

New Dynamics of Ageing Programme

Music for Life Research Project

Promoting social engagement and well-being in older people through community supported participation in musical activities

Research Team:

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Partners:

Guildhall Connect, Guildhall School of Music & Drama; Silver Programme, The Sage Gateshead; Music Department, Westminster Adult Education Service

What is MUSIC FOR LIFE?

The **MUSIC FOR LIFE PROJECT** researched the role of music in people's lives and the impact of participation in music-making. There has been little prior research exploring the potential for music-making to make a significant contribution to older people's quality of life.

Aims

- (i) explore and understand the role of music-making in the lives of older people;
- (ii) examine the potential link between participation in music activities and the improvement of well-being of older people;
- (iii) learn about potential wider benefits to families and communities when older people engage in music-making;
- (iv) learn about the processes through which barriers may be overcome and benefits may be maximized.

Methods

Questionnaires before and after 9 months of participation in musical activities
Quality of life measures: CASP-12; Basic Needs Scales
Interviews, Focus Group discussions
Observations

Participants

N = 451: musicians n=349 (29% beginners);
Control group (in non-music activities) n=102;
Age 43-94; 77% White British; 76% Female.

Project Partners

- **The Sage, Gateshead**, where the weekly 'Silver Programme' actively involves over 500 people in various music activities including singing of all kinds, steel pans, African drumming, guitars, recorder, folk ensemble, ukuleles, brass, music theory and samba.
- **The Guildhall Connect Project**, which runs community music projects in East London with people from a wide range of backgrounds, ages and experiences. Its inclusive approach embraces everything from classical to popular music, western and non-western genres; emphasis is put on activities where participants create and perform music together.
- **The Music Department of the Westminster Adult Education Services (WAES)**, which offers a range of community music activities for older people. The WAES music programme caters for students at all levels of expertise. Courses in a range of musical genres are offered, specialising in singing, playing instruments, sound engineering and using sequencers, music theory and composing.

It is a joy to be made to concentrate, to think quickly, to enjoy singing and have fun and make new friends

Key Findings

Quality of life measures

- Measures of well being were consistently higher amongst the music participants (n=398) than amongst the control group (n=102).
- There was either no change or positive change over time on the Casp-12 quality of life scales and Deci and Ryan *Basic Needs Scales* (NS).
- **Comparison between 3rd and 4th Age:**
 - Autonomy, Pleasure, Relatedness sub-scales (NS)
 - Control, Self-realisation, Competence sub-scales: 4th age lower

For many years I have suffered periodic bouts of depression. Since being welcomed into the Silver Programme I am happy to report that I have been depression free. Unless you have this condition you cannot imagine what a blessed relief it is to be without it for almost a year.

Benefits

Social: Structure, Belonging, Community, Intergenerational contact, Fun

Health: Vitality, Mental Health, Mobility, Feeling Rejuvenated

Cognitive: Challenge, Skills, Progression, Concentration, Memory

Emotional: Protection against stress, Protection against depression, Sense of purpose, Positive feelings, Support following bereavement, Confidence, Creativity

Barriers to participation

- Structural: Location, Time of day, Financial
- Access to information
- Dispositional: lack of confidence
- Social: caring responsibility, social roles

Making music helped me to know that whatever age you are there is still something new and magic out there to enjoy.

Publications and events

- Findings from this research were presented at the *International Society for Music Education conference* in Beijing in July 2010; the *British Psychological Society Education Section conference*, Milton Keynes, November, 2010; *Research in Music Education conference*, Exeter, April 2011; and the *Leading Music Education International Conference*, Canada, 2011.
- The project is featured in a book celebrating the Year of Music, published by the Institute of Education.
- Participating groups performed at the Barbican Arts Centre, London, on 5th May.
- Conferences and events at the Institute of Education (October 2010, April 2011) and the Sage Gateshead (July 2010) and at the Southbank Centre, London (October 2010) included live and video performances of some of the musical groups participating in the project and dissemination of the research findings.
- Forthcoming conferences: International Association for Gerontology and Geriatrics, Bologna 2011; British Psychological Society, Glasgow 2011; British Society of Gerontology, Plymouth 2011.

My husband died suddenly over 2 years ago and I found the participation in the singing and an instrumental group was one of the greatest supports in my life. Singing is always uplifting and it is difficult to be sad while playing the ukulele.

For further information contact:

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