Music for Life: Promoting social engagement and well-being in older people through community supported participation in musical activities

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Little attention has been paid to the potential for music-making to effect a contribution to the quality of life of older people
Aims

• To explore the way in which participating in creative music making activities can enhance the lives of older people;

• To consider the extent to which this may impact on social, emotional and cognitive well-being

• To consider the specific processes through which this occurs
Examples of musical activities (video)
Case studies

• The Sage Gateshead – Over 500 people aged 50+ engage in weekly activities (mainly white population, has satellite classes which widen participation, has intergenerational classes).
Connect programme of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama - community projects in East London Sheltered Housing (one intergenerational project, one project with novices aged over 50, strong ethnic mix)
Music Department of Westminster Adult Education Service

- mixed-generation choir
- over 50s singing groups
- over 50s music appreciation class
- over 50s keyboard class
Non-music control group

- Language classes (4)
- Art or craft classes (5)
- Yoga
- Social support (2)
- Book group
- Social club members
Measures

• Pre and post questionnaires including:
  • CASP-12 quality of life measure (subscales for control, autonomy, pleasure and self-realization)
  • Basic psychological needs scales including sub-scales for autonomy, competence and relatedness
• Nature and frequency of activity documented, perceived benefits, difficulties experienced, how might be improved
Qualitative data

• Focus group interviews to explore experiences in greater depth (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, level of musical expertise)
• Ten participants from each case study selected for in depth study – case histories – family member also interviewed
• Musicians acting as teachers/facilitators given questionnaires, sample were interviewed
Observations

- Videos made of a range of musical activities followed by interviews
- Where performances given videos made of these
The sample

- 500 participants
- 398 musicians
- 102 non-musicians
- Age range 43 to 94 most between 60 and 80
- Overall Male 86 Female 341
- Most white British (77%)
KEY FINDINGS – 1
Quality of life scales combined: 3 factors

• Purpose
• Autonomy/Control
• Social Affirmation

• Music groups higher than control groups;
• Comparison of 3rd/4th Age: Deterioration on ‘purpose’, NS for other factors
KEY FINDINGS – 2: Benefits

**Health:**
- Vitality
- Mental health
- Mobility
- Feeling rejuvenated

**Social:**
- Structure
- Belonging
- Community
- Intergenerational contact
- Fun

**Cognitive:**
- Challenge
- Skills
- Achievement
- Concentration
- Memory

**Emotional:**
- Protection against stress
- Protection against depression
- Sense of purpose
- Positive feelings
- Support following bereavement
- Confidence
- Creativity
Key Findings – 3: Barriers

**STRUCTURAL** I wish it was during the day, I really do, ... I don’t like going out in the dark alone ...

**INFORMATION** It was a year after I retired that I actually saw this ... I wouldn’t have known about it if I hadn’t seen the leaflet at the library.

**Social** This is the greatest opportunity that I have ever had to express my musical talents. Before it always felt that it was an elitist sphere.

**DISPOSITIONAL** Motivation for the first time is THE hardest thing.
Key Findings – 4: Facilitators

Facilitators of musical activities with older people had specific training needs but few opportunities for CPD.

Effective facilitators:

- Played key role in fostering positive outcomes
- Rejected deficit model of ageing
- Worked towards goals
- Provided opportunities for performance
- Were professional and credible
- Acknowledged prior experience and knowledge of participants
- Worked together with participants in choosing relevant repertoire
it must save the health service and the social services an enormous amount if they put these in place everywhere ... it must be good for our health ... I think music is therapy, you know. I think it can really pick you right up.