



Musical Connections Hubs



Impact Report



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**ARTS COUNCIL
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The Goodenough Charitable Trust



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Note: Participant names throughout this report have been coded to ensure anonymity.

Musical Connections Activity Summary (June 2017 – Sept 2019)

This report covers activity funded predominantly through an Organisational Development grant that Quench Arts was awarded from Arts Council England via a Grants for the Arts application, with match funding from Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust's (BSMHFT) Caring Minds Charity, The Goodenough Charitable Trust, The Goldieslie Lodge, Walmley Golf Club and the Great Midlands Fun Run plus Colin Quiller, father of a long-term member of the project. The overall grant focus was to support research and development to enable Quench Arts to sustain and expand our ***participatory music-making activity for isolated and vulnerable adults who wouldn't otherwise engage in the arts.***

This report focuses on the evaluation of new activity delivered under the banner of 'Musical Connections Hubs', though will also touch on activities provided by our Music Support Worker role as well as the wider impact of the funding in regards to future participatory opportunities for isolated and vulnerable adults.

The ***Musical Connections Hubs*** programme was established to action-research new, sustainable models of artistic delivery, primarily developing outreach partnerships with 5 new integrated community mental health hubs across Birmingham (North, South, East and West) and Solihull (called 'Musical Connections Hubs').

Musical Connections Hubs was a music programme for vulnerable and isolated adults (including mental health service users) living in Birmingham and Solihull. This Hub project developed the previous successful Musical Connections model into an outreach format, in order to reach more people not accessing the arts. The programme consisted of group music-making sessions to build people's **confidence, resilience and sense of wellbeing, connecting participants** with others with similar interests. Activity included:

- 1 monthly half day music session per hub (this was initially intended to be able to cover a mixture of group/individual sessions over a period of 16 months, according to the needs and wishes of each hub but, in reality, was nearly always used as a group session. Generally, this structure was voted on by each group of participants in order to engage more people in the project sessions, for a longer period of time, rather than just having 1 hour per month per individual which would benefit only a small number of people. Participants also preferred to have the opportunity for social interaction.)
- These sessions were open to existing Musical Connections members and newly recruited participants living locally to each hub. We initially planned to engage up to 30 participants per hub, holding 2 group sessions in that half day period of 1.5 hours each where necessary. In reality, attendance levels only ever got to the stage of needing to consider splitting into 2 shorter sessions in the Longbridge Hub, and in fact this didn't end up happening. All hubs ended up running longer monthly sessions of 3 hours, engaging the whole group.
- An informal performance (sharing) for participants to perform the music created in their hub.

- Additional opportunities for Musical Connections Hubs participants to attend and/or perform at 5 quarterly Musical Connections fundraising events. Each hub had this opportunity in place of one of the hubs' monthly sessions (so there were in fact, 15 sessions delivered per hub, plus an external performance (and dress rehearsal)).
- Sharing of music created digitally online via Quench Arts' Soundcloud page.

Overall Grant Focus

To support research and development to enable Quench Arts to sustain and expand our participatory music-making activity for isolated and vulnerable adults who wouldn't otherwise engage in the arts.

Musical Connections Hubs Aim

To action-research new, sustainable models of artistic delivery, primarily developing outreach partnerships with 5 new integrated community mental health hubs across Birmingham (North, South, East and West) and Solihull (called Musical Connections Hubs).

Summary of Achievements

The aims above have been achieved through the programme delivery. This report reflects on the impact that activities have had upon participants and the statistics relating to engagement in the project. Although we did not meet our original target of 30 people attending per hub, we did reach many people who would not otherwise have engaged in participatory arts activities due to confidence, travel issues and support needs. Having project sessions scheduled in different locations helped those not able to travel to our base in Winson Green to access music sessions and the referral arrangements with BSMHFT enabled us to engage and target recruitment towards specific vulnerable adults with mental health conditions in each location who would not be able to access mainstream provision.

The primary focus of our delivery was to pilot a new model of Musical Connections in 5 identified areas across Birmingham and Solihull and, through our partnership with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, this was achieved. Some of these hubs worked better than others, as this report highlights, and there were particularly high levels of referrals to the project from the Longbridge area of the city, possibly because of the distance otherwise required for people to travel to other opportunities in the city centre, but also potentially because of higher levels of staff engagement here. Another key success related to the Handsworth Hub, where a core group of participants were fully engaged and excelled through accessing wider project performance opportunities. Both the Yardley Hub and Northfield Hubs also had a small but core group of participants who developed significantly through the programme.

The Musical Connections Hubs project has been a great opportunity for Quench Arts to test out a different model and much learning has taken place, as can be seen in the 'Reflections and Lessons Learnt' section.

We asked our artistic team to comment on the success of the Musical Connections Hubs project in meeting its aims. Comments included:

"Musical Connections has been extremely successful in term of meeting the outcomes, and has most certainly developed participants' confidence, resilience and sense of wellbeing, and connected them with others with similar interests."

Lead Artist MH (Handsworth)

"Overall, it has been successful. As well as leading Yardley hub for the duration of the project, I have worked at least one session at the other hubs. I'm not sure we engaged 30 participants in each hub, but we have been successful in engaging both existing project members and new recruits. I've seen three hubs share original material at the end of project fundraiser in September 2019 and there are several recordings online of original material made across the hubs. The one big advantage of this the model is that people interested in the project have been able to join without waiting up to a year (which was the case in the old model). Also, there has been more of a chance that participants have had to travel less distance to attend sessions than before, when everyone came to our venue in Winson Green."

Lead Artist PCa (Yardley)

"Highly successful in the delivery of all planned group sessions and final sharing session, in the recording and uploading of all music recorded and in the measuring of impact on participants. Partially successful in reaching more people not currently accessing the arts. Only partially because we only reached 15 out of the target of 30 participants for our hub."

Lead Artist PCh (Erdington)

"The activity was scheduled and advertised each month - even if they were badly attended, as was the case in Solihull (the hub I worked in). Existing Musical Connections members attended, and it kept them in touch with the project and other social events connected to the sessions. When we did have people, they were proud of the music that was created. It was recorded and uploaded, and the individuals were keen to share it with family and friends."

Lead Artist JS (Solihull)

"I think the project was hugely successful. We worked with vulnerable adults to help them to create the music that they wanted to create, we facilitated collaborations, song writing, musical instrument skill learning and development, band practice, audio recording and production, singing and rapping. We boosted confidence, supported learning and encouraged social confidence."

Lead Artist SW (Longbridge)

Statistics

Overall the project benefitted 179 isolated, vulnerable and/or disabled adults in participatory music activity. This included:

- 30 individuals through the Musical Connections 'Music Support Worker' role. The Music Support Worker was employed for 1 day a week across the project duration to predominantly support longer-term Musical Connections members from the previous incarnation of the project. The role provides 1-to-1 musical support for those unable to access group activity and also additional musical support to developing project members in forming music ensembles and bands, enabling them to progress to mainstream performance opportunities.
- 81 individuals through the Musical Connections Hubs sessions.

As 15 individuals were engaged in both aspects of the project, the total number of **new** individuals benefitting through the participatory activity was 66 people.

In regards to other beneficiaries of the grant, an additional 24 longer-term Musical Connections members benefitted from the wider elements of the programme (e.g., from project newsletters, accessing activities online/social media, attending events). In total, therefore, 54 existing Musical Connections members benefitted from the activity.

59 extra participants engaged in regional Musical Connections taster sessions, bringing the total number of participants benefitting from the grant to 179 people.

Musical Connections Hubs Engagement:

The breakdown of referral numbers which then progressed to some session attendance per hub was as follows:

Handsworth Hub (Orsborne House):

13 New Referrals

3 Longstanding Musical Connections Members:

Yardley Hub (Creative Support):

15 New Referrals

3 Longstanding Musical Connections Members:

Erdington Hub (Northcroft Hospital):

13 New Referrals

2 Longstanding Musical Connections Members:

Lyndon Hub (Solihull):

6 New Referrals

4 Longstanding Musical Connections Members:

Longbridge Hub (Longbridge CMHT):

19 New Referrals

3 Longstanding Musical Connections Members.

Individuals who were referred but then didn't attend any sessions have not been counted in the statistics above.

Overall, 75 sessions of 3 hours were delivered in total across the 5 hubs, including the setting sharing events in Handsworth, Yardley, Erdington and Longbridge Hubs. Originally we had planned 16 sessions per hub, but this changed to 15 sessions in order to enable us to pay the music leaders from each hub to support hub members' performances at our Musical Connections fundraising gig. We felt that this was beneficial in order to enable participants from each group to meet and in order to provide performance opportunities in mainstream venues, widening participants' artistic engagement.

Through the Music Support Worker role, the following activities were delivered:

- Number of individual 1-to-1 sessions (benefitting 30 participants): 181
- Number of collaborative sessions: 131
- Number of people involved in collaborative sessions: 22
- Number of hours of collaborative session delivery: 278 hours (max duration 3 hours)
- Number of external events supported with performances: 42 (including: Arts All Over The Place events; Community Vibe gigs; Creative Support events; BSMHFT Fun Days; Acocks Green Carnival; ACMC Summer Fun Day; The Choir With No Name's Festival With No Name; Music on the Roof Micro Festival). Please note, multiple bands playing at the same event counts as 1 event.

5 Musical Connections fundraisers were also held, with guest artists including:

- Katy Bennett
- Steve Ison (Music Support Worker)
- Abi Budgen
- The Katies
- The Strangest Feeling
- Josh Wunderlich

52 Musical Connections members performed at these fundraisers, including Musical Connections bands:

- ADHD
- Cosmic Soul
- The Devilators
- The Paul Lawrence Experience & Band
- Handsworth Hub (2 separate performances)
- Yardley Hub
- Erdington Hub

The total audience attendance obtained through the project included (approx.):

- Handsworth Hub Sharing, 16/9/19: 35
- Yardley Hub Sharing, 17/9/19: 20
- Erdington Hub Sharing, 18/9/19: 45
- Longbridge Hub Sharing, 20/9/19: 30

- Musical Connections Fundraiser 1 (Thimblemill Library, 27/10/18): 35
- Musical Connections Fundraiser 2 (Thimblemill Library, 14/12/18): 55
- Musical Connections Fundraiser 3 (The Edge, Digbeth, 3/5/19): 60
- Musical Connections Fundraiser 4 (The Edge, Digbeth, 5/7/19): 25
- Musical Connections Fundraiser 5 (Kitchen Garden Cafe, Kings Heath, 13/9/19): 60

Audience reached through external performance opportunities: 42 events with an average of 50 audience = 2100

Total audience numbers engaged through the programme = 2465*

Please note that these are attendance numbers rather than the number of different individuals attending as it was not possible to collect this information.

Analysis of Participant Progress against Project Outcomes

Musical Connections Hubs Member Baseline Analysis

The following is a summary impact analysis of evaluation material collected from Musical Connections Hubs members via a creative baseline template. This template was completed by members with the support of their music leaders at the beginning and then end of the project to help measure distance travelled, with 'feelings checkers' completed quarterly. The statistics below must be read in conjunction with the completed case study information in order to gain a true picture of the project impact, as the results from this type of questioning can vary considerably depending on a members' situation at the time, particularly where the member has a mental health condition.

In the statistics below we refer to 'collective potential progression points'. By this term we mean the total available number of points that the cohort of participants could gain overall across the year, after taking their initial baseline scores into account. As an example, on a scale of 1 to 10, if a person's first baseline was a 3 then they had the potential to progress 7 points by the end of the year. Combining the numbers from every participant in regards to their available progression points on the scale then give us the total number of possible 'collective potential progression points'. We then work out then percentage of available progression achieved at the end of the year as a cohort. This statistic is very useful where a participant may have given an initial baseline score at the higher end of the scale and therefore have limited room to increase their score at the end of the project, which then affects the 'numbers improving' percentage.

The following data analyses the responses of a sample group of 20 members completing baseline documents at the beginning and then end of the project and includes some artist comments. Where relevant, we also include 'Feelings Checker' activity statistics, which were based on a scale of 1-5. Please also refer to the case studies.

Outcome 1:

Vulnerable and isolated adults will make musical progress through the project.

95% showed improvement in the statement, 'I find it easy to sing/play in front of others and express myself through music'. The most progress was an increase of 8 points on a scale of 1-10. The average progression per participant was 3.8 points. 25% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

74% showed improvement in the statement, '**How do you feel about your artistic skills at the moment?**' The most progress was an increase of 3 points on a scale of 1-5. The average progression per participant was 1.1 points on a scale of 1-5. 57% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

"Participant LB had never done anything musical before and got to the stage where she could play piano along with a live band."

Lead Artist SW

Outcome 2:

Vulnerable and isolated adults will make personal, social and emotional progress through the project.

90% showed improvement in the statement, 'I feel valued and accepted'. The most progress was an increase of 9 points on a scale of 1-10. The average progression per participant was 4 points. 26% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

80% showed improvement in the statement, 'How do you feel about your level of social confidence at the moment?' The most progress was an increase of 3 points on a scale of 1-5. The average progression per participant was 1.4 points on a scale of 1-5. 57% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

"There was a particularly powerful session where a participant was able to use music and lyrics to express how he felt on an incredibly difficult and emotional situation. There were tears throughout the session, but he left saying that he felt so much more positive about the situation than he ever had before."

Lead Artist JS

Outcome 3:

Vulnerable and isolated adults will show growth in regards to confidence, resilience and sense of wellbeing.

95% showed improvement in the statement, 'I can achieve what I want to'. The most progress was an increase of 9 points on a scale of 1-10. The average progression per participant was 3.5 points. 23% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

90% stayed the same or showed improvement in the statement, 'I am able to do things as well as other people'. The most progress was an increase of 8 points on a

scale of 1-10. The average progression per participant was 3.7 points. 24% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

74% showed improvement in the statement, 'How do you feel about your health and wellbeing at the moment?' The most progress was an increase of 3 points on a scale of 1-5. The average progression per participant was 1.1 points on a scale of 1-5. 46% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

“Participant EF - before March she would often be the only female in the group. This also occurred in August when the other two regular females were away. At this session she commented that before joining Musical Connections she'd have never been able to sing out loud in a group of men. Now she does so comfortably and is happy to take solos. A very tangible growth in confidence.”

Lead Artist PCh

Outcome 4:

Vulnerable and isolated adults will build their social skills and connections through the project.

80% showed improvement in the statement, 'I find it easy to work with other people and I can compromise'. The most progress was an increase of 9 points on a scale of 1-10. The average progression per participant was 3.7 points. 24% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

90% showed improvement in the statement, 'I often take part in local positive activities related to my interests'. The most progress was an increase of 9 points on a scale of 1-10. The average progression per participant was 3.5 points. 23% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

84% showed improvement in the statement, 'How do you feel about your opportunities to connect with other people through music at the moment?' The most progress was an increase of 4 points on a scale of 1-5. The average progression per participant was 1.8 points on a scale of 1-5. 69% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

“As a result of the Hub fundraising gigs, HA connected with YA (from Yardley Hub) and has invited YA to be in his band. This is fabulous for both men. HA heard YA playing and was able to assess that musically and personally, YA would be a great influence and band member.”

Lead Artist MH

How The Project Has Helped Members with the Five Ways to Wellbeing

For this section of the baseline activity, participants were asked (in their 2nd or 3rd session) to think about how the project might help them with each of the Five Ways to Wellbeing (New Economics Foundation) and then to reflect on these at the end of the project activity. Participants' comments and reflections are stated below, in their own words and these also relate to the outcomes above.

Connect With Others

Initial comments:

- Gives me an opportunity to work on music tasks. Creating something through or with other people.
- In group sessions, as you have to be involved.
- It's great to be able to work with others with musical minds.
- Gives me confidence.
- I am more sociable. I like to meet up with family and friends on a regular basis.
- I connect with a lot of people. I've made loads of friends.
- Meeting and working with new people - some of whom aren't already proficient musicians.
- Playing together with others and being aware of what they are playing.
- I have found writing music with others easiest.
- Making creative decisions and working as part of a band.

End of Sept 2019 Comments:

- (It's helped) as I do more activities such as short courses at Fircroft College; some plans to do music with others - this has made me work with others and thus less isolated.
- Made new friends.
- Made me do it more (connect with others). Made friends.
- I have made friends.
- I visit friends occasionally and I can talk to others easily.
- Spending time with others and making music with my friends.
- Being in a team.
- I've found taking part, rather than sitting and watching, probably the best part.
- Love mixing with other musicians.

Keep Learning

Initial comments:

- Helped me formulate goals. 2 strands of MC. 1 x songwriting groups + 1 x performances. Develop with both set of skills, progressing musically, keyboard, vocal, guitar, recording.
- Meeting different people and all the different types of music.
- I learn a lot when at the activities.
- I am inspired to keep learning because of Musical Connections. I attended a mindfulness course recently.
- Helps me to understand keys and chords. Helping me to work music out to songs I hear.
- He has been quite set in his ways with how he writes music, so good for him to try and few different techniques and ideas (support worker).
- Learning how to play guitar and djembe.
- Practising instrument more than before.
- Learning keyboard at home.
- Helped connect through music. Find it easier to enjoy and understand music since been here. Made friends with (another member) and acquaintances - friends whilst at MC.

- Have confidence that people will take and be interested in my ideas.
- Yes. It's helped me to find new friends.

End of Sept 2019 Comments:

- Learning how to sing and use my voice, learning musical theory. Harmony. How to play guitar and keyboards. Learning how to use music technology to make music.
- Helped me realise that I can sometimes overcome fear.
- Learning how to write songs.
- Basic keyboard - never done before.
- Learning instruments and started songwriting.
- I hope to go on a stress management course and tai chi.
- In the future I'd like to learn to read music.
- Learning to play different chords I not sure to play.
- Been absolutely wonderful.
- Always room to learn, even at 65.
- (Music leader) is amazing - got me doing bass which I didn't do before. I just played live which I didn't think I'd do. Taken up drum lessons.
- Learning to try different things. Experimenting with different music styles and instruments.
- Home recording.

Be Mindful

Initial comments:

- MC has given me greater purpose in life, working on my goals.
- Coming to group sessions helps keep the mind from worrying.
- Always respectful to others.
- I am more mindful because of Musical Connections. My thoughts are positive. I am aware of what am doing.
- When I come to MC it helps me relax and stop rushing around.
- Learning to sometimes give up what he wants in order to work along with others (support worker).
- Accept our music.
- Listen to others' ideas.
- Playing keyboard.

End of Sept 2019 Comments:

- More focussed, able to practise for hours, my mind wonders less; greater general awareness of myself and others. How my actions can affect others.
- Gives me positive feeling.
- Been aware of other abilities and learn from them and gives me more confidence.
- Brought it back on how to work with other people in a group.
- Helped with band and choirs.
- I am mindful of Musical Connections and my 1-to-1 with Steve.
- I know how I play my Uke(lele) on what others done ready to do it (sic).
- Learning from others.
- Good for your mind.

- Gives chance to express yourself whatever your ability and see others and realise they can do it.
- Helped with confidence which has helped my concentration.
- I like to give other people and chance and listen to them.

Give To Others

Initial comments:

- Listening to performances, constructive feedback. Playing in other members' bands.
- Small groups mean everyone is involved - being able to talk to new members who come for the 1st time and share my MC experience.
- (Participant) is open to helping others (support worker).
- Hope I give confidence to others.
- Because of my singing I feel happier and it enables me to be kind and give to others.
- Improves my confidence in helping other people. For example, if someone is struggling with what they are doing, I know what to say to them.
- A high standard of guitar player, he's been able to share some of those skills with others as well as using them in recordings to embellish others' ideas (support worker).
- Share my music. Play with them.
- Creative ideas.
- With ideas and playing others my music.

End of Sept 2019 Comments:

- Yes, I have been able to give to others, i.e., encourage others; give some support; give some time, play instruments to support others' songwriting. Also, entertain people - all them to forget their problems.
- Give more ideas about songwriting - my aim (giving their ideas to help others with songwriting helps them with their own songwriting).
- Give myself to others to make friends.
- I have been able to contribute to others.
- I help others - a family member and friends. I like to be positive.
- Giving some ideas for anyone in the Musical Connections team!
- Meeting lots of different people from different backgrounds.
- Love to give my musical energy to beginners.
- Helped to make songs. Given an input into songwriting.
- Share music and songs with audiences. Got the musical skills to start supporting friends that are trying music.
- I like to encourage people to develop their skills.

Get Active

Initial comments:

- Set goals, working on them. It makes me active, very active, MC group and seeing (the Music Support Worker) keeps everything ticking over.
- Doing performances.
- Musical Connections has helped me get out of my flat and be creative.
- Feeling good about myself.

- I now take part in other musical events. I am more active, and I am positive in my daily walking.
- MC encourages me to be more active in making new songs.
- He has not been attending other music sessions recently, so this is helping him to play again (support worker).
- Get out of the house.
- Gets me out.
- Helped me with keyboard skills, working in a group.

End of Sept 2019 Comments:

- I am much more active than I was. For example, I'm in two choirs and have performed at several open mics off my own bat. Also, I do more other non-musical activities, e.g. keep fit.
- Going to other music events like Brainstorm.
- Given confidence to travel on new bus routes - worried before.
- Come out the house more. More performances.
- More confident.
- More active with creativity and people.
- Music improves mental wellbeing and general outlook on life.
- I go to the gym very soon. I walk every day 5000 steps at least.
- Coming to the Connections (Musical Connections) and Switch too (a Mac Makes Music group that the participant has recently joined).
- Just to get out and socialise has been great fun.
- Keeps my body working.
- Since I've known R (MC member) through MC we go out busking and I'm learning to play drums. Have taken up drum lessons in the last year. Wouldn't have done this without MC.
- Inspired me to get out and make music.
- Giggling musician.

"I am inspired to keep learning because of Musical Connections."

Participant BB



Musical Connections Hubs Participant Evaluation Form Analysis

The Hub Group Sessions

What did you think of these sessions?

- Poor: 0%
- Ok: 0%
- Good: 17%
- Very Good: 83%

Please explain your answer:

- The sessions were good, once a month, occasionally the group was a bit small, but we achieved a lot.
- Enjoyable. Obtained talent.
- We were able to understand what was expected.
- It was great to create the songs with (music leaders) and the group.
- More confident.
- I'm so glad I took part. It's given me more confidence and (I'm) more musical.
- It was very good. We had a lot less people and so it was like a 1 to 1 session. I would have liked to have more people at the hub.
- Meeting new people and making music with everyone.
- Lots of fun.
- Very important for confidence and felt enjoyable throughout.
- Shame I couldn't get to all of them.

Were you satisfied with the number of sessions?

- Too few: 35%
- Just right: 65%
- Too many: 0%

Did you achieve what you hoped to achieve in these sessions?

- No: 0%
- Partly: 6%
- Yes: 87%
- More than I expected: 7%

What did you particularly like about the hub sessions?

- They were local, based in the community, creative - we usually wrote a song and recorded it.
- People working together. Liked venue.
- Friendly.
- They were enjoyable.
- The opportunity to express myself on the guitar and how the great songs came together.
- Bonding together. Learning from each other.
- The creativity around music, writing songs and comradeship.
- Creativity, brainstorming.
- I liked the techniques we could do - warming up our voices; making music and learning and playing music.

- Making music with everyone.
- Spending time, doing something completely different.
- Writing our own songs.
- The creativity.
- (Music Leader) was excellent, encouraging, very professional.
- Togetherness. Working with each other.

Was there anything that you didn't like or that we could do better?

- Missed the larger group sessions (from the old model) - connected with more people, worked with a variety of song writing group leaders, which I found valuable. Personally, preferred the big group sessions because of better networking and opportunity to work with a variety of people.
- No.
- No.
- I would have liked the sessions to be fortnightly and maybe the odd member of the group could have been more musical.
- I was satisfied with the sessions.
- No.
- N/A.
- Sometimes I didn't like to write songs on a subject I didn't know about. I would have liked to have written a gospel carol.
- No. Just perfect.
- No. Working hard to get better.
- Clash with ADHD (a Musical Connections band rehearsal, led by the Music Support Worker).

Fundraising Gigs

Did you perform at any of these?

- Yes: 92%
- No: 8%

If you attended, what did you think of the gigs?

- Poor: 0%
- Ok: 0%
- Good: 43%
- Very Good: 57%

What did you particularly like about the gigs?

- A chance to listen to new music, hear what the other hubs have been up to, a good evening entertainment and the opportunity to perform to a friendly audience.
- Variety of music and nice friendly people.
- The sound of live music.
- Performing what we did as a group together and having good feedback.
- Public participation and connection with others.
- The gigs were entertaining and there was a good atmosphere.
- Showing people what we can do.
- Really entertaining, such a variety of music and people.

- Felt really welcome.

Was there anything that you didn't like or that we could do better?

- A little more time to rehearse to keep participants interested.
- Technical glitches could have been avoided maybe.
- No.
- N/A.
- The Edge was a bit tatty. Sound good.

End of Project Informal Sharing in Each Hub

What did you think of the sharing?

- Poor: 0%
- Ok: 0%
- Good: 25%
- Very Good: 75%

What did you particularly like?

- The opportunity to show what we have accomplished.
- Bringing along friends and family to watch our gig and performance.
- Music making process.
- The chance to perform solo for the hub and others to listen and hear our music.
- Share what we do.
- We had a really good time. It's been an uplifting experience.
- Friendliness.
- People getting together and given confidence and inspiring. Working with others.
- Sheer amount of work that's gone into it. Productivity.

Was there anything that you didn't like or that we could do better?

- N/A.
- No.
- No.
- N/A.

The Project Impact

Of all members completing the evaluation questionnaire, against the statement '**how has music and music-making helped you?**':

- 100% stated that 'music helps me to relax and de-stress'
- 100% stated that 'it has helped me to connect with others'
- 94% stated that 'it has enabled me to make new friends through music'
- 88% stated that 'the project has allowed me to express myself'
- 88% stated that 'it has helped me to learn to collaborate as part of a team'
- 76% stated that 'I can say things through music that I can't say otherwise'

Of all members completing the evaluation questionnaire, against the statement '**how has the project helped you in general – what difference has it made?**':

- 94% stated that 'it has made me feel more confident in general'
- 94% stated that 'it has improved my awareness how music making can help my

wellbeing'

- 88% stated that 'it has given me a positive experience of attending activities at my mental health hub'
- 82% stated that 'it has made me realise what I am capable of achieving'
- 82% stated that 'it has improved my social skills'
- 82% stated that 'it has got me out of the house'
- 82% stated that 'it has opened up new opportunities/introduced me to other new things'
- 59% stated that 'it has helped me become more independent'
- 41% stated that 'it has improved my relationship with mental health staff/carers'
- 29% stated that 'it has enabled my mental health workers/carers to see me do well in a different situation'

True or False:

Project participants were asked to select true or false relating to the statements below. Responders stated:

Without Musical Connections I wouldn't engage in the arts

- True: 75%
- False: 25%

Musical Connections has improved my musical skills/technique

- True: 100%
- False: 0%

Musical Connections has improved my confidence to now go on to access other music or arts opportunities

- True: 100%
- False: 0%

Because of Musical Connections, I'm already involved in other music-making activities

- True: 87%
- False: 13%

Musical Connections has given me new personal skills

- True: 93%
- False: 7%

Musical Connections has made me feel less isolated

- True: 100%
- False: 0%

Musical Connections has improved my health and wellbeing

- True: 100%
- False: 0%

Musical Connections has improved my mental wellbeing

- True: 94%
- False: 6%

I didn't do anything musical before joining the project

- True: 31%
- False: 69% (note: included responses from existing project members)

I am going to continue with my music making

- True: 100%
- False: 0%

Is there anything else you want to say about the difference that the project has made for you? If so, please detail this below:

- The project has and continues to be transformational for me. I feel much more positive and know that something really positive has (and will) occur because of my involvement in Musical Connections.
- I believe that being unemployed with mental illness, that making music can improve the situation.
- It has been fabulous collaborating with (music leaders).
- What I think is so great about Musical Connections is that I can get help with instruments I want to learn.
- Helps my mental health improve when surrounded by positivity and people who are in the same boat.
- New friends.
- It's made me understand music/ mix with people.

Any further comments/suggestions/ideas?

- Really hope it continues. Found the songwriting sessions really useful.

"I can't believe you got that level of engagement out of Participant LJ. She is very fragile and for her to perform like that is a great achievement for her."

BSMHFT staff member, TG



Participant Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1: Participant HA

Written by Michelle Holloway (Lead Artist, Handsworth Hub)

HA is a long term member of Musical Connections. HA is a vulnerable adult – he suffers from depression and often chronicles this and its wider impact in his songs. He currently works with Steve Ison (Musical Connections Music Support Worker) and also has his own band with other MC members. He regularly performs at local events, including the CWNN Festival With No Name, MC fundraisers, Brainstorm open mic and other events.

For HA, it was obvious that when MC was reinstated in the Hub format that he would make sure he could attend in one area. He knew how much it helped him in the old format and had the confidence to come back and continue his healing musical journey. When choosing which Hub to attend, the main thing that made him choose Handsworth (apart from the location) was the fact that Nicola McAteer was the Lead Artist. He had previously worked with Nicola and she had been a key part of his progress over the previous few years. His loyalty to her is undeniable; even when seeing members of other Hubs out at open mic nights, or at fundraisers, he could never be persuaded to join a different Hub.

HA's participation on the Hub project has been fantastic. His attendance was reliable and regular which helped to give the group a good foundation. In fact, he did not miss one session. HA said himself that he liked the small group as it *"means everyone is involved – being able to talk to new members who come for the first time and share my MC experience."* The latter part of this quote is really important. When HA first joined MC, it took him months to attend a group session (and then it was only so people would stop asking him). He didn't engage with people and was very quiet and shy. For him to now take a leading role in supporting new members shows a huge amount of positive change. Not only was he able to evaluate and assess situations during the session, in order to help other members of the group feel comfortable, he also became a lifeline for another member of the project (HD); during sessions he would always check in with HD to check she was ok, and he always waited for her at the end of each session so that he could walk her to the bus stop. It has been such a joy to see these positive changes in HA's interactions with others and know that MC is a huge contributing force to the confidence that he now has that enables him to do this.

Music helps HA with his self-esteem, his confidence, and the project has helped him realise that he can, in his words, *"sometimes overcome fear."* He feels safe enough to come to a session even on a bad day stating that, *"it makes you feel better."* He also has done the same thing with open mic performances – and found that he always feels better after a performance, even if he struggled to get up and do it. HA feels that, as a result of MC, he is much more open and social. This is something that comes naturally to him now – it doesn't feel forced. He thinks the environment makes you feel *"comfortable and safe."*

Musically, I have seen perhaps more subtle progress, but still progress all the same. He is more confident when performing and has started to try and perform a song or

two without his lyrics in front of him. If he forgets his words mid piece, he is calm and opens his book and starts where he left off. I have also noticed that his physicality is slowly changing on stage. Originally, he shrunk into a chair, hiding as much as he could behind a microphone stand and book of lyrics. Now, he is able to have the music to one side and acknowledge the space around him. At the Hub performance he even managed to stand up to perform - a small thing for many others, but a huge step for HA. He spoke to a member of Quench staff afterwards about this and mentioned how he wanted to give it a go, and how nervous he was that he was physically shaking. He was really proud of himself for managing to stand up to perform, and he gratefully accepted the praise he received; it's almost a physical representation of his personal growth and acceptance that he is worthy of other people's attention and focus.

In the Hub sessions, HA has started to sing quietly, and continues even when clocked by someone else. He willingly plays the shaky egg. He also continues to have a good idea about what he wants – i.e. he currently wants flute added to one of his tracks. As an aside, his social skills have improved so much that he is able to acknowledge that if he would like someone to do something for him, then he is willing to do something for them. i.e. he wants me to play the flute for him, so during sessions he would say, *"I'll sing for you, Michelle, because I want you to do play the flute for me."*

Looking at HA's baseline scores (of which we have prior to the Hub, start of the Hub and post Hub) it is clear that there has been continued tremendous progress. His feelings checker about his health and wellbeing has increased from 'poor' to 'ok' to 'good' and his scores on the Outcome Star have also mainly improved too. HA acknowledged that he thinks some of this is due to more time on the project, being surrounded by those who inspire him and are his cheerleaders.

I think a key part of HA's continued progress has been the continuity of Quench staff team. He knows everyone really well and feels really safe and comfortable. He trusts everyone and feels secure enough to be vulnerable. He can banter with the team, and jokingly plays us off against each other. i.e. *"I'll sing for you, but don't tell X that I sang!"*

In the short term, Musical Connections gave HA his first performance experiences. In the long term, he feels he interacts more with people as a result of the tight knit hub, and really benefits from the continuity and stability provided over time. Coming to group sessions *"keeps my mind from worrying and it gives me positive feelings."*

CASE STUDY 2: HB **Written by Michelle Holloway (Lead Artist, Handsworth Hub)**

HB is a new member of Musical Connections who joined in 2019. He heard about the project via a flyer at the Handsworth Hub (BSMHFT Orsborne House) and decided to come along to help him get back into music. He has a long musical history which involved him playing bass in a band. However, this ended sourly, and he feels like he was pushed out of his band for having differing ideas and opinions to the other members. He has not played music since then, mainly because he felt that

there wasn't anyone suitable around him to make music with. He found that other projects were either music and computers or involved people much younger than him that he couldn't connect with.

In terms of musical progress, HB came on in leaps and bounds. Not only has he got back into playing his bass guitar, he also started to learn how to play the keyboard. He also sang and did some excellent percussion parts. It was nice to see his inner musicality grow in confidence and show more each month. He also performed at 2 Hub fundraisers and at the final sharing.

HB found an interesting outcome of playing more music was that he listened to less – because he was doing it more and had the confidence to do so! He has also recently bought his own bass and keyboard to have at home again so he can be making music at home. HB found that being able to access music again “*made me very happy.*” He felt safe and included at the Handsworth Hub, which had a “*family feeling.*” This also meant he felt safe to experiment musically. He also didn't feel out of place due to his musical interests as at Musical Connections any style is welcomed and included and there are so many different ones!

The project has also helped HB's wellbeing and personal/social skills. Musical Connections really helped HB's mental health. Before, he “*felt like an outcast*” and it is only now with Musical Connections that he feels like people are “*accepting him again.*” It is interesting to note that for his very first session, he wasn't concerned about the music, but he was worried about the situation and whether the other people would accept him.

I noticed in the short time that I knew him, that he became more relaxed during sessions, more open to other ideas and more adaptable. One clear moment that sticks out in my mind was when he double checked with Participant HC before assuming that he was going to play bass on a track. This was extremely important because only a few months earlier, he had been adamant that he was going to play bass as he didn't remember he had played the keys part on a particular track and it took quite a lot of convincing him otherwise! It was nice to see him develop this awareness as he felt safer, less threatened and more included in the group. The performances helped to cement this. Another key growth in HB's social behaviour was the way that, by the end of the project, he was complimenting and raising up other members of the group, giving them confidence and making them feel good about themselves.

HB's evaluation forms serve to reinforce this positive change. In his Outcome Star, 4/6 questions had a score of 1 or 2 at the beginning of the project, which rocketed to 7/8 by the end. He wrote how, due to Musical Connections, he now “*comes out of the house more*” and wants “*more performances.*”

It is clear that the impact of the project has been huge for HB. He is keen to get involved in future opportunities and has made contact with Steve Ison (Music Support Worker) to book individual and small group sessions with him. HB loved the gigs and the sound of live music. The only way he would have changed the project would have been to have more sessions, which were longer, to give him more time to learn and get things right!

He believes that *“being unemployed with mental illness, [that] making music can help the situation.”*

Case Study 3: The X Family **Written by Pete Churchill (Lead Artist, Erdington Hub)**

The X family consist of Participant EA together with her parents EC and EB. They got involved in the Musical Connections (MC) Erdington Hub sessions in March 2019, and except for one month when they were on holiday, have attended every session since. EA presents as having a mild learning disability and had been part of Quench Arts' Wavelength programme for young people with mental health conditions until she became too old to continue with that project. This progression onto Musical Connections illustrates one of Quench Arts' strengths – a continuity of provision across their various projects. EC has a physical disability with a resulting limited mobility (further detrimentally affected by a recent operation) and thus it was decided that it was appropriate for the X family to join Musical Connections as a family group. The experience at Wavelength was that both parents were keen to be actively involved, providing another reason for this arrangement at Musical Connections. Though not perhaps as individually isolated as some other Musical Connections members, clearly having a double occurrence of disability in the family brings many challenges in day to day life so their participation in these sessions was warmly welcomed and highly appropriate.

As a family unit, a steady growth in confidence, in musical contribution and in integration with other group members, could be clearly observed over the 6 months that they were part of the project. This is clearly supported by the baseline questions, which in all 3 cases show marked improvements in the self-scoring questions: 'I find it easy to sing/play in front of others and express myself through music' (confidence) and 'I am able to do things as well as other people' (general ability and self-perception). Other questions that also scored an improvement in all cases include 'I can achieve what I want to' and 'I often take part in local positive activities related to my interests', implying a feeling of greater integration with others through music (and perhaps other unspecified interests). As a family then, it is clear that their involvement in the project has brought them tangible benefits, which they are very ready to identify themselves. I will now take a look briefly at the three family members individually and finish with one or two observations about the family dynamic.

Participant EA

As previously mentioned, EA already had some experience of creative music-making in a group context through her involvement at Wavelength. She brought with her an ability to play basic chords on ukulele and a good sense of rhythm. She quickly established a place in the group as ukulele player for each new song that was written, and together with PC on guitar and ED on keyboard, provided the main instrumental backing. Developing music for new songs would increasingly be steered forward by EA, who would choose a chord she knew to begin with, then suggest others that could follow it. However, she displayed flexibility when the momentum of the group sometimes took the tune in a different direction and she would have to

adapt her chords accordingly. She was also willing to learn new chords and enjoyed doing so. At least on one occasion she experimented with different finger shapes on the fretboard until she found a combination of notes she liked which we would then be incorporated into the song. Music was very much her department rather than lyrics, though she was quite ready to express an opinion if there was something in the words that didn't sound right to her. EA maintained a focus for the whole session and her increasing confidence in the group was evidenced in her keenness to perform in front of others at both fundraiser events and our final sharing session. The fact that EA scored herself an improvement from 6 to 8 in response to the deeply personal question 'I feel valued and accepted' would seem to suggest, very movingly, that through this group work EA has been affected positively by the warmth and welcome of the group at quite a deep level.

Participant EB

Though EB had had a go at bass guitar previously, she was the only family member who wouldn't have classed herself as musical before the project. However, her very marked increase from 2 to 7 in response to the question 'I find it easy to sing/play in front of others and express myself through music' suggests that this changed significantly over the course of her involvement. This is perhaps one of the benefits of ours being quite a small group. It meant that there couldn't really be any passengers – everyone had to pull their weight! EB ended up playing percussion in most songs, keyboard in one, and sung in them all. When sometimes there were only 4 singers in total (others being too busy concentrating on their instruments) she was thrown in at the deep end but bravely accepted the challenge and 'found her voice' as the sessions progressed. Once settled into the group she was also fully involved in the songwriting process in terms of suggesting ideas and adaptations for lyrics. Her improvement from 'OK' to 'Good' in relation to social confidence suggests that her regular participation in this group and her pride in what it achieved has benefited her outside the group itself.

Participant EC

EC came with a musical track record – a drummer and singer. He has played in bands and performed as a duo with his brother in the past. He brought his own djembe to sessions and his rock-steady rhythm underpinned all songs he was involved with. Beyond this, his vocal ability, and particularly his propensity for harmonisation, came into its own more and more as the months progressed. This ability came with a humility, though, and at no point did EC ever attempt to dominate or insist on a certain way of doing things. He would always leave space for others in the group and just quietly suggest ideas now and again. The project benefitted from his performing experience when he put together a set with his brother (joined by EA on a couple of numbers) for a Musical Connections fundraiser in May. Despite his musical experience, it's clear that EC got as much out of Musical Connections membership as anyone else – indeed, if his self-scoring is anything to go by, possibly more! Many of his scores have doubled from the beginning to the end of the project. The only two that remained static were those relating to artistic skills (already settled a fairly high level) and social confidence (again, already at a high level).

In terms of family dynamics, the X family presented as a very close and well-integrated family. Both parents were clearly immensely supportive of their daughter and were working hard to make sure her particular needs were met. However, there

was no evident over-indulgence, and good-natured teasing was very much the order of the day, all ways round! EA for her part was very much her own person and wasn't shy about putting a different point of view forward from either or both parents. As a family they displayed an openness to others in the group which was reciprocated. As far as I'm aware this is the first time a family group has joined Musical Connections. It has proved to be a highly successful venture both for the family and the project as a whole.

Case study 4: LA **Written by Sarah Wilson (Lead Artist, Longbridge Hub)**

LA was very shy when he first came into the project in August 2018. LA has a history of anxiety and depression and rarely leaves the house to engage in the wider world. He was withdrawn and quickly identified JC, the support artist on the project, as someone that he could communicate through. So, LA would say what he wanted to say quietly to JC, and JC would communicate it to the rest of the group.

Initially, he was flexible and did not really make creative decisions, always deferring to other people's opinion of what should happen and what should be created. His body language was an attempt to hide himself, but he was kind and engaged.

As the project wore on, it became apparent that LA was really enjoying the sessions, attending all without fail, and was always at least 20 minutes early. He is an excellent self-taught guitarist and his creative ideas are unique and inspiring. As the sessions went on, the group started to notice how good he was and gave him positive feedback. They would also ask him for his input and support his creative contributions. This led to him being more open to expressing himself directly and he stopped needing to use JC as a conduit and started to speak for himself and build relationships.

LA built a really good relationship with LC, another new member of the project, who is a freestyle rapper and poet. They jammed a few ideas around and the mixture of styles was amazing musically. The group got quite excited about working on the ideas but then LC stopped coming and I think this knocked LA back a little bit. For the next few sessions he seemed a little flat and just kept asking if he was coming back and saying how much he would like to develop those ideas.

As time progressed, it became apparent that LA was also highly skilled at drumming and bass guitar and he would fill in for people who weren't there and support them when they were. The whole group started to grow in confidence and room opened up for other people to contribute ideas and lyrics and we started writing other songs. As this happened, his capacity for self-expression grew and he started making visible decisions about what he wanted to contribute to the songs and holding his ground in conversations about direction and structure and style. The group warmed to this and started to look to him as a bit of a leader creatively. This was a real shift for him and led to him having the confidence to come in with some lyrics and a guitar idea that he had been working on at home. LA shared it with the group, and we worked on recording it. He would never get to the stage where he would sing or share his vocal in any other way than showing us words on his phone and then he decided it should

be an instrumental. I know there is a vocal to the piece but for some reason he never felt up to sharing it.

Towards the end of the project, LA's posture was much more upright. He was laughing and joking with the group, speaking for himself and holding his ground sharing his creative ideas, supporting other members of the group and talking about going out in the evenings to see bands and maybe even performing himself. LA really enjoyed preparing for the show in the Longbridge Hub and he was really pleased with the quality of work that we had produced. He expressed an interest in continuing with Musical Connections and maybe doing the 1-to-1 sessions that will be held in Winson Green. As this is an unfamiliar part of the city to LA, he may need support to access these, but it will be amazing if he does do so as he currently mainly stays very close to home.

Case study 5: LB **Written by Sarah Wilson (Lead Artist, Longbridge Hub)**

LB was referred to the project by her Occupational Therapist. LB has a history of severe anxiety and depression. When LB came to her first session the group had been running for a few months and relationships had been established. She came in leaning heavily on a walking stick and giving the stick a lot of attention even after she had sat down. She was visibly shaking and very pale. Her voice was quiet, and she would only talk very quietly to me. The group were obviously a source of anxiety for her, but she knew she wanted to learn some piano. It was obvious that LB needed focused attention and support in order to be able to engage at all. Luckily the group were working on a song with some simple chords so I worked closely with her to teach her the shapes of some chords that would fit in to the song. We did this wearing headphones and, for the most part, were quite isolated from the rest of the group. LB started to relax, her breathing changed, and she put her stick down on the other side of the room when she came back after the break and walked to the keyboard unaided.

As the sessions wore on, LB's attendance was sporadic, and she would always be very apologetic about not having come. She was very keen to learn the theory behind the chords she was learning and started to be able to work out chords for herself. Her mental health meant that she would forget easily (due to medication) and LB would be very apologetic about having to ask again and have things repeated in her learning but I think as time wore on she realised that nobody minded and other people in the room were having similar struggles with their learning.

LB chose to work in headphones on her own a lot but did begin to communicate with the group. About half way through, she got to the stage where she got brave enough to bring some words in that she had been working on at home and asked to sit and write a song with me, so we worked with the rest of the group to shape the music and evolve the words she had written in to a song. This was a change point for her. LB became much more integrated into the group and, whilst she would work in headphones while she was working things out and she would still have issues with confidence and shaking, she would push through those and sing vocals and play

piano in the room with everyone else once she was comfortable with her contribution.

Everyone loved the resulting song and I am a little disappointed that her sporadic attendance prevented us from ever getting her vocal recorded. It was an aim and she did take guide vocals and musical recordings away to practise to. However, the positive feedback LB received boosted her confidence so much that she was able to play piano along with the group in a live band style jamming session. She really surprised herself with this and said she had never thought she would get to the stage where she was good enough to play with a band.

LB did not come to the final show at Longbridge CMHT which was a real shame because she had contributed to a lot of what was played, but she did buy a keyboard and start learning more and more on her own at home.

Case Study 6: YA **Written by Paul Carroll (Lead Artist, Yardley Hub)**

YA joined the Musical Connections Yardley Hub after two months of us it running on a monthly basis. He heard about the sessions through Solihull Mind and said that he has a passion for music and wanted to get involved in something musically worthwhile. He started as a very competent musician with excellent guitar and bass skills and vocal confidence. YA had been in bands before and was currently playing with the music group at Solihull Mind, although he says it didn't always run.

YA was a very enthusiastic member of Musical Connections. He attended all but one session throughout the duration of the project and fed back that there were "*far too few*" sessions, despite also accessing additional Musical Connections sessions on a one-to-one basis in the Solihull Hub. He was particularly impressed with "*the leadership of PC and KS*" (the artists leading the Yardley Hub). He also said that he enjoyed connecting with PC and KS on a level, all as professional musicians. It was this trust that opened up YA's social opportunities when, with KS and PC's support, he attended the local Brainstorm open mic night and performed with them. There, YA met some of the other project artists and participants and now he is very keen to attend more Musical Connections sessions in the future. This would be with different lead musicians and participants, something I feel he would have been more wary of doing before he joined the project.

YA contributed fully in sessions, helping with lyric-writing and playing electric guitar chords and lead solos. In his early sessions I felt that he had a tendency to dominate others a little and was often dissatisfied with the recordings we made, hinting that other people in the group could have sounded better. He also clashed mildly with another dominating member of the group. However, as the project progressed, YA's apparent enjoyment of the creation and recording of the group's songs increased and I observed that he was much more tolerant of others in the group, even at the slight expense to the quality of the performance.

In his evaluation, YA recognised in himself most of the benefits that the project aims to deliver around expressing yourself, de-stressing, improved social and

collaborative skills, connecting with others and making new friends and increased self-confidence. I was particularly impressed with how YA developed socially and as a collaborator. Also, of note was that, despite being a good musician already, YA still feels that his songwriting has improved through taking part in the project. I am very pleased that we were able to offer this to YA given that we also have members in the group who take part musically at a beginners' level.

Case Study 7: YB **Written by Paul Carroll (Lead Artist, Yardley Hub)**

YB joined Musical Connections (Yardley Hub) nearly half-way through the project but then attended all but one session from then to the final sharing. She had heard about the project from a friend and thought she might like it because she says she is, *“attracted to the sound of music and the people that have an enthusiasm for music.”* YB intended just to observe at first and simply enjoy the music of other people in the group. After the first couple of sessions, YB spoke openly with the Yardley Hub music leaders about how she was feeling very negative about her abilities as a singer, taking a break from her weekly choir. She said she'd never been told she was any good at much when she was growing up. In an unpressured way, Musical Connections music leaders tend to get everyone involved in writing lyrics, playing an instrument and / or singing. In her first session YB soon found herself contributing lyrics to the song being written that day, singing along quietly. She surprised herself, saying she didn't think she would join in but the lead musicians and the group in general were nice and relaxed. As she came to more sessions, YB also had a go on keyboard, percussion, guitar and ukulele. She says she really enjoyed trying out different things whereas, when she started, she wasn't bothered either way about making music - now she wants to try anything whenever she can! YB adds, *“I felt thrilled by the experience. I went along not expecting to take part and ended up performing. Surprisingly I've gone on to talk to others about MC (Musical Connections) and how it has helped me to try different instruments and start making my own songs. It makes me feel good and has brought out in me musical creativity.”*

This ability to share so enthusiastically her experience of Musical Connections with other people in her life has been a benefit YB has recognised. She likes that she has *“demonstrated to others what I have gone on to learn.”* She was pleased that she could invite family and friends along to the project's final sharing to see for themselves. It was an opportunity for YB to get well deserved positive feedback from a wider circle of people. In addition, one of YB's favourite things about the project was the fact that she has connected with the other project participants and enjoyed the *“comradeship.”* YB also feels that her health has benefited, saying, *“my wellbeing has been so much better.”* Now she is singing again in two choirs and is involved with a band. YB was very positive when giving feedback to Quench Arts about the project in all its objectives around enabling people to express themselves, de-stress, connect positively with others as well as raising positive outlook on life and improving health. YB says, *“It has made me feel good about myself. Before I would say, ‘I can't’ but now I say, ‘I can.’”*

The following 2 case studies focus on Musical Connections members who did not attend hub sessions but who did engage with our Music Support Worker within his role.

Case Study 8: SA **Written by Steve Ison (Music Support Worker)**

SA is a singer-songwriter and musician who performs his own music on guitar and has been a member of Musical Connections for about 4 years. He has Bipolar Disorder which makes it difficult for him to connect with people, leaving him feeling easily overwhelmed and, in the past, has left him unable to leave the house.

Over the past year, he's met regularly with me as Music Support Worker to record his own music. SA has described the experience of recording as "*very helpful*" as it has got him back into music and motivated him to improve as a musician. In his words, "*I've been finding I rehearse each song we record a lot beforehand. It helps me get them into better shape. Going over them has helped me sharpen my guitar and vocals.*" I've personally noticed a big improvement in SA's confidence and ability as a singer and guitarist over the last year. He is playing in time and singing more in pitch. He also appreciates the steady pace and relaxed environment of Musical Connections which enables him to feel a sense of achievement without feeling overwhelmed or put under pressure, "*we seem to be taking it steadily which I like. I feel like I'm coping quite well.*"

In this time, SA has also performed a small solo set in front of an audience at two Musical Connections fundraising concerts. At these events, he showed a marked increase in confidence from a previous Musical Connections performance he did 2 years ago where he suffered from markedly severe anxiety and stage fright, performing only 1 song. He says of them, "*I've really enjoyed it (performing). I've had a lot of good feedback and encouragement. I feel really accepted.*"

The relaxed, welcoming environment of Musical Connections concerts has had another benefit to SA as it has enabled him to connect with people and feel more socially relaxed. About the last Musical Connections gig at The Kitchen Garden Cafe where he performed he says, "*I struck up a conversation with people I didn't even know. I can't even remember the last time I did that.*" He really appreciates the kindness shown by Musical Connections staff too, saying "*You and Musical Connections have been so accommodating and kind. Even when I was stuck one night (after a Musical Connections gig) when my taxi didn't come, the Quench Directors made sure I got home safely.*"

SA's family have also enjoyed seeing him perform at fundraising gigs and he recently played his song 'Heart Strings' at his mother's 90th birthday. SA's confidence has increased so much, he now has plans to take his music into the wider world on his own, "*I've thought about going around playing my original children's songs, like Sammy the Salmon, to schools. I feel I'm demonstrating it's possible to live with Bipolar Disorder, get on with life and enjoy it. If it wasn't for Musical Connections, I wouldn't be where I am. Where else would I get that kind of support?*"

Case Study 9: SB Written by Steve Ison (Music Support Worker)

SB is a long term Musical Connections member who has struggled with social anxiety, isolation and low self-esteem. I started working with him doing one to one sessions in 2013, putting guitar chords beneath the original songs he sung and wrote. Through regularly attending Musical Connections group sessions, he met another member, SC, a bassist and Musical Connections volunteer, WH, who played drums. With SC, WH and myself on guitar and SB on lead vocals, the pop/rock band ADHD was formed in 2015. ADHD have been rehearsing, writing and performing original music regularly since then and this year have launched their first album entitled Catch 22, recorded mainly at ACMC, the Musical Connections base. For SB this is *"a dream come true. The third proudest moment of my life after getting married and becoming a Dad!"*

SB's involvement with ADHD, and in particular the experience of becoming more successful as a band performing live in front of paying audiences, has increased his confidence and made him feel better able to cope with social situations, *"I feel loved by people and people really like what I do."* This has led to reduced social anxiety and improved self-esteem. Over the last year, the confidence SB displays on stage has been translating into reduced anxiety in social situations. From my observation, his stutter has improved considerably from a year ago. This has further increased his ability to communicate successfully, *"I'm happy to speak to people more now. Based on me, that's all about confidence."*

SB's self-esteem has received a further boost through his experience working collaboratively with the band producing original music. While SB had written songs in the past, he was unsure of whether people would like them and the experience writing with ADHD and producing an album has improved his confidence in his own abilities. In the past, SB has struggled with depression and felt unmotivated to go out or keep active. He says, *"even a year ago I didn't want to turn up for rehearsals, but I did, and it made me feel better."* Having the band and the weekly ADHD rehearsal seems to provide a much needed anchor in his life. SB admits, *"If ADHD wasn't there, I'd struggle with my mental health without that as a focus."* It provides him with a reason to leave the house as, *"without it, I'd just be staying in."*

He has a good relationship with the other members of the band and really values the opportunity to rehearse together and continually improve musically. Despite not always feeling that he wanted to go to rehearsals, he persevered and is now able to enjoy a real sense of achievement.

"I'm really glad I pushed myself to do it because now my dreams have come true."

SB has described the launch of ADHD's first album as one of the proudest moments in his life. He is feeling positive about the future and enjoying a renewed sense of purpose, *"I'm looking forward to what the future can hold for ADHD."* SB has a lot of appreciation for how Musical Connections has helped him move forward with his life *"If it wasn't for you guys and the Musical Connections practice space, I wouldn't be able to do it."*

Workforce Development

Baseline Analysis

Quench Arts is committed to developing the local workforce and through the Musical Connections Hubs programme offered 5 Assistant Music Leader roles, 1 per hub, with associated mentoring from the Lead Artist. After an application and interview process 5 people were appointed to the role:

KS was appointed to work in the Yardley Hub with PCa as mentor. KS is a woodwind specialist who also sings, plays guitar and piano. Quench Arts has worked with KS for a number of years as she had volunteered on the Musical Connections project for a number of years previously and had been a shadow artist on the junior version of Musical Connections called Wavelength. Quench Arts really saw this role as a stepping stone for her to then be appointed as a lead artist on future programmes, which did happen during the course of the project as she was appointed as Lead Artist on Quench Arts' Plugin project, a youth mental health project based in inpatient settings.

MH was appointed to work in the Solihull Hub with JS as mentor. MH is a woodwind specialist who also sings and plays piano. Quench Arts has worked with MH for a number of years as she also had volunteered on the Musical Connections project for a number of years and had been a shadow artist on the Wavelength project, a community based project for young people with mental health conditions. Again, Quench Arts really saw this role as a stepping stone for her to then be appointed as a lead artist on future programmes, which did happen during the course of the project as she was 'promoted' to Lead Artist at the Handsworth Hub when NM went on maternity leave.

JW was appointed to work in the Handsworth Hub with NM as mentor initially, and then MH (see above). JW is a guitarist and singer who had recently graduated from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. JW was a new music leader to Quench Arts.

JC was appointed to work in the Longbridge Hub with SW as mentor. JC is a guitarist and music technology specialist who had previously worked for Quench Arts as a shadow on the Wavelength project and as a youth music leader on The Junction project at Base Studios in Stourbridge. JC had also volunteered on the Musical Connections project, so it felt a natural progression to appoint him to this role.

AJ was appointed to work in the Erdington Hub with PCh as mentor. AJ is a woodwind specialist who also plays piano. Although Quench Arts had not worked with AJ previously, he had completed a course delivered by Quench Arts called New Horizons, aimed at musicians who would like to develop their teaching and facilitation skills.

All Assistant Music Leaders completed a baseline questionnaire at the beginning of the programme, reviewing their skills and experience and setting personal aims for the role. These baselines and aims were revisited at the end of the project to self-assess their progress. As with the participant baselines, in the statistics below we

refer to 'collective potential progression points'. By this term we mean the total available number of points that the cohort of Assistant Music Leaders could gain overall across the year, after taking their initial baseline scores into account. This statistic is very useful someone may have given an initial baseline score at the higher end of the scale and therefore have limited room to increase their score at the end of the project, which then affects the numbers improving percentage. A summary of the collated baseline feedback is below.

80% showed improvement in the statement, 'I feel confident in running music activities with groups of musicians with varied skills, experience and musical interests'. The most progress was an increase of 2 points on a scale of 1-10. 45.4% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

60% showed improvement in the statement, 'I regularly reflect on and evaluate my work'. 60% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

60% showed improvement in the statement, 'I am confident in managing difficult behaviour during sessions. I understand about positive behaviour management and how behaviour is linked to other factors, including my own performance'. The most progress was an increase of 2 points on a scale of 1-10. 50% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

60% showed improvement in the statement, 'I feel that I have an appropriate range of musical skills for the participants and project sessions in order to inspire people to make music'. 33.33% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved. Many of the Assistant Music Leaders scored themselves highly at the beginning of the programme as 3 of the 5 already had significant experience of working within the project model.

60% showed improvement in the statement, 'I feel able to provide appropriate, suitable and engaging activities that will enable all participants to take part in my sessions, whatever their ability or specific needs (e.g., differentiation)'. 27.2% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

60% showed improvement in the statement, 'I feel I have a good awareness of the mental health sector'. 25% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

40% showed improvement in the statement, 'I feel confident in helping adults improve their musical skills and techniques'. The most progress was an increase of 2 points on a scale of 1-10. 28.5% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved. Again, the majority of the Assistant Music Leaders were already experienced in working with adults at the beginning of the programme, so there was not much improvement that could be made.

40% showed improvement in the statement, 'I feel confident about working with adults with mental health conditions and specific needs'. 40% of the collective potential progression points available were achieved.

As stated, some of the baseline analysis shows a limited progression against the statements used due to the Assistant Music Leaders appointed already being experienced in working within the mental health sector and in supporting creative music making sessions. We saw these Assistant Music Leader roles very much as a step between a Shadow Artist role and a Lead Artist role, so recruited Assistant Music Leaders with a certain level of experience so that they could use the opportunity to work on their personal development areas in order to become more confident leaders in the future. We feel that all Assistant Music Leaders have progressed as desired as can be seen in the goals analysis below. All 5 Assistants are now in a stronger position to be able to lead musical sessions with vulnerable adults within their specialist areas. This is fantastic news for Quench Arts as we develop and expand our wellbeing work in the future.

Goals Analysis

Each Assistant Music Leader set themselves 3 personal goals that they would like to achieve as part of their role. Of the 15 goals set by the Assistant Music Leaders

- 12 goals were achieved or exceeded.
- 1 goal was partially achieved. (This related to AJ wanting to develop his keyboard skills and, although he feels his skills have dramatically improved, he still wants to work on multi-tasking playing keyboard and facilitating at the same time.)
- 2 goals were not achieved. (These related to KS wanting to use music technology in the sessions to continue to develop her skills. Due to the members in her group, this skill wasn't needed but the goal was met on another Quench Arts project as KS now works on the Plugin project, which is a music technology focussed project. The other goal not achieved was MH wanting to improve her accompaniment skills. As she was working with musicians who played guitar, and due to the music created, she does not feel this skill was needed and, therefore, did not develop it throughout the project.)

Some quotes from the assistant artists regarding their role:

- *"I feel like my leadership and communication skills have improved, which positively impacts all aspects of my professional work."* Assistant Music Leader JW
- *"I believe the project has helped me gain more experience in working with a wider range of people and with that developed my skills further to be more confident about taking up roles like this in the future."* Assistant Music Leader JC
- *"Previously I had always doubted my ability in working with adults as my experience had mainly been with groups of children. As I helped deliver sessions, I became more confident in my ability to lead."* Assistant Music Leader AJ
- *"This project has reminded me how much I love this kind of work, and how much I love collaborating and working as a team."* Assistant Music Leader MH
- *"I am confident that I could lead sessions like this on my own or on a one to one basis. I feel that the project helped me consolidate all that I have learned over the previous years of Musical Connections activity and that the stability*

of the once monthly sessions with the same people was good for the same reasons.” Assistant Music Leader KS

Some observational quotes from lead artists regarding the assistant roles:

- *“MH showed a huge amount of kindness and understanding when people started discussing upsetting and difficult subjects in lyric writing sessions. She helped those people greatly!” Lead Artist JS*
- *“JC was an ideal support artist for me as he has guitar skills that I do not have and was therefore able to support the people in the room that I would not have been able to support at that level. He is also very good at reading a person’s needs and supporting without patronising. I watched JC’s confidence grow and with it his capacity for dealing with delicate situations in the room and people’s fragility. He has a natural propensity towards gentleness and compassion, and this was given more space as his confidence grew.” Lead Artist SW*
- *“AJ has undoubtedly taken significant steps forward along the path to becoming a self-sufficient music group leader through his involvement with Musical Connections.” Lead Artist PCh*
- *“JW was an excellent support. He was brilliant at suggesting musical ideas and was sensitive to the needs of the group.” Lead Artist MH*
- *“KS can definitely lead her own sessions. I think KS taking a lead artist role on Plugin was a huge success. I went to observe her recently and she leads very comfortably.” Lead Artist PCa*

Reflections and Lessons Learned

In this section of the report we have summarised our key learning from this action research project and will use this to inform further project development.

Challenges

- Though 65% of those completing the project evaluation stated that the number of project sessions were just right, we are aware that these results only include reflections from those who stuck with the project throughout the duration. Our experience and feedback throughout the pilot project suggests that some of the most vulnerable participants would have preferred more regular sessions and a greater level of engagement. If a participant was unwell for one of the monthly sessions, then the wait for the next opportunity to engage would mean effectively a 2 month gap without seeing people. Sometimes the project lost participants because they felt they’d missed too much or it felt like a big deal to return, despite our encouragement. We were keen to offer opportunities across all 5 of the integrated community mental health hubs and our project schedule was steered by the budget available. In hindsight, it may have been better to provide more significant levels of activity in fewer of the hubs, though this potentially may have meant engaging less people overall and thus having less reach.
- Some of the most vulnerable mental health service users referred to hub activities found the group sessions challenging. These participants attended sessions with professional support and appropriate arrangements and changes in the structure and format of sessions were made to accommodate their needs, attention span and interests. However, it was clear that some participants would

have benefitted from our old project model by having additional 1-to-1 sessions in order to build musical and group working skills prior to attending the project group sessions. Within the scope of the Musical Connections Hubs project structure, there wasn't the budget, time or venue space to provide 1-to-1 sessions for everyone referred to the project and all of the hub members chose to run a group session model. This was a real shame and was a definite negative in regards to the Hubs model. We have addressed this issue in part with our new Personalised Health Budget offer detailed under next steps.

- The sessions in most of the Hubs were not as well attended as we initially envisaged and this didn't always reflect the interest and number of referrals that had been made to the project in each area, as people who'd confirmed attendance via text on the day often didn't show up. Attendance tended to be sporadic in most areas, though 4 Hubs did have core group of regular participants. Partly this was due to the reasons stated in the bullet points above but is also due to the nature of working with this beneficiary group. One of the benefits of running group sessions is that the project sessions can still go ahead even if a few individuals don't attend. Sometimes lower numbers were seen as a positive thing for members who felt overwhelmed by larger numbers, in other cases some participants felt that they were too exposed with a smaller group.

“Attendance has been the thing that we have struggled with most. Some participants said this would be solved by having more regular sessions because if you couldn't come one week you could come another time during the month and catch up.”

Lead Artist SW



- Attendance in the Lyndon Hub sessions, in Solihull, was very poor, despite a strong start. It was apparent that several of the initial group attending sessions were actually very poorly and unable to attend due to needing hospital treatment. In addition, Solihull Mind started to run weekly music sessions which unfortunately clashed with our monthly sessions and we were unable to change the day or venue of our sessions due to staff availability and venue restrictions. That being said, the small group of regular attendees at these sessions gained a huge amount of musical input and progressed considerably in their musical skills and confidence.
- Some hub settings were more suitable for group creative music making than others. In the Yardley Hub project sessions were run from a community venue

(the Creative Support building). Though this was seen as positive, it did mean less engagement from BSMHFT in this hub which resulted in fewer project referrals from that area compared to others. Also, Creative Support was a small venue space so would not have been able to accommodate larger group sessions. This was also the case at the Longbridge Hub which, though based on a BSMHFT health and community centre site, only had a very small group room which would not have been viable for larger group sessions. In all hub settings our project sessions were timetabled to have least impact on clinical activities in regards to noise levels and placement within the venue and this took some liaison at the beginning of the project in order to ease any concerns and find an appropriate time and space (sometimes affecting the actual hub site that the sessions were based in).

- Non engagement in Musical Connections Hubs based activities from some established Musical Connections members was disappointing. Continuing to offer previous Musical Connections members time with the Music Support Worker, whilst supporting their continued engagement, may have actually had the impact of them not needing, or not accessing the new Hubs based sessions. Additionally, some established members were concerned about going to a mental health focused venue for musical activities as they were wary about sharing their details with a professional organisation and felt more comfortable accessing this kind of provision in community venues. This actually contradicts much of the positive feedback from those who did actually attend the project activities on site, would said that attending music sessions at such a venue would make them more comfortable using the professional services offered there in the future.
- As the Musical Connections Hubs programme was run in partnership with BSMHFT and based in mental health focused sites, this did affect the recruitment of new members who were more generally vulnerable or isolated, such as those with physical disabilities and long term health conditions (rather than having an identified mental health condition). Musical Connections has historically had a mixture of participants from varying backgrounds and, although the Hubs project was still open to any isolated or vulnerable adult, the fact that sessions were held in mental health settings and clearly in partnership with BSMHFT may have been a barrier. In addition, the space available at the Solihull Hub was inaccessible for wheelchair users.

Successes

- The project engaged isolated and vulnerable adults in hub locations who otherwise would not have taken part in participatory music activity and the Musical Connections project. Most of our new participants anecdotally stated that they would not have travelled outside of their local area to take part due to the extra anxiety that this would cause in addition to meeting new people; the fact that the sessions were local and, for the majority, in a venue that they were comfortable with as mental health service users was a real positive.

“The one big advantage of this the model is that people interested in the project have been able to join without waiting up to a year. Also, there has been more of a chance that participants have had to travel less distance to attend sessions than before, when everyone came to our venue in Winson Green.”

Lead Artist, PCa

- Having had this local support and built up their confidence with the team and other participants, 100% of those completing the project evaluation said that they will continue with their music making. All have been offered the opportunity to engage with the wider Musical Connections project and to attend sessions at our Winson Green base. This includes being able to request 1-to-1 ongoing support with our Musical Connections Music Support Worker, who has offered to meet each member at their hub location and show them the route to our base using public transport.
- The quality of songwriting and number of original tracks created (105) through the project was really very impressive, especially considering the amount of contact time and the relative inexperience of new project participants. Even those with very little prior musical experience felt that they had something to offer and felt ownership of the material created. This is a huge testament to the strengths of our project team. https://soundcloud.com/quench_arts/sets/musical-connections-2018-19
- Though opportunities for engagement between each Musical Connections Hub was limited, it was a real success that 3 of the hubs managed to perform at our final project fundraiser concert (the Handsworth Hub at 2 of these). This was a fantastic opportunity to show longstanding Musical Connections members what had been created, as well as people from other hubs present. In addition, it was lovely that some participants travelled to other hubs to see their informal setting sharings.
- A collaborative track with contributions from each hub was created during the project to ensure that participants were aware that they were part of a wider project. Due to issues across the hubs with recording formats/speed and a limited amount of time to polish contributions, the concept of this activity was probably stronger than the final track, however the process was nevertheless useful and it did provide ongoing motivation across the sessions to work on something different.
- Offering CPD opportunities for emerging practitioners was certainly a success as we continue to develop the local workforce which, in turn, will help more vulnerable and isolated people to become engaged in the arts. Quench Arts would consider employing all 5 of the Assistant Music Leaders on projects appropriate to their skills in the future, expanding our existing team and enabling us to increase our activities and thus musical provision for isolated and vulnerable adults.
- Being able to sustain Musical Connections has had a wider impact on other local organisations as we have been able to support a number of external events. A particular example of this is our support of Arts All Over The Place, where we have been able to provide performers for their gigs and events. This not only helps the organisations we support but provides more opportunities for the members of Musical Connections.
- Beyond the Musical Connections Hubs project, the wider impact of the organisational research and development grant provided to Quench Arts by the Arts Council has been hugely beneficial for the organisation. This has enabled us to:
 - Establish a Personalised Health Budget offer for adults entitled to section 117 aftercare, in partnership with Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust and the Rowan Organisation, enabling those referred to receive a package of fully funded 1-to-1 sessions and optional additional funded group

activities by pooling of budgets. People who are eligible for section 117 aftercare under the Mental Health Act now have a legal right to a personal health budget from 2 December 2019, so this offer will see some growth.

- Present our work and outcomes to strategic staff at the following sites, with a view to further partnership working discussions and/or the delivery of a Musical Connections taster session: Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust; Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust; SENSE; Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust; Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, Cannock Chase District Council.
- Deliver 3 Musical Connections tasters for the Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust, Sense, and Cannock Chase Mental Health Hub, working with vulnerable adults with mental health conditions, physical and learning difficulties, including a presentation to senior staff, performances from Musical Connections members and a practical group creative music making session for staff and participants). Our original aim was to engage 3 regional mental health trusts in our taster activities; in the end 1 taster was instead offered to Sense in Birmingham, rather than regionally, with approval from the Arts Council, due to regional mental health trust capacity issues. Feedback from staff and patients was overwhelmingly positive. 95% staff thought the session was excellent (5% good); 86% rated the relevance to the needs and interests of their service users as excellent (14% good), and 91% thought that their service users could benefit from a music project in their setting (9% said maybe). 82% of the participants engaged stated that they'd like to be involved in a 10 week project; 18% maybe; none said no.
- Develop a new project funding application (Awards for All) with Cerebral Palsy Midlands around a production around Disability Awareness within the community (application decision pending under Cerebral Palsy Midlands).
- Engage and support a successful application to Spirit of 2012, led by the Midland Arts Centre, for a new partnership project with mac Birmingham and various other partners for female carers called Hidden Voices (Spirit of 2012 have funded 10 such project across the country through the Carers Music Fund, which is supported via the DCMS Tampon Tax Fund).
- Hold initial discussions with Healthy Lifestyles (Cannock, Staffordshire) for music activity supporting new parents with/at risk of post-natal depression, focusing on attachment with their children. An application has been submitted to Old Possum's Trust (application decision pending under Quench Arts).
- Achieve further funding from Awards for All for Musical Connections continuation from November 2019 – August 2020.

The time that Quench Arts Directors have been able to devote to trialling different models and ways of sustaining Musical Connections and other participatory music activity for isolated and vulnerable adults has been very helpful, particularly in relation to Personalised Health Budgets opportunities and establishing new partnerships. We are now in a good position to obtain direct funding to support the provision of activities for those most in need with section 117 support, and are hopeful that Personalised Health Budgets funding will soon open up to a wider demographic of potential beneficiaries in the near future, which will help to better balance our reliance on charitable trusts and foundations. In addition, the new partnerships and contacts made will enable us to develop and expand our adult

wellbeing programme, giving us wider reach and furthering our knowledge and experience with specific groups.

“Being in MC is just like being in heaven, where everyone is sharing their music, listening, talking to each other, getting to know each other. Everyone’s family, everyone’s friends – that’s how it feels to me. Everyone’s getting together and sharing”

Participant KH

Next Steps

Here we detail how we will now move forward with our adult wellbeing programme and our immediate actions for the upcoming year.

1. Delivering activity through Personalised Health Budgets

Through our strategic work over the past 15 months, we have developed a package of activity for Personalised Health Budgets: <https://www.quench-arts.co.uk/personalised-health-budgets-offer>. This is an exciting development for Quench Arts as it will mean that certain elements of the Musical Connections project can be sustainable through these means, albeit with a specific target group (i.e. currently only those eligible for Section 117 aftercare). Our main aim moving forwards is to manage and expand referrals for this offer and also to see whether there is any scope to further our offer to those eligible due to physical disabilities. 17 people engaged in the Musical Connections Hubs programme are eligible for Section 117 aftercare funding and have been contacted to ensure that they are aware of the opportunity and how this could help support their ongoing musical development.

2. Awards for All Funding Success for Musical Connections

We are delighted to be able to continue some Musical Connections activities at our base in Winson Green due to a successful funding application from the National Lottery’s Community Fund (Awards for All), as detailed above. This grant will allow us to deliver activity from November 2019 until August 2020. It covers:

- 1 day per week for our Music Support Worker role, which will have the remit of working with members on an individual and small group basis, including participants who took part in the Musical Connections Hubs programme.
- Monthly special interest sessions focused on a particular musical skill, theme or genre, as advised by the project’s Member Advisory Group.
- Monthly group music making sessions, led by a Musical Connections Artist and supported by the Music Support Worker.
- Quarterly project newsletters for all members.
- 3 fundraising gigs with guest artists.

3. All Hubs participants will have access to wider Musical Connections opportunities and the Music Support Worker role

Although, disappointingly, we have not been able to immediately secure further funding to sustain activities in the 5 Integrated Community Mental Health Hubs due

to a need for BSMHFT to make significant budget cuts this year, the participants we have engaged over the past 15 months will still be able to access our group activities mentioned in the points above and via the Music Support Worker role. If participants are eligible for Section 117 aftercare, they can access our Personalised Health Budget offer. BSMHFT are keen on using these Personalised Health Budgets to try to sustain some Musical Connections Hubs activities in the future via the pooling of budgets of those eligible and an offer to each hub has been created should they be able to obtain PHB funding for 3+ participants per hub.

4. *Partnership working with Cerebral Palsy Midlands*

As stated above, over the past year we have developed a partnership with Cerebral Palsy Midlands, visiting to talk with and consult their members and staff on a number of occasions. We have submitted a joint funding application for a project around disability awareness. If successful, Quench Arts will support this through devising a training programme for local music leaders and will support Cerebral Palsy Midlands with event management.

5. *Partnership working with SENSE*

A taster Musical Connections session has been delivered with SENSE and we have already delivered some youth holiday activity sessions for this charity for individuals who are deaf/blind. We hope that through these activities we can build further programmes with SENSE as we feel that, as an organisation, we can benefit from their experience and can also offer them accessible participatory musical activities that enhance their current provision/performance programme.

6. *Partnership with Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles (Cannock, Staffordshire)*

Having presented to managers of this programme, they are keen to work Quench Arts further regarding our mental health work and we plan in 2020 to deliver a pilot programme around working with those with post-natal depression, combining our Wellbeing and Early Years strands of work. A funding application is pending.

Links

Blog posts - <https://www.quench-arts.co.uk/blog>

Music - https://soundcloud.com/quench_arts/sets/musical-connections-2018-19

Further information about Mental Health First Aid training: <http://mhfaengland.org/>

Further information about the Five Ways to Wellbeing and Outcomes Star:

<http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/entry/five-ways-to-well-being>

<http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/mental-health/>



Musical Connections Hubs Thanks

We would like to give huge thanks to all of the Hubs, support workers and setting staff who have supported our participants to attend sessions, and to our project artistic team for their hard work and tenacity.

In particular, we would like to give special thanks to Neil Atkinson, Integrated Hubs Manger (now Interim Clinical Director) of Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, for his support in establishing setting partnerships and in obtaining match funding support via BSMHFT's Caring Minds Charity to enable the Musical Connections Hubs project to go ahead.

We would also like to thank Tracey Green, Maxine Thraves, Caroline Wilde, Jim McGrath, Elaine Murray, Rachel McGuinness and Creative Support for their support in referring individuals to the project sessions, organising appropriate venue space and supporting people to engage.

Lead Artists: Nicola McAteer (Handsworth Hub)
Michelle Holloway (Handsworth Hub maternity cover),
Paul Carroll (Yardley Hub)
Pete Churchill (Erdington Hub),
James Stanley (Lyndon Hub, Solihull)
Sarah Wilson (Longbridge Hub)

Support Artists: Josh Wunderlich (Handsworth Hub)
Katie Stevens (Yardley Hub)
Arjun Jethwa (Erdington Hub),
Michelle Holloway (Lyndon Hub, Solihull)
Jake Cross (Longbridge Hub)

In addition, we would like to thank our project funders who have made the Musical Connections Hubs project possible:

- Arts Council England
- Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust Caring Minds Charity
- The Goodenough Charitable Trust
- The Goldieslie Lodge

- Walmley Golf Club
- The Great Midlands Fun Run

Huge special thanks also to Colin Quiller, father of long term project member Helen Quiller, for his personal fundraising efforts to help achieve the above match funding for this project, which really went above and beyond.



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