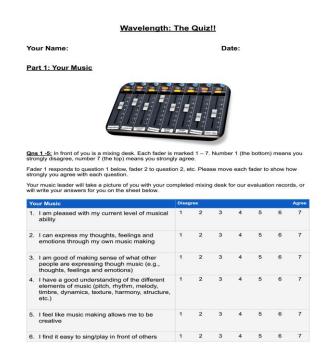


## Writing Case Studies - Why It's Important as an Artist to Reflect on Participant Progress Paul Carroll

We have been writing case studies on participants of Quench Arts music projects in the West Midlands, UK for about seven years. This article explains why reflecting on participants' progress and expressing findings in an accessible way is so important.

First of all, what is a Quench Arts case study? Free from bullet points and numbered paragraphs, these documents are written more like stories than evaluation reports. We start with the reason why a participant wanted to take part in a particular project with some information around why they were eligible, where they were with their current music-making, health and wellbeing and what they and their parents, carers or support workers were hoping would be the benefits. To follow on, we write about how the participant developed over a series of sessions with us, highlighting any turning points and challenges overcome. We finish by showing where the participant is at the end of the project and any plans they have to take their music further. We summarise the change in scores on their before-and-after baseline self-assessments and from information gathered at the time via sessional monitoring reports (pictured below). And where possible we add quotes from both the participant and their parents, carers or support worker.





Quench's monitoring documentation: a 3-page before-and-after baseline assessment (left) and a report for each session (right)

There is a lot of material to draw from when writing a case study. During a Quench Arts social inclusion project such as Wavelength, the documentation process is very thorough to gather as

much evidence as possible as well helping staff improve the project and their practice wherever possible. Each participant taking part in Quench's social inclusion projects completes a before, mid-point, and after baseline assessment, setting some goals for the project and showing how they feel about themselves, their musicality and their connections with others. At the end of each session, the lead artist writes a monitoring report about what happened, highlights of the session and particular benefits to the participant based on the project aims. Participants and artists also complete an evaluation form at the end of the project. So why do we write case studies when there is already so much other documentation generated?

Quench Arts excel at providing evidence to funders of the impact of their music projects on the hundreds of participants they work with. I could go as far to say that project evaluation is the very reason why Quench continue to survive in the current climate, when applying for funding is extremely competitive. Clear reporting is key. Have a brief look at the partial pictures of the evaluation documents above. Each participant will have 3, three-page baseline forms, a before and an after, and a mid-point baseline too. In addition to this there would be about ten of the monitoring forms (pictured right – one per individual session), plus group session monitoring forms, evaluation forms from both the participant and the artist and possibly a statement from a parent, carer or support worker as well as comments from host staff. And that's just for one of up to 20 participants in a year for one project. But it's simply too much information to provide clear evidence to a funder of the true impact of a project. A case study pulls it all together into a neat, informal story.

In addition to the main funders of a project, the case studies can also be useful to people who are interested in taking part in a Quench Arts project or to partner organisations, such as mental health trusts and hospitals, who might make referrals to a project. The case studies paint a good picture of what could be expected if you took part. They could also be good for host organisations in justifying their support of the project, securing match funding and dedicated rooms and staff time. These are all very important for making a project work practically.

Finally, the writing of case studies can provide a useful time for a music leader to remind themselves of the stating points of individual participants, giving context to a project's achievements, highlighting the value of the work for themselves. It may have been forgotten how far they came on through taking part in the project. This provides motivation and energy towards continuing to work in what can sometimes be challenging circumstances.