

Music in Hospitals & Care
Report to The Beer-Harris Memorial Trust
December 2024

About Music in Hospitals & Care

Music in Hospitals & Care is a charity that improves the health and wellbeing of children and adults through the healing power of live music. For 76 years, we have been sharing professional, bespoke live music with people in health and care settings across the UK who might not otherwise get to experience it. These live music sessions are specially tailored to the needs and tastes of the people taking part, and have been shown to help people to feel happier and more relaxed, less anxious, more connected to those around them, and more connected to themselves. Our vision is for everyone to be able to access and experience the joy of live music. The Beer-Harris Memorial Trust is helping to make that vision a reality.

Project details

In June 2024, we received a wonderfully generous donation of £1,500 from The Beer-Harris Memorial Trust. This grant enabled us to share six hours of personalised, professional live music with people living with mental health problems across the UK, including Charlton Lane Hospital in Cheltenham, The Redwoods Centre for Mental Health in Shrewsbury, Leverndale Hospital in Glasgow (x2), County Hospital in Pontypool, and Wythenshawe Hospital in Manchester.

Our approach to sharing music is based on personal choice. The people who took part in these sessions chose the type of music they heard and how they engaged with it. Our musicians looked out for the subtlest of cues from participants, and adapted on the spot to individual reactions to create truly remarkable moments of connection, catharsis and joy.

Areas of mental health addressed

The people who took part in this project were living with a wide range of mental health problems – from anxiety and depression to addiction and schizophrenia.

Impact and stories

Your grant helped to transform the experience of hospitalisation for people living with mental health problems across the UK. Feedback from the sessions made possible by your grant shows that this project provided a positive distraction from the clinical environment, helped people to connect with each other by bringing them together in a joyful activity, provided a healthy emotional outlet, encouraged reminiscence and sharing of favourite songs, and inspired dancing, singing and laughter in people who don't often communicate or engage with activities.

After the session at Charlton Lane Hospital, musician Michael Lunts reflected:

“A few patients were glowing with pleasure throughout, including ‘David’ who loved the piano showpieces and said he had worked for Bluthner pianos in London. Another lady who had smiled from the first note played gave me a big hug afterwards. Another lady, who had been smiling and joining in, shed a tear during ‘What a Wonderful World’, a song whose poignancy can have that effect, but she soon cheered up when I sang something more jolly. But it is some of the quieter, more withdrawn patients who are most rewarding to pull out of their inner world, when, as on this occasion, several of them started to mouth the words of the songs to themselves.”

The session at Wythenshawe Hospital led one man whom staff said “*rarely communicates*” to sing along to songs by The Beatles and chat to musician Chris about his favourite tunes.

At County Hospital in Pontypool, there were requests for Mozart, Schubert and Bizet, as well as 60s’ classics like ‘Do you know the way to San Jose?’ and Hey Jude.

Meanwhile, at Leverndale Hospital, musician Neil Sturgeon led the group in singing Happy Birthday to two residents, and was then accompanied by patient Simon* for an improvised performance of Sweet Caroline and My Way. Family members approached Neil after the session to say how much they had enjoyed themselves. Moments like this show how music can bring people together, and help people to reconnect with their passions and interests, thus restoring a sense of identity during a challenging time.

Conclusion

We are so grateful to the Trustees of The Beer-Harris Memorial Trust for your ongoing support of our work. Thanks to you, around 100 people living with mental health problems in hospitals across the UK have experienced the joy of live music. We hope this report gives you some insight into the difference you are making.

Thank you for the music!