



LISTENING TO THE UNSAID

AN EVALUATION OF MUSICIANS' DEVELOPMENT:
FINDINGS FROM THE SONGBIRDS MUSIC FOR HEALTH PROGRAMME AT
ROYAL MANCHESTER CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL 2018-2020

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY SOUND CONNECTIONS



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INTRODUCTION TO THE SONGBIRDS MUSIC FOR HEALTH PROGRAMME

We are delighted to commission Sound Connections to create this report, which shares learning from a series of reflective interviews with Music Leaders participating in the Youth Music funded Medical Notes and Songbirds Music programmes at The Royal Manchester Children's Hospital between 2018 and 2020, during our final phase of work as LIME Music for Health. Its publication comes at an exciting time in our organisational development, as we move our programme to the newly formed Songbirds Music UK CIC and look forward to continuing our work in creating formative music leader opportunities for young musicians.

The report consolidates - and celebrates - the experiences of our musicians as they developed skills in working with children and young people in hospital and related community settings. As a team we each share the impact of the work on our musical careers. We hope that by sharing our experiences we can offer a valuable resource for organisations who, like us, strive to develop new opportunities for Music Leaders in health and community settings whilst bringing music to children and young people in the most isolated of circumstances. We hope too, to give an insight into the impact of such valuable work on our Music Leaders' growth and development, as each builds their individualised pathway of participatory and co-creative practice within the sector.



We would like to thank all our Music Leaders for the passion, creativity, and dedication they bring to their work within the hospital, and for their openness in contributing to this evaluation; the experiences they share form a strong foundation for supporting music leader development in future, and richly pave the way for creating new pathways for meaningful hospital music making with children and young people in hospitals and healthcare settings.

ROS HAWLEY & MARK FISHER
DIRECTORS SONGBIRDS MUSIC UK
FEBRUARY 2021



INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION

In January 2021 the Songbirds Music for Health programme commissioned Sound Connections to complete an independent, external evaluation focusing on the development of Music Leaders involved in the programme.

The evaluation is centred around 'Medical Notes: Music at the Heart of Life 2', which was a programme funded by the National Foundation for Youth Music from 2018 to 2020, bringing live, interactive music onto the wards at Royal Manchester Children's Hospital. A team of specially trained Music Leaders worked sensitively at the bedside with children, young people, families, and staff, giving everyone a chance to be part of the music. There were a variety of projects running within the programme including: Songbirds, a tailor-made music programme for children with the most complex healthcare needs; and Sound Environments in Paediatric Critical Care which focused on the sound environment of high noise and high stress departments within the hospital, and explored the role that music plays in alleviating anxiety and creating a therapeutic, calming sound environment. Flying the Nest was a bespoke remote music-making project providing individualised music provision for families with a child with complex needs transitioning from child to adult services. There were annual public-facing events including: ZestFest, an annual music festival held in the atrium and outdoor areas of the hospital; and Wingbeats conference held at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) in 2018 to celebrate the work of the Songbirds Music for Health team, share an exchange of knowledge and explore current best practice in the Arts-Health sector.

Songbirds Music for Health also delivered accredited training programmes for music and medical students at the RNCM and The University of Manchester Medical School.

Since March 2019, in response to COVID-19 and restrictions within the hospital, music sessions could not continue in person, so the remainder of the programme was delivered remotely working live with children and families via iPads, and through high-quality audio and video resources for families to access in their own time.

The critically-acclaimed and widely-respected programme has received national and international recognition in publications, conferences and winning awards in the NHS in the North Excellence in Supply Awards 2018 (Patient Experience Category) and the Building Better Healthcare Awards 2018 (Collaborative Arts Project (Performance) Category). Ros Hawley, Specialist Lead Musician for the programme and Co-Director of Songbirds Music UK, was also shortlisted for the Inspirational Music Leader Award at Youth Music's national awards in 2019.

Sound Connections collected evaluation evidence through telephone interviews with eight Music Leaders and through one Music Leader providing written responses to the same questions. We asked them to reflect on their experiences to learn more about how their skills have developed through involvement with the Songbirds Music for Health programme. Specifically, we asked Music Leaders to reflect on:

1. Their own development across a range of skills and capacities:

- Musical skills
- Creative skills
- Social and interpersonal skills
- Professional skills
- Reflective practice
- The impact on other aspects of their musical careers

2. Observations they made about if and how healthcare staff, patients and parents/carers developed greater understanding of the benefits of music in healthcare settings.

Overall, the interviews provided the space and opportunity to compile rich evidence about the profound personal and professional impact the Songbirds Music for Health programme had for the Music Leaders involved.



EVALUATION FINDINGS



INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSIC LEADERS

The Songbirds Music for Health programme attracts a range of Music Leaders who have varied careers as performers, teachers, and composers working with different musical styles. Music Leaders expressed that they were interested in joining the programme for various reasons: they enjoy working with people; they want to make a difference and help others going through difficult times in their lives; they are interested in caring roles; they enjoy performing music and bringing out responses in people; they like that the work is challenging, rewarding and thought provoking; they want to gain first-hand experience of the positive impact of music in health and experience of working with disabled children and young people.

You can find a full list of Music Leaders, including a summary of their experience, in Appendix 1.

Two Music Leaders are also course leaders for the Songbirds Music for Health annual training programme at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM). This training partnership is the longest standing programme of its kind linked to a conservatoire in the UK. It is a popular accredited, thirty-hour placement opportunity that supports up to ten undergraduate and postgraduate students a year. It is designed to introduce musicians to the use of live music as a vehicle for communication with a focus on helping students to promote wellbeing and recovery in both hospital and community settings. Five Music Leaders are alumni of RNCM and were involved in the training programme as part of their studies. Some Music Leaders said they have also gained experience and training with Live Music Now (LMN) and Seashell Trust.

Through their work with the Songbirds Music for Health programme, Music Leaders have been involved primarily in ward-based residencies focused on patient-centred musical interaction at bedsides and in sensitive clinical spaces. They have held residencies in surgical wards; short stay and elective surgery; with children in a clinical research facility; in a mental health unit; urology and gastrology; neuro-rehabilitation; burns units; and Intensive Care Units and High Dependency Units – all highly individual and potentially sensitive areas demanding musical approaches specific to each context. They have also been involved in music-making on children’s wards and other hospital wards; performances in open public spaces; working as a mentor and supervisor across different hospital settings; training medical students to use music in their practice; performing as part of ZestFest (a day-long annual music festival – the first of its kind set in a paediatric hospital); and leading composition projects.

Residency models have been designed to nurture and develop Music Leaders’ skills, competencies, and confidence in hospital music practice. Musicians have been paired together to support and enrich their development throughout the programme; peer learning is at the heart of the programme structure.



MUSIC LEADER DEVELOPMENT

We asked Music Leaders about how their skills, practice and careers have developed through being involved in the Songbirds Music for Health programme.

MUSICAL SKILLS

We looked first at musical skills and found that, overall, it is greater musical flexibility and freedom that Music Leaders developed most. Throughout the interviews there is a sense that the approach required for working in healthcare settings has stretched Music Leaders beyond their original training and has helped them feel more liberated and free to explore their musicality in new ways.

Improvisation was mentioned by several musicians as being the most important musical skill they have gained during the programme. One described improvisation as the *“biggest thing, especially coming from a classical base. Learning an African and eastern European basis of approaching music has completely changed my cello playing ability.”* and another expressed feeling *“happier to go with what happens.”*

Some Music Leaders said that they now **use their voice and sing** more when playing. Their reflections suggest that they feel greater freedom to explore musically through using their voices and *“creating simple musical arrangements and songs.”* For one leader it has *“brought out my voice to sing, harmonising and collaborating with people.”*

Learning to **play by ear** and *“picking up a tune”* is another important musical skill some have newly developed.





Music Leaders expressed that they have been able to adapt their performance skills to a different environment, and to different combinations of instruments, and that the ability to translate their “**performance mindset**” to a hospital setting is important.

Listening in a different way was mentioned by Specialist Lead Musician Ros Hawley, who also pointed out how important **ensemble skills** are: *“The work teaches you to listen (musically) differently. It hones the ensemble skills.”*

Others felt they have developed greater musical **sensitivity**, especially when playing close to patients. They noted that this sensitivity extends to observing responses from patients and having a variety of instruments and activities to hand to respond appropriately and flexibly.

One music leader said they have refined their **instrumental skills** and developed new **playing techniques**: *“I developed specific guitar accompanying skills, chords and finger picking... Also playing sax very quietly and with a good tone in a hospital environment.”*

The combination of musical skills developed through practical experience of music making in a healthcare setting is summed up here:

“The first-hand, very practical experience of performing and improvising music on children’s wards directly to patients throws you into the deep end musically; developing your skills to improvise, sing and perform as an ensemble very quickly.”

CREATIVE SKILLS

In many ways musical and creative skill developments overlap. Music Leaders explained how they have grown creatively and, as with musical skills, improvisation was a key creative capacity mentioned repeatedly. They describe how improvisation enables them to think “in the moment”, respond to individual situations, be flexible, change plans mid-way and adapt. Developing a ‘toolkit’ of skills to use when making music is seen as an important way of ensuring Music Leaders have access to a variety of options and activities they can use flexibly.

“Thinking in the moment and coming up with songs on the spot that reacted to the patient. Being able to inject creativity and develop a toolkit (call and response, contrasting dynamics game, pass the sound around the musicians).”

“This sort of work really makes you think on your feet. You need to think of everyone who you are working with, it could be a bay with five people of different ages and needs.”

Ros Hawley identified *“improvisation, being flexible and an ability to be responsive in your music making”* as the key creative skills involved in music making in hospitals.

Composition was another skill that Music Leaders have developed through being involved in the programme:

“My composition skills have developed through the Sound Environments project. I have done four compositions based on four seasons, that was really huge for me.”

“I write tunes and songs on the spot, or informed by the tunes I have improvised or loosely prepared.”

“I developed my ability to spot moments which could be crafted into compositions. It has given me the time and resources to focus on producing high-quality work and has allowed my creative skills to become more efficient – there are lots of opportunities with Music for Health to experiment with compositions, recording and installations.”

One music leader described the **creative movement** skills they developed because [due to specific ward restrictions] they weren’t allowed to bring their cello into the hospital: *“I developed creativity using other ways of playing, using more movement.”* whilst another music leader *“developed skills in creative movement, reacting to the child: child led conducting games.”*

Another music leader said they benefited from *“using visual stimulation, from the ward; a picture, a teddy bear, could even be an invasive sound (a beep).”*

Other creative skills mentioned included thinking in different ways, using very simple things to generate music and communication: *“Thinking outside the box... how to strip things back to their simplest form, the value of using one sound.”*

SOCIAL AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Music Leaders described a range of social and interpersonal skills they developed and honed through being involved in the Songbirds Music for Health programme. The reflections about social and interpersonal skills were particularly rich and nuanced, and demonstrated the great sensitivity and emotional intelligence required.

Common themes were learning how to “read the room”, to communicate without talking, to interpret the mood and atmosphere in different spaces, and to be **flexible and adaptable**.

“Adaptability; I’ve never been in such a high paced ever-changing environment and so you need to read a space and how patients and families are feeling and how the other musician is feeling.”

“Listening to the unsaid and being able to read situations, being able to walk into a space and read and listen through what is not being said and trying to respond to that through the music.”

Many Music Leaders talked about how they learnt to communicate non-verbally, in a nuanced, refined way, reading facial expressions and body language, and being sensitive when interacting with others. They learnt how to build conversations through music, being mindful of how their presence is affecting what is happening in the room. Another reflection was about learning how to present yourself, and how subtle changes and differences affect the way in which patients interpret your behaviour and interaction.

“[I’ve learnt] how to communicate non-verbally, as a lot of the children can’t speak. You develop an ability to say things through music, building up conversations. Using body language to invite someone to take part, placing yourself in the room, taking note of how your presence is affecting what is happening in the room.”

“Comic timing [is important] – being able to respond to the moment. You need to be sensitive to the space and the environment. Being able to know whether your input is needed. This comes from parents/guardian as they may be aware of the situation. Relaying body language, subliminal signals – this helps you understand whether to approach someone.”

Before becoming involved in the Songbirds Music for Health programme, one music leader described feeling out of their comfort zone, but that they developed interpersonal skills by learning how to “interact with patients, their families and health-care staff in a sensitive and appropriate way. This pushed me beyond my limits; developing my interpersonal skills a great deal.”

Another described learning about **emotional space** through taking part in training about therapeutic approaches: “It’s all about sitting in someone else’s emotional space and being there with them. It’s not about imposing an emotional approach on them - I did therapy training and this has informed my approaches.”

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Several Music Leaders said that their skills for communicating with other musicians and professionals in the music field have improved. The Songbirds Music for Health programme has helped them to develop these skills, particularly through taking part in role play activities. The experiences they have gained have also helped them to work more intuitively as part of a team.

“Being able to communicate with the other musician in the room when there are so many other things going on. We did a role play on this as part of our training and it really helped.”

“Working intensely with another professional in your field, don’t really do this as a freelancer. Building trust with another player.”

Another key area of learning has been in communicating with families and healthcare workers: *“I have learnt how to communicate in a multi-disciplinary setting, how to communicate with doctors, nurses and other staff.”*

Several Music Leaders said that it has been useful to learn **sign language and Makaton skills**. Other skills mentioned include **online communication and public speaking**.

Music Leaders described needing to work closely with colleagues and expressed how the training around **communication** was particularly useful. They described how they *“developed strong working relationships with colleagues to communicate musically without speaking. We had lots of training around supporting others as a mentor as well as being supported as a mentee, which was useful.”*

‘Through being involved in the programme another music leader said they have developed their confidence skills: *“It’s a big confidence builder in communicating with children of all ages and abilities.”*

During the COVID-19 pandemic Music Leaders have also learnt new communication skills for working with patients through technology: *“Working through Teams and iPads, encouraging interaction – that is really challenging but amazing.”*



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

A core principle of the Songbirds Music for Health programme is reflective practice. All Music Leaders are required to fill out evaluation logs after each session as part of a debrief with their partner musician, and at the end of the project they write up a case study and complete a final evaluation report. Some also keep reflective diaries. They said how important it has been for them to take time to **reflect, talk and write** about their music sessions. Reflective practice has been encouraged from the outset through training sessions and support. Music Leaders expressed that this has given them the opportunity to **process** their experiences, to **remember** the detail of sessions, and to **compare** approaches with others.

“Talking about my practice has improved a lot. It’s been embedded from day one as part of the training – it’s part of the work. It helps me to develop... It helps me process the emotional side of the work.”

“I process things by writing and talking... Always debriefing after each session gave different levels of reflections and these feed into my understanding of what is happening both longer and shorter term.”

“Music for Health has helped me formalise my reflective practice through writing it down and verbally reflecting with colleagues. Ros and Mark have been brilliant in helping us develop this area.”

It’s a massive part of what I do and built into every session and important from a mental health point of view. I sometimes spend as long reflecting as delivering.”

Given the work involves a lot of **emotional input** one music leader said how useful it was to “*unpack after each session.*” Another said “*When you are working with another musician you can digest afterward. One of the most useful things was when all the musicians came together to compare experience and approach.*”

Another Music Leader led **reflection sessions with junior doctors** as part of the ongoing training partnership with Manchester Medical School. They said that having the opportunity to focus on reflection has developed “*reflective and leadership abilities.*”

The level of peer-to-peer support has also been important to many.

Songbirds Music for Health Specialist Lead Musicians also expressed how helpful it has been to reflect on their practice.

“This has been a huge thing for me, to develop writing about my work. This journey has led me to writing a PhD. This has become a big thing for me.”

“As a result of a previous project I ended up writing a radio play about it and this really helped me in developing my reflective practice. As a tutor supporting the students, reflective practice is key.”



CASE STUDY: REFLECTIONS FROM SONGBIRDS MUSIC FOR HEALTH PROGRAMME SPECIALIST LEAD MUSICIAN, ROS HAWLEY

Ros Hawley established and co-leads the Songbirds Music for Health training programme at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM). She also writes about her work through her research and is now completing a PhD about her practice using musical interaction in hospitals.

Ros explains that working as a musician in healthcare settings teaches you to be flexible, responsive, and to listen (musically) differently. To be able to read situations and 'listen to the unsaid' is a very important part of this work and trying to respond to that through the music is key. Ros also highlights the importance of understanding the nuances of human interactions 'in the moment'.

She has written about how to communicate the subtlety of language and of trying to find a shared language with healthcare professionals, where 'sound', 'music' and 'noise' can all mean different things yet can be used interchangeably in conversation.

In healthcare settings, music helps to facilitate a sense of community, bringing together staff and patients. Staff see children in a different light and see what they can do for themselves, which can be very uplifting. The benefits of the music sessions for children and families include feeling happy, joyful, creative and being empowered. For the children it is about having a sense of control and ownership: *"An example of this would be when one young man in PICU smiled whilst we were at the door to his room, he was moving his head to conduct us as we played, and the mum and nurses could see that, and this became quite powerful as the weeks progressed."*

With this programme there are always challenges with funding but when people work in partnership and feel that they 'own' this and it is part of the community then it works most effectively. *"It contributes to holistic care. It's about shared understanding and breaking down hierarchies"*.

IMPACT ON OTHER PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES

The Music Leaders all have varied and diverse career portfolios, so we wanted to find out how being involved with the Songbirds Music for Health programme has helped them in other areas of their working lives. This section of the evaluation clearly demonstrated the wide-reaching ripple effect the Music in Health programme has had as a workforce development opportunity.

Firstly, we looked at how the Songbirds Music for Health programme has helped them become more established working in healthcare settings; many told us that they have gone on to work in a range of other hospitals including a 12-week project in the Intensive Care Unit at Belfast Children's Hospital and another at Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

Due to the high profile of the programme and the unique experience it offers, Music Leaders feel strongly it has helped with getting other work: *"It's widened my experience. It has higher profile and that **helps with getting other jobs**. Looks great on a CV... It gives you unique experience which helps in getting other work in the field."*

"The projects I've led, the performances I've been a part of, and the work I've created in Music for Health have been vital experiences I've used in job applications. I would be in a much weaker position to apply for jobs had I not been a part of Music for Health."

One music leader demonstrated how deep an impact the Music in Health programme, and mentoring from the Specialist Lead Musicians, has had during the early stages of their career:

"They have absolutely taught me everything. Really nurtured me, from my third year in college, through to now. Fantastic mentoring and guidance which still happens. My role has changed and I now lead and mentor musicians on the programme."

Taking part in Songbirds Music for Health programme has opened up and formed new musical journeys for Music Leaders, which has led to many new opportunities, including international links, research, and setting up a new company.

"Without discovering Music for Health I wouldn't have had any journey as a musician working in healthcare settings! This programme has allowed me to experience performing music on wards, which would be very difficult to arrange myself, and as a composer has given me opportunities to stretch my creativity, consider how music and health can be combined, and open up new avenues for me to create compositions. I now consider being a musician in health settings to be a serious career opportunity."



We also found that the Songbirds Music for Health programme has had an impact on other areas of Music Leaders' working lives and has been a springboard for other opportunities such as projects in other community and participatory settings or working as a performing musician.

"I work with a Down's Syndrome Network in Leeds and my work at the hospital has been really useful."

Several Music Leaders say they have also developed **greater confidence in other areas of their working life, in performing and in life in general.**

"The programme has made me more confident in a co-creative way. My experimental contemporary music has benefited from this work. I'm also leading on a project with Ulster Orchestra, working in healthcare settings."

"I am now teaching in reception and Year 1 which is new to me as I am now more confident. Huge increase in my confidence in my playing and performing."

"It really improved my confidence to get other work. My communication skills have improved and I have got new opportunities. Musically it has changed me so much. I now tend to play without music/parts. I have more confidence in performing and as a human being."

Another music leader described how they have developed better social skills and greater creativity in their **education work** and more flexibility in **performing.**

"More social skills in my wider education work, finding what works for the children I work with. I try and let my students I teach express themselves more. Less didactic, much more creative in my approach to teaching. More flexibility in my performing, happy to try new things, memorising music..."

Due to meeting many like-minded musicians through the Songbirds Music for Health programme, new performing opportunities have arisen.

"Now meeting more like-minded musicians and finding another way to work with them, so there are new ensemble possibilities."

As well as enabling new career pathways, Music Leaders have found new avenues into research and study.

"The placement really helped me consider my practice and opened up other pathways in my other work and thinking about myself as a musician... When I finish my MA I would love to continue this work. I have applied for a PHD in music education at RNCM and this [the Songbirds Music for Health programme] would be part of that."

"I have been working with a spoken word artist on a project who then wrote a series of poems that we set to music. It has had an influence on how I write."

Music Leaders are **proud** to have been involved in the Songbirds Music for Health programme and it has been an **important and meaningful** part of their careers.

"It has been a really significant part of my career. Working with inspiring people – Marianne, Ros, Mark. Doing talks at conferences has happened because of it. I look at it with pride as part of my career."

"The main thing is that this programme has meant a lot to me over the years and I truly hope it will continue to develop."



CHALLENGES

The evaluation was overwhelmingly positive, though two specific challenges were highlighted:

One Music Leader said that the process of developing creative skills can be “frustrating” and inconsistent due to the **“sporadic on-off nature of the work”**. They said that they “had a couple of years of lots of work (a day a week) and we felt like a team... Then the work became patchy.”

Another music leader said that **creating a balance** is important in this kind of work and that emotional exhaustion is a risk: “If you do too much it becomes exhausting so it’s about balance and you need to be careful about this.”



THE BENEFITS OF MUSIC IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

Looking beyond Music Leaders' own development, we asked them to consider if staff and hospitalised children and their families developed greater understanding of the benefits of music in healthcare through taking part in the Songbirds Music for Health programme.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE BENEFITS OF MUSIC

Music Leaders reflected that key to staff developing a greater understanding of the value of music was that the Songbirds Music for Health programme had worked to **embed this over time**.

"At Manchester Children's Hospital there has been a lot of groundwork by Ros and Mark to instil the concept and value of music in these settings."

Ros expressed how involving music in hospital settings helps *"to facilitate a sense of community bringing together staff and patients."*

Music Leaders said that **initially some staff were apprehensive** about having musicians present, but once they demonstrated their sensitivity and staff became more familiar with them, they were **welcomed**. One music leader said that they needed to be aware that staff were the 'gate-keepers'.

"The Outpatients unit is a great example. Initially staff were quite apprehensive in having us there. We managed to turn that around and be sensitive to the space. Working on wards is very busy. We learnt not to be in people's way but the staff got used to us and welcomed us into the space."

"The staff become more familiar with what you are doing and work with you. I would help with routine work or procedures (for example providing musical distraction). Other times they would point you in the direction of patients they know who benefit. This develops over the course of the residency."

The Music Leaders gave examples where staff who were involved in the programme, and who experienced music sessions first-hand, became generally more **supportive, invested and positive** about the benefits of music in hospital healthcare settings.

"One play specialist is very progressive in his approach in supporting children in their right to play and he was particularly invested in it [music on the ward]."

"Play workers and managers get it. Once they see it in action it is undeniable, even if just the atmosphere on the ward. It is so far reaching and once they see that, they want it on their ward. In Manchester Children's Hospital it is an embedded part of the hospital."

"A lot of the staff have now experienced it first-hand and there has been music in atrium area and Outpatients (both open spaces). This means music permeates the whole space. Staff recognise you and we feel part of the hospital."

Music Leaders sometimes worked with play specialists and physiotherapy staff during assessments or observations and they developed good relationships with specific staff. Having the support of senior members of staff was particularly important.

"Always so much better if a senior staff member is enthusiastic and supportive, for example one ward manager has helped source funding to work on paediatric intensive care."

"We have had great responses from Consultants, we do meet them on their rounds. We get a lot of verbal and visual support from them."

*"Help and assistance from the **wider team of support staff** is also a key part of making their work successful."*

"Our current work via zoom and iPad would not happen without the help and support of the support staff. Playworkers are absolutely brilliant and the support from the Head of Play Services has been wonderful. Hard to conceive to be able to work as well as we can without the play staff there, and the housekeepers."

"Once we build a relationship, they ask us to go to a specific patient, supporting medical procedures, especially playworkers. It wouldn't work without that link."

Some Music Leaders saw clearly that staff had a deep understanding of music's role, value and significance:

"With certain staff members I saw a huge impact, in terms of understanding the work – play services manager and their specialists. They understood the significance of the interaction, understanding that it was much more than just entertainment."

"They [the staff] also see the benefit of what we do with the patients. Play staff have a close relationship and we work with them closely, they really see the change and help us pick out reactions that we might not have seen."

Lastly, it is important to recognise the positive effect music has on the **staff wellbeing**.

"The staff say how much the music changes the feel of the ward, it makes them relax. There is a positive effect on their mental wellbeing."



FAMILIES’ UNDERSTANDING OF THE BENEFITS OF MUSIC

When Music Leaders worked with children and families over a longer period of time, they noticed that they discovered the benefits of music, and would ask them to come back to work with them again.

“We’ve seen certain cases, and these are long term, where you do see a change or development – they might ask for it or ask you to come back. Some of the older patients do realise the benefit as they see what is possible.”

CASE STUDY: BENEFITS OF MUSIC FOR PATIENTS

Polly Virr (cellist) and Chloe Hayward (violinist) worked together as a pair during the Songbirds Music for Health programme. They reflected on one example of a long-term change or development in a patient that they witnessed. They worked with a young girl who had autism who was very withdrawn at first, but over time she built a good relationship with them. Polly described how the girl had a real connection to the music as soon as they started to play. At a later point when they met her in the Outpatients Department a very special moment unfolded and Polly recalled that “She saw us and came over and spontaneously sang ‘Hallelujah’ out loud – everyone stood still and came out to watch. Everyone erupted with applause.” Chloe also said how magical this moment was: “She wanted to sing a song with us – Hallelujah, and she stopped the hospital. It was magical, a turning point moment and everyone loved it. It made us feel really welcome.” Through the relationship Polly and Chloe built with this young girl, she became more confident and she was able to sing in public. This positive relationship was also valued by her parents who were very encouraging and trusting of the musicians.

Parents and caregivers also developed a greater understanding of the benefits of music when Music Leaders visited them on a **regular basis**.

“Regularly seeing patients and families does have an impact and we form strong bonds over many years. Our work helps cement the bond between families in the session.”

Their understanding was enhanced through **directly experiencing how their child has benefitted** from a music session, for example through noticing them interacting, smiling, and enjoying the music.

“There was one dad, we were working with his daughter, and he has this moment of calm. He was always there and it was a moment for him. From then, he always invited us over to play for his daughter.”

“Seeing patients with limited movement trying to interact, parents really see this.”

Music Leaders reflected that parents and caregivers find it powerful when a **child takes control and ownership**, engaging with the music and expressing themselves creatively.

Overall, families were very **appreciative** of the musicians’ visits and were **happy to join** in the music sessions, which gave them chance to **open up and express their feelings**.

“We often have parents thanking us and joining in. I’ve often had parents cry as they hadn’t had a chance to express their feelings before. I’m thinking particularly about the burns unit, which is most cut off as that is the nature of the [infection] controls needed – they didn’t get the interventions and visits that other wards got. There’s little social and emotional input as it’s so restricted. But we noticed that the families became more open and would join in.”

CASE STUDY: PARENTAL SUPPORT

Polly and Chloe said that they have seen many parents who over time develop their understanding of the value of the Songbirds Music for Health programme music sessions. Parents who they met on a regular basis were particularly aware of the benefits. They gave an example of a 12-month-old baby who they worked with on a weekly basis and during this time they saw a real development and transformation. The parents of the baby were very supportive of their work as they saw the direct benefits for their child. This positive experience resulted in the parents fundraising for future music sessions in the hospital.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Reflecting on the evaluation findings a number of key themes became clear. We have summarised the themes here as key principles and ingredients. These are all skills and capacities that Music Leaders developed through being involved in the Songbirds Music for Health programme; by becoming immersed in working in healthcare settings, and through receiving mentoring, training and professional development. They exhibited and referred to these skills and capacities recurrently during the evaluation process.



1. Advanced **emotional intelligence**, particularly **empathy**.
2. An ability to **improvise freely, compose** and **react in the moment**.
3. Being **sensitive** to the environment, intuitive and flexible. This includes the ability to 'read the room' and **adapt** to changes in circumstances and situation.
4. **Advanced communication skills** (verbal and non-verbal) that enable connection with children, parents, carers, healthcare workers and fellow Music Leaders.
5. A **reflective approach**, and the ability to encourage and support others to be reflective in their practice.
6. A willingness to **think in different ways** and to be **curious**.
7. Being able to **listen deeply**.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE MUSIC LEADERS

The nine Music Leaders who took part in interviews were:

- Mark Fisher (Specialist Lead Musician/Co-Director of Songbirds Music UK) is a guitarist/composer with over 20 years' experience working in SEND, community and healthcare settings. Mark is a course leader for Songbirds Music for Health programme training at the RNCM. <https://mvfisher.net>
- Anna Harrison is a violinist and at the time of the evaluation was a postgraduate student in music and psychology at the RNCM. <https://annaharrisonviolin.wixsite.com/violin>
- Ros Hawley (Specialist Lead Musician/Co-Director of Songbirds Music UK) is a musician working with children with complex needs since 1993. Ros is founder and course leader for Songbirds Music for Health programme training course at the RNCM, and is completing research on musical interaction. <https://roshawley.com/>
- Chloe Hayward is a violinist and graduate from Leeds College of Music who works in schools and has SEND experience.
- Cecily Smith Nesbitt is a cellist who studied at the RNCM. Cecily performs, works in education with people with PMLD, and runs music events. <http://www.cecilysmithnesbitt.com>
- Tom Sherman is a musician who works in schools, healthcare settings and the community. <https://www.thsherman.com/>
- Jess Tomlinson is a clarinet/saxophone player who studied at RNCM. Jess plays in bands and orchestras, and is a workshop leader for Live Music Now. <https://tommomusic.wordpress.com/>
- John Uren is a composer who studied at the RNCM.
- Polly Virr is a cellist who studied at the RNCM. Polly teaches, leads workshops and performs. <https://pollyvirrcello.com/>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 2

Recordings, writing and reports from the Songbirds Music for Health team:

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