Active ageing with music: Supporting wellbeing in the third and fourth ages

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Ageing: the UK context

Number of people over 65 is projected to double by 2071, reaching 21.3 million (GOScience, 2008);

The ‘oldest old’ comprise the fastest growing group. The number of centenarians in England and Wales is rising by 8% per year (Office for National Statistics, 2011).

Social isolation and depression amongst older people are increasing (Age UK, R&RA);

An accepted need for initiatives that support older people’s well-being and productivity (Jamieson, 2007).
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, with a focus on teaching and learning in informal contexts
Key messages

Benefits of participation in music, for older people (experienced and novices):

- Cognitive, Social, Emotional, Health;

Music participants had higher wellbeing than comparison groups doing other activities;

Barriers to participation:

- Structural, information, social, dispositional;

Expert facilitation is key in bringing about positive benefits, but facilitators of musical activities with older people had specific training needs yet few opportunities for CPD.
Music-making: a route to active ageing
Design

Multi-methods approach:
- Quantitative measures of wellbeing
- In-depth interviews
- Focus groups
- Observations

3 case studies (398 participants in musical activities)
Control groups with other activities (102 participants)
Comparisons within and between groups
Measures of well being consistently higher amongst the music participants than amongst the control group;

No change or positive change over time on quality of life scales;

Comparison of quality of life sub-scales between 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} Age:

– Autonomy, Pleasure, Relatedness (NS)
– Control and Self-realisation – 4\textsuperscript{th} age lower
– Competence – 4\textsuperscript{th} age lower
KEY FINDINGS – 2: Benefits

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

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

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

**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 ...

People are frightened of it because they think ‘oh, we’ve got to pay money’.

**DISPOSITIONAL** Motivation for the first time is THE hardest thing

The main barrier is having the guts to come out of the house to a new group of people.

**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.

As a full time carer I sometimes find it difficult to attend

**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
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;
• Had professional expertise in music, facilitation and issues relating to supporting older learners.
Follow-on project: Professional Development

Consultation
Development of video resource
Facilitators Handbook
Nine regional workshops
Advocacy activities
Key principles
‘Talking Heads’
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.