

Plugin

Impact Report 2022-'25

PLUGIN PROJECT 2022-2025 ACTIVITY SUMMARY

**Over 3 years Plugin engaged young mental health inpatients in 4 hospitals.
In total, the project engaged:**

279 young people aged 12-25
151 were core participants
(attending 3 or more sessions, Youth Music's definition)

Over 3 years Plugin delivered:

796 one-to-one sessions

144 group sessions

These were delivered face-to-face.

When wards were closed due to Covid19/ incidents, the team spent 40 sessions developing resources (mainly in Y1 of the project).

Plugin employed:

6 Freelance Lead Music Leaders (1 per Setting. 2 music leaders left during the programme so needed to be replaced).

12 Young Music Leaders (18-25).

Offered 38 performance opportunities for young musicians aged 18-25.

Click here to hear some of the backing tracks created in resource development sessions



We worked in the following settings across Birmingham & Coventry:

- Birmingham Children's Hospital's Parkview Clinic
- Priory Hospital Woodbourne CAMHS (2022-23), Birmingham
- Priory Hospital Woodbourne Acute Wards (2023-24), Birmingham
- BSMHFT's Ardenleigh Forensic CAMHS Unit, Birmingham
- Cygnet Joyce Parker Hospital, Coventry

BSMHFT = Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

CAMHS = Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service



Workforce Development:

We offered the following training:

For the Plugin Team:

Youth Mental Health First Aid (11 completions, please note that some of the team were already trained).

Autism Awareness (15 completions).

Safeguarding/ Child Protection (18 completions).

In addition to Youth Music funded training, we offered Trauma Informed Practice and Emergency First Aid at Work.

For setting staff:

Training sessions around subjects like songwriting, music and mindfulness, music tech (17 attendances).

Arts Award Advisor Training (2 completions).

1 setting induction pack with music facilitation activities and guidance was produced.

Wider workforce (including setting staff):

5 Why Music sessions (59 attendances).

1 Why Music? Resource Pack was created.

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 (quarterly meetings) and year-end & project-end evaluation meeting minutes; questionnaires; 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 including MOHOST (The Model Of Human Occupation Screening Tool) observations; 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.

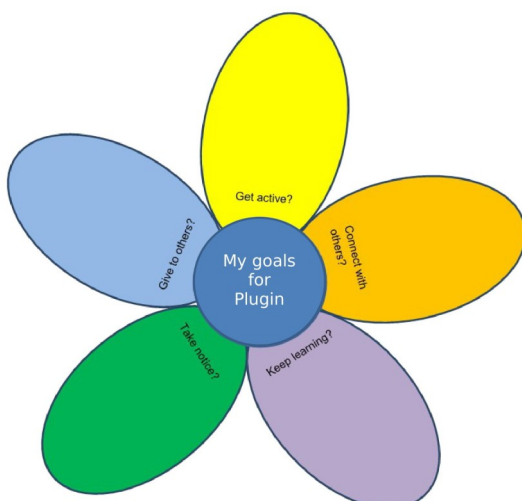
Your Music	Disagree						Agree
1. I am pleased with my current level of musical ability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I can express my thoughts, feelings and emotions through my own music making	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I am good of making sense of what other people are expressing through music (e.g., thoughts, feelings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

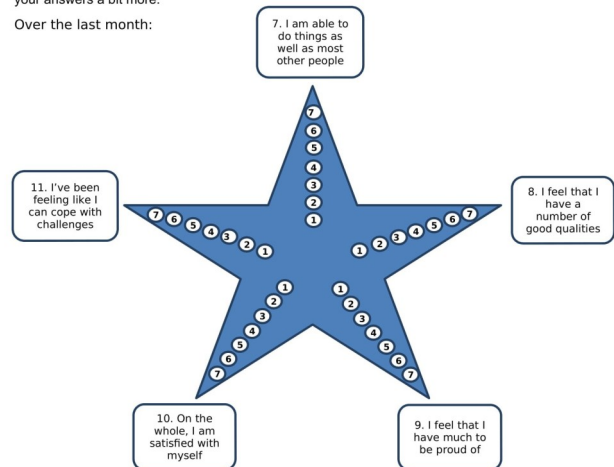
Please write 'Still working', 'Met' or 'Exceeded' in each petal, considering your original goals. Feel free to add any extra information in each petal about how the project has helped you in each area.



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.

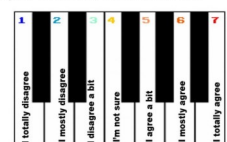
Over the last month:



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 reflection 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.

Plugin 2022-25 Participant Baselines Collated																		
Setting	Participant Name	Participant Code	1) I am pleased with my current level of musical ability				2) I have strong instrumental/vocal production software skills and technique (as relevant to your main musical interest)				3) I have the musical skills to collaborate with others (e.g. in a duo/ band/ensemble)				4) I have a good understanding of the different elements of music (pitch, rhythm, melody, timbre, dynamics, texture, harmony, structure, etc.)			
			Start	Middle	End	Change	Start	Middle	End	Change	Start	Middle	End	Change	Start	Middle	End	Change
22	Parkview Yr 1		3		5	2	3		5	2	4		6	2	4		6	2
23	Parkview Yr 1		3		6	3	3		5	2	2		5	3	2		6	4
24	Parkview Yr 1		2		4	2	3		4	1	4		5	1	3		6	3
25	Parkview Yr 1		4		5	1	5		5	0	4		4	0	3		5	2
26	Parkview Yr 2		3		5	2	3		5	2	3		6	3	2		6	4
27	Parkview Yr 2		3		5	2	2		5	3	3		6	3	4		5	4
28	Parkview Yr 2		4		6	2	2		3	1	4		5	1	2		4	3
33	Parkview Yr 2		2		4	2	2		4	2	3		5	2	2		5	3
34	Parkview Yr 3		3		6	3	5		6	3	6		7	1	4		6	2
35	Parkview Yr 3		1		3	2	1		4	3	1		7	6	6		7	1
36	Parkview Yr 3		3		6	3	1		5	4	4		6	2	1		5	4
37	Parkview Yr 3		3		6	3	1		5	4	4		6	2	4		5	1
38	Parkview Yr 3		5		6	1	4		4	0	5		4	1	2		3	1
39	Parkview Yr 3		4		6	2	3		5	1	5		6	1	2		6	4
41	Parkview Yr 3		5		6	1	3		3	0	5		6	1	6		6	0
42	Parkview Yr 3		6		6	0	4		6	0	7		6	0	6		6	0
43	Parkview Yr 3		3		4	1	1		2	1	1		1	0	1		3	2
44	Parkview Yr 3		2		4	2	2		4	2	5		6	2	6		6	0
53	Totals per column		184	7	254	70	143	0	223	74	184	0	243	60	166	13	240	74
54	Total Number of Participants	47																
56	Total Number of Participants Completing Qn	47																
57	Total Number of Participants Completing Qn	47																
58	ANALYSIS																	
59	Numbers showing improvement					37				37				31				35
60	Numbers staying same					7				8				13				12
61	% Showing improvement					78.7234				78.7234				65.95745				74.46805
62	% Staying same					14.89362				17.02128				27.65957				25.53191
63	Most progress					3				5				6				4
64	Progression points available					145				160				145				163
65	% available progression points achieved					48.27596				41.11111				41.37931				45.39877
66	Average progression					1.489362				1.574468				1.276596				1.574468

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

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Here is an example of a new spreadsheet we developed over the course of this grant which we use to collate outcome observations from sessional monitoring reports. This is a useful tool for music leaders when it comes to writing end of year case studies as it can be filtered down to individuals or settings to see how much progress young people have made over time.

Outcome 1	To improve participants' skills on instruments/ voice/ production software (as appropriate)								
Participant	Group	Setting	Date	Source	Page	Quotation	Quoted	Role	
Participant B33	N/A	Cygnat	17/06/2024	Session 6	2&3	"I want to make some fast music for something like a fight scene." Shared music for video games. Styles - video gaming - fast, slow, scary etc.	VP	ML	
Participant B33	N/A	Cygnat	24/06/2024	Session 7	2&3	"B33 did brilliantly! After a difficult start, because Logic Pro was so unfamiliar to him, he was grinning from ear to ear when he started to put his video game track together using the midi keyboard"...B33 played arpeggiated synth parts and drums on the midi keyboard - he was visibly proud and happy with how easily he got results.	VP	ML	
Participant B33	N/A	Cygnat	08/07/2024	Session 9	3	I showed B33 how to edit synthesizers to create a video game like sound. Using plugins such as Alchemy and RetroSynth in Logic Pro. B33 also began writing melodies using a piano and MIDI keyboard...I (Joe) taught B33 how to incorporate chords through the C Major scale into Logic through a MIDI Keyboard. Vix had wrote some pointers and notes on a piece of paper for Patrick to practise.	JW	YML	
Participant B33	N/A	Cygnat	08/07/2024	Session 9	2	B33 did a great job coming up with musical ideas, such as the main piano riff and the right drumbeats. He also helped create the song's theme, excitedly suggesting "Temple" and "Escape," which led to the title "Temple Escape." ...Cinematic music, Cymbals, Heavy drums, Piano riff. Session summary: Playing a melody on a stand-alone keyboard initially and then transferring the melody into Logic Pro through using a MIDI Keyboard. Listening to effects through Logic Pro and through Splice. Reverse/inverted melody to create two different parts and another v tricky part! VIX put stickers on the relevant keys and wrote the notes down for B33 to practice. He may be up for performing next week. Musical progress: Very good sense of timing and rhythm...I showed B33 how he could play the piano to create tension within the song and adapt the main piano riff to make it catchier. B33 started to understand what Logic Pro was and how he can record any melody he plays on the stand-alone keyboard.	VP/ JW	ML/ YML	
Participant B33	N/A	Cygnat	08/07/2024	Session 9	1	Started a new track with B33 playing a piano into Logic Pro and adding cinematic drum parts for a new video game...I showed B33 how he could play the piano to create tension within the song and adapt the main piano riff to make it catchier. B33 started to understand what Logic Pro was and how he can record any melody he plays on the stand-alone keyboard.	JW	YML	
Participant B33	N/A	Cygnat	15/07/2024	Session 10	2	B33 did well learning how to use synths and started adding more melodies and played piano into Logic. I (Joe) showed B33 a range of sounds within Logic and asked B33 to tell me if he liked any sounds, to which I favoured them and went back to them. B33 played a melody using piano (a familiar sound) into Logic Pro and	JW	YML	
Participant B33	N/A	Cygnat	29/07/2024	Session 12	2	B33 did a great job coming up with musical ideas, such as the main piano riff and the right drumbeats. He also helped create the song's theme, excitedly suggesting "Temple" and "Escape," which led to the title "Temple Escape." I showed B33 how he could play the piano to create tension within the song and adapt the main piano riff to make it catchier. B33 started to understand what Logic Pro was and how he can record any melody he plays on the stand-alone keyboard.	JW	YML	

The spreadsheet above can be filtered down by setting, participant and focused on different outcomes per tab. It can also measure the number of observations against a specific outcome to create cohort statistics. Although it took a long time to set up and populate, it's a useful tool that we will be embedding across our other programmes. We are looking at ways in which to make this system more time efficient, and are exploring the use of Google Forms and AI to see whether there are easier ways to collate the information moving forward.

Each programme year, we put together an extensive evaluation report collating that year's feedback, baselines, statistics and case studies and have meetings with staff and settings. Our annual reports highlight challenges, successes and any changes we need to make for the following delivery year, responding to lessons learnt.

We also collate how many goals set by core participants against the 5 Ways To Wellbeing have been met, exceeded or are still in progress.

Participant Goals Set & Reviewed					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total	Percentage of Total (all 3 years)
Get Active					
No. Goals Set	9	8	15	32	
Still In Progress	0	1	3	4	12.5
Met	7	3	8	18	56.25
Exceeded	2	4	4	10	31.25
Connect With Others					
No. Goals Set	6	7	14	27	
Still In Progress	0	0	4	4	14.81
Met	6	7	8	21	77.78
Exceeded	0	0	2	2	7.41
Keep Learning					
No. Goals Set	9	11	25	45	
Still In Progress	0	3	6	9	20.00
Met	8	5	10	23	51.11
Exceeded	1	3	9	13	28.89
Take Notice					
No. Goals Set	3	6	8	17	
Still In Progress	0	2	0	2	11.76

OUTCOME 1 - MUSICAL: TO IMPROVE PARTICIPANTS' SKILLS ON INSTRUMENTS/ VOICE/PRODUCTION SOFTWARE (AS APPROPRIATE).

79%* of participants showed improvement against the statement, *'I'm pleased with my current level of musical ability'*. 15% stayed the same (2% marked themselves at the top of the scale when joining the project). 48% of potential participant progression points were achieved.

79%* showed improvement against *'I have strong instrumental/vocal/production software skills and technique'*. 17% stayed the same (4% participants marked themselves at the top of the scale when joining the project). 41% of potential participant progression points were achieved.

*based on 47 full baseline responses

Example of music leader feedback:

"The project has been very successful in supporting progression against this outcome. [For example] Participant C55 really impressed us with their ability to learn the bass. Before joining the project, (he) had never played the bass before but by the final Plugin session, he was able to read and play simple bassline tabs for his favourite songs. He was also able to play the bass alongside others and had started memorising the parts he was playing."

HKK, Music Leader

"I want to be able to play synths and guitar and do all the music for my video games. I want to do everything myself, but didn't know how to make the music - I can now!" Participant B33

Main challenge: particularly towards the end of the project in our 2 non-forensic settings, our team faced high demand from young people wanting to engage. Whilst this has been really positive, it's been challenging for our teams to manage, especially when splitting time across multiple wards. Therefore, we've not always been able to offer the amount of time or support individually that we'd have liked. We have worked in groups but this isn't always possible and group dynamics need careful consideration.

"Participants developed skills in composition and performance, with notable improvements in confidence and technical ability." JW, Young Music Leader

Example of setting feedback:

"Staff have observed that engagement in music has not only built technical skills but has also enhanced cognitive abilities, focus, and emotional expression. Participants have shown increased patience, persistence, and self-motivation when working on musical projects, skills that are transferable beyond the sessions."

EM, Activity Worker, Ardenleigh FCAMHS

Outcome 1 reflection:

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

The quality of music created, range of genres/instrumentation represented and amount of original music created is evidence of success against this outcome and highlights participants' musical development. This music can be heard on the 3 project CDs created.

Main success: group collaborations, where they have been possible, have been a fantastic motivating factor and also helped to build key ensemble skills such as listening and timing, as well as personal skills. In addition, carefully considering the Plugin team pairings in each setting has really helped us provide a varied balance of musical strengths, specialisms and personalities.



Click on the CD covers to hear each of the Plugin CDs!

OUTCOME 2 - PERSONAL: TO IMPROVE PARTICIPANTS' EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Example of setting feedback:

"The Plugin project has been a transformative experience for our young people, allowing them to express themselves in ways they never thought possible. It has created an outlet for their emotions and helped them gain confidence in their own abilities, which has been crucial to their mental health recovery journey."

Laura Grant, Lead Occupational Therapist, Woodbourne Priory

Outcome 2 reflection:

Overall there has been good 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 many choose to focus on.

SAMPLE LYRICS

*Dry blood beneath the sleeves
Oh they're the only one that believes
Cut yourself to see how much it bleeds
How much it bleeds*

*Why am I still here?
I can't even shed a tear
What if I died last night
Your parents are crying
You feel like you're dying
But you are not alone
Feel like the world is against you
Like you're screaming
But no one can hear you
You're not alone*

68%* of participants showed improvement against the statement, '*I can express my thoughts, feelings and emotions through my own music-making*'. 28% stayed the same (13% participants marked themselves at the top of the scale when joining the project, so had no room for progression). The most progress was 5 points on a scale of 1 to 7.

Main challenge: Occasionally, the topics written about can be triggering for others to hear, for example see the sample lyrics below. Whilst it's important for the young people to be able to express their experiences through music, we also need to be mindful of who is listening to the tracks and how hearing them could have a negative impact upon their mental health. Our CD and playlist has trigger warnings where we feel this is needed. Also, lots of young people have wanted to write more instrumental music or focus on production so it's harder to obviously evidence progress in emotional literacy without lyrics, although music leaders do encourage participants to articulate their thoughts regarding the music and emotions they are conveying through discussions.

Main success: Many tracks discuss the issues and experiences that the young people are facing/have faced and several are extremely powerful. This is down to the safe environment that the music leaders and setting staff have created in sessions, ensuring the young people feel comfortable to share their feelings and emotions. Topics don't always have to be heavy, however, and sessions allow young people to interact through a positive activity and have an outlet to have fun together.

"Participant B3 wrote about her experiences dealing with depression and suicidal thoughts. She made a comment on how it actually helped her to get everything down on paper."
SH Young Music Leader

*based on 47 full baseline responses

OUTCOME 3 - WORKFORCE:

TO EMBED IN SETTING STAFF & OUR EMERGING MUSIC LEADER WORKFORCE THE SKILLS & CONFIDENCE TO PROVIDE CREATIVE MUSIC MAKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IN INPATIENT SETTINGS.

From all 12 Young Music Leader revisited baselines:

92% showed an improvement against the statement, *'I feel I have the appropriate skills and confidence to work in inpatient settings with young people with mental health conditions'*. 8% stayed the same. 71% of potential progression points were achieved.

83% showed an improvement against the statement, *'I feel confident about developing positive relationships with young people in music sessions.'* 17% stayed the same. 77% of potential progression points were achieved.

In total, Young Music Leaders set 39 goals. Of these, 41% were met, 49% were exceeded and 10% were still in progress.

Having Young Music Leader roles has been a huge success for the programme as it has enabled Quench to get to know and mentor the emerging workforce, bringing in fresh ideas and perspectives into the community music sector. They have been great role models and inspiration for participants we work with.

Setting Staff:

Main challenge: For setting staff, having the capacity to attend training has been an issue across the programme. We have produced an induction pack for members of staff around music facilitation tips and benefits in the hope of having wider reach.

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, 4 key staff at Ardenleigh FCAMHS are now able to support participants with using Logic to a good level, with occasional support and guidance.

Sample setting staff feedback:

"The project training has provided staff with practical tools for using music as a therapeutic and creative outlet. For instance, a staff member who was initially unsure about their role in musical activities has grown more confident in encouraging participation and facilitating small-group discussions."
EM, Activity Worker, Ardenleigh FCAMHS

From setting staff project-end evaluations (7 responses):

57% stated that the Plugin project had 'completely met' our ambitions for Outcome 3. 43% stated that it had been 'somewhat met' (out of options 'completely met', 'somewhat met', 'not sure' and 'not met').

Outcome 3 reflection:

Overall there has been good progress towards this outcome (significant progress for Young Music Leaders), evidenced through young music leader baseline data, 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 has enabled Quench to upskill the local emerging workforce. They have also helped us to diversify our own workforce. The wider workforce development impact on settings has been varied in its success. Where we've had consistent staff support within settings and a commitment to attend training, it's worked incredibly well (such as at Ardenleigh).

Sample Young Music Leader feedback:

"I have grown significantly in confidence, communication, and leadership. Working with VP (Music Leader) helped me understand the importance of adaptability, inclusivity and effective communication, whether in groups, 1-1 communication or leading sessions." JW, Young Music Leader

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES TO IMPROVE PARTICIPANTS' SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS.

60%* participants showed an improvement on their revisited baseline against the statement 'I feel that I am good at working in a team'. 45% potential progression points achieved

66% of participants completing revisited baselines progressed against the statement, 'I have the musical skills to collaborate with others.' 41% potential progression points were achieved.

**based on 41 full baseline responses*

Participants set 23 personal goals for 'Connect with others' (one of the Five Ways to Wellbeing). On reviewing these goals at the project end, participants felt that 19 had been met and 2 exceeded.

Sample setting staff feedback:

"Music fosters social connection, which is particularly important for young people who may feel isolated due to their mental health challenges. Group music-making... encourages teamwork, communication, and a sense of belonging. Engaging in a shared creative process can build confidence, strengthen peer relationships, and help young people feel supported and understood." EM, Activity Worker, Ardenleigh FCAMHS

"Making music has helped me to feel less awkward with other people"
Participant B19

Sample music leader feedback:

"Seeing Participant C6's and Participant C11's (GAU ward), and Participant C7's and Participant C8's (Irwin ward) friendships and individual confidence and skill sets develop has been fantastic."
VK, Young Music Leader

"The project improved my connecting with others quite a lot through music and songwriting, both with other young people and with the music leaders." Participant D9

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES TO IMPROVE PARTICIPANTS' SELF ESTEEM.

68%* participants showed an improvement on their revisited baseline against the statement 'I feel that I have much to be proud of'. 40% potential progression points achieved.

**based on 41 full baseline responses*

60%* participants showed an improvement on their revisited baseline against the statement 'I've been feeling like I can cope with challenges'. 38% potential progression points achieved.

**based on 40 full baseline responses.*

Of 143 personal goals set and reviewed by participants against the Five Ways To Wellbeing, 61% were met and 24% were exceeded. These have been key to young people recognising their success and progress.

"I cannot express how valuable I found these experiences as a way of seeing the young people really flourish. I found out one young person could sing, and I mean sing, with such power and control it helped me understand them so much better; to see them in a refreshed way, gave me more of an idea of who they were outside of the hospital."
Rebecca Chandler, Assistant Psychologist, Parkview Clinic

"I feel so proud of myself that I finished another song for my sister." Participant C26

"When Participant D11 finished writing her song she was delighted at the end of the session, saying, 'I wrote it, I wrote it, I wrote it!' to her social worker, who came in at the end to listen to the song."
PC Music Leader

HOW FAR WE HAVE MET THE PLUGIN PROJECT AIM:

To embed sustained music provision in the mental health support offer for young people in acute/forensic settings in Birmingham and Coventry and to share our learning and project impact across the West Midlands.

Through discussions and evaluation feedback from partners and staff, we feel that we have made significant progress in meeting this aim, despite some challenges. There is now a level of understanding and commitment across 3 Plugin settings we have worked in (as Cygnet Joyce Parker closed) to continue to invest in music for wellbeing programmes. There is increased awareness around the impact that music can have to aid recovery and how it can help keep people well. Hospitals are all aware of the community based offers that Quench has and are able to signpost people on discharge to continuing provision. There is always more work to do, and we are grateful to be able to continue to have an impact upon the sector through our 4 year In Sync programme, funded by Youth Music.

Priory Hospital Woodbourne have fully funded a 9 month programme for all of their wards, for all ages, in 2025.

Birmingham Children's Hospital's Parkview Clinic (part of Forward Thinking Birmingham) and Ardenleigh FCAMHS have committed increased match funding for Plugin continuation through our new In Sync programme, funded by Youth Music.

Quench has various community programmes that inpatients can be referred to on discharge, e.g., Wavelength (for ages 14-25) and Musical Connections (adults). We've taken learning from Plugin to build our early intervention offer, though our new Overdub Club (for neurodiverse children aged 11-13), a primary-aged offer and a LGBTQIA+ youth focus group and cross arts programme (both funded via the National Lottery). Our range of programmes enable us to offer sustained musical support across ages and between inpatient & community settings.

Forward Thinking Birmingham has fully funded Quench music taster sessions across 24/25 for their Early Intervention for Psychosis Teams.

SHARING LEARNING/ STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

We have shared learning via networks/events/meetings such as:

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 meetings/conferences; Youth Music's Music In Healthcare Network meetings; Birmingham City Council Preparation for Adulthood Team meetings; Autism West Midlands meeting; BVSC's Improving Community Connection for Health & Wellbeing networking event, with social prescribers and voluntary sector organisations; Arts Council Fair and Inclusive Music Midlands consultation, Leicester; Health Exchange Social Prescribing meeting; Resources for Autism meetings; Flourish network meeting of VCFSEs working in partnership with the NHS, Public Health, Social Care and Education; Socially Shared network meeting (including the Power of Podcasting training); ICCR (Integrated Community Care and Recovery Service) Partnership, Operations and Co-production meetings.

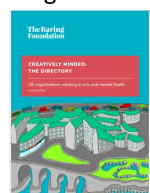
We have published 24 blogs on the [Youth Music Network](#) (currently unavailable to view) and on our [website](#), sharing learning/practice

We contributed to calls for evidence and Plugin was briefly mentioned in these publications

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KEY CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Setting staff training

Organising training for setting staff has been challenging mainly due to the stretched capacity of hospital staff. Trying to find a suitable time where a number of staff were available to attend has been difficult and we have had to be as flexible as possible to enable some training to happen on every site. We have also offered training for staff from multiple settings to attend to make it viable.

To help strengthen impact here, we've developed an induction pack for newly recruited hospital staff, with musical activities they can embed in their practice (as turnover of hospital staff is high). This will also act as a reference resource for any staff member who would like to increase their confidence in including musical activities within their work.

Notification of participant discharge

This still remains a significant challenge. When notified in advance of an upcoming discharge, we complete baselines and evaluations and prepare signposting information to support ongoing music making. Unfortunately, despite attempts to improve things since our last grant, we still sometimes get very little or no notice of a participant being discharged and at times even setting staff face similar frustrations. This affects collection of final evaluation materials, including revisited baselines.

Our team work hard to capture outcomes progression and impact through sessional monitoring reports, so we can generally still analyse the participant's journey and progress, but little notice does mean that our evidence can't be triangulated alongside other evidence of progress. This setting staff are unable to provide MOHOST data for young people who have been discharged, as they then have restricted access to patient records. We need to be better at capturing setting feedback and on a more regular basis from settings, although this is challenging due to setting staff capacity.

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

Settings support/closures

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.

Additionally, during the 3 year programme, we had 2 CAMHS settings close with only a few weeks' notice. The Priory Woodbourne's whole CAMHS unit closed in Oct 2023. As music was so valued at the hospital, we managed to quickly arrange to transfer Plugin to their adult wards, working with young people aged 18-25. Cygnet Joyce Parker Hospital closed completely (Oct 2024), changing to adult only provision. As we could not continue here, we moved our artistic team to Parkview, where demand for Plugin was so high, and this meant we were able to offer increased provision here, engaging more participants.

Having a calm approach so that back up plans can be formulated when the unexpected happens is definitely a lesson we have learnt from Plugin. We feel that we dealt with these major changes well and overall the impact on delivery was minimal.

CD/ playlist production

We have learnt that we definitely need to give longer lead in times to complete our end of year CDs. This is a balance of ensuring that there are enough sessions delivered for music leaders to work with young people to complete/record the original music for the CD/playlist but also for project managers to have the key info, like credits, what the tracks sound like, etc., to create a good CD order, to allow enough time for the CD design, mastering and duplication by the time of the end of year sharings. We need to also allocate more contract time to music leaders to mix tracks outside of sessions.

Although CDs are now becoming obsolete, we find the young people still like to have a tangible record of what they have achieved so putting in the time to produce these is still beneficial and relevant.

KEY SUCCESSSES

The main successes of the project have been:

- 1. The number of young people engaged across the programme.** There is very clearly a need and interest in engaging with creative music making within our inpatient settings. There has also been a vast array of music created across a range of genres, which has only been possible thanks to the varied skillset of our music leader team. Their musical strengths, experience and knowledge across different genres has enabled young people to steer the sessions according to their interests and has supported engagement and musical progression. The quality of the music created has generally been high, especially when considering the limited duration of time/number of sessions that the team have had to work with the majority of participants and the recording environments available. Young people engaged have shown huge amounts of pride in what they have created and this has helped to build self-esteem as well as individual and group morale on the wards.
- 2. The Young Music Leaders employed have shown strong development in their knowledge and skills.** They have all grown in confidence and have taken on increased responsibility across each year. All Young Music Leaders have now progressed to other training or freelance music facilitation opportunities, not just with Quench Arts, but through other music organisations and schools across the West Midlands. Providing opportunities for the emerging workforce through Plugin has really helped strengthen and diversify the sector locally.
- 3. Where setting staff have been able to support sessions on a consistent basis, they have really seen the young people's musical progress over time as well as the wider impact of the project on self-esteem, peer connection and self-expression.** They have also built their own musical skills and confidence through the sessions and by attending training opportunities.
- 4. Bringing in guest performers to perform to, interact with and inspire our young participants has had a huge impact** for very little investment and we are keen to expand this offer to additional performers. We are aware, however, of the need to provide training and support to young people new to this type of work because of the potentially challenging and upsetting nature of the settings that they may visit. We have embedded more training and support into our new In Sync programme. For the past 3 years, we have largely offered the young performer roles to our Young Music Leaders as they have been better prepared to work in these different environments. In our new In Sync programme we will widen our recruitment.
- 5. The fact that all of the 3 settings engaged (as our 4th, Cygnet Joyce Parker closed) all want to continue to engage with Quench Arts on creative music making programmes** is a real testament to how the project has become embedded into the hospitals' provision. All settings are providing more match funding to allow provision to continue, again showing the value they place in it. Also, due to Plugin success, we have been directly contracted by Forward Thinking Birmingham to offer taster sessions for their Early Intervention in Psychosis teams as they have seen the impact that music can have within the mental health sector.
- 6. Quench Arts has refined its Theory of Change** and is proud to be able to support people on our programmes across a number of transitions e.g., from inpatient to the community; from childhood to adulthood. Plugin has been a key programme within our plans and we are delighted that it will be continuing through our In Sync funding from Youth Music. We have added early intervention programmes and social prescribing offers into our work as relevant to our learning through this grant.
- 7. Despite Cygnet Joyce Parker Hospital closing during Plugin, by expanding our work into Coventry we have been able to build closer links with Coventry Music Hub and the new Heart of England Music Hub** (covering Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull), of which we are a hub partner. This new music hub is keen to develop links with Quench Arts and this is largely down to us developing the relationship through the Plugin project.

MUSIC FACILITATION TIPS

We have reflected on our learning and asked our Plugin team to suggest tips that they could give to other staff new to working in mental health inpatient settings in the future. Here are some suggestions:

- 1. Don't be afraid to let the session flow and move somewhere different** (to what you initially expected or planned). Follow the participant and reassure them that they can come back to things if they want/need to move onto something else.
- 2. Be ready to record**, even in participants' first sessions, in case they don't or can't come back again. It is useful to have one track that any young person can very quickly add an element to (such as singing a chorus or adding a simple beat), so that they can gain a sense of achievement in being represented on a track, even if they weren't able to engage for long. Despite the above, remember that the process should always be more important than any musical documentation. If a participant doesn't want to record, then that is fine. Your facilitation should always support their musical progression and enjoyment as a priority.
- 3. Encourage the participants (where allowable) to share and work with each other** outside of the sessions as well as within the sessions. Set tasks to keep people engaged between sessions and to support motivation and progression.
- 4. To keep people engaged through group work, consider simple ways to incorporate multiple contributions and use technology to support this where you can.** For example, participants offering single words on a theme can be easily and quickly recorded with a Logic Quick Sampler plugin which participants can then turn into melodies.
- 5. Finding ways to engage people non-verbally initially can create ways in.**
- 6. Try to establish what young people like in the music they listen to and listen to the genre as much as you can.** If your setting doesn't have/allow internet access, try to bring reference tracks and new material to widen their listening experiences into the setting on a USB stick.
- 7. Don't underestimate the time that it might take to build trust and rapport with a participant.** Sometimes it might take several weeks for a young person to build up the confidence to come and look in on a session before they begin to engage. Showing up regularly and continuing to offer the opportunity to engage, even if someone has declined previously, is really important.
- 8. Developing musical skills and techniques through covers can be really useful and motivating** but there are often copyright limitations with recording these. To initiate creative work and composition, it can be motivating to ask young people to create new lyrics authentic to their own experience, or to use elements of the tracks they like as inspiration for new work. Making (and demonstrating) the creative process to be as simple as possible can really help, as can explaining the focus of the project and how the creative music making process can help build resilience and assist recovery. Our visiting guest performers showcasing their original music and talking about their inspiration here has really helped highlight the potential and impact of creating original material.
- 9. Try to focus on the positives from sessions.** Even if a young person has only engaged in a session for 5 minutes with you, this might be 5 minutes more than they are engaging in other activity. If someone needs to leave after a short while then it can be really positive that they feel comfortable to be able to communicate this with you.
- 10. The need for flexibility when working within CAMHS wards is of paramount importance.** For instance, if there has been an incident on a ward before you arrive, you may need to be adaptable and unfazed to work with new people on different wards, despite what you originally planned for the session.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TIPS

- 1. Due to the staff turnover in hospital settings, it's useful to capture any staff feedback during (or at the end of) each session** in case they are not present to give in depth reflection at the end of the project to help evidence project impact.
- 2. Ensure music leaders allow time within the sessions to involve young people in the final mixing of their tracks.** This builds young people's skills and awareness of what is involved in producing a final recording and can be quite time-consuming to do outside of project sessions if you have multiple participants. It also gives participants full ownership over the final sound of their track.
- 3. Allow enough time to get a good quality CD/playlist produced for the end of each year.** Ensure all staff have additional mixing time in their contracts and set deadlines for when project managers need to have information like track titles and credits, etc., earlier than you think you need them. This will allow time to properly consider the CD/playlist order, get the artwork completed, and allow for mastering and duplication. With the number of tracks we had submitted in 2025, we did not allow enough time between the submission deadlines and hospital sharing events, which raised the stress levels for project managers when the CDs were only delivered on the day of the 1st sharing!
- 4. For project managers, when estimating the time needed to coordinate a programme, always add some additional contingency time for unexpected occurrences.** We have needed significant additional coordination time throughout Plugin, for instance when hospitals closed and we needed to formulate new plans.
- 5. Track the impact of the project using easily accessible collation tools, such as Excel, to record outcome progress.** If information is captured and recorded on a weekly basis, it can give a thorough picture of progress over time when analysed. It may a lot of investment of time in the initial stage to set up appropriate templates bespoke to your needs, but that time is well spent if it saves you time at the evaluation stage and helps build stronger impact evidence and case studies. We are looking at new ways to streamline our monitoring and data collection across the team so that we can be more time-efficient, such as the use of Google Forms for sessional monitoring forms rather than standalone Word docs.
- 6. Ensure that your team are well supported and that project managers are easily contactable and approachable.** Working within the mental health sector is challenging and your artistic team are at the heart of this. They will be encountering difficult scenarios which could affect their own mental wellbeing and ensuring that your team keep well is of paramount importance as this will impact on the support they can provide others, including participants. Providing a way for them to offload after a session is really important so that they don't dwell on any difficulties or challenges. Providing supervision and reflection opportunities for the team to come together too for peer support is crucial.
- 7. Don't just rely upon 1 contact within a hospital setting.** Hospital staff seem to move on from roles often and it's crucial to have a number of contacts who understand the project that you can call upon if the need arises. Having partnership contracts which are signed by 2 people within a setting is a beneficial way to build a relationship from the outset.
- 8. Ensure that you have some budget allocated for equipment upgrades, plugins & repairs.** Especially if you're working with any kind of technology, things do seem to break or need updating quite regularly. Having some budget to ensure that samples/ sounds can be utilised is something we have learnt is needed over the course of the programme so we are current and not just relying upon the basic soundbanks provided with Logic/ Ableton etc.
- 9. Try to provide signposting options for inpatients who are being discharged.** Transitions can be really daunting but if young people know they can keep working with you or engaging with music, they will be able to cope better with these changes.
- 10. Remember to have fun** and enjoy the work you're doing whether you're a music leader or project manager. Being passionate about what you do is infectious! .