



**Sound Environments in Paediatric Critical Care**

**Project Evaluation August 2020 - July 2021**

**Songbirds Music UK CIC**

**Company Number: 12039440**



***“I hope you can continue to do the fantastic work you do & continue to uplift patients and parents at such a vital time.”***

Parent, PCC May 2021.

## Sound Environments

### Project Team:

#### **PCC Unit**

Eleanor Aston, Ward Manager Paediatric Critical Care (PCC)

Ian Jones, Housekeeper

Karen Butler, Housekeeper

#### **Songbirds Music UK (SMUK) Musician Team (working in pairs)**

Ros Hawley clarinet (Lead) & Mark Fisher guitar/composer (Lead); Co- Directors SMUK

Polly Virr, cello (Associate) & Jess Tomlinson, clarinet (Associate)

Kate Catling, Freelance Project Manager SMUK

#### **Therapeutic and Specialised Play Services**

Susan Fairclough, Therapeutic and Specialised Play Service Manager (Head of Play Services) Youth Service Manager and Events Lead, RMCH

### Overview

Sound Environments live music sessions in PCC have developed over a period of 4 years, funded by the national music charity Youth Music and the PCC unit/RMCH charity. Delivered by Songbirds Music UK, designed in collaboration with Eleanor Aston and her team, and currently commissioned by paediatric critical care (PCC), the programme has two core aims:

- To improve the experience of children and families during their time in paediatric critical care (PCC) by supporting the unit's strategies for patient centred care; enabling agency and patient voice through creating opportunities for child directed musical interaction; supporting the wellbeing of parents and family members through engagement with music/musicians; reducing children and families' stress and anxiety, and building resilience, whilst in PCC.
- To improve the overall clinical environment with live, responsive music making, and positively alter the existing acoustic, detract from clinical noise (equipment and machinery), reduce noise levels at the bedside, and support staff wellbeing through the carefully considered use of live music.

### Project Structure

Pre Covid 19, regular twice weekly sessions allowed the programme to become an embedded activity within the unit, with expectations of session activities, type of music and bedside approach clearly understood and embraced by staff teams. Musicians also developed a strong understanding of the PCC unit and built positive relationships with staff, due to the regularity of visits and consistency in approach during sessions.

## **Covid 19 – implications and modifications**

Across the UK, hospital arts programmes suspended activity in mid-March 2020. Sound Environments was able to resume in August 2020 with the support of Eleanor Aston, PCC Ward Manager, and Susan Fairclough, Manager, Therapeutic and Specialised Play Services at RMCH.

As live on-site sessions were no longer possible, the programme pivoted to remote solutions, exploring ways to maintain access to music for patients and families through creating recorded music resources accessible at patient bedsides, and developing a remote live music session offer via Microsoft teams.

## **Learning - Staff and Musicians**

Project adaptations were significant, requiring commitment and openness from the whole team to try a new and previously untried approach. There were no existing models of practice to refer to at the time; the lead musicians' involvement as leads in Youth Music's National Music in Healthcare Network meant they could make comparisons and share ideas with other projects across the country facing similar situations, to support the project's development. It should be noted that the support of the PCC staff involved in the project was a huge factor in its success, ability to continue and be effective for children and families. Feedback collected through a musicians' team debrief meeting, meetings with the Ward Manager and from feedback questionnaires completed by the Housekeepers has informed learning, identified by the project team, as summarised below:

- Due to the exceptional circumstances surrounding Covid 19 there was limited scope for usual planning and preparation time associated with musician in residence projects.
- Staff in PCC had to navigate NHS IT systems to enable the addition of music resources to bedside computers.
- Investment was needed to purchase additional IT equipment for use in sessions.
- NHS IT needed time to configure iPads for use in sessions, and set up Microsoft Teams software.
- The project required use of unfamiliar technology, and its application in a new context/activity.
- Hospital Wi-Fi connectivity in PCC was at times unstable, meaning sessions were occasionally interrupted; glitches on Microsoft Teams presented challenges to musicians delivering sessions.
- It took time to establish the appropriate number of weekly sessions, with a need to consider an ever-evolving Covid 19 situation, and balancing pressures on time constraints and commitment to find optimum times for activity to take place.
- Housekeepers had to adopt a quick development of specific skills needed to manoeuvre and manipulate technology to support live music interactions at patient bedsides.
- Housekeepers had to adapt their regular role/time commitments to include supporting the music sessions on a regular basis.
- Musicians had to adapt to a reduced ability to sense/see/hear the wider context of ward environment through a screen during interactions.
- Musicians had to adapt to a lack of control over sound quality, volume level, speed of movement between spaces, and positioning within ward spaces and bedside areas.
- Musicians experienced a reduced ability for sustained contact/relationship building with wider staff teams due to their lack of physical presence in PCC.

- Musicians discovered the importance of remote technology in providing close-up images of the responses of complex needs children; access to these responses increased in some cases and enabled more effective interactions.
- Timing of musical activity (knowing when/where/how to introduce music) to be right for staff, child and family, is a key factor in the success of any bedside musical interaction whether 'live' or remote.
- Housekeepers were able to involve parents in the facilitation of musical interactions.
- Housekeepers were able to involve nurses in the facilitation of musical interaction.
- Time factored into the start and end of sessions to debrief with Housekeepers was the most effective time to collect feedback and discuss the project.
- Over time the team developed new skills together, and learned to work together effectively, creating a new model of music activity using a new previously untried format at RMCH.
- Sessions provided an alternative method for Housekeepers to maintain contact with patients when regular activities (tea/coffee break) were suspended due to Covid restrictions.
- The Associate musicians reported developing new skills in composing music for PCC.
- The Lead musicians reported learning novel approaches to remote sensory musical interaction.
- A WhatsApp private group was the most effective way to maintain communication between the team during the project.

### **Patient benefit - Case study examples**

This report draws on three examples of patient benefit to demonstrate the wide reach of the project.

1. **Complex healthcare needs:** A young non-verbal child patient with complex healthcare needs, previously known to the project team before Covid -19, participated regularly in remote music sessions at her bedside. Over time, Housekeepers Ian and Karen were able to engage mum with holding the iPad during musical interactions. Mum proactively moved the iPad close to her child's face so that she could hear the music. This meant that the musicians could also see the child's responses very clearly and mum was also able to feed back her own observations of her child's responses - these included her daughter making small movements with her eyes and mouth, and moving her tongue, which mum interpreted as her child wanting to sing. The child particularly responded to hearing the musicians sing her name, which mum could clearly witness. All the musicians worked with this child and her mum and were able to give rich feedback on her responses during music sessions. These interactions prompted the lead musicians to further research screen technology to enhance musical interaction with children with limited communication.
2. **Musical stimulation & engagement:** Associate musicians Polly and Jess worked with a young boy and his father over a series of bedside music sessions, effectively engaging him in a range of stimulating musical activities using percussion instruments, body movement and their instruments (cello and clarinet). The boy was highly energetic and benefited from the individual attention he received from the music sessions, and also from being able to control

aspects of the musical interactions, directing the musicians' music making, and expressing preferences through his choice of percussion instruments. The sessions provided much needed stimulation for the boy and supported his father in providing stimulating, focused and educational activity during hospitalisation. The Housekeepers were able to immediately document the boy's sessions (with permission) whilst they were taking place, giving an instant record of the project and its value.

- 3. Legacy & impact:** lead musicians Ros and Mark met, through the Housekeepers, a young baby with complex healthcare needs, and mum. During several visits, the musicians sang a song for her child, with simple words, repeating his name. Mum recorded their visit on her phone and disclosed later that she played the video to her son every day, and to members of her family. Sadly, the baby later passed away; mum had kept the recording and contacted PCC to ask if the musicians would record a version for her so she could play it at her baby's funeral. The musicians made a recording, and as a way to express her thanks, mum recorded a short video to show the impact of the music sessions on her son, and to show the importance of the music sessions for her during her time in PCC.

### **Recommendations for future projects**

- Time is needed to be built into future projects to test new remote working models in the clinical setting.
- Time needed in future projects to build staff confidence in using unfamiliar technology.
- Involving a member of Play staff would support Housekeepers during sessions, further develop musical activity and access to project music resources within PCC.
- Implementation of simple, quick and easy to use evaluation tools will ensure staff can fully contribute to project learning and development.
- Building staff awareness of the project will support continued understanding of the project when delivered remotely, and ensure aims are maintained, and relationships between staff and musicians sustained.
- Development of a project stakeholder group would better promote the project across PCC, RMCH and the Trust.
- Involvement of Patient Experience team/strategy would enable wider understanding of the project across RMCH.
- Development of a hybrid live/remote musical interaction model is now possible across RMCH meaning wider access to music for more isolated patients.
- There is scope for both live and remote models, and hybrid versions to have a wider reach across RMCH and the Trust, meaning similar models could be implemented successfully in other ward areas, due to the learning gained from the project and its evaluation.
- Involvement of play services would enable further reach of the project across RMCH

## **Sustainability**

- An external research/evaluation partner built into future bids would increase profile and support sustainability of the project, and help to capture the case studies of family experience more formally.
- Clearly demonstrating how the project aligns with existing NHS strategies will strengthen understanding of the project and its value and support future funding bids.

## **Project Outputs**

- M4H2020/SoundCloud: <https://soundcloud.com/m4h2020>
- Sound Environments in Critical Care bedside compositions (MV Fisher)  
<https://soundcloud.com/m4h2020/sets/sound-environments>
- Cardmedic™ music resource profiling Sound Environments project nationally and internationally <https://www.cardmedic.com/>
- Sound Environments was shortlisted for the NHS in the North Excellence in Supply Awards 2021 in the Patient Experience Category  
<https://www.innovationagencynwc.nhs.uk/excellence-in-supply-awards-2021>
- Mark Fisher, Lead Musician has been recognised for his Sound Environments compositions and involvement in the project and is a finalist in two categories in the Manchester Culture Awards 2021; Promotion of Health and wellbeing and Creative Care in COVID-19 (winner announced November 2021)
- Article – MFT Patient Experience
- Article - Journal of Music, Health and Wellbeing for Autumn 2021 publication
- I-pad 'how to' sheet
- Musical Instrument Resource Bank for PCC patients
- Music Video Resource Bank created for children and young people in hospital by music and medical students on SMUK's training programmes 2020/21  
<https://vimeo.com/songbirdsmusicuk>
- Music listening resource created by Music Associates Polly and Jess

***“For the first couple of days, my son was too poorly to take part in any activities.***

***Today, he did a ‘live’ music session which he really enjoyed. I think things like this are really important and it’s great to see that the hospital hasn’t let COVID put a complete stop to everything.***

***Overall the care that we’ve received over the last three days has been amazing, the staff are a credit to the NHS for how hard they have worked to normalise coming to hospital – which is of course a scary time for all”.***

PHDU Patient Story, Denise Bennett and Eleanor Aston, November 2020



Image featuring Karen Butler, taken from Sound Environments in PCC August 2020 – July 2021

**Dr Rosalind Hawley (she/her)**

**Specialist Healthcare Musician** <https://roshawley.com/>

**Co-Director, Songbirds Music UK** <https://www.songbirdsmusic.uk/>

Twitter: @MusicSongbirds

Instagram: songbirdsmusicuk

Soundcloud: [www.soundcloud.com/m4h2020](http://www.soundcloud.com/m4h2020)

Vimeo: [www.vimeo.com/songbirdsmusicuk](http://www.vimeo.com/songbirdsmusicuk)



Ros Hawley, Mark Fisher, Kate Catling, Jess Tomlinson and Polly Virr (left to right)