

## **Evaluation Report**

### ***Sing Healthy Play Happy*** **April '16-April '17**



#### **Background**

*Sing Healthy Play Happy* is an Open Strings Music project commissioned by Brighton & Hove CCG for three years from April 2016, providing free participatory music sessions for people living with dementia and their carers. In each year of the project, we are delivering 30 two-hour sessions in two community-based locations (ie: 60 two-hour sessions per year). In the first year of the project (April '16-April '17), we delivered sessions to create a dementia-friendly community at Lavender House (a BHCC seniors housing scheme in East Brighton) and sessions at Hop 50+ (a social centre for older people in Hove, on their dementia-friendly activities day).

#### **Quantitative Data**

##### Mood monitor scales:

85% of participants reported an improvement in mood from the start to the finish of each session, using a simple image-based scale (282 completed scales, over the course of the year in both projects combined).

##### Surveys:

We surveyed participants in weeks #1, #5 and #10 of each ten-week block.

100% of participants said:

- that it had been easy to join in
- that they enjoyed being part of the group

90% said that coming to the sessions had a positive effect on how they felt

83% said that they had had a chance to try new things.

(sample size: 30 fully-completed surveys)



Open Strings Music CIC  
Ireland Lodge, Lockwood Crescent, Woodingdean, BN2 6UH  
info@openstrings.co.uk

tel: 01273 569096  
[www.openstrings.co.uk](http://www.openstrings.co.uk)

### A note on collecting data:

During this first year, we found that asking people living with dementia to reflect on their experiences using a survey format required us to ask questions in a more conversational way; we also noted that sometimes a person's verbal response was not in line with what we had observed of them in that session (eg: everyone had a chance to try many new things in each session, but sometimes a person was not able to remember that they had done). As a result, in year #2 of the project, we are using less survey-based data collection, though continuing to use the image-based wellbeing scales wherever possible.

We were asked by our commissioner to collect data based on careful observation and reflection by workers and carers, as well as self-reporting by participants with dementia. The data on the following outcomes was collected using these methods, over a period of several weeks – in some cases, throughout the whole year.

### **Qualitative Data**

#### **a) Increase in wellbeing / mental health**



### Observations:

- E (male, mid-80s): In his first sessions, there was limited interaction and verbal communication. In session #1: he said *I don't think I'll enjoy this* and reported feeling unwell. Session #3: he sang and played an instrument for the first time. E came to regular sessions, smiled, made more eye contact, and demonstrated increasing confidence when playing instruments. Session #18: he told us that he is now the expert at playing the zither. Staff observed that transformation they've seen in him during the sessions continues when he has lunch in the centre after the session.
- G (female, early-60s) and D (female, early-80s): G (daughter - carer) often arrived at sessions feeling stressed. We observed that sessions helped them to engage positively together and with others, using the instruments in playful ways to communicate with each other.



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- B (female, late-70s): Often seemed nervous at start of sessions, but by break time up doing her showgirl dance routine
- P and M (female-male couple in early-80s): Used the music-making to sing to each other, and interact playfully; bantering with instruments, smiling and lots of eye contact.
- A (male, mid-60s): Enthusiasm for project increased as role evolved from participating to leading sessions. He reported increased confidence and wellbeing. Manager observed that project gave him a purpose and brought out a more practical, independent side of him.
- D (female, mid-50s): Scheme manager observed she was initially hesitant, but blossomed in sessions; the first time she'd seen her really smile and sing. Joining in with repetition, rhythm and words gave her a calm consistency, which helped her to relax and escape from pressures and past trauma.

### **b) Improvement in cognition and dexterity**



### **Observations:**

- E (male, mid-80s): Initially hesitant to join in physical warm-ups and use instruments. His responses became faster each week: tapping feet, moving with music, playing instruments more confidently for longer, and making jokes. Session #3: seemed steadier on feet; after session he asked to go into garden. Session #15: danced with facilitator, smiling and moving in perfect rhythm with music. Conversations and survey responses more coherent.
- J (male, late-60s): engaged in banjo playing during sessions solo and with facilitators, so less restless and distracted.
- B (female, late-70s): As sessions progressed, B taught dance steps by moving her feet so that the group could copy her.

### **c) Social isolation to inclusion**



#### **Observations:**

- G (female, early-60s) and D (female, early-80s): In tea breaks, G often offered and sought support and advice from other carers and staff, and told us that the group support often helps her stress levels decrease during sessions.
- A (male, mid-60s): Scheme manager observed that project has been good for him as it has pulled him from isolation into a group session which he hasn't done before. This has enabled him to mix with other people.
- L (female, mid-60s): She observed that sessions have helped her to engage more in community life, helping her depression.
- K (male, late-60s): In this group, the only one he attends, he listens to the music while managing his physical pain.

### **d: Staying active in the community for longer**



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### Observations:

- A (male, mid-60s): Very engaged in music-making from start. Brought own instrument, offered riff and initiated jam. As confidence increased, took more of a leadership role in sessions and volunteered with us in local community.
- M (female, early-80s) : From halfway through the 30 sessions, she initiated warm-ups, brought song sheets and her ukulele. Also started attending exercise classes at Lavender House though was a participant from outside the scheme.
- T (male, late-70s): Hosting role, making tea, welcoming participants from the community, enquiring after people if they could not attend.

### Sustainability: development of projects beyond the OSM sessions

As part of the project's outputs, we worked with Lavender House and Hop 50+ to explore the possibility of the groups self-running after the end of the 30 sessions in April '17. We identified potential peer volunteers, built up a core repertoire initiated by participants, and shared skills with project workers to help enable the two projects to continue (see appendix).

### Additional outcomes

- Lavender House participants performed at events including Mind B&H World Mental Health Day
- Dementia Friends training delivered at Lavender House as a result of our linking up these groups
- Two participants from Lavender House have become OSM volunteers and helped us deliver taster sessions at various venues including Duke of York Picturehouse, Fabrica and Brighton Fringe
- Music and mark-making session with Lavender House Art Group
- Partnering with Chichester Dementia Action Alliance to deliver our training for carers at Chichester Cathedral
- Presented the work of the project at NAMIH (National Alliance of Musicians in Healthcare) conference, Royal Brompton Hospital, London
- OSM volunteer started training as an occupational therapist as a result of working on this project
- Exchanging music for connection sessions for storage and meeting space at Ireland Lodge as a result of running the project (value added / in-kind).

### Sing Healthy Play Happy year two

In May '17, we delivered ten weeks of Sing Healthy Play Happy at New Larchwood, Coldean, and Maycroft Manor, Patcham. From October '17, we will deliver another two ten-week block of community sessions based at Maycroft Manor, and also at Patching Lodge, Eastern Road.



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## **APPENDIX**

### **I: Project outcomes – participant comments**

#### **a) Increase in wellbeing / mental health**

- *It helps my husband with his dementia and I enjoy it. I hope it goes on for a long time.*
- *When we are at home before coming here her mood is very low, but as soon as she walks in the room and sees the people and the instruments her mood instantly improves.*
- *I wouldn't be here in this chair if it weren't for all of you. I came to get rid of the blues. I was crying before I came. Now I'm in a completely different place. This place has saved me. I hang on to it.*
- *I was panicking on my own in my room and felt really tired and low. I heard the music so I came down. I feel much better now. Music cheers you up. You forget your trials, tribulations and illnesses*
- *It enhances Mum's mood and mine all day. She lights up when she comes. And it gives me a break.*
- *I love every moment. I hope these sessions go on forever. They set you up for the week*
- *I haven't had this feeling for years. The sessions can't come round fast enough.*

#### **b) Increase in cognition and dexterity**

- *My mum is not usually able to concentrate and focus, but she really does when she is here*

#### **c) Increased social inclusion**

- *I enjoy the pleasure of the company*
- *It is one of the few things that carers can attend with Alzheimers sufferers at their level*
- *The sessions make it easier to mix and communicate with others. I'm happy to have discovered the group*
- *I just enjoy singing and having fun and meeting lovely people. I know it makes me and others happy*
- *I like it. It's lovely. We have a natter and sing songs. I meet some of my generation. It gets me out of the house and gives me a break*

#### **d) Staying active in community for longer**

- *We came every Monday during the break. There was a wave of enthusiasm. We were looking forward to it. I say, 'if you don't use it, you'll lose it.' I enjoy it very much. Mostly we use the songbook. We sing and play a lot of the ones we used to. It's very good we're still carrying on doing it. It was good to have people come to the sessions from outside Lavender House. I hope they come back. The more the merrier*
- *I never did rapping or lyrics before. It came out of the blue. Being with the group helped me to find out that I could do it. I was encouraged by a volunteer here to have a go and keep learning to play the ukulele. I'm getting better. I've been practising a lot.*



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## **2: Development of projects beyond initial 30 sessions**

Jampots at Lavender House: Tenants began to organise and run their own jam sessions in the breaks after each block of ten sessions. Residents of Lavender House utilised their own soundmaking resources - including their hearing loop microphone and their own instruments, and made creative use of found sounds such as kitchen utensils to complement their music-making - and a music file that one tenant had compiled from our sessions together. The group is still self-running jam sessions five months after the end of our project (including putting in a funding bid for additional instruments).

The Hop Stop Music Box: We co-created tools with participants, staff and volunteers, to enable them to continue to run their own sessions, and made a songbook of the group's favourite songs and activities. We set up a Hop Stop Music Box to encourage people to bring in unused instruments, and to make simple percussion such as yoghurt pot shakers. Hop 50+ volunteers decided to use the SHPH CD as a springboard to lead group singing. A Hop 50+ volunteer said, *I feel my confidence is nearly there now to support musical activities.*



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