



When you're alone, we're together: Remembering Radio Orwell

Evaluation report by Claire Driver
December 2025



SUFFOLK
ARCHIVES

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Angles

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OOHERE



*“It was ours. It made Ipswich, it was Ipswich, which was brilliant.”
- Former Radio Orwell listener*

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Summary

“Demonstrated vividly to all of us how radio is a lifeline for those who welcome receiving information and entertainment purely in audio format.” - Former Radio Orwell Employee

When you're alone, we're together: Remembering Radio Orwell was a community project led by Cohere Arts in partnership with Suffolk Archives and funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project ran from September 2024 to April 2025 with a final celebration event to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Radio Orwell in October 2025.

Cohere Arts recruited 15 visually impaired adult participants from their High Spirits VI drama group, together with 5 sighted volunteers. Participants developed new skills and applied them in genuine collecting activities, interviewing and recording people connected with Radio Orwell's story.

New archive material relating to Radio Orwell has been added to the Suffolk Archives collection. 16 new oral histories and eight collections of documents increase the amount of material held at Suffolk Archives about the operation of Radio Orwell, the working lives of employees and life in Suffolk in the 1970s and 1980s. The collection can better tell the local story of the radio station and its significance in the community.

People living with visual impairment are more aware of Suffolk Archives as a place to visit and a place to engage with Suffolk heritage. People understand about the function of the archives and how they can access them for their own research or interests. Participants' knowledge and understanding of local history is improved.

Contributors felt their stories and memorabilia was valued by the project team. People enjoyed sharing their memories and connecting with friends and former colleagues.

Local heritage is available more widely in an online exhibition that showcases the new oral history recordings and digitised items along with interpretation of the Radio Orwell story. The collecting and research undertaken as part of *When you're alone, we're together* inspired Cohere Arts creation and performance of *Living on Air* at the Sir John Mills Theatre in April 2025.

Cohere Arts, Suffolk Archives and High Spirits have shared their knowledge about accessibility. Suffolk Archives have used the experience to inform their future work and successful application to National Lottery Heritage Fund for *Beyond Labels*, a project to celebrate disability in Suffolk. This will increase representation and participation with more disabled people in the county. *When you're alone, we're together* participants feel confident to take part in this new project.



FIGURE 1 PARTICIPANTS VISITING SUFFOLK ARCHIVES

Introduction

“I just remember the DJs becoming a big part of my life really. They almost became kind of mates. It was community. It was just a way of linking everybody together.” - Former Radio Orwell listener

When you're alone, we're together: Remembering Radio Orwell was a community project led by Cohere Arts in partnership with Suffolk Archives and funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The project aimed to collect and preserve first-hand memories and memorabilia of Radio Orwell in the run up to its 50th anniversary year in 2025, and to work with local visually impaired participants.

Radio Orwell started broadcasting to Ipswich and Suffolk in 1975 and was one of the UK's first commercial radio stations. A high percentage of local listeners tuned in for news, bulletins and message boards, entertainment and for company. The station effectively provided a soundtrack to the lives of many people in the area. In 1978, 81% of people in Ipswich listened to Radio Orwell, rising to 100% in some areas of the town. The adverts and jingles were as familiar as the voices of the presenters, and the project title *When you're alone, we're together* is taken from one of these jingles, sending the message that radio can provide company and comfort to its listeners in their homes.

According to research by the RNIB, people with sight loss are more than twice as likely to experience unhappiness or depression than the UK average, with 50% of blind or partially sighted people stating they are always or frequently limited in the activities that they would

like to take part in. This project offered visually impaired adults a way to engage with their local heritage and to be actively involved in collecting and consultation.

Cohere Arts is a community interest company established in 2021 and provides opportunities for communities to engage with arts, culture and heritage through original performance works, creative health activities and knowledge sharing. High Spirits is Cohere's drama group for adults living with visual impairment. Based in Ipswich, the group provides specialised access and support enabling people living with sight loss to work alongside professional artists in the development of performing arts skills and ideas.

Project aims

When you're alone, we're together aimed to collect and secure first-hand memories and memorabilia of Radio Orwell. This would be achieved in a partnership between Cohere Arts, Suffolk Archives and a group of blind and partially sighted adults, and:

- Public call outs for memories and material relating to Radio Orwell, and public collecting events in community settings facilitated by project partners and participant interviewers. Holding events in the Ipswich community would stimulate interest and spread the word about the project, and encourage local people's engagement in remembering, sharing and preserving Radio Orwell's history.
- Recruitment and training of visually impaired participants as oral history interviewers. This gives visually impaired adults in the Ipswich area ways to take part in heritage-based activities, including learning new oral history skills, developing awareness of the archive service and creating a way for blind and partially sighted people to tell Suffolk Archives about accessibility of visiting and researching at The Hold. This knowledge would be shared with other cultural organisations in the area.
- Recording interviews and recollections with project contributors and depositing new oral histories in the Suffolk Archives collection, and receiving, digitising or depositing donated items into the Suffolk Archives collection. This will preserve the history of Radio Orwell for the future, enrich Suffolk Archives with these stories and make more resources available for the public and researchers.
- Celebrating and sharing the achievements of the project and providing opportunities for people to feel connected to each other and to heritage.

Evaluation approach

This independent evaluation presents the activities of *When you're alone, we're together* and considers the difference the project made and the experience of taking part.

Questions and areas for evaluation enquiry were guided by the intended outcomes based on NLHF principles and combined with Cohere Arts' ABC Impact Framework. The framework sets out Cohere's intention to build Agency, Belonging, Creativity, Competence and Confidence through its project activities. Particular focus of the evaluation is on the experience of the project and how people felt about taking part across three outcome areas: Saving heritage, Inclusion, access and participation, and Organisational sustainability.

Outcomes	Evaluation areas / questions	ABC Impact
Saving Heritage People have increased heritage knowledge	What Radio Orwell history is preserved? Do people feel connected with this heritage?	Belonging: People feel more connected to where they live and their heritage
Inclusion, Access and Participation Access to arts and culture for marginalised communities People are healthier and happier, living more meaningful lives	Have participants developed heritage-based skills and knowledge? How did people feel about taking part? Have barriers to access and participation been identified and removed?	Competence: People have developed skills and knowledge Competence: People feel a sense of accomplishment Agency: People have agency over how they manage their own health and wellbeing
Organisational Sustainability Developing sector knowledge	Have people learnt / developed their skills? Has knowledge been shared?	Competence: People have developed skills and knowledge

Table 1: Evaluation questions and NLHF and ABC Impact mapping

Data collection

Evidence was collected in the delivery phase by the Cohere Arts team and alongside the independent evaluator at the end of the activity phase. The qualitative and quantitative data in this report comes from:

- Analysis of pre and post activity participant/volunteer questionnaires (11 completed responses).

- Interviews with community participants (2 participants).
- End of activity focus group with community participants (11 participants).
- Transcripts of participant feedback discussions on oral history engagement and collecting events (7 participants).
- Emails from contributors during and at the end of the project.
- Feedback conversations with Cohere Arts and Suffolk Archives teams.
- Attendance at *Living on Air* performance and Radio Orwell celebration event.
- Quantitative data from Suffolk Archives and Cohere Arts.

Evaluation limitations

Prominence was given to verbal feedback methods over written questionnaires to meet participants' access needs. This makes it likely that some participants' contributions have come through more strongly in discussions than others. More one-to-one feedback would have achieved this, but this was not possible in the time frame of the evaluation.

Project activities

Call out

At the beginning of the activity phase Cohere Arts made a **call out for people to get involved as participants or to contribute stories** or material through social media channels, local radio and existing networks.

Oral history training

12 visually impaired adult participants and 5 volunteers were trained in oral history recording and interviewing by Suffolk Archives. Training covered familiarisation with recording equipment and practice with recorders, the ethics of collecting oral histories and interview techniques. 11 participants had previously engaged with Cohere Arts. Interviewers used the Micro-Speak Plus digital voice recorder that has tactile buttons and voice prompts and sounds to assist people living with sight loss.



FIGURE 2 A PROJECT PARTICIPANT USING THE VOICE RECORDER AT THE ORAL HISTORY TRAINING LED BY SUFFOLK ARCHIVES (LEFT) AND AN INTERVIEW AT ONE OF THE STORY COLLECTING EVENTS (RIGHT).

Story collecting events

Three story collecting events were held at Suffolk Archives, New Wolsey Theatre and Eastern Angles in October 2024 with the participation of **8 visually impaired participants and 5 volunteers**. The public were invited to bring in photos, documents and other Radio Orwell memorabilia. Former listeners and employees were invited to contribute their oral histories. **23 visitors attended and 8 oral history interviews were collected**.

An extra collecting event was held with **7 visitors and another 8 oral history interviews** were collected. The extra event came about because the team at Suffolk Archives were contacted by more people who had worked at Radio Orwell who were unable to make it to the previous events.

In total, **16 oral history recordings** were collected and **8 collections of documents and artefacts deposited at Suffolk Archives**. Interviews were collected with former listeners, employees and DJs, including competition contestants and audio technicians. The documents collected range from newspaper cuttings, programme notes and schedules to studio designs and accounts and include a promotional handout from Radio Orwell's launch in 1975 and details of the restructure that incorporated West Suffolk's Saxon Radio in the 1980s.

Consultation

One consultation event was held at The Hold at the end of the project for visually impaired participants to go on an archive tour and to discuss their experiences of working with Suffolk Archives on the project. Feedback was given on how exhibitions and interpretation can be more accessible to blind and partially sighted visitors. People from other Ipswich based creative organisations were invited as a way to share this knowledge, and six people attended from SPILL festival, Ipswich BID and Suffolk Archives. Learning from this event has informed Suffolk Archives 2025 successful NLHF application for the *Beyond Labels* project, celebrating disability in Suffolk.

Online exhibition

One online exhibition is available at <https://suffolkarchives.shorthandstories.com/remembering-radio-orwell/>. The exhibition shares newly acquired Radio Orwell collections and includes oral history extracts, digital images and interpretation. A project participant evaluated the online exhibition for accessibility, and the design was revised by Suffolk Archives as needed.

Celebration event

One Radio Orwell 50th Anniversary event at The Hold with around 70 attendees. The celebration brought together contributors, participants, former staff, listeners and interested public, to engage in an 'in conversation with' and Q&A with presenters, view some of the newly acquired material, and screening of the project film telling the story of the project and *Living on Air* performance. This is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtDiY2okREw>.



FIGURE 3 Q & A WITH EX RADIO ORWELL PRESENTERS AT THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, SUFFOLK ARCHIVES (LEFT) AND EX-EMPLOYEES HOLDING AN ANNIVERSARY CAKE AT THE EVENT (RIGHT).

Living on Air

The research and collecting phase of *When you're alone, we're together: Remembering Radio Orwell* inspired the development of a play, *Living on Air*, which was performed by the High Spirits group at the Sir John Mills Theatre, Ipswich to 200 audience members over 3 performances. The play was set in a fictitious radio station but picked up the themes and experiences of Radio Orwell. Many of the contributors to the project went along to watch the performances in April 2025. An evaluation of *Living on Air* is available at <https://coherearts.org/impact/>.

Cohere Arts VI drama company *High Spirits* present

LIVING ON AIR

a play by Emma Bernard
at the Sir John Mills Theatre
Gatacre Road, Ipswich
Sat 12th April 14:30 & 19:30
Sun 13th April 14:30

Scan here to book
or call 01473 211498

Touch Tour - Sun 13th April at 13:30
All performances with BSL
& Integrated Audio Description

COHERE

Eastern Angles
Heritage Fund
Arts Council England

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

FIGURE 4 POSTER FOR *LIVING ON AIR*

Project Outcomes

Suffolk Archives collection is enriched with new material about Radio Orwell.

At the beginning of the project, Suffolk Archives had a small collection of 6 individual items relating to the establishment and running of Radio Orwell. The call out and invitation to three collecting events resulted in collecting new items for the archive. Collecting events were facilitated by project participants and **an extra celebratory event** was facilitated by Suffolk Archives due to interest. A **short film** was made documenting the project.

Material held in the archive relating to Radio Orwell increased to **8 collections including scrapbooks, photographs, press clippings, adverts and other ephemera amounting to over 120 pages of material.** One collection included the original plans of the studio, and another included the audited accounts of the station since its launch. **16 new oral histories were added to the collection** detailing people's working lives and experiences and connection to Radio Orwell, as these included the DJs and presenters, engineers, radio secretary and marketing staff as well as listeners and radio contributors.

"I have carefully retained my modest collection for 50 years in the hope that one day an opportunity would present itself for me to share it with others." - Former Radio Orwell employee

The interest generated by the collecting events continued with the team at Suffolk Archives being contacted afterwards with offers of material and interviews. Contributors and especially former staff enthusiastically spread the word among their networks so that more material and contributors came forward. **The interest continues with arrangements to record more oral histories and take in more items.**

The newly acquired collections allow the story of Radio Orwell to be told and researched more fully and captures the innovation and community spirit of the station. They reveal the working lives of people at the station including the people behind the broadcasts and the 'on air' voices. **The new material evidences how the station worked to represent the community and local life.**

Participants developed heritage-based skills and knowledge

People have new skills

"When I started I thought I'm not going to like this. I'm just going to turn up and see what it's like, but I ended up thoroughly loving it." Participant

At first, some participants felt nervous about taking part in the project, particularly collecting oral histories and using recording equipment. In the pre-activity survey, confidence and awareness of oral history was low, scoring an average of 1/5 from participants. At the end

of the project this score increased to 3.5/5. **People had learnt new skills and felt comfortable and able to collect oral history interviews**, use voice recorders, and demonstrated questioning and listening skills.

The team at Suffolk Archives provided oral history training to teach participants about interview techniques, oral history documentation and ethical considerations. In the post-activity feedback, participants clearly understood interview techniques and reflected that active listening was an important oral history skill as well as questioning. Putting the training into practice, interviews were conducted in groups to support interviewers and interviewees and to stimulate and encourage sharing of the heritage.



FIGURE 5 PARTICIPANTS AT THE ORAL HISTORY TRAINING

People got to grips with the recorders quickly. **Suffolk Archives liked the recorders chosen by Cohere Arts as they were simple to operate and intend to use these in future on all community projects because of this.** One participant felt that they will use their new interviewing skills in a work situation where they have been tasked with creating a podcast.

People have new knowledge and understanding about the history of Radio Orwell

Both participants and contributors said they had learned about Radio Orwell because of the project.

Learning first hand from the memories and group discussions between Radio Orwell employees, supporters and listeners was a helpful way to bring new stories to light. One contributor who had a long history with Radio Orwell expressed that the collecting event even filled gaps in their knowledge. One participant described how much more powerful it was to learn directly from the people whose stories these were than learning from a book: *“Meeting the individuals and hearing them first hand is better than reading any book.”*

People considered and compared the media landscape of today to the 1970s and 1980s, discussing the move from BBC only radio licenses to commercial broadcasting, pirate radio stations, and advances of radio technology and professional versus volunteer-led stations. Alongside these reflections was an opportunity to discuss Radio Orwell as a workplace. The camaraderie among colleagues at the station and the relationships established with listeners and the radio community stood out in the research. Participants noted how ‘on air’ Radio Orwell appeared to be male dominated but that behind the scenes the balance of men and women was more equal. **Creating interviews with the women involved in Radio Orwell goes some way to tell that story and presents a new perspective on radio history.** More can be done in future interviews to ensure representation of hidden women’s stories.

More people are aware of Suffolk Archives and what it does

At the start of the project 8/11 participants had not engaged with Suffolk Archives and had limited awareness of its existence and function. By the end of the project, **participants felt their knowledge and understanding had improved**, with an increased average score from 2/5 to 4/5 (Figure 5).

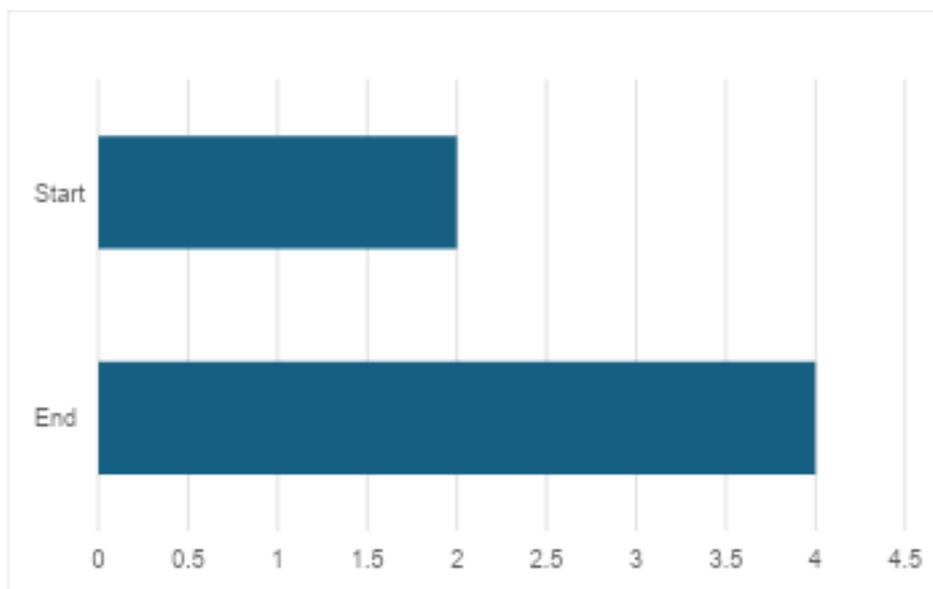


FIGURE 6 SHOWS INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF SUFFOLK ARCHIVES' ROLE, SERVICES AND COLLECTIONS FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END OF THE PROJECT. THIS IS BASED ON AN AVERAGE OF THE SCORES OUT OF 5 COLLECTED FROM 11 PARTICIPANTS.

This success was based on locating one of the story collecting events at Suffolk Archives and opportunities to engage with staff at all events. Participants toured the archives, took part in an access consultation along with collecting and celebration events held at The Hold. **Participants learnt about The Hold, what it is for and what can be done there. This changed people's minds about what a blind or partially sighted person can do at an archive.** Experiencing the archive tour and going into the store rooms, having the chance to feel the environment and to have the stores and collections audio described, interpreted the archive for people. Questions and discussions were perceptive about document storage, security, cataloguing and researching, showing how interested people are in the experience and their intention to engage more in future. There was excitement about going behind the scenes with one participant commenting: *'I've finally been in one of those rooms with the shelves that move!'*

Call outs, collecting events, the celebration event and the online exhibition maintain the interest in the project for participants, contributors and the public. **This project has raised the profile of Suffolk Archives as a place to deposit material and to visit to learn about the past in Suffolk through research or public programming.**

"This project has not only gained momentum in people wanting to share their memories of Radio Orwell, but also the profile of the archive service as a place of deposit, and a place to discover stories from the past." Suffolk Archives

Suffolk Archives continued collecting Radio Orwell material after the collecting events because of increased interest from contributors. By the final celebration, awareness extended to knowledge of what Friends of Suffolk Archives is as a charity supporting the work of the archive. One contributor suggested mentioning this to other contributors as a way 'to help build a Hold family', showing a sense of pride and connection with what has been achieved.

People felt connected to the heritage and to each other

“Radio Orwell made a major contribution in creating a more cohesive community in the rapidly expanding Ipswich by forging links between the people of Castle Hill with Gainsborough and Chantry with Rushmere – not forgetting the numerous rural villages.” - Former Radio Orwell DJ

People’s feeling of connection increased during the project. At the start, the average participant score for feeling connected was 8/10 and this increased to 9/10 by the end.

Some people wanted to take part in the project because they already had an interest and connection with the Radio Orwell story before the project began, or because they were interested in local history. One participant described how the project had given them a connection to the heritage and to people in their family who all had a story to tell about Radio Orwell. **Contributors enjoyed remembering the heyday of the station and how significant it felt to them and the area.**

The collected stories demonstrate Radio Orwell’s place in the Ipswich community and prompted people to reflect on how new and special this had been. Contributors described the experience of how Radio Orwell included local people, voices and stories, and made listeners feel part of a community family.

“Imagine the effect of suddenly hearing that there are new road works at Major’s Corner? Or to feel part of the excitement at Portman Road? The immediacy of such reports was unprecedented for us and I believe added substantially to the feeling of community spirit.” - Former listener

Contributors and participants repeatedly supported the project at different events, coming to a collecting event, the *Living on Air* performance and celebration event, indicating how important this story is for them and how much they wanted to be part of it. The project helped some participants talk to their families about events in the past such as Snowline and competitions, lost and found noticeboards or the football. This prompted conversations beyond the project events and reveals the place the station had in local people’s lives and the history of the town.

The project prompted one person to think about 20th century and audio / digital historical sources and the significance of finding different ways to capture this history for future researchers. This is a useful reflection for future contemporary collecting projects.

“So much of my generation’s heritage will be on screen...and finding ways to make that accessible to researchers in the same way we can look at Kelly’s Directories or Newspapers is important.” - Celebration event attendee

People felt good about taking part

“After the event I felt very uplifted so thank you for that. My tiny involvement in this whole exercise has been a wonderful experience for me.” - Former Radio Orwell employee and attendee of story collecting event

Participants and contributors expressed joy at taking part. **Participants’ wellbeing across measures of mood, connection, empowerment and accomplishment improved from the start to end.** Physical health remained unchanged at an average score of 8/10 (Figure 6).

One participant expressed how much the project had meant to them because they had an interest in radio history and technology and taking part in this was an opportunity to find out more and to pursue that interest. **Taking part in the project jogged memories of people’s earlier lives** including happy memories of growing up and working lives, promoting good feelings, feeling valued and connected.

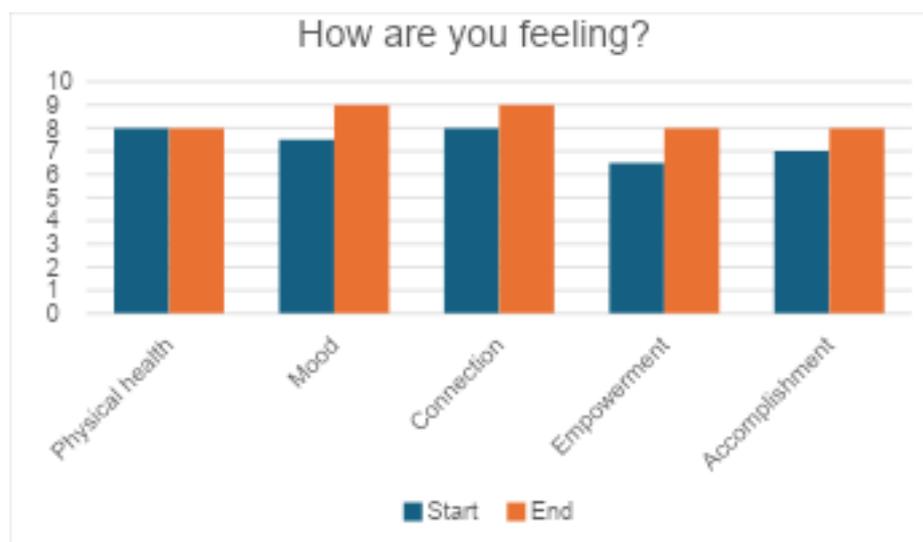


FIGURE 7: PARTICIPANT WELLBEING IMPROVED DURING THE PROJECT. RESULTS ARE BASED ON THE AVERAGE SCORE OUT OF 10 COLLECTED FROM 11 PARTICIPANTS.

Suffolk Archives and other local cultural organisations have new understanding of accessibility for people with visual impairment

The project aimed to share knowledge with Suffolk Archives and other partners in the local cultural sector around accessibility for blind and partially sighted people. A consultation meeting and building tour facilitated by participants discussed issues of interior space, flooring and signposting, interpretation and access to toilets.

There were different opinions about the existing accessibility of The Hold building and Suffolk Archives in the feedback from project participants. This is not a surprise as each participant's opinion is based on their individual needs. The open space in the Street area was described as difficult for someone to navigate, especially with the welcome desk being off to the side and not by the front door. A brightly coloured and tactile line on the floor was suggested to assist people to find the desk. Participants also suggested sighted guide training for staff, positioning a staff member near the front entrance to look out for people who may need assistance, and a button or doorbell at the entrance to get staff attention.

Equipping staff with the skills and confidence to approach and guide someone with impaired vision was discussed. Comments were received about the locked Changing Places toilet, especially in relation to a comment about someone not being able to find someone to help them: *'I've got no vision, I can't pick out someone to help.'*

“Accessibility-wise, I found the building itself open and colourful. I like the way it is designed, especially when you explain about the library being in the shape to replicate the Maltings on the waterfront.”

“I think differently. I don't think it's very accessible at all. It might seem strange, but if someone's completely blind, there's too much open space. If I was on my own here, there's nothing to kind of get orientated.”

Differing views of VI adults participating in Consultation Event at The Hold

Suffolk Archives invited one of the project participants to consult on the accessibility of the online exhibition, and how it could be read with a screen reader. This identified that the template used to create online exhibitions is not easily readable with a screen reader and Suffolk Archives have acted on this.

A result of all these conversations is that **Suffolk Archives is introducing a building accessibility review and discussing introducing tactile flooring and intercom at the entrances to The Hold. Staff have already received sighted guide training.** Action was taken to improve the accessibility of the online exhibition. The Changing Places toilet is now unlocked that makes it accessible for someone and their guide dog without having to find someone to unlock it.

Sharing knowledge has strengthened relationships between Cohere Arts and other cultural organisations. Beyond the project, participants are involved in consultancy with Dance East and have contributed to initial meetings for Suffolk Archives' *Beyond Labels* project.

ABC Impact Framework

Cohere Arts' ABC Impact Framework sets out Cohere's intention to build Agency, Belonging, Creativity, Competence and Confidence through its project activities. Evaluation data collected suggested that through taking part in the project as participants, contributors or attendees, people experience the following impacts:

Agency: People have agency over how they manage their own health and wellbeing

- People are in control of their own activities. They chose to participate in *When you're alone, we're together: Remembering Radio Orwell* and felt empowered by taking part. They took part in genuine collecting and heritage activities that contribute to the knowledge about radio and local history.
- Beyond the project people are choosing to engage with other heritage programming. People have chosen to visit The Hold since the project because they are familiar with the space and know how to navigate it. Perception of The Hold has changed as a space to come for wider community and heritage engagement and not just as a place for research.
- One participant with an interest in radio history feels inspired by the project to consider if this will be the time to 'get back into radio'.

"It made me feel I'd actually been there in the hey-day of Radio Orwell. A connection that history books could not provide - a personal touch." - Project participant

Belonging: People feel part of community. People feel more connected. People make friends

- Belonging was a powerful outcome of the project. People reflected on the sense of belonging and community created by Radio Orwell. People spoke about the DJs feeling like part of the family, and the station being the 'go to' for entertainment and information. Reminiscing on this feeling of the station as a trusted friend, prompted conversations within families and with other people about their memories and relationships with the radio. Some people felt uplifted by this and the shared experiences that were created.
- Developing skills have given people the tools to capture their own family histories and to think more about their ancestry, including recording oral histories with family members and considering what resources are on offer to them at Suffolk Archives. Project participants have returned to The Hold for other events, demonstrating that they are interested in community heritage events beyond the project and that people feel confident to be in the space.
- Participants are acting as access consultants for other cultural organisations in the area at Dance East and at Suffolk Archives for *Beyond Labels*.

“If I hadn’t have done it [the project], I would have regretted it forever. So it’s taught me one thing...if you’re unsure, just go for it anyway, because you’ll never know if you don’t.” - Participant

Creativity, Competence, Confidence

- Participants developed new skills on the project that facilitated the success of the collecting activities. Some participants will take these skills forward into their personal lives, recording oral histories with family members for example, and into their work lives, producing podcasts.
- The legacy of the project is evident in increased confidence of the team at Suffolk Archives around inclusive practice. Staff have been trained on sighted guiding, and the project has prompted a building accessibility audit. Immediate actions make the building more accessible to all and increase staff confidence, including making sure the Changing Places toilet is unlocked and that staff can approach and support blind and partially sighted visitors. Suffolk Archives will also expand how it describes its accessible events in the what’s on guide.
- More generally, the partnership between Cohere Arts, Suffolk Archives and participants has strengthened. Working in partnership has reinforced the intention of the team at Suffolk Archives to work more with people with disabilities and this is a strong starting point for future work and the *Beyond Labels* project.



FIGURE 8 STORY COLLECTING EVENT AT THE NEW WOLSEY THEATRE

Conclusions and thoughts for the future

***When you're alone, we're together: Remembering Radio Orwell* successfully achieved its aims. New oral histories have been collected and added to the collections at Suffolk Archives along with rich new archive material. As a result, the story of Radio Orwell can be told more fully in the future. The affection that local people felt for the radio station and the importance people place on the radio in their community is reflected in the success of the collecting strategy that has uncovered new archive material and testimonies.**

What worked well

- Working in partnership: The project strengthened the partnerships between Cohere Arts and Suffolk Archives. This developed Cohere Arts' heritage strand, taking in new skills development in oral histories, developing collecting strategies and heritage interpretation at the celebration and *Living on Air* play. These partnerships can continue to grow.
- Raising the profile: The project raised the profile of Suffolk Archives among contributors and participants, and The Hold has become a familiar and safe place for more people to engage in heritage learning. Conversations have started in families about local history and family stories, with the possibility of future collecting, research or engagement with the archive. Suffolk Archives have been open to learning from participants about accessibility and have acted on the advice to improve. This strengthens the image of the service as approachable and trustworthy.
- Skills and confidence: People have enjoyed taking part and have developed new skills. There is a sense of achievement in taking part and appreciation in being able to explore and share valued heritage. The strong local story, community connection and new knowledge and understanding engaged contributors and supporters repeatedly over the project.
- Public collecting: Finding key contacts as a starting point for collecting worked well and once this was achieved, word about the project spread and more people came forward. This is a good model for future collecting strategies.
- Group collecting: This project strengthened Cohere Arts heritage strand and has been the first time collecting oral histories. *When you're alone, we're together* collected oral histories in groups to enable conversation and shared recollection. This was an effective method because it provided a supportive setting for both contributors and interviewers.

Thoughts for the future

- Some participants may be interested in other heritage volunteering opportunities. Now that the team and participants are trained, could they offer group or one to one interviews on other Suffolk Archives, Cohere Arts or organisations projects, and offer insights into oral history training on other projects?
- Can participants advise on access to oral history in Suffolk Archives and other organisations' exhibitions? During the consultation, participants pointed out that it is difficult for them to locate oral history listening devices in gallery spaces and that they need audio on-gallery instructions, for example, how long a recording is, who is speaking and what about, what happens when one person stops speaking.
- The online exhibition is an effective opportunity to share the project more widely and to maintain its profile. However, online exhibitions are not easy to find on the Suffolk Archives website and fixing this will benefit future projects. Could this come into the scope of the accessibility review, and could participants be involved?
- Did there need to be extra time in the research phase? The extra story collecting event and oral history was a response to greater engagement with the project. Unfortunately, there wasn't time to include participants on the extra date. This was disappointing, especially for one participant in particular who would have liked to be involved. Extra time in this phase could have given the team more flexibility to ensure everyone was as involved as they wanted to be.
- Some participants are interested in researching local and family history at Suffolk Archives but will need assistance to access finding aids and support from someone to read documents to them. It is possible that this will come under the Beyond Labels project, but it would be interesting to explore how to facilitate this with the Cohere Arts and High Spirits partnership.

“Society and technology has obviously moved on by leaps and bounds in 50 years. It is difficult to compare 2025 with 1975. Preserving the ‘story’ is vital because you are not so much enabling a direct comparison with the then and now but rather highlighting what it was possible to achieve in the 1970s and 1980s but has been lost – presumably forever. When we had Radio Orwell, most of us probably believed that this was a feature of our lives that we would enjoy forever. But, of course, nothing is forever.”

Now that it is gone, it is essential that the essence of what happened in those days is placed on official record by some means or another so that in future people can see what took place in the past and could, in theory at least, be possible again in the future.”

- Former Radio Orwell employee and project contributor

