

Everything stops for tea – a Being Human cultural cuppa

What could be more inclusive for a Brit than a good old cup of tea? Couple that with a culture snack and you have one of the innovative 'Being Human cafés' that go live in November as part the UK's annual celebration of the humanities. Add a spoonful of sugar and the humanities learning will go down in a most delightful way.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a major accelerator for online communications for education, businesses and families as they get to grips with video-conferencing technology. And this is also driving innovation for the 2020 [programme](#) for the Being Human festival led by the University of London's School of Advanced Study, with its new Being Human Cafés.

These online get-togethers such as the [Forty Winks Café](#) reflecting on contemporary culture, sleep and health with researchers from Northumbria University, and a ['Bostin' tea party virtual café](#) exploring Black Country dialect with the University of Wolverhampton, are being employed as an engaging, human-scale form of public engagement for a massive range of activities.

As festival director Professor Sarah Churchwell explains: 'The whole idea behind the Being Human festival is to take cutting-edge research in the humanities and make it approachable. We want to show the many ways in which this research is relevant to people's everyday lives, and to make sure that our activities are accessible to as many people as possible. We are delighted that in this year of all years, when so many people are isolated at home, we've been able to create a national festival of inclusive, human events.'

Now in its seventh year, the multi-city festival, run in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy, takes place from 12 to 22 November with an impressive 220 events exploring this year's 'New Worlds' theme.

As you might expect, the cafés feature strongly in the 'Social inclusivity and equalities' sub-theme of Being Human (the other four are: Culture and politics; Urban decay and regeneration; Open spaces, landscapes and health; Museums and collections) although it's flexible enough to be employed anywhere. In fact, increased use is likely as pandemic clampdowns some into operation. So just get a brew going and mouse-click or point your way to some enriching experiences.

Given the number of people who claim to be 'tone deaf', music simply has to be inclusive. Anyone, anywhere, and even with no previous experience can join in for [The Sounds of Music Across the Lifespan](#) (organised by the University of Edinburgh). Have you ever wondered if music is good for your health? Do you enjoy singing? Join this online sing-along event with singer, teacher and choir director Heather Macleod, and discover what research shows about the benefits of music in our lives with Dr Judy Okely from the [Lothian Birth Cohorts](#).

Heather Macleod will lead the session with humour and skill. Expect a fun and uplifting hour singing and learning a song. This is a great opportunity to learn, relax and let go in a Covid-free environment. Following the session, Heather will provide recordings of individual parts to refresh your memory and enjoy at your leisure. You'll

be amazed at how much you can learn in a short time. Bring yourself, your ears and your voice along and find out why music is good for you and your loved ones.

Many elderly people have suffered during 'lockdown'. [Indoors: Experiences of Older People during Lockdown](#) (12–22 November) is an online and socially distanced in-person event based on the eponymous photography exhibition that narrates the lived realities of coping, connecting and remembering, through the stories and photographs of older East Londoners during lockdown.

The exhibition showcases photographs and interviews, alongside insights from research in social science, ethics and history. It will share the voices, experiences and images of 'shielded' communities of older people as they have both struggled with, and adapted to, life under lockdown. Researchers from the Wellcome Centre for Ethics and Humanities and the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit have partnered with portrait photographer Adam Isfendiyar, to explore the experiences of those commonly perceived as society's most vulnerable during the coronavirus pandemic.

Other 'Social inclusivity and equalities' highlights include:

- [The People's Theatre](#), organised by the University of Derby in partnership with Derby Theatre, uses the theatre's archive as a starting point for vital conversations about its future. Founded as the 'Little Theatre' in 1948, paid for by donations by Derby residents, it rose like a phoenix from the ashes after a major fire in the 1950s to become Derby Playhouse in the Eagle Market in the 1970s. In 2010 it was bought by the University of Derby and became Derby Theatre. But just how representative of the people of Derby has the theatre really been? Can we learn from its history to reimagine the relationship between the theatre and its community, particularly in the context of current major events?
- [New Language Worlds](#) (organised by the University of Sheffield). How do non-dominant languages preserve ways of seeing and relating to the natural world? This question is explored in an online workshop taking inspiration from the Mapuche-Chilean poet Cecilia Vicuña's statement that 'poetry is life's reserve, a forest for the renewal of language, a biodiversity of the soul'. With the help of poets, translators and scholars, participants will translate from one of three 'minor', non-dominant languages: Galician, Welsh and Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. At the end they will have a new language-object – a translated poem – to take away.

These are just samples of some of the free public online and socially distanced face-to-face activities taking place across the UK.

The full Being Human 2020 festival programme is available at <https://beinghumanfestival.org/events/>

Find out more about the festival at <https://beinghumanfestival.org/> and follow the latest news on Twitter at @BeingHumanFest.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. **For all enquiries**, please contact Maureen McTaggart, Media and Public Relations Officer, School of Advanced Study, University of London, maureen.mctaggart@sas.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 7862 8859
2. **Being Human**: the UK's only national festival of the humanities, 12-22 November 2020. Led by the School of Advanced Study, University of London, in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy, Being Human is a national forum for public engagement with humanities research. The festival highlights the ways in which the humanities can inspire and enrich our everyday lives. For more information, please visit www.beinghumanfestival.org or follow the festival on social media at @BeingHumanFest.
3. **The School of Advanced Study (SAS)**, University of London, is the UK's national centre for the promotion and support of research in the humanities. SAS and its member institutes offer unparalleled resources, facilities and academic opportunities across a wide range of subject areas for the benefit of the national and international scholarly community. Last year SAS welcomed 892 research fellows and associates, held 1,903 events highlighting the latest research in the humanities, received 25.9 million online visits to its research resources and platforms, and hosted 173,493 visits to its specialist libraries and collections. The School also leads Being Human, the UK's only nationwide festival of the humanities. Find out more at www.sas.ac.uk or follow SAS on Twitter at @SASNews.
4. **The Arts and Humanities Research Council** is part of UK Research and Innovation. We're the UK's largest funder of arts and humanities research and training, investing over £100 million every year. We fund independent researchers in a wide range of subjects, including history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and many more. The research we fund provides social and cultural and benefits that contribute to the economic success of the UK, as well as to the culture and welfare of societies around the world. Find out more about us at ahrc.ukri.org, or on Twitter at @ahrpress.
5. **The British Academy** is the voice of the humanities and social sciences. The Academy is an independent fellowship of world-leading scholars and researchers; a funding body for research, nationally and internationally; and a forum for debate and engagement. www.britishacademy.ac.uk, @BritishAcademy. For further information, please contact Sean Canty at the British Academy press office on s.canty@thebritishacademy.ac.uk or +44 (0) 207 969 5273.

