



QUENCH Arts

Plugin

A FREE CREATIVE MUSIC AND WELLBEING
PROJECT FOR INPATIENTS AGED 12 - 25



MAKING MUSIC
MAKES A DIFFERENCE

PLUGIN PROJECT ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Over 3 years Plugin engaged:

165 young people aged 12-25
82 were core participants
(attending 3 or more sessions)

Over 3 years Plugin delivered:

863 one-to-one sessions
212 group sessions

These were delivered face-to-face
and via Zoom.

We also created lots of resources
whenever we couldn't deliver
sessions due to Covid19!

Plugin employed:

4 Freelance Lead Music Leaders
8 Young Music Leaders (18-25)
2 Young Project Coordinators (18-25)

Click
Here



We worked in the following settings across Birmingham:

- Birmingham Children's Hospital's Parkview Clinic (Y1, 2 & 3)
- Woodbourne Priory Private CAMHS Hospital (Y1, 2 & 3)
- BSMHFT's Ardenleigh Forensic CAMHS Unit (Y1, 2 & 3)
- BSMHFT's Ardenleigh Adriatic Low Secure Ward (Y3)
- BSMHFT's Tamarind Centre (Y1 & 2)
- Forward Thinking Birmingham's Blakesley Centre (Y1, 2 & 3)
- Forward Thinking Birmingham's Birmingham Road Hub (Y1)

BSMHFT = Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Training:

32 Plugin staff and setting staff received
training such as:

- Youth Mental Health First Aid (17 completions)
- Autism Awareness (21 completions)
- Arts Award Advisor Training (9 completions)
- Accessible Music Tech/ Apps (5 completions)
- Project Coordination Diploma (1 completion)
- Safeguarding/ Child Protection (16 completions)



EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Our evaluation data has included weekly sessional monitoring forms completed by music leaders (including participant comments and relevant staff observations documented against project outcomes); recordings of work in progress; team reflection (monthly meetings) and year-end & project-end evaluation meeting minutes; evaluation feedback from training opportunities and performance visits offered; participant baselines (at project start and end); participant and setting staff evaluation forms at year-end; Music Leader 'Do, Review, Improve' personal aim reviews (set at the beginning and revisited at project mid-point and end); and participant case studies written by project artists and Quench Directors. An example template for recording of participant responses to baseline activities is given below.

Plugin: The Quiz Revisited!!

Remember that you did this quiz at the beginning of Plugin? We are asking you the same questions again to see how things have changed for you. Please look at your answers from your initial quiz to help you think about your answers for this one. Thanks!

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

Part 1: Your Music



Qns 1-5: 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.

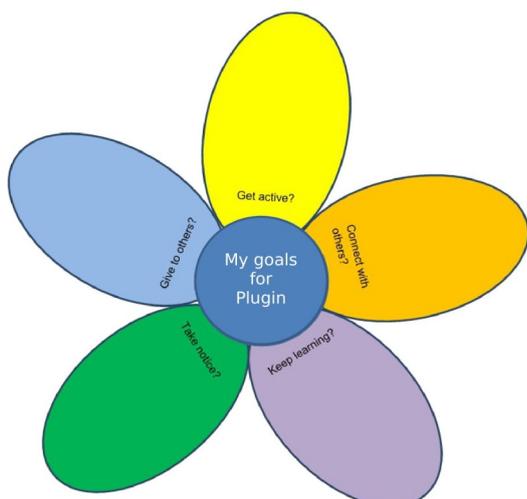
Your Music	Disagree	Agree
1. I am pleased with my current level of musical ability	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2. I can express my thoughts, feelings and emotions through my own music making	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3. I am good of making sense of what other people are expressing through music (e.g., thoughts, feelings and 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	

Part 4: Tell Us If You Got What You Wanted, What You Really, Really, Wanted!

Your goals for the project:

Look at your original goals for the project (from your 1st quiz). How has your involvement in the project helped you with your goals? Are you still working towards them? Have you met your goals? Have you exceeded your goals?

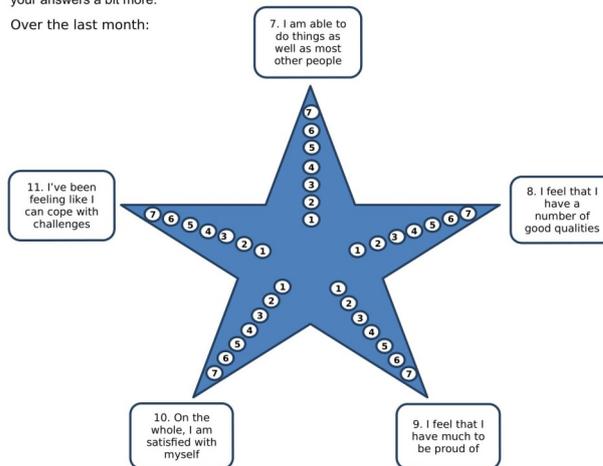
Please write 'Still working', 'Met' or 'Exceeded' in each petal, considering your original goals. Feel free to add any extra information in each petal about how the project has helped you in each area.



Part 2: It's All About You! (You are the star here :-))

Qns 7-11: Below is a picture of a star. Imagine that you are the star. Each point of the star is marked 1-7. Number 1 (the inside) means you strongly disagree, number 7 (the end of each point) means you strongly agree. Please colour in each point of the star to show how strongly you agree with each question. Your music leader may ask you to explain your colouring to understand your answers a bit more.

Over the last month:



Part 3: How you doin' now?

Qns 12-15: We want to know a bit more about how you feel about your life to see if your involvement in the Plugin project has changed this. Your Music Leader will show you a scale of 7 notes from low to high. Please play a low sound on the keyboard in front of you if you disagree, raising up to a high sound on the keyboard if you totally agree. There are all the notes in between if you think you don't quite agree or don't quite disagree. If you are totally unsure, you can press note 4. Your Music Leader may record your response or write your answers on the form below.

How you doin' now?	No.
12) I feel that I have good social skills	
13) I feel that I am able to connect with other people on the project	
14) I feel that I am good at working in a team	
15) I feel motivated to progress musically	



Our baseline evaluation tools are devised to use creative and practical activities to engage participants in the process, empowering them to set their own goals and to recognise and appreciate their progress. They also enable us to collect data to monitor project impact.

Participants have reflected on a range of musical, social and wellbeing indicator statements collated from sources such as Youth Music's evaluation questionnaires, the Rosenberg self esteem scale, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), outcomes/mental health recovery star and Five Ways to Wellbeing nationally recognised tools. Data has been analysed on a cohort basis to give statistical results and has informed individual participant case studies.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Here is an example of the type of spreadsheet we use to analyse baseline data. Analysis is done on an individual and cohort basis. We also record the potential progression points achieved, recognising that if a young person assesses themselves at the top of the scale in their initial baseline, then no increase can be shown.

Setting	Participant Name	Participant ID	Year															
			1) I am pleased with my current level of musical ability				2) I can express my thoughts, feelings and emotions through my own music making				3) I am good at making sense of what other people are expressing through music (e.g. rhythm, melody, timbre, dynamics, thought, feeling and emotion)				4) I have a good understanding of the different elements of music (pitch, rhythm, melody, timbre, dynamics, thought, feeling and emotion)			
			Start	Middle	End	Change	Start	Middle	End	Change	Start	Middle	End	Change	Start	Middle	End	Change
Ardenleigh FCAMHS		A1	7	7	0	6	7	7	0	6	6	6	0	5	7	7	0	6
Ardenleigh FCAMHS		F1	4	7	3	3	7	4	1	7	6	3	3	7	4	7	3	7
Ardenleigh FCAMHS		G1	4	5	1	5	5	0	6	5	0	6	5	5	5	5	0	5
Woodbourne Priory		U1	5	7	2	3	6	3	4	5	5	4	1	4	6	6	0	6
Woodbourne Priory		V1	2	7	5	2	6	4	5	7	2	1	7	7	1	7	6	7
Tamarind Clinic		I1	4	6	2	7	7	0	7	7	0	2	5	5	5	5	0	5
Tamarind Clinic		J1	4	7	3	4.5	6	1.5	7	7	0	3	6	6	6	6	0	6
Totals per column			30	0	46	16	30.5	0	44	13.5	36	0	44	8	23	0	43	20
Total Number of Participants			17															
Total Number of Participants Completing Qn			17															
Numbers showing improvement			14															
Numbers staying same			2															
% Showing Improvement (calculation given)			82.353															
% Staying same			11.765															
Most progress			5															
Progression points available			89															
% available progression points achieved			17.978															
Average progression			0.3412															

Limitations to the data collection:

Working in mental health, participant baseline scores can be greatly affected by how the young person is feeling at the time of completion if, for example, they are having a really good/bad day, so we triangulate data to ensure multiple evidence sources (such as staff feedback, music leader sessional observations, parental feedback) are recorded against each outcome and participant to measure progress. Our staff discuss and document participants' thought-processes when undertaking baseline activities as these conversations are incredibly insightful to contextualise unexpected changes. We also produce individual case studies to show each young person's journey through Plugin.

Music Leader session reports, evaluations & case studies

Participant reflections & music created

Setting staff evaluations/ observations

OUTCOME 1 - MUSICAL: TO IMPROVE PARTICIPANTS' MUSICAL SKILLS.

81%* participants showed an improvement in their revisited baselines against the statement 'I'm pleased with my current level of musical ability.'
49% potential progression points achieved
8% started at the top of the scale

77%* improved against the statement 'I've a good understanding of different elements of music (pitch, rhythm, etc.)'
53% potential progression points achieved,
4% started at the top of the scale

Example of music leader feedback:

"P2 found a lot of the specific Logic controls confusing at first, and it took a long time for him to grasp how to use them creatively. Towards the end of the project, he vocalised how surprised he was by his ability to make the music he loved listening to, and became more confident in working independently without our help."

DC, Music Leader

Outcome 1 reflection:

Overall there has been significant progress towards this outcome, evidenced through baseline data, music leader observations and setting staff feedback.

Y2 was a challenge due to Covid19 affecting the amount of face-to-face delivery we could do with participants. During this year we largely provided resources for young people to complete in their hospital settings, encouraging independent learning. However, measuring and evidencing musical progress across Y2 was difficult as we weren't seeing the young people.

The quality of the original music written by the young people is a testament to their musical development over the course of the project. This music can be heard on the 2 project CDs (45 tracks).

"I'm singing more at home. I've learnt how to make a beat and record synths and know more music terminology."

Participant N1

Example of setting feedback:

"Service users have been able to use music as a way to express the way they feel and their experience of mental health along with their experience of residing within the NHS secure care service. They have built knowledge on how to use GarageBand and Logic Pro X software and to use this independently outside of the sessions."

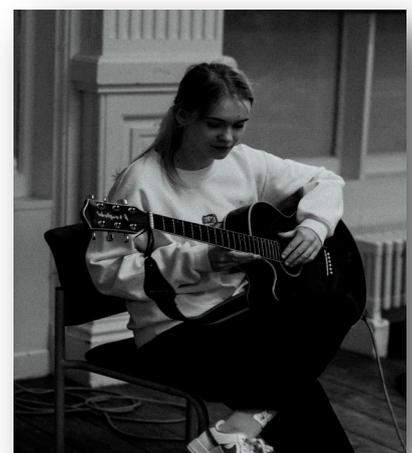
Service users have used the mic independently to record their own lyrics promoting independence and a sense of achievement."

HB, Senior Occupational Therapist, Tamarind

Main challenge: inpatients may not be able to access musical equipment in between sessions without staff support due to safeguarding reasons (e.g., guitar strings/mic leads pose a risk).

Staffing capacity (particularly in a pandemic) might limit opportunities to access instruments/ software to rehearse and develop between sessions.

Main success: providing diversity regarding the musical strengths, specialisms and personalities of the artistic team at each setting has really helped to engage and inspire young people with a range of interests. Pairing music leaders with young music leaders with complementary skills has also helped with practice sharing and CPD.



*based on 26 full baseline responses

OUTCOME 2 - SOCIAL: TO IMPROVE PARTICIPANTS' SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS.

60%* participants showed an improvement on their revisited baseline against the statement 'I feel that I am able to connect with other people on the project'.
31% potential progression points achieved,
16% started at the top of the scale.

50%* participants showed an improvement against the statement 'I feel that I have good social skills'.
25% potential progression points achieved,
8% started at the top of the scale.

Sample setting staff feedback:

"P17 gained a greater understanding of how his 'social battery' works through attending this, and other group activities, on the ward. He was able to reflect with his therapy team on how tiring he finds spending time with others and how to balance his need for connectedness with recharging this battery with time alone. The music sessions were a great opportunity for social connectedness and something he always prioritised when planning his day and pacing his social output. He built good relationships with the music leaders and also worked with his peers to write songs and play together."

P17 has a diagnosis of ASD and at times can have difficulty with social interactions so this was especially beneficial as an opportunity to socialise in a productive and structured way."

VJ, Occupational Therapist, Parkview

Outcome 2 reflection:

Overall there has been good progress towards this outcome, evidenced through baseline data, music leader observations and setting staff feedback.

Covid19 has inevitably affected some aspects of the delivery, such as not being able to bring all settings together for the collaborative events, but all young inpatients have had the opportunity to engage and collaborate with other young people, including our Young Music Leaders, even if remotely.

Sample Music Leader feedback:

"Participant X1 did not want to stay at the first session which we had together and would only come into the room with her Mum. She couldn't maintain eye contact at the start. She now organises everyone. She leads a band in music making, organises extra rehearsal time, teaches others outside of sessions and has invited others to join the band. During the recording process she was particularly sensitive to others."

KS, Music Leader

"It's helped me to get active, get off the wards and do something positive. The project has helped me to engage with staff at clinical meetings. It's given me something to talk about."

Participant P9

Main challenge: young people in inpatient settings generally only have opportunities to work with other poorly young people facing their own challenges. This can make for unsettled or volatile group dynamics. Having a young person choosing to attend and engage with music leaders can be a big deal in itself. Our ambitions were to bring external young performers (aged 18-25) into settings to interact and inspire participants. Covid19 has affected this part of the programme.

Main success: Where we have been able to bring young musicians into settings, this has been valued. In many cases setting staff were surprised at how engaged their patients were and who asked questions.

The way we build from one-to-one working, to pairs and then groups for those ready has really worked for many young people. This is highlighted on the collaborative tracks on the CDs.

*based on 26 full baseline responses

OUTCOME 3 - PERSONAL: TO INCREASE SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH MUSIC MAKING.

Sample setting staff feedback:

"Young people have improved self-esteem and are confident in singing in front of groups and staff. I think it has made them realise their talents (even though sometimes they deny this). Plugin has been a great way to make young people realise their potential and grow in confidence and see their own talents. The young people have thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and the staff have seen the benefits and positive effects it has had on their mood and confidence".

EW, Nurse, Parkview

Main challenge: Young inpatients have not been able to access the usual opportunities to build self-esteem that young people naturally have through new experiences and peer networks, or to achieve success. They are often coming to terms with a diagnosis, potential associated stigma and the impact that might have on their self-identity and future. Low confidence can inhibit their willingness to give things a go, fearing failure. In other cases, participants may try to hide insecurities by appearing dominant, over-confident or uncompromising.

Main success: Working with participants to set their own aims for the project and spending time with them reflecting on the process has empowered young people at a time when they might otherwise feel very little control over their lives. Finding out what is important to them to achieve through the project and building in milestones so that they can recognise and measure their progress has been key to sustaining engagement.

Example of Music Leader Feedback:

"P1 began to recognise his own ability. In the summer sessions, he would obsess over very small mistakes and had a perfectionist attitude to his work. We had a self-reflective conversation about perfection, and how he could learn to be happy with his ability and not feel like he should get everything right straight away. At the end of the summer sessions, he'd finished his first track, and said to me how he never thought he'd ever be able to make music like it. He vocally expressed how proud he was of himself and thanked us for our help. He kept wanting to play the track over and over again and showed it to numerous members of staff."

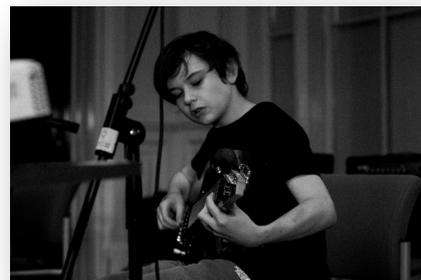
DC, Music Leader

58%* participants showed an improvement on their revisited baseline against the statement 'I am able to do things as well as most other people'.
27% potential progression points achieved, 25% started at the top of the scale.

Sample setting staff feedback:

"P4 increased self-esteem on Plugin and was able to engage in other activities that have been offered after succeeding in Quench sessions. This has included team sports/activities as well as more creative activities."

KN, Lead OT, Parkview



"I can do some things that others can't. My confidence has skyrocketed in music."
Participant P3

Outcome 3 reflection:

Overall there has been good progress towards this outcome, evidenced through baseline data, music leader observations and setting staff feedback. There have been lots of opportunities for young people to succeed (such as through writing their own music and performing to their peers). Often, young people with mental health conditions find it difficult to recognise success but meaningful praise and allowing them to set their own goals has been key.

*based on 26 full baseline responses

OUTCOME 4 - PERSONAL: TO IMPROVE PARTICIPANTS' EMOTIONAL LITERACY.

Example of setting feedback:

"P17 used music to express how he was feeling, especially through lyric writing and recording this music. Expressing his emotions is something he would find difficult so finding a new way to think about and communicate these was fantastic for P17."

VJ, Occupational Therapist, Parkview

85%* participants felt that they'd improved against the statement 'I can express my thoughts, feelings and emotions through my own music making.'

31% potential progression points achieved, 12% started at the top of the scale.

Outcome 4 reflection:

Overall there has been significant progress towards this outcome, evidenced through music/ lyrics, baseline data, music leader observations and setting staff feedback. We encourage all young people to write their own music in whatever style they choose. Many choose to write songs and are given lots of different stimuli to inspire this. They do not have to write about their own mental health or struggles but this is a recurring topic that they choose to focus on.

Main challenge: When encouraging personal expression through creative music making there is huge potential to help young people to develop their musical identity and to uncover more about them and their personal life experiences. Sometimes, though, some thought needs to be given in regards to the content and language of the lyrics created and this can be a tricky balance. We need to consider the young person's frame of reference. It is important to let the tracks flow and to be careful about any judgement you make as the track is not only a reflection of their music but also of who they are and how they are accepted. At Quench we work with settings to determine any 'no go' areas that might be triggering for a young person thematically but the general default stance is to allow all personal expression.

SAMPLE LYRICS

I'm so tired of fighting this,
I just want this all to stop
Life keeps moving fast
And I can't slow the clock
And we're all just broken people
Just trying to push along
But life really just feels kind of wrong
I wanna feel free up with the birds
And I don't want to have to purge
Throwing up can ruin your life
But I guess that I'm just holding on

Main success: The quality of the original tracks created. Many tracks discuss the issues and experiences that the young people are facing/ have faced and several are extremely powerful. In many cases, OTs supervising sessions have said how useful the creative process was for them to find out more about participants, their lives and feelings, and also to begin to address any issues or concerns identified through the devising process.

"Doing a little bit of music myself has made me see what other people are going through when they're being creative. Doing music in the summer was so important. It gave me a reason to get out of bed and helped me when I'd just arrived in hospital. When I'm trying to manage a tough situation, I write lyrics. They might not get used eventually but it helps me in a tough time."

Participant P3

Click on the CD pictures to hear the music created!



*based on 26 full baseline responses

OUTCOME 5 - WORKFORCE: TO IMPROVE THE PRACTICE OF MUSIC LEADERS & HEALTHCARE WORKERS.

From all 8 Young Music Leader revisited baselines:

100% showed an improvement against the statement, 'I feel I have a good awareness of the mental health sector.'

100% improved against the statement, 'I feel confident in helping young people improve their musical skills and techniques.'

Main challenge: Covid19 has had an impact on the capacity of setting staff to attend external training and also for settings to provide consistent individuals to supervise sessions and thus build their skills and confidence. Sometimes, knowledge and confidence gained remains with 1 or a select few staff members who may move on in future, so cascading of learning hasn't always been possible.

Main success: Where we've had consistent setting staff engagement in the project this has had a significant impact on staff confidence and has helped support musical engagement between sessions and across settings. For example, the Activity Worker at Ardenleigh FCAMHS is now able to support participants with music production using Logic independently to a good level, with occasional support and guidance. At the Tamarind Centre, staff supervising took knowledge and activities from our Plugin sessions with under 25s and replicated this with older patients on site so that they also benefitted. Music is now integral to the OT offer at Tamarind, all OTs having been trained in using Logic. Recruiting young music leaders has been very successful to keep our team fresh.

Sample setting staff feedback:

"Staff who would facilitate the sessions were able to observe how to use the musical instruments and software meaning they were able to provide additional support outside of the weekly Quench sessions. Since Quench has been facilitated, there has been a noticeable rise in interest of service users wanting to attend music sessions, including those who do not meet the under 25s criteria. Therefore, due to the high demand and interest, music has been added to the new occupational therapy therapeutic timetable."

HB, Senior OT, Tamarind

From setting staff evaluations:

100% of staff involved said that their knowledge of the benefits of music had increased as a result of the project.

100% staff said that they now felt more confident in accessing musical opportunities for young people and supporting musical progression.

Outcome 5 reflection:

Overall there has been good progress towards this outcome, evidenced through, young music leader baseline data, music leader and training evaluations and setting staff feedback. Having Young Music Leaders on the project has helped to ensure that our team stay current in their musical knowledge and awareness plus it enables Quench to upskill the local emerging workforce.

The wider impact on settings has been varied in its success, mainly due to Covid19 affecting staff capacity and consistency.

Sample music leader feedback:

"I had Autism training which was very beneficial for me and I believe I have a very good grasp now of how to tailor my approach to young people with ASD."

DC, Young Music Leader



Click here to see our music leaders demonstrating virtual collaboration

HOW FAR WE HAVE MET THE PLUGIN PROJECT AIM: To improve the sustainability of music provision in hospital in-patient settings caring for young people with mental health conditions aged 12-25 in Birmingham.

Tamarind Men's Forensic Centre have provided all of their occupational therapists with training on Logic Pro X and they now offer music as part of their therapeutic offer to all of their inpatients.

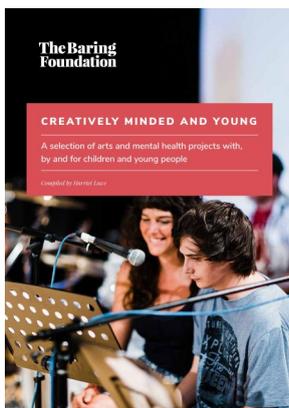
Birmingham Children's Hospital's The Parkview Clinic has already secured £6000 funding for Plugin continuation if we are successful with our pending Youth Music application. Woodbourne and Ardenleigh have also committed to providing match funding and consistent nominated staff leads to support any new activity, ensuring skills development.

Ardenleigh's Activity Worker is now skilled at using Logic Pro X and the setting have invested in an iMac and studio recording equipment, ensuring music activities can be offered outside of the Plugin project.

Forward Thinking Birmingham are aiming to deliver Arts Award sessions during school holidays across all 4 of their mental health hubs, including the Blakesley Centre, and have secured funding to enable this to happen.

Quench Arts has developed our own Theory of Change for our music and wellbeing work that identifies our strengths in supporting transition from youth to adult provision, and between inpatient and community participation.

SHARING LEARNING/ STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT



We have published 22 blogs on the [Youth Music Network](#)

We have shared learning via the following networks:

- Birmingham City Council Arts and Health Working Group
- Midland's Thriving Communities Learning Together Programme
- National Academy for Social Prescribing
- Community Catalysts Social Prescribing Network
- Birmingham Music Education Partnership
- Youth Music's Music In Healthcare Network meetings

And through presentations given to:

- Mac Makes Music's Collaborative Hub meetings (including Music Education Hub leads from Birmingham, Solihull, Worcestershire, Sandwell and Coventry)
- Cygnet Joyce Parker Hospital
- Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Staffordshire Public Health
- Cannock Chase Mental Health Hub
- Coventry & Warwickshire Partnerships NHS Trust
- Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

KEY CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Delivery and Covid19 disruption

The Covid19 pandemic has had a dramatic effect on the project, especially in Y2. Most settings were unable to have in person sessions for the majority of the year, with activity resuming on Zoom for the latter part. Therefore, we have not reached as many young people as we had hoped and our monitoring and evaluation evidence has also been negatively impacted.

Y3 has been much more stable, with face-to-face working largely returning but with Covid19 mitigations and reversions to Zoom in instances of Covid19 outbreaks.

We have learnt so much about working online and developing resources over the 3 years which will inform our work in the future.

Notification of Participant Discharge

This has been an ongoing challenge. When notified in advance we have completed final baselines/evaluations and disseminated signposting information. Unfortunately, particularly throughout the pandemic, we have sometimes been given very little notice of a participant being discharged or being moved to another ward/hospital and at times even setting staff working closely with participants face similar frustrations. This has affected collection of evaluation material and completion of Arts Awards in some cases. In future we need to insist on more regular revisiting of baseline data and feedback, capturing the project impact before young people move on.

In general our settings have had fewer inpatients on site throughout the pandemic, particularly initially, as when Covid19 hit, most inpatients were discharged as quickly as possible with the realisation that the ward environment during lockdown might not be the best place for them. When young people needed admitting, they are generally placed in the first appropriate hospital bed available and then moved to a more local setting when there is space. Some young people have been 'held back' in youth inpatient settings when turning 18 because of a lack of appropriate spaces in adult provision but, when beds do become available, they are moved on very quickly.

Settings

We have had good staff support and supervision of project sessions from our settings. However, staff shortages and increased demands upon setting staff have meant that staff attending haven't always been consistent people which has impacted on their development and the embedding of music provision in settings. Also, the speed at which settings were able to approve the return to in-person working varied but we did manage to run sessions on Zoom.

1 setting in Y3 (an outpatient mental health service for young people unable to access community provision) were not themselves seeing young people face-to-face due to Covid19 risks, so they found participant recruitment difficult. After a number of months of little/no engagement, we made the difficult decision to cease sessions there and relocate activity to a different setting. It's hard to plan for changes such as this but we have learned the need to have 'challenging conversations' with partners when things aren't working and to not be afraid to end a project in a setting when it's not working, despite the best intentions of all involved. We feel that the conversations were open and held in the right way, so should not affect any future relationships.

Changes to the original project proposal

Not all of our original project plans were able to be achieved, mainly regarding participants attending external or collaborative events due to the risk of spread of Covid19. Plans also had to change in Y2 due to match funding not being achieved from settings as we weren't actually going in. Youth Music were incredibly supportive and flexible during this time, enabling us to re-allocate budgets.

Increased coordination demands on Quench Arts Directors due to the Covid19 pandemic has reduced our capacity for strategic work and fundraising. However, some progress has been made.

Please see our full Plugin impact reports for each project year for more information around challenges and lessons learned.

KEY SUCCESSES

1) The quality of the music created: We are incredibly proud of the music created by the young people involved. There are some excellent examples of songwriting around mental health as well as an array of different genres of music on display. The CDs created are a testament to the adaptability of our music leader team in being able to support such different tastes and interests and we feel very lucky to have such a talented team.

2) The development of the team: We are passionate about providing opportunities for new and emerging music leaders to be involved in our work as this keeps us as an organisation fresh and provides a fantastic opportunity to get to know more people that we can potentially employ in the future. The young music leaders and young project coordinators have been a real asset to the project and we would like to continue to develop our relationship with all of them if we have opportunities suitable for them. The 2 young music leaders employed in Year 2 of our Plugin programme have now gone on to be employed as lead music leaders on our community-based Wavelength project, so the Young Music Leader opportunity is really working, benefitting both Quench and other local arts organisations by training facilitators of the future. Our lead artists continue to be reflective of their own practice and are excited to share their skills and knowledge whilst also gaining and developing themselves by working with the young music leaders.

3) The resources we have created (www.quench-arts.co.uk/plugin-project-resources): We have developed many resources (video, audio and worksheets) that have been useful to engage the young people on Plugin. As we have posted these on our website and promoted them on social media, other young people have also benefitted as well as other organisations who have asked if they can share our work with their music leaders (such as all of the organisations in the Birmingham Music Education Partnership; Coventry Music Hub; Solihull Music Service; Severn Arts; Sandwell Music Education Hub). The backing tracks alone have 2342 listens on Soundcloud (as of the 1st Feb 2022).

4) The commitment to continue Plugin's legacy from settings: Parkview, Ardenleigh and Woodbourne settings have all committed to supporting a new Plugin project if we are successful in gaining more funding. Parkview have already secured the £6000 match funding required through Birmingham Children's Hospital Charitable Trust. Also, due to the success of the Plugin project, another hospital in Coventry (Cygnet Joyce Parker) would like to be involved in future, after a presentation we gave. They have committed to providing consistent staff to work alongside music leaders to help embed music in their provision as this is currently not offered at all to their young people.

The Tamarind Centre would also like to continue to work with us but in a broader way, as the majority of their inpatients are over 25. They have a strong demand for music provision on site and staff have been taking input and activities from Plugin sessions to then engage older patients independently in music making. They have already invested staff time into attending training from our Plugin staff, have allocated a new OT the role of music coordinator and have booked some external training for all of their staff on Logic Pro X with Blue Whale Studios. This is a fantastic way to show how much the investment from Youth Music has embedded music across a setting, enabling music opportunities to be sustained.

5) Strategic development: Despite the extra coordination challenges over the past 2 years due to Covid19, the Quench Arts Directors have made good progress in strategically sharing learning from the Plugin project as well as signposting participants to external opportunities and our other projects on discharge (e.g., Wavelength, our community based mental health project for young people, has acted as a good transition for Plugin participants aged 12-18, and our Musical Connections programme for those 19+). We have developed a 'theory of change' for our music and wellbeing work that identifies our strengths in supporting transition from youth to adult provision, and between inpatient and community participation.

Plugin Challenges, Successes and Tips In Greater Detail

Outcome 1: To improve participants' musical skills.

Challenge

Young people may not have regular unsupervised access to instruments/software outside of project sessions for safeguarding reasons (guitar/violin strings and mic leads posing a risk of self-harm, etc.). Particularly across the pandemic with staffing issues, setting staff might not always be able to facilitate regular individual access to instruments/resources and rehearsing in communal areas might not always be appropriate for other young people's needs or for someone with low confidence who may not want others to hear.

Success

Thinking carefully about the Plugin team members placed in each setting has been key to the success of the project. Providing diversity in regards to the musical strengths, specialisms and personalities of the team at each setting has really helped to engage and inspire young people with a range of musical interests and also provided options for young people who might naturally feel more comfortable or inspired by a particular member of the team. Pairing music leaders with young music leaders with complimentary skills has also helped with practice sharing and CPD.

Tips

Develop resources and set tasks that will allow young people to build their skills and knowledge between sessions without needing regular access to specific instruments or software. For example, research phone/tablet apps that can teach guitar chord shapes or strumming patterns for someone interested in playing guitar; set lyric-writing tasks on a theme for rappers or sound sampling tasks for those into production.

Don't forget that one of the quickest ways to build skills is to get people working together. This develops listening and time keeping skills as well as a whole load of personal and social skills!

Outcome 2: To improve participants' social connectedness.

Challenge

Young people in inpatient mental health settings generally only have opportunities to work with other poorly young people facing their own challenges. This can make for unsettled or volatile group dynamics. Remember, just you being there as an external person and a young person choosing to attend and engage with you can be a big deal. Our ambitions through Plugin were to bring external young performers (aged 18-25) into settings to interact and inspire participants. Where we've been able to do this the impact musically and socially has been strong but obviously Covid19 has had an impact here.

Success

Our Young Music Leader roles have really helped to engage and inspire participants musically and to ensure our teams' musical knowledge and listening are kept current. Where we have been able to bring young musicians into settings, this has been such a valued offer and really positive for the participants. In many cases setting staff were surprised at how engaged their patients were and with who asked questions and interacted. It has also been a fantastic learning experience for the young performers – just don't forget the need to prepare the visitors for what to expect in the setting, make sure to check out what they plan to perform to ensure it's suitable and make time to reflect on the experience with them afterwards.

Tips

Young people are attending because they like music; use this as an ice breaker to find out what music they listen to and don't be afraid to leave time for a response – their medication or condition might mean that it can take a while to process information. Particularly watch out for any non-verbal communication, a shake or nod of the head is a decision and a first step. Build trust and rapport individually at first and then, when ready, introduce the idea of the young person sharing their work or collaborating with another participant. Make sure to think carefully about who could work well together musically and socially and check with setting staff first that this can happen before offering it as an option!

Plugin Challenges, Successes and Tips In Greater Detail

Outcome 3: To increase positive self-esteem through music making.

Challenge

Building self-esteem takes time. Young people in mental health inpatient settings may not have been able to take up the usual opportunities to build self-esteem that young people have through new experiences and peer networks, or to achieve success. They may have struggled with changes and disruption to their routines and education as a result of their mental health and/or the pandemic and to being unable to access the regular support and activities that helped keep them well previously. They are often coming to terms with a diagnosis, potential associated stigma and the impact that such a label might have on their self-identity and future. In sessions, low confidence sometimes inhibits their willingness to give things a go, fearing failure. In other cases, participants may try to hide their insecurities by appearing dominant, over-confident or uncompromising. Sometimes it may take weeks of you just being there, turning up and showing your face for a young person to begin to trust you, to know that you'll come back and that the time and energy they invest with you is worth it.

Success

Working with participants to set their own aims for the project and spending time with them reflecting on the process, where possible, has empowered young people at a time when they might otherwise feel very little control over their lives. Finding out what is important to them to achieve through the project and building milestones so that they can recognise and measure their progress has been key to sustaining engagement.

Tips

To help with recruitment and engagement, think about playing some live music on the ward to build interest (where appropriate) and encourage other participants to talk about what they are doing with you, to act as advocates.

Find out the young person's interests and plan 'quick win' activities around these, ensuring immediate success. Recognise that initially a participant may have a short attention span or low energy and build on this. Once participants have built trust and rapport with you, work with them to set their own goals and set achievable targets each session, aiding motivation.

Make sure to give regular and valid praise. Praise any positive behaviour or contribution given, no matter how small a step this might seem to you. In group sessions recognise all ideas, even if they aren't used in the end for that particular track or song as there is always potential to revisit something in time. Make sure that any praise you give is valid and specific, otherwise it could be perceived as not being genuine or being patronising and you could lose trust.

Outcome 4: To improve participants' emotional literacy.

Challenge

When encouraging personal expression through creative music making there is huge potential to help young people to develop their musical identity and to uncover more about them and their personal life experiences to date. Sometimes, though, thought needs to be given in regards to the content and language of the lyrics created and this can be a tricky balance. Think about the purpose of the track – is the process more important or the outcome? Who is the audience? What is going to happen to the track once finished? What is allowable from a setting point of view in terms of theme and language used? Could the content put a young person at risk or make them or another young person identifiable from the experiences they describe? Do the lyrics incite violence or gang tension? What is authentic for that young person? Think about the young person's frame of reference rather than your own. It is important to let the tracks flow and to be careful about any judgement you make as the track is not only a reflection of their music but also of who they are and how they are accepted. At Quench we work with settings to determine any 'no go' areas that might be triggering for a young person thematically but the general default stance is to allow all personal expression as a track is developing. We are, however, open with participants about what might or not be able to be used on the final

Plugin Challenges, Successes and Tips In Greater Detail

project CD and why, often producing 'radio edits' of tracks but giving them a copy of the full version.

Success

The quality of the original tracks created through the Plugin project can be heard on the CDs/playlists created. Many of the tracks discuss the issues and experiences that the young people are/have faced and several are extremely powerful. Not all tracks made the Plugin CD and some on the CD are radio edits. However, all participants were given copies of their full unedited tracks for their own use. In several cases, Occupational Therapists supervising sessions have said how useful the creative process was for them to find out more about participants, their lives and feelings and also to begin to address any issues or concerns identified through the devising process. [Plugin CD 2019](#); [Plugin CD 2021](#)

Tips

Some young people may only be interested in learning or performing covers initially, despite the aims of the project. Make sure to explain the value of creative music making but also work with them to use covers to build their musical skills and confidence. Find out what it is that they like about a particular artist or track and work with them to replicate this in their own work. Maybe change the lyrics to reflect their life but not the music; or keep the lyrics the same and change the beat or chord sequence. Often when young people feel some success here they lose any fear and feel the value in creating their own work, though this isn't always the case. The most important thing is to keep a young person keen and engaged so use your judgement.

Check out some of our Plugin blogs and resources:

[Music identity and relationships blog by Chris Roberts](#)

[Music and Self Identity Video by James Stanley](#)

<https://www.quench-arts.co.uk/plugin-project-resources> (see 'Discussions on Music' section)

Outcome 5: To improve the practice of music leaders and healthcare workers.

Challenge

Covid19 has had an impact on the capacity of setting staff to attend external training and also for settings to provide consistent individuals to supervise sessions and thus build their skills and confidence. Sometimes the knowledge and confidence gained remains with 1 or a select few staff members meaning that the learning isn't embedded in the setting if these people move on. Cascading of learning hasn't always been possible.

Success

Where we've had a consistent identified member of setting staff engaged in the project this has had a significant impact on their confidence and knowledge and has helped support young people's musical engagement between sessions and across settings. For example, our OT Assistant at Ardenleigh FCAMHS is now able to support participants with music production using Logic independently to a good level, with occasional support and guidance. At the Tamarind Centre, staff supervising took knowledge and activities from our Plugin sessions with under 25s and replicated activities with older patients on site so that they also benefitted. Music is now integral to the OT offer, all the OT team having been trained in using Logic software.

Tips

See outcome 1 success. Pair music leaders with complementary skills in settings to help with practice sharing and CPD. If possible, employ Young Music Leaders on the project to help keep the whole team's musical knowledge, awareness and activities current.

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