



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

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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.

Wavelength: The Quiz!!

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

Part 1: Your Music



Qns 1-6: In front of you is a mixing desk. Each fader is marked 1 – 7. Number 1 (the bottom) means you strongly disagree, number 7 (the top) means you strongly agree.

Fader 1 responds to question 1 below, fader 2 to question 2, etc. Please move each fader to show how strongly you agree with each question.

Your music leader will take a picture of you with your completed mixing desk for our evaluation records, or will write your answers for you on the sheet below.

Your Music	Disagree	Agree
1. I am pleased with my current level of musical ability	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2. I can express my thoughts, feelings and emotions through my own music making	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3. I am good of making sense of what other people are expressing through music (e.g., thoughts, feelings and emotions)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4. I have a good understanding of the different elements of music (pitch, rhythm, melody, timbre, dynamics, texture, harmony, structure, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5. I feel like music making allows me to be creative	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6. I find it easy to sing/play in front of others	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	




One to One Monitoring Form

Participant's Names: [] and []
 Artist's Names: *Katie and Paul*
 Date/number of session: *1st on their own for both*

"One thing I liked..."

Artist response: *taking part fully in his own dedicated session, further enjoying playing percussion.*

has an incredible rapping voice, overcame some nerves and had a go at keyboard, resulting in a track entirely made by him.

Participant response: _____

"One thing we could change next time..."

Artist response: *Carry on with []'s instrumental*

has another idea he'd like to work on

Participant response: *happy to carry on layering acoustic instruments*

keen and asking when we're back

Brief narrative of session: *(Please include musical styles, approaches, equipment used, outcomes...)*

- had been before and collaborated with another participant, playing percussion, keyboard and rapping, new to all. We talked about the sort of music he liked (Trap) and what he wanted to do - 'just make a beat', which we took to mean an instrumental, no lyrics. He took an interest in the djembe and we had a jam. P on guitar, K on clarinet. [] wanted to make the jam the basis of an instrumental so we recorded guitar and djembe individually in Logic. It took a while to get the string good so that is all we had time for*
- Amazing first session with []. We learnt he was a Grime fan and experienced rapper but had never made his own backing before. However he had a go and showed a great sense of rhythm recording a drum pattern and managed to get a Grimey bassline he liked. Then we were treated to some expertly delivered rapping with a very mature sounding voice when listening back. We detected a change in tempo in his vocal so adjusted the tempo of the track and [] said he liked both the double-time and half-time tempos we tried so he rapped over both. He then did some very interesting extra vocals over the top, really expressive*

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.