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

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Background



Little attention has been paid to the potential for music-making to effect a contribution to the quality of life of older people

Possible benefits of music making

- **Personal motivations (self-expression, recreation, self-improvement, use of leisure time)**
- **Musical motivations (love of music, performing for oneself and others, learning more about music)**
- **Social motivations (meeting new people, being with friends, sense of belonging) (Coffman, 2002)**
- **Spirituality (Hinkle, 1988)**
- **Health benefits of singing (immune system, exercise, breathing, posture) (Clift et al., 2008)**

Music and well-being

‘In addition to creative expression, the arts offer a whole range of personal benefits for older people themselves and to the wider community in its relationship to older people. It is even possible that use of the arts could decrease expenditure for the NHS. ...the current economic climate makes it even more important to try to do this ...’

(Baring Foundation, 2009)

Aims

To explore the way in which participating in creative music making activities can enhance the lives of older people;

To consider the extent to which this may impact on social, emotional and cognitive well-being

To consider the specific processes through which this occurs

Examples of musical activities (video)



Design

Multi-methods approach

3 case studies

Control groups where possible with other activities

Comparisons within and between groups

Case studies



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The Sage Gateshead – Over 500 people aged 50+ engage in weekly activities (mainly white population, has satellite classes which widen participation, has intergenerational classes)



Connect programme of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama - community projects in East London Sheltered Housing (one intergenerational project, one project with novices aged over 50, strong ethnic mix)



Music Department of Westminster Adult Education Service



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mixed-generation choir
over 50s singing
groups
over 50s music
appreciation class
over 50s keyboard
class

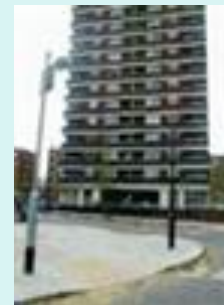


Non-music control group



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- Language classes (4)**
- Art or craft classes (5)**
- Yoga**
- Social support (2)**
- Book group**
- Social club members**



Measures

Pre and post questionnaires including:

CASP-12 quality of life measure (subscales for control, autonomy, pleasure and self-realization)

Basic psychological needs scales including sub-scales for autonomy, competence and relatedness

Nature and frequency of activity documented, perceived benefits, difficulties experienced, how might be improved

Qualitative data

- **Focus group interviews to explore experiences in greater depth (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, level of musical expertise)**
- **Ten participants from each case study selected for in depth study – case histories – family member also interviewed**
- **Musicians acting as teachers/facilitators given questionnaires, sample were interviewed**

What we asked participants

Some contextual questions

Previous and current engagement in activities

Views on barriers to participation and how to overcome them

Reasons for participating

Why music?

Issues related to teaching and learning

Observations

Videos made of a range of musical activities followed by interviews

Where performances given videos made of these

The sample

451 participants

349 musicians

102 non-musicians

The Sage Gateshead 290

Guildhall 16

WAES musicians 31

Age range 43 to 94 most between 60 and 80

Overall Male 86 Female 341

Most white British (77%)



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What our participants say 'Talking Heads'

For people like me who live alone outside activities are very important, if not essential part of life. They give us a chance to meet people, make new friends, socialise as well as learning new skills which give us a sense of achievement.

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

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 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.

KEY FINDINGS - 1



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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:

- CASP-12 Autonomy or Pleasure (NS)
- Casp-12 Control and Self-realisation – 4th age lower
- Deci and Ryan Autonomy and Relatedness (NS)
- Deci and Ryan Competence – 4th age lower

KEY FINDINGS – 2: Benefits



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Social:

Structure
Belonging
Community
Intergenerational contact
Fun

Cognitive:

Challenge
Skills
Achievement
Concentration
Memory

Health:

Vitality
Mental health
Mobility
Feeling rejuvenated

Emotional:

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

Key Findings – 3: Barriers



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STRUCTURAL I wish it was during the day, I really do, ... I don't like going out in the dark alone ...

People are frightened of it because they think 'oh, we've got to pay money'.

DISPOSITIONAL
Motivation for the first time is THE hardest thing

The main barrier is having the guts to come out of the house to a new group of people

Social This is the greatest opportunity that I have ever had to express my musical talents. Before it always felt that it was an elitist sphere.

As a full time carer I sometimes find it difficult to attend

INFORMATION
It was a year after I retired that I actually saw this ... I wouldn't have known about it if I hadn't seen the leaflet at the library

Key Findings – 4: Facilitators



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Facilitators of musical activities with older people had specific training needs but few opportunities for CPD.

Effective facilitators:

- Played key role in fostering positive outcomes
- Rejected deficit model of ageing
- Worked towards goals
- Provided opportunities for performance
- Were professional and credible
- Acknowledged prior experience and knowledge of participants
- Worked together with participants in choosing relevant repertoire

it must save the health service and the social services an enormous amount if they put these in place everywhere ... it must be good for our health ... I think music is therapy, you know. I think it can really pick you right up.





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