

## ACTIVITY REPORT AND SELF-EVALUATION of the MUSICAL WALKABOUT



### AIMS

The aims of the project expansion were to

- increase social inclusion by engaging, stimulating and enriching participant's lives through music
- improve wellbeing of participants by increasing involvement, social and family cohesion through the project
- promote creative self-expression by generating a rapport and ongoing dialogue with participants
- encourage empathy and support for all involved in the challenges of **managing** an ageing and increasingly isolated population via an artistic, person-centred approach
- promote 1-2-1 musical activities and their benefits

The methods to do this were multi-pronged - the 80 hours of sessions, the short filmed project and evening screenings/gigs at each participating home. Through a combination of print materials and online marketing the project reached vastly more people than I had estimated, providing a very real and beneficial momentum for the project coming out of the funded period, which ended in January 2017.

## PARTICIPATION / REACH FIGURES

Numbers regarding participants of sessions, and audience for live, broadcast and online iterations of the Walkabout, through the film and my written explorations in the MW blog exceeded my forecasts significantly.

### PARTICIPANTS

I estimated that I hoped to reach 300 participants in sessions themselves. The outcome was 398 participants from March to December 2016. This can also be broken down into actual interactions (or songs sung) which totalled 924 during the same term. Additionally, the number of staff and family who regularly participated reached approximately 60 people over the term.

The methods of outreach to the wider community I used became more varied as the year progressed, from sharing developments and discoveries in the project through MW website blogs, shared on social media (Facebook and Twitter) and taking opportunities to discuss the projects with fellow practitioners and members of the public from different forums or platforms.

### FILMED PROJECT REACH / BLOGS / ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Facebook's 'Insights' (available on the Musical Walkabout Facebook page) gave me the following information about the posts I made.

Videos - 3620 people reached  
Topical posts - 395 people reached  
Calls to action - 457 people reached  
Blogs - 4362 people reached  
General page activity - 774 people reached

This totals 9,608 Facebook users reached - a vast increase on the 100 people I forecast. The increase can be accounted for by the fact that I paid for two £20 adverts (or 'post boosts') to be placed on Facebook, which drastically shifted numbers; taking the example of the blog I posted and paid to boost, not only was the 'reach' 4000 (people who saw the post in their news feed), the 'post clicks' were raised to 79 and the 'reactions, comments and shares' were 50. These were significant increases on the average, indicating the importance of utilising Facebook's marketing facilities where possible.

To this can also be added the 375 people who attended screenings of the Musical Walkabout film at the 'premieres' in the care homes, an Alzheimer's Research Gala fundraiser, and the Graham Care Annual Awards Dinner.

The positive effect of the Musical Walkabout film cannot be ignored. It has done more to engage people than any other promotional element of the project, and I am currently in talks with Clare Unsworth of Foxbite Media to re-edit and shoot more for an extended version of the film, as it is of broadcast quality.

The total number of people reached within the term of the funded bid has, quite frankly, astounded me, and has proved to me the appetite in our communities for information about or ways to engage with projects like the Musical Walkabout and those in our society who experience social isolation.

## WHO CAN TAKE PART?

Everyone; Residents, Family, Friends and Staff!



## LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENTS

### SONG CHOICE

A key area of the project revolves around participant's song choice; each resident/service-user has the autonomy to choose to guide the musical selection process and is encouraged through conversation and self-expression.

This area of the project has proved the most challenging to achieve en masse; while many participating residents easily guide song choice with suggestions and stories, this is not the case for everybody. A large percentage of participants are living with a dementia or face the challenge of difficulty in memory recall. To help facilitate this engagement and exchange of information, a combination approach was necessary; as the sole practitioner I found prompts helpful, but this was just one avenue I pursued.

My own artist or genre suggestions had a good degree of success in stimulating ideas from participants, and where such questions were not practicable, I relied upon asking, or judging, what mood (cheerful / romantic / etc..) were preferred on the day.

Where residents could not speak verbally, a more holistic method was required; a combination of 'reading the room' and seeking guidance of staff members or family members present. This might involve noticing and taking cues from CDs of artists on display in resident rooms, or suggestions by staff who are privy to resident's musical preferences (discovered from family reports) and needs ("Doris is feeling down today, so something uplifting would be good", for example). The staff of all participating homes have been fonts of knowledge about and compassion for the residents, and sessions would not be the same without their assistance and guidance.

I am currently collaborating with Dr Julia Jones of Found In Music, who did her PHD in personal musical tastes and preferences of the elder community, and it is evident that there is an opportunity

for further research into how to better identify song choices with residents, possibly through an Research and Development grant. Found In Music's research into the psycho-physical effects of popular music on human behaviour has been published in scientific journals, trade press, consumer publications and featured on radio and TV.

### FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

This challenge was made much easier where family participation / engagement was present. Family members and friends of residents proved invaluable to the musical 'detective' technique. In collaboration with the management and staff of all participating care homes, literature on the Musical Walkabout explaining the aims and challenges were distributed in reception areas. Additional information was available through care home calendars and e-mailshots, giving dates of Walkabout sessions, inviting family and friends to attend.

Where I had expected 'Family Support Groups' to be a valuable way to engage directly with family members, these turned out to be more of an idea in gestation than a regular practice. Summer Fetes and other events at homes are proving to be another way to reach and engage family members.

## NECESSARY CHANGES & UNEXPECTED DISCOVERIES

### SCREENINGS

To replace this loss of access that Family Support Groups would have offered, it became apparent that making the evening screening/gigs as accessible as possible to family friends was a necessary compromise. We had a lot of success with this, combining a screening of the "What is the Musical Walkabout?" film with practical demonstrations of how sessions run, and offering a method of giving feedback at such evenings. The act of involving attendees of all ages and relations in this approach led to many practical and effective tips, insights and a richer understanding of the relationships between all participants - residents, family, friends, staff and management alike.



### STRUCTURAL SCHEDULE CHANGES

Two of the approached care homes in the original activity plan could not afford to participate within the term of the funded expansion (March 2016 - Jan 2017), but have now become committed clients for the coming year. To accommodate this, as well as two committed homes who could not do all ten sessions (both chose to have eight instead), the shortfall was met by Hawkinge House, who increased my attendance from fortnightly to weekly in November 2016. This allowed me to provide all intended 80 sessions.

### AN EXAMPLE OF FAMILY SUPPORT

The support and endorsement of individuals like Jacqui Often (daughter of regular resident John Often) have been of enormous benefit to my overall practice of the Musical Walkabout, as well as in the outreach of spreading word of the project. Jacqui has been instrumental in generating interest for the project through social media, physical presence on sessions, as well as staging a fundraiser in Canterbury attended by 150 people for Alzheimer's Research in December 2016 which the Musical Walkabout played and practiced at, once again raising the profile of the project locally and nationally.



### CARE HOME MANAGEMENT

Encouragement and support was also extended to myself and the project by staff and management of the participating homes, in particular Terry Mullan, registered manager of Hawkinge House. At every opportunity, Terry has gone above and beyond to promote and celebrate the Musical Walkabout, going so far as to invite me to represent the project at their annual Gala Awards Dinner held by their parent company Graham Care in December 2016, an event attended by nearly 100 staff and management. Excerpts from the filmed project were screened as well as a short talk given by owner Ernie Graham and myself.

### PERSONAL DISCOVERIES

The most exciting and unforeseen discovery was the need for a greater emotional availability in my practice. (see attached MW Website blog - "Emotion") This relatively complex and abstract element of the project unfolded and grew as a result of this realisation. Essentially this encompasses the

atmosphere I am part of creating, that the interaction is offering catharsis for both participant and practitioner and allowing such emotions that arise to be accepted with compassion and presence.

I believe that this epiphany was and is a game-changing embellishment of the overall approach of my practice within the Musical Walkabout, and one which makes the entire experience richer; more lasting and meaningful for all involved. Furthermore, this revelation has made a significant difference to my artistic practice across the various strands of my career, deepening my understanding of how to better engage with audiences, allowing me to commit myself fully to creative experiences and business opportunities, while holistically developing as an independent artist.

## WERE THE AIMS MET?

### THE EVALUATION

As a result of the evaluation Ann Skingley of Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health carried out in December 2016, as well as the ongoing feedback stream assembled through literature, suggestion slips, testimonials from participants I can conclude that a measurable improvement was made to both primary and secondary participant's wellbeing and relationships through access to the artistic self-expression the project offered them. With these findings, as well as an online outreach to the wider community through the Musical Walkabout website, Facebook page and further promotional efforts through partnering with other organisations and their networks, I can conclude that the primary aims of the bid were met successfully. *For an in-depth record, please see the attached Evaluation document.*

### DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICE

Participants and people in decision-making positions within the care homes, as well as related organisations, other providers of creative care solutions and members of the local community have been receptive, encouraging and excited to continue or begin collaboration with the Musical Walkabout, sharing their thoughts and opinions with me on a regular basis.

Where issues were encountered, creative solutions were found in alliance with participants and partnerships in the project, and such issues have been a valuable learning resource for everyone involved in the Musical Walkabout.



## LEGACY - Going forward ...

### CONTINUED EXPANSION

As a result of the success of 2016's funded expansion of the Musical Walkabout, it was prudent to become a Community Interest Company in February 2017. This process has involved non-executive directors coming on board, of which Nigel Turley of local funding specialist Funding For All is one. Nigel's guidance and continued support, and becoming a CIC is already opening more doors for the Musical Walkabout, in the form of opportunities and more possible funding streams.

Thanks to pursuing local funding from Shepway and KCC councillors, I have been able to more than double the client list for the Musical Walkabout, from 6 to 14 in the five months since the film first screened, successfully being granted supplementary funding for each new participating client. The geographical reach has expanded to include Medway and North Kent, with client enquiries from further afield.

Speaking engagements have recently become a new and exciting way to spread the word about the project. The "What is the Musical Walkabout" film has now been screened at Maidstone's Dementia Action Alliance/KCC Creative Care Convention in Jan 2017, as well as this year's !Normal? Festival of the Brain at Folkestone's Quarterhouse in May 2017. There are plans to show the film at local short film nights and community collectives, and to develop the film with more footage for film festivals.

The benefit of engaging the local community in this way continues to be invaluable to the development of the Musical Walkabout. Local fundraising events like Folkestone Soup (where I was a successful pitcher for the project and recipient of the accrued funds) and the project website crowd-funding (Jan 2018 goal is £1000, with £515 raised so far) are brilliant ways to keep the project's expanding budget sustainable while creating advocates in a variety of sectors.

In the months since the ACE funding end-date, collaboration with and support or information / training from organisations like the following have become critical to the evolution of the Musical Walkabout CIC. Among the new connections in my network are the NHS, Found In Music, Dementia Inspired, Kent Dementia Action Alliance, Alzheimer's Society, Kent County Council and Shepway government and local councillor's through Ward Budget Applications and Members Grants, Kent Rural Coffee Caravan, Mind, Herne Bay Umbrella, and Funding For All.



Attendance of the Dementia 20:20 Conference at Royal College of Medicine (funded by Found In Music) in April 2017 allowed me networking opportunities with organisations on a national level. This type of CPD is a necessary injection of information, energy and contacts into my practice.

Most pleasingly, new sector involvement in the project has expanded the reach of the project beyond the elder generation / people living with dementia to the fields of mental health, with sessions already underway. Future possibilities in negotiation also include the local homeless community, disadvantaged youth and refugee crisis centres. This kind of organic evolution, established through an ethos of inclusivity and countering social isolation wherever it is found, is exactly where I hoped I would find the Musical Walkabout after the 2016 funding period.

**Nina Clark, April 2017**

