



ARTS & HEALTH SOUTH WEST PRIZE 2015 SHORTLISTED CASE STUDY



Name of organisation:
Plymouth Music Zone

Title of project/programme:
Music for a Change

Dates of project/programme:
1st October 2012 31 March 2014

Summary:

Plymouth Music Zone (PMZ) uses music to reach out and transform the lives of the most marginalised people of all ages in Plymouth and beyond. It works with over 100 partner organisations annually in a diverse range of health, social care and education settings delivering up to 70 sessions to almost 800 people every week.

“Music for a Change” is an innovative programme of 'musical respite' developed to improve the health and emotional wellbeing of the most vulnerable children, young people and families going through the most challenging and traumatic changes. It specialises in engaging groups other arts organisations often find too challenging - including work in mental health and dementia care units, the only Tier 4 adolescent psychiatric unit in the South West, children with complex, profound physical and emotional needs, bereaved families and socially isolated asylum seekers/refugees. It also involved working with women and children fleeing domestic abuse in safe houses reserved for those at “risk of death or serious harm”. Independent Evaluation showed music sessions developed emotional resilience and wellbeing, rebuilding trust and a sense of control and hope to navigate change. The refuge work enabled mothers to

improve relationships with their children and to be a family again while facing the upheaval of losing everything.

The project also provided celebratory performance opportunities and specialist training to partner organisations' staff and Music Leaders, building delivery capacity. Audio and video recordings leave an invaluable legacy for participants and demonstrate the project's significant impact within the Arts and Health sector.

Overview:

Identifying need:

The project is evidence-based, building on previous learning/engagement with participants in fully evaluated programmes created to address distinct local gaps by offering children and young people (CYP) musically/socially inclusive, enriching opportunities suited to multiple/complex needs of participants, their families and carers.

The project responded to evidence of need to build on programmes of activity with emotionally vulnerable CYP. Partners had previously engaged with PMZ and consultation showed an urgent need for continued development/sustained engagement.

'Music for a Change' was strategically steered by identified need in Local Authority's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis.

Aims:

- To empower emotionally vulnerable CYP experiencing challenging and sometimes traumatic changes by providing high quality 'musical respite', involving opportunities for self-expression improving resilience to their circumstances.
- To extend PMZ's work to include families and explore effective practice using music to support difficult transitions.

Objectives:

- Provide chances for CYP to meet others in similar situations reducing isolation.
- Help CYP express feelings through writing songs, aiding grieving/change process.
- Provide tangible outputs to counteract feeling of transience, creating memories to keep eg CDs/DVDs.
- Provide sustained engagement as a powerful antidote to chaotic lives.
- Music Leaders to better understand emotionally vulnerable groups to develop effective practice building on existing experience.
- Partner organisations to learn how music is best used to support transitions.

What PMZ did:

Delivered creative music-making sessions - 10 x 1 hour weekly sessions per 10 week term over 5 terms. Sustained provision minimum 10 weeks adapted according to group needs. Sessions provided vital respite from challenging situations.

'Family Taster' sessions: (3 x 2 hour sessions - year 1) Progression for families engaging in project – explored/shaped **'Family Saturday' sessions:** (Weekly 2 hour sessions x 30 weeks, year 2). Provided activities to encourage parent-child interaction with 'takeaway' activities.

Celebratory performances at PMZ events.

Created **Audio and video 'keepsakes'** - to share with friends/family, showing impact across networks.

Trained Music Leaders – Deepened understanding of needs of transition groups: bereaved children/domestic abuse, involving input from partner organisations. Addressed need to focus adapting musical approaches with emotionally vulnerable groups.

Shared learning - Partner organisations' training: learning benefits of music delivery, 3 half days involving minimum 5 partners each day.

Embedded learning/effective practice - Self-evaluation day with Music Leaders, group reflection/compiling user journeys re: transition groups.

Compiled 'Practice Write-ups' - resources for dissemination across networks/websites.

Commissioned **Independent Evaluation** to influence commissioners and effect policy at Government level.

Artforms and artists:

Music Leaders with specialist skills were chosen to deliver the range of music-making sessions to meet participants' needs. Skills/experience are key to gathering vital information from different perspectives surrounding participants. It enabled them to provide tailored approaches with need for sensitivity/experience of working with different groups. Also included video and creative arts activities when appropriate.

PMZ upskills existing/aspiring music leaders & partner organisations, strengthening PMZ's capacity to position music as a powerful support/development tool at the heart of local strategic health/education priorities, committed to creating 'happy, healthy, aspiring communities'.

Programme included bespoke workforce development solutions to increase skills/capacity in these specialist settings.

Intended health outcome:

To improve mental and emotional wellbeing of participants through reduced social isolation, increased self-expression and improved resilience through being valued and involved.

Beneficiaries:

CYP/families experiencing sudden/difficult changes they have little or no control over. They all share the need for a physically/emotionally safe environment. Participants were recruited via established/newly developing partnerships with statutory agencies/social care organisations/charities directly managing their welfare needs including: children's centres, special schools, mental health units, charities supporting bereaved families, CYP seeking adoption, disabled siblings/family members, in Domestic abuse refuge, asylum seeking/refugee CYP/families.

Other beneficiaries:

Music Leaders, staff from partner organisations - received skills-sharing sessions/training.

Wider public, families/friends and Arts and Health sector via evaluations/performances/video/audio recordings.

Outputs:

- Audio recordings/video 'keepsakes' compiled by groups, shared on social networks, websites, evidencing success.
- Independent Evaluation, evidencing our approach in developing emotional resilience. Responded to need to create evidence base/encourage sustainable routes through partner organisations.
- University multi-disciplinary evaluation launch Seminar
- Practice Write-ups - disseminated across networks/websites

Partnerships:

We developed targeted strategic/specialist strands of work with a wide range of partners to engage and empower those CYP living in particularly challenging circumstances/facing especially difficult changes in their lives.

Partnerships allowed us to reach CYP most in need and least likely to be engaged in high-quality musical experiences.

PMZ is increasingly interested in collaborative impact of cross-sectoral work; our flexibility allows us to work across disciplines/perspectives/backgrounds and organisations.

Local Authority Commissioners for Disabled Services invest in PMZ because of our inclusive, person-centred musical approach that has accessibility, equality/diversity at its core, providing appropriate musical experiences to participants.

In 2013 PMZ launched its 'PMZ Perfect Partner' Awards. Recipients include Plymouth City Council Commissioner for Children's Services, Children's Worker at Plymouth Domestic Abuse Refuge and Independent Evaluators of the project.

Location:

Music-making sessions took place in PMZ's premises located in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Plymouth and in partner organisations' settings across the city. PMZ's multi-sensory music studio uses interactive technology to open up new worlds and forms of expression for babies/CYP with PMLD and/or life-limiting conditions ensuring accessibility.

Activities:

Creative music making sessions: for participants from 7 partner organisations over 5 terms. 10 x 1 hour weekly sessions termly, carefully planned/designed according to needs of each group and with their direct input, eg choice of style of music/instruments/singing/composing/making musical instruments to play themselves. For CYP in domestic abuse refuge, making instruments was a hugely valuable activity as many had fled their homes with no belongings of their own.

Activities also included accessible music-making sessions for CYP with disabilities, helping them create their own unique music using digital technology. PMZ's multi-sensory music studio and extensive resources allow people who have never been able to make music before to experience the power and emotion and improved wellbeing that is possible through music making.

When the project happened:

1st October 2012 – 31 March 2014

Innovation:

"Music for a Change" was highly innovative in that it worked with many partners other arts organisations cannot work with due to the complexity of participants. The project delivered a tailored programme seeking depth and breadth within inclusive and person-centred creative music sessions.

Workshops with bereaved children, young people in psychiatric settings, looked after children and children of asylum seekers and refugees have shown a level of ambition, skill and innovation that created new ways of working for a wide range of partner organisations who also valued the resultant cross fertilisation of skills.

Project partner Commissioning Officer for Children with Disabilities at Plymouth City Council said:

"...it is actually a personal thing for me that I really want to tell as many people, particularly decision makers and Plymouth City Council, just how important Plymouth Music Zone is to the children I work with and provide services for. These young people can barely communicate to ask for what to eat, to ask for a drink, to ask to go outside, they can't communicate effectively, but PMZ managed to get them to communicate. The music that they created is incredible."

Plymouth Domestic Abuse Refuge said no other services sustained working with their mothers and children because of the inconsistency, instability and chaotic nature of their participants. PMZ is the only organisation flexible and skilled enough to stick with them and provide continuous delivery.

This approach won the Inspiration Award at the Music Teacher Excellence Awards 2015.

Participation:

Music activities addressed a need for access to sustained activities for CYP to express themselves and connect with others in similar circumstances to reduce isolation. Group activities using young person-centred approaches allow every CYP to have a voice, maximising feelings of control and empowerment, addressing need to counteract instability in their lives.

Young people influence session content and desired outcomes ensuring specific needs are met. Music leaders are highly skilled and matched appropriately to suit the diversity of young people. Forms of music are used that encourage young people to express feelings and 'Tell the Tale' eg composition/percussion/rap.

The project focussed on progressing towards creating performances and tangible outputs eg 'keepsakes' involving audio recordings, videos of performances and musical journeys with award certificates marking success. This was key to counteracting feelings of disempowerment resulting from challenging transitions, reinforcing the focus on empowerment, constancy and self-expression. Partner organisations used their pastoral expertise in sessions ensuring stability and continuous support, also important for effective delivery. Beneficiaries included:

Children's Centres/age 0-4 awaiting special needs diagnosis/newly diagnosed, /parents (500)

Bereaved CYP/with terminally ill parents/working with family counsellors at Jeremiah's Journey charity, Derriford Hospital (20)

CYP in foster care, via independent fostering agencies Families for Children/Foster Care Associates and via Youth Service (30)

CYP with disabled family members (20)

CYP in Plymouth Domestic Abuse Refuge Service (30)

CYP in Adolescent Mental Health Unit (6)

Other beneficiaries:

- 20 Music leaders/training and skills sharing sessions
- 14 staff/partner organisations/training
- Wider sector/public via evaluation/performances/video/recordings, above 1000

Outcomes:

To develop the expressive and musical ability of emotionally vulnerable children and young people through participating in empowering music activities.

2. To increase families' awareness and understanding of the importance of 'musical respite' activities in helping their emotionally vulnerable children and young people deal with their challenging changes.
3. To increase awareness and understanding within PMZ and beyond of using music as a tool for the development and support of emotionally vulnerable children and young people experiencing challenging transitions.

Methods of evaluation:

PMZ won Best Overall Impact Practice Award at the South West Impact Awards 2014. It has a fully embedded, responsive outcomes-based monitoring/evaluation system including weekly attendance records, enrolment and evaluation forms, questionnaires, films, recordings, interviews & feedback from partner settings.

Further depth comes from case studies by music leaders with input from partners, staff and parents. Music leader notes, lesson plans and CD/video outputs reinforce this. The range of tools available allows consultation with young people, parents, partners, observers as well as music leaders/relevant others across this programme.

The Management Team tracks progress towards achieving intended outcomes using a 'Planning and Review Framework' ensuring quality and continuous self-evaluation and reflection to embed learning and evidence of impact. This is crucial for informing organisational development and sharing best practice with our stakeholders, strategic partners and networks.

Examples of evidence of achieving outcomes:

'**Tyler's Tale**' tells the story of a young boy PMZ worked with in the domestic abuse refuge and after he and his mother moved into their own home: <http://bit.ly/1kW99VB>

Tyler: *"It was the most difficult time of my life ... we produced loads of music and it made us all forget about the past ... when PMZ came it made me forget about all the bad things ... If I could describe words for how Anna did it ... heart-warming and caring, because she didn't have to do that, she chose to do it."*

'**PMZ Partners – Music for a Change**' gave partner organisations the chance to say why they felt the project was so needed. They saw first-hand the effect it had.

<http://bit.ly/1GyiYS4>

Independent Evaluation of 'Music for a Change' (2014) demonstrates powerful evidence of our approach in developing emotional resilience. "Feeling their Way - Women and Children using Music to Navigate Transitions from Domestic Violence", Quinn and Blandon, Plymouth University <http://bit.ly/1yaJGA2> stated:

"The skills and creativity demonstrated by the Music Leader are inspiring ... Domestic violence silences women and children, makes them feel hopeless and worthless and

unable to break free of such norms of behaviour. The music project counters this, helping to break a potential cycle of abuse for the next generation. In doing so it builds capacity for the future, and reduces potential resources that might be needed to support future generations."

"PMZ is willing to respond to the needs of the women and families rather than impose its own rhythms upon them. In this way, it can gently encourage even the most reluctant participant to benefit from its provision. ..."

Learning:

Working with adolescents with mental health issues can be transitory depending on their health and who might be there one week/not the next. Reactions might be completely different week to week. Music Leaders had to be responsive to numerous unexpected factors.

Identified need for more music leaders in specialist fields. Just as important as musical skills are character, attitude, emotional intelligence and resilience - difficult things to learn. We pioneered a 'Capabilities Matrix' of skills/competencies for Music Leaders as a result.

One Special school teacher was told to teach/co-ordinate music delivery - she had no musical ability or experience. We provided training for simple strategies/signposting, together with delivery of music there, enabling other teachers to incorporate music into lessons.

Music Leaders enabled CYP to choose what to write about in composing songs. It was not an illusion of choice but a real choice. Staff evaluations showed participants became stronger as a result.

Mothers/children In the Domestic Abuse Refuge can change weekly - difficult for the Music Leader to build trust and confidence. Also a challenge encouraging some mothers to join in with activities or even communicate between themselves and the Music Leader. Regular, sustained weekly session delivery built trust, resulting in successful participation.

University of Plymouth evaluators found this work a real challenge. The research surrounding domestic abuse disturbed them and witnessing the evidence/people's stories impacted on them. This is the second evaluation that the University has completed for PMZ and they regard this as a valuable development tool.

Critical success factors:

Achievements:

PMZ/"Music for a Change" made a significant impact on the arts and health sector in 2014. 2 Independent Evaluations and two national awards recognise its value.

Project was successful in achieving aims using effective practice to provide powerful respite to help CYP deal with difficult changes in their lives.

Specific Successes of planning, delivery and outcomes:

- Reputation/partnerships: PMZ earned a strong reputation for choosing appropriate partners committed to achieving same outcomes.
- Diversity/adaptability: working with diverse range of partners and participants.
- Highly successful 'Skills Pods' covering: studio recording, filming, repertoire, composition, music technology, working in multi-sensory music studio, working with children in challenging circumstances and in transition, iPads/apps, working with families, behavioural issues and solutions, mentoring.
- Influence: Devon/Cornwall Police used findings in 2014 "Music for a Change" independent evaluation to inform their practice.
- Independent observations: Provided essential evidence to see the bigger picture and snapshot evidence to pick up on things that might otherwise be missed.
- Successfully engaging reluctant mothers in Domestic Abuse Refuge. Parental/carers involvement is imperative, though not always possible.
- Music leader emotional intelligence: crucial to reading the situation, often highly changeable. Extremely flexible/reflective, tailoring activities to take account of shifting parameters, but with consistency.
- Structured sessions - so participants know what to expect, with enough room to make their own choices to increase confidence and resilience.
- Successful relationship building between Music Leader/participant - built on trust. In some cases it may be hard to 'reach' some participants.

Partnership working with our partners continues where funding allows.

Funding and Resources:

Main funder – National Foundation for Youth Music: £45,915

Partners' contributions: £6,890

Total Budget: £52,805

The Independent Evaluation was also matched with over £20,000 in kind support from Plymouth University, despite only £4000 budget from PMZ. This sense of 'buy in' was a significant vote of confidence and a critical success factor allowing us to access high quality independent evaluation expertise and impact on wider sectors. This has since enabled the development of a strong research partnership that we aim to build on further. Both Independent Evaluations carried out in 2014 contained research insights that pioneered a new approach to the arts and health in the field of Post Human Theory. The all day 'Transitions in Life' launch seminar/conference that took place also opened up pathways to multi-disciplinary academics and new ways of working via the Plymouth Institute of Education (Arts and Humanities) and the Centre for Culture, Community and Society. PMZ's work had been previously unknown in these areas

and now commands more influence and respect as a result of this Music for a Change programme.

Image titles and credits (L-R)

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- **Title:** Artwork by child at Domestic abuse refuge
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