.

Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny.

From tragedy a beauty is seen.
Through the tears my vision is clear.
In this journey time is suspended.
Which of the favours of your lord will you deny.

Count the blessings, make them
Known, shout Hallelujah.
Live hard!
Love fiercely!
Rejoice
Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny.

– Fehmína Parveen

I think I've had more psychological help from myself more than anything else, I think it's been stamina and guts that's brought me through

Research study participant

We were brought up a bit hard core compared to the way people are brought up. So, to say that this, this kind of pandemic is gonna affect...no, it's not. It's affected us, but we will not let it get to us. We won't let the racism, the racial agenda get to us, the BAME. We won't let anything get us down because this is...this is like a fly and we're bees in a nest, you know. I mean, we can tackle anything that comes our way

Research study participant



I've just got to say during this pandemic I have fallen more in love with my community than I can possibly say. Honest to goodness I think we have the best community ever the way we rally around.

Research study participant



(Personal) Inertia

These days I walk in sunlight over graves
and I realise myself,
forgetting expectations to lose myself
in the tranquillity of an abandoned golf course
as all the days grew longer,
needing to breathe back in oxygen after a sprint.

These days I can stay awake through the evening but I've lost my
grip on early mornings,
stuck to my screen and knee-deep in government policy
knowing I believe in something more than this
but never recovering from lovely inertia

– Seth Connor-Fullwood



Now Covid has gone

On a morning like this one
Where there is no sun
The rain is horrendous
The pandemic is done

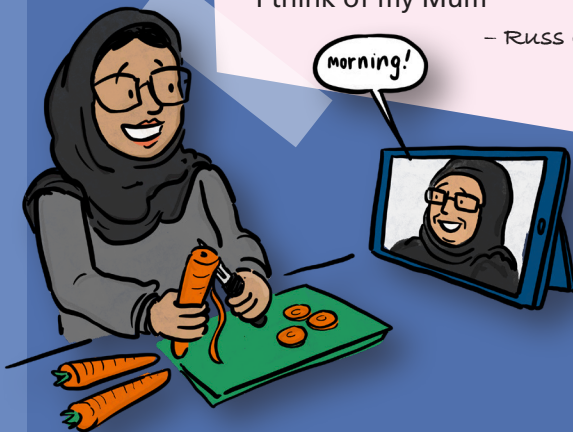
I look out of the window
Stare at the sky
Thank Heavens I think
That I am alive

On a morning like this one
Where there is no sun
I smile and I laugh
At the mad stuff I've done

I look out of the window
Stare at the street
Thanks Heavens I think
That life is so sweet

On a morning like this one
Where there is no sun
My thoughts wander
I think of my Mum

- Russ Cowper



I am love
I breathe love
I see love
I hear love
I speak love
The more I pray the more he
shows me the way
I have to let go in order to
grow
In order to grow
I am love.

– Nasrīne Akhtar



The Proud Mancunian Spirit

The people of our City
Endured as we always do
The proud Mancunian spirit
Always shines through.

We were hit very hard
Times were really rough
The proud Mancunian spirit
Made us extra tough

We rallied to the call
Helped each other through
lockdown
The proud Mancunian Spirit
Epitomises our town

We've learnt some tough lessons
Lost loved ones along the way
The proud Mancunian spirit
Never once gave any sway

Now we fight back stronger
Look back at tears and fears
The proud Mancunian Spirit
Lights up our nation's spheres

We innovate more quickly
Research even faster
The proud Mancunian spirit
Means nothing is our master

To all those who've loved and lost
Our empathy is strong
That proud Mancunian spirit
Of which we all belong.

– Russ Cowper

This too shall pass

Call to action

Closing Reflections

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged and caught all people/institutions in the world unaware. Therefore, the magnitude and the pandemic's effects vary at personal, family, community and other levels depending on one's focus. Consequently, we are calling to action different stakeholders to consider, addressing the after-effects including but not limited to the following.

1. Central/Local governments to deliberately invest in interventions that address the negative effects on people as safety nets in sectors such as health, education, social care and business among others.
2. Responsible institutions to consider addressing health inequalities identified during the pandemic and all related vulnerabilities.
3. The need for relevant institutions to invest in further research/investigations to unearth any hidden effects, something that will strengthen the evidence base in planning and/or decision-making processes
4. There is a need to reflect on the existing legal and policy frameworks where possible to change some laws and/or policies, especially those that were found to be restrictive/inadequate during the pandemic.
5. Above all, action needs to be taken at individual/institutional levels to enhance and consolidate all positive attributes/approaches/skills that were brought in by the pandemic, for instance, the work-from-home approach and skills such as baking, cutting and styling hair.

Authors and Contributors

Nusrat Acheampong (Community Nurse)

Nasrine Akhtar

Kyia Binnall

Russ Cowper. 57 yrs old. Health Innovation Manchester, Vocal and GM ARC Patient panel member. Psoriasis Association trustee and proud Mancunian.

Seth Connor-Fullwood, and I just left college, where I studied Film, History, Politics, and Drama, but I've always been interested in writing and the arts. The pandemic interrupted my time at secondary school, meaning I had no proper experience of exams by the time I did my A-Levels. I'm partially deaf, and have been since birth. I would love to be able to have a career in the creative industries, and am very grateful for having the opportunity to advance that through this book.

Ghazala: mum & carer

Jennie Holdsworth. 23. Jennie is an Oldham based writer, originally from Yorkshire, writing everything from comedies, to horror, to folk tales. She graduated from the University of Salford with a BA in Creative Writing with her main writing styles include that of stage plays, screen plays, and short stories, but this time decided to dabble in a small bit of poetry.

Shuhaney Lad Hi I'm Shuhaney (20). I'm currently a student and doing psychotherapy and counselling. When helping to create this book, it brought back so many memories, both positive and challenging ones. But, it was lovely working in a team and seeing everyone else's journey through Covid and how people overcame the changes and where they are today. So I just want to say thank you to Steph who let me be a part of this wonderful book and hope it inspires other people.

Manoj British Indian, male family carer from Greater Manchester.

Rev Enock Mayanja

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Nahida Parveen: Working hard to challenge perceptions of Muslim South Asian women. A community champion that teaches respect and kindness.

Lucy Porte, 24, Health Informatics student at Manchester

Skye is a Queer Spoken Word Artist, Poet and Singer Songwriter who's words speak of recovery through connection. They have been published by Heroica and Ample, and enjoy performing and singing their poems and songs wherever they land.

Jack So

Gertrude Wafula

Appendices

Song list

- Vivaldi - Four Seasons
- New Order - Blue Monday
- Stone Roses - I am the resurrection
- Oasis - Master plan
- The Pogues - love you till the end
- Madonna - Time goes by
- Fisherman's friends - Union of different kinds
- The Weekend - Blinding Lights
- Jason Derulo - Savage Love

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