

Music for Mental Health and Wellbeing

A pilot project

Impact Report



Executive summary

Background and acknowledgements

Music in Hospitals & Care is a charity that improves the health and wellbeing of children and adults through the healing power of live music. Every year, we work with professional musicians to share live music with people from across the UK, who may not otherwise get to experience it.

The aim of this project was to further develop our approach to live music in mental health services, by providing opportunities for partners and musicians to come together to practice, learn, develop and identify key outcomes.

Ruth Stevenson, researcher, independently evaluated the project, designing an evaluation framework and associated methodology that would bring together local and national data.

Thank you to the Peter Sowerby Foundation for funding this 12-month UK-wide pilot project. We also acknowledge the support of our freelance musicians and partner settings: Bowmere Hospital (Chester), Wythenshawe Hospital (Manchester), Gartnavel Royal Hospital (Glasgow), Southleigh Community Hospital (Croydon) and Princess of Wales Hospital (Bridgend).

Key findings

Throughout the course of the pilot, live music had a positive impact on those experiencing it – including both patients and staff in the mental health settings. Here is a snapshot of the findings.



Patients engaged with the live music in a wide variety of ways:



Dancing and movement in response to the music



Engaging in conversations, often prompted by the music



Interacting with the instruments



Listening from directly outside the room or elsewhere in the setting



Immediate impact on patients:



Improved wellbeing and a relaxing experience



Nostalgic feelings

Longer term impact on patients:



A better atmosphere on the ward



Looking forward to future live music sessions

Benefits for staff:



A chance to relax



Getting to know patients

Benefits for settings:



Regularity of sessions



Access to a source of funding

These positive impacts were enabled by the selection of the right musicians for each environment, along with the identification of 'local staff advocates' who ensured that the live music was well supported in the space and that delivery was smooth.

The ongoing responsiveness of the musicians across the project sessions ensured that the live music was tailored to the needs of the local settings and those in attendance, which proved impactful and valued. We found that varied instruments, genres, and demographics of musicians worked well and that success lay in the consideration taken and the skills and experience of the musicians.

The consistent approach to live music delivery is summarised as *model of delivery* in this report, which resulted in the patients feeling empowered to engage on their own terms. Patients were provided with an enjoyable activity in a safe and supported environment, through which they were empowered to participate in whatever way they chose to. Ultimately, they had some autonomy and control in a setting where this is not always possible.

Methodology

Researcher Ruth Stevenson was commissioned to independently evaluate the project, bringing together local and national data to identify:

- The processes that facilitate successful live music delivery;
- The successes of the musician approach, and the processes supporting this;
- The impact on patients experiencing the live music;
- The impact on staff, processes and outcomes within the mental health services;
- Local variations in project delivery and impact;
- Enablers of any successes in the project.

Evaluation methods were as follows:

- Musician reflection forms (84 completed forms across 75 sessions)
- Patient impact forms (227 completed forms)
- Staff impact forms (121 completed forms)
- Other patient reflections (with setting-appropriate methodologies selected from a 'menu' of options designed by the evaluator in consultation with the live music team, Steer Group and local settings)
- 5x small group interviews with 11 musicians
- 9x interviews with 5 decision-makers and 5 attending staff members
- 4x interviews with Music in Hospitals & Care local leads

The evaluation period was 6 March to 16 June 2023 with some activity extended beyond this.

Designing the evaluation

The following key project stakeholders were identified: patients experiencing the live music, musicians, staff supporting patients in experiencing the live music, decision-making staff within participating services, and Music in Hospitals & Care staff.

The following anticipated challenges were noted:

- It would be difficult to gather longer term impact from patients themselves because at some of the settings patients do not stay for long and consequently may only come to one live music session. This also meant that there was no clear 'end' reflection point, from the perspective of the patients, to build the evaluation around;
- It could be a challenge for some patients to engage with evaluation tools if they had low levels of literacy, or were too unwell;
- We could not guarantee that service staff would engage with the evaluation as they were busy and their immediate priority would always be patient care;
- It was desirable to set up and pilot an evaluation process that could be transferable and sustainable beyond this specific project.

An evaluation framework, related methodologies and tools were prepared with this in mind, including 'core' methodologies designed to be suitable for use at all settings. These were rolled out at the start of the evaluation phase, and were administered by chosen individuals, depending on the setting support. (At Ty Llidiard for example, they were administered by the staff and the hospital's music therapist).

The musicians played a key part, due to their pivotal role as individuals present at all sessions who could build trust with setting staff and patients. Towards the end of the evaluation phase, in-depth interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders, and individual settings collected more detailed patient reflections in a way that suited their setting. A selection of methodologies was prepared by the evaluator, allowing the musicians (or staff) to use approaches that they felt most aligned with patient need.

"It makes the rest of your day happier. You feel brilliant, upbeat. It makes my day better, I feel good calm and relaxed and happy. If I feel woe before coming, I get way up there [points upwards] after."

Patient, Gartnavel Royal Hospital



Reflective artwork during the live music from Princess of Wales Hospital (also on front cover)

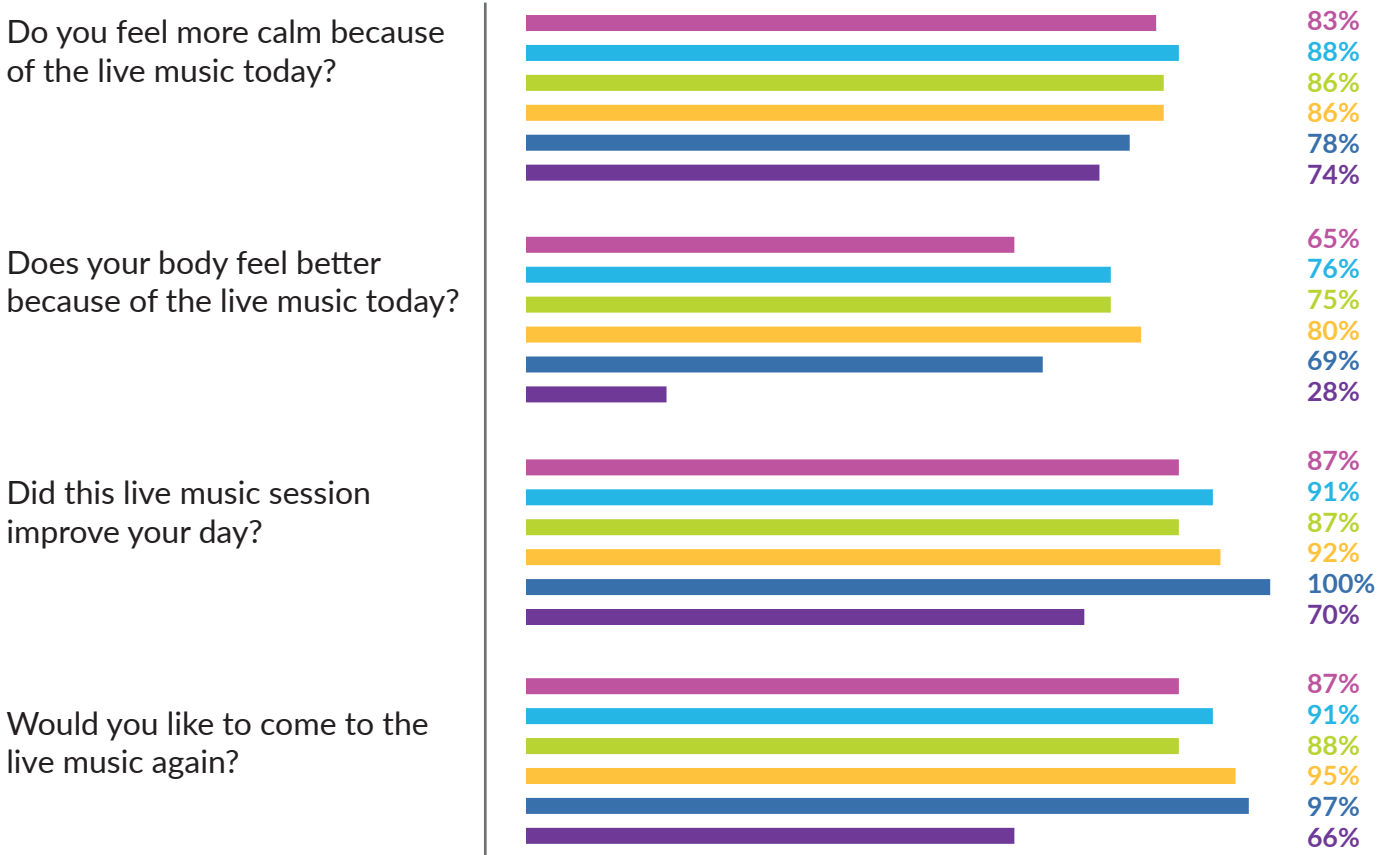
Impact

Researcher Ruth Stevenson was commissioned to independently evaluate the project, bringing together local and national data to identify:

The impact on patients experiencing the live music

Patterns in self-assessed patient impact across the settings:

- Combined national data (227 individuals)
- Wythenshawe Hospital (52 individuals)
- Gartnavel Royal Hospital (59 individuals)
- Southleigh Community Hospital (32 individuals)
- Princess of Wales Hospital (50 individuals)
- Bowmere Hospital (33 individuals)



Response to the live music sessions was very positive across the settings, with more than nine in ten patients at each setting saying that they enjoyed the live music following each session.

There was only minor variation in self-assessed impact across the settings, with the exception being the Princess of Wales Hospital where self-assessed impact was lower as compared to the other areas. It is likely that this is influenced by the acute nature of the setting and the severity of illness that the patients were experiencing. Many positive impacts on individual patients were however observed by staff and musicians at this setting.

“It seems that even people who generally don’t respond have responded in some way, even if it has been really small. That’s been a really big thing for them that they’ve been able to do that.”

Music in Hospitals & Care local lead

Patients engaged with the live music sessions in a wide variety of ways:

- Making requests for a special song to be played by the musician;
- Engaging in conversations, often prompted by the music;
- Singing along with the music;
- Dancing and movement;
- Participating together with other attendees in a group activity;
- Interacting with the instruments;
- Self-generated content, initiating solo singing or playing instruments;
- Passive engagement, just listening;
- Sitting elsewhere in the room;
- Listening from outside the room;
- Appreciating music as background to other activities;
- Listening from elsewhere in the setting;
- Staying for a full session;
- Coming and going during the session as they choose.

The role of requests in enabling participation

Most of the live music sessions were very request-based, and this was encouraged by the musicians. The local staff members considered this to be highly positive because:

- It enables patients to make a choice and hear things they want to hear;
- It gives patients a chance to express their personalities and share their tastes;
- It prompts patients to interact and have conversations.

“Doing the requests is amazing because it’s just getting that engagement. Some patients don’t talk, may be in very stressful situations, very emotionally distressed. Actually, just to have that conversation just asking for a song can be quite transformative in a patient’s journey sometimes.”

Local decision maker

The following immediate impacts on patients were recorded:

- The sessions were judged by the staff to be beneficial for the patients (92% of the staff agreed that the session made a positive difference to the patients);
- The staff and musicians observed a visible positive difference in the patients;
- The patients experienced fun and enjoyment (97% of patients told us 'yes' they enjoyed the live music);
- The patients experienced improved wellbeing (83% of patients told us 'yes' they feel more calm because of the live music);
- The patients had a relaxing experience;
- The patients experienced positive physical impacts (65% of patients told us 'yes' their body feels better because of the live music);
- The music generated nostalgic feelings, which could be positive or bittersweet.

Small but meaningful interactions

Many patients experienced small interactions, reactions or changes that were important or impactful for that individual, for example:

"One lady sat in a foetal position at the other side of the room but moved onto nearer chairs through the event when she liked a song and stood up finally to speak to me near the end, saying 'thank you' and she'd enjoyed my playing. She had smiled and joined in songs she clearly recognised."

Musician, Bowmere Hospital

"He had a tendency to seem angry and became loud. I noticed that I could distract this patient by singing a song and this would change his pattern of thought and behaviour."

Musician, Wythenshawe Hospital

"There is a patient where her mood changes often. When the musician came in she got involved in the singing. She sings it quite nicely. For the rest of the day she was a bit calm."

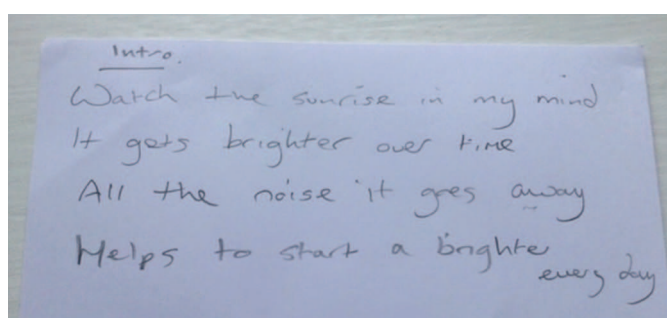
Local staff, Southleigh Community Hospital

"His mum and dad were there. Something really special happened. The mum was engaged and the dad was singing along, and the son reached out and held the dad. It was a lovely moment when they hugged each other."

Local staff, Southleigh Community Hospital

The following indicators of a longer-term impact of the live music on patients were recorded:

- The live music improved their day (87% of the patients told us 'yes' the live music improved their day);
- The staff observed a better atmosphere on the ward afterwards;
- Some patients talked about the live music between sessions (33 conversations about the live music were recorded of which all were positive);
- The patients looked forward to future sessions;
- Many patients attended multiple times, indicating ongoing appreciation (and 87% of patients told us 'yes' they would like to attend again).



Patient reflective songwriting, Bowmere Hospital

“Having seen them in action, I believe Music in Hospitals & Care is making a real difference to patients and helping their recovery.”

Consultant, Princess of Wales Hospital

The impact on staff, processes and outcomes within the services

The following impacts of the live music on staff were recorded:

- The staff experienced enjoyment (99% of staff agreed that I personally enjoyed attending the session, with 97% agreeing strongly);
- The staff had a chance to relax at the sessions;
- The staff experienced vicarious enjoyment, appreciating that the patients enjoyed the live music;
- The staff felt that attending the live music improved their working day (90% of staff agreed that I will have a better working day today because we had this session)
- Many staff reported that attending the live music helped them to get to know their patients (75% of staff agreed that attending the session helped me to get to know the patients)
- A positive impact on non-attending staff was also described, as the music carried throughout the setting.

“We’ve obviously all been at the live music sessions as well and I think the staff actually benefit from it.”

Local staff member

The following impacts of the live music on local settings were recorded:

- The sessions were appreciated as an external offering that could be offered for engaging and entertaining patients;
- It was easier for settings to manage resourcing if an external organisation was providing the activity, as this saved planning time and encouraged patients to gather in one room;
- Holding regular sessions ensured that more patients could benefit in a more in-depth way, and enabled musicians to take a tailored approach which has resulted in greater impacts;
- The fact that Music in Hospitals & Care had access to a source of funding for the sessions made it a very easy decision for the settings to participate.

Selection of musicians

The musicians selected for this project held a range of similar qualities across all the project settings, and this was shown to facilitate successful project delivery.

Those employed in this project were professional musicians with a strong degree of **musical proficiency**. They had a varied repertoire and were willing and **able to take requests** from those in attendance at the sessions. However, their successes in this project were strongly linked to the other qualities that they brought to the role.

The musicians had strong **inter-personal skills** and a **calm and calming manner**, which meant that they were able to quickly build relationships with patients and staff, putting attenders at their ease. They also had **facilitation skills**, enabling them to create a safe and welcoming environment where attenders felt comfortable to engage. A **willingness to take a flexible approach** was also necessary, as patient and setting needs proved to be highly unpredictable and the musicians needed to be very responsive to this.

The musicians were **extremely experienced** in all of these areas, and they were **very resilient** which helped them to cope with this challenging role. The evaluation has shown that it is vital to select the 'right musician' to deliver a project such as this, and it is recommended that findings from the evaluation should be used to guide future recruitment and manage musician expectations around what might be expected of them.

"It is taken as read the fact that we are musicians and we can play our instruments, but it's over and above those musical skills that we need [for these environments]."

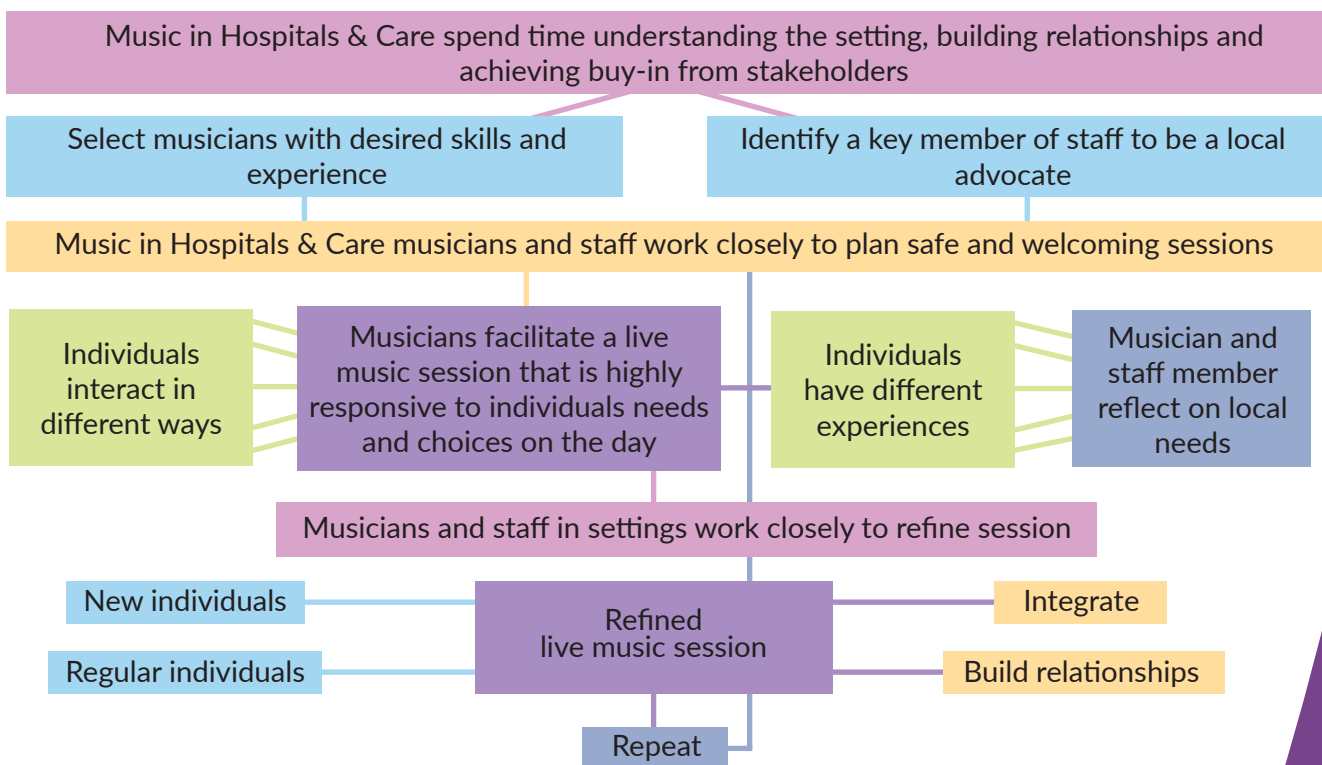
Musician

Developing a model of delivery

Despite national differences in type of care and genre of live music shared, there was substantial commonality in the approach taken by our live music team and musicians. The common factors in the approach were:

- Selecting the right musician for the environment, with the necessary skills and experience;
- Identifying a member of staff who is a local 'staff advocate' for the project and who can facilitate smooth delivery;
- Ensuring that the live music is delivered via a safe and supported environment;
- Providing a live music experience that is highly tailored to patient needs and choices, as a consequence of which the patients experience a variety of impacts which will differ by individual;
- Holding regular sessions enabling musicians and local staff to refine the local approach and to develop relationships with both staff and patients;
- The musicians spent time ahead and in between being onsite, undertaking programme preparation and development;
- Musicians were reflective, responsive and adaptive both in terms of repertoire and when considering when to engage and in what way.

It is therefore possible to define a broad model for providing music in mental health settings based on the approaches developed by the music delivery team and musicians.



In practice the live music has been more effective in the cases where delivery has more closely matched all elements of this model.

The value of live music

Throughout the evaluation the various stakeholders described the value that live music can offer, and it is useful to articulate this as it underpins the successes and positive impacts of the project.

The value that live music can offer:

- Many people like music, so music has a wide appeal;
- Music is easy for people to engage with;
- Music has the power to 'do something deeper' than many other activities;
- Music triggers emotions and memories and this can be cathartic;
- A live music experience is a different and more immersive experience as compared to listening to recorded music.

More specifically, the various stakeholders described the value that live music can offer in a mental health setting, and again it is useful to articulate this as it demonstrates why live music can generate positive impacts in these types of settings.

"Someone can listen to the radio or something, but it's not the same, is it?"

Local decision maker

The value that live music can offer in a mental health setting:

- It is an activity that has wide appeal across all patient groups;
- It provides patients with an enjoyable experience in an environment where they may feel bored;
- It provides new opportunities for patients who may not otherwise have this experience;
- It provides an opportunity for patients to focus on something that is not their symptoms;
- It is a non-clinical activity provided in a clinical environment;
- It provides patients with an opportunity to be themselves;
- It provides patients with an opportunity to exert choice and control through their decision to attend and their level of involvement;
- It is an activity that strengthens relationships and builds trust between patients, and between patients and staff;
- It is a chance for patients to talk to somebody external for a change;
- It can be a cause for optimism where patients experience positive emotions;
- It is a low-risk activity which is highly unlikely to have any negative consequences.

"It can be hard to find activities that will engage this group of people, that meet a wide range of needs. But music definitely fits that bill."

Local staff member

Why this project worked well

The evaluation has shown that this music for mental health and wellbeing pilot project has been **valued by settings, staff and patients** due to being an enjoyable, positive and beneficial experience.

The Music in Hospitals & Care model of delivery has proved to be particularly **well suited to a mental health setting**, and the flexible and responsive approach taken by the musicians has worked well because it offers a **variety of engagement options to meet differing patient needs** and ultimately **provides the patients with an opportunity to exert choice, autonomy and control in an environment where that is not always possible**.

Crucially, this approach has resulted in **small but meaningful interactions, reactions or changes** which have been shown to have made a real difference for individual patients.

Funding the future

All of the staff members interviewed said that they would like to continue to hold regular live music sessions “in an ideal world”. However, all also identified funding as being the key barrier, making clear that any decision to continue, “would depend on the cost”.

In order to make any decision, the various staff members described conversations that they would need to first have with local colleagues and more senior decision-makers within their setting. They felt that funding could potentially be sourced from ward funds, local budgets or by bidding for money from their Trust. This would be expected to be a time-consuming task, requiring staff to make a case and outline the benefits of the live music.

Music in Hospitals & Care intends to support this process and continue to explore this avenue of delivery, and the following actions have so far been taken to evolve the learnings from this pilot:

- A six-month programme of sessions at Ty Llidiard, Princess of Wales Hospital is planned combining live music and visual arts.
- An application for funding has been made for a programme of music in the Intensive Psychiatric Care Unit at Gartnavel Hospital.
- An application for more live music at Southleigh Community Hospital, Croydon

“It is really good having it on a weekly basis, so it would be really good if that could carry on. But it would depend on the cost.”

Local decision maker

Conclusion

Our live music in mental health settings was well received and effective. This resulted in a variety of positive impacts that were explained by and observed in patients and corroborated by setting staff and other stakeholders. In particular, **it has been shown that small interactions, reactions or changes elicited by the live music can be, and have been, particularly important or impactful for individuals.** Staff and settings have also benefitted, and have valued the live music sessions.

The majority of the musicians have developed an approach to live music delivery which was consistent across the project, and this has resulted in the **patients feeling empowered** to engage on their own terms. This approach has been summarised in the Music in Hospitals & Care model of delivery.

Patients have been provided with an enjoyable activity in a safe and supported environment, through which they have been empowered to participate in whatever way they choose to. Ultimately, they have been given the **opportunity to exert choice, autonomy and control** in a place and situation where this is not always possible.

For this reason, it is important to emphasise that the live music sessions are not simply a passive activity. Because **each patient interacts on their own terms** and can potentially be supported to do so in a very wide variety of ways, it could be said that this model of providing live music falls under the banner of participatory arts.

The ongoing responsiveness of the musicians across the longer timespan of the **regular programme of sessions** has ensured that the live music was tailored to the needs of the local settings and those in attendance. It has been shown that **varied instruments, genres, and demographics of musicians** have worked well.

A key learning point is that the project relies heavily on bringing together an appropriately skilled and highly enthusiastic team across Music in Hospitals & Care, the musicians and the settings, so taking the **time to build and nurture solid and productive relationships** must be a priority.

All of the local staff were keen for the live music to continue in some form. However, it was made clear that cost will always be a factor in local decision-making around whether to have live music to support wellbeing, and the fact that Music in Hospitals & Care were able to offer this programme of music at no cost, thanks to the generous funding of The Peter Sowerby Foundation, has been particularly welcome.

Recommendations - how you can help



Sign up to our newsletter:

Stay up to date with our work in mental health and find out more about the benefits of live music.

mihc.org.uk/#Newsletter



Spread the word:

Share on social media or with friends, family and colleagues.

mihc.org.uk/sowerby-report



Donate:

Help more people experience the joy of live music by donating today or setting up a regular gift.

mihc.org.uk/donate



Fund our work:

Fund live music in mental health settings to ensure staff and patients can access the benefits outlined in this report.

mihc.org.uk/become-a-funder



Enquire about live music:

Work with us to create a programme of live music in your health or care setting.

mihc.org.uk/live-music/enquire





Music in Hospitals & Care musicians Angharad and Marged at the reflective artwork session