

Music for a Generation in Hertfordshire

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Organisation: Hertfordshire County Council

Country: United Kingdom

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Recreation, culture and religion

Type: Partnerships, Public Service

Launched in: 2013

Overall development time: 1 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

Music, in all genres, has a world-wide audience that stretches across every age, country, language, culture and ethnicity. Musical activities such as singing also improve health and wellbeing. Increasingly, music is also used as a therapeutic tool for people with dementia.

The Music for a Generation project developed by Hertfordshire County Council and local partners is an original intergenerational approach to co-production which improves the health and wellbeing of older people and also benefits younger people. The evidence gathered speaks for itself!

Why the innovation was developed

- Feedback from citizens through local fora in Hertfordshire, including a Governance International Co-Production Star event with 120 participants in 2013, commissioned by the Hertfordshire Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group, suggested that many citizens would like to get engaged in activities which reduce isolation and promote resilience.
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Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve effectiveness, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction

- Music for a Generation is an intergenerational scheme which aims at improving health and wellbeing for people of all ages. The essence of the project is to bring together different age groups and engage them through music.
 - The project is being underpinned by the Five Ways to Wellbeing Framework developed by the new economics foundation: Connect, Keep Learning, Be Active, Take Notice, Give.
 - It is also supported by the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Hertfordshire County Council which states as its overall aim: "With all partners working together we will reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of our people in Hertfordshire."
 - Importantly, the strategy puts the focus both on health and well-being, with well-being being defined as "a contented state of being happy and healthy."
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Main beneficiaries

Elderly people, Government staff, Young people

- Residents of Hertfordshire
- The elderly, or residents that are isolated

Results

Efficiency

- The pilot proved economically viable and therefore sustainable. Future funding has already been secured to continue the work in the pilot centres.
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Effectiveness

- The Workshop Leaders suggested that people attending the day centres seemed to be able to understand better when words were spoken rhythmically. This is being explored further through a clinical assessment.
 - One stroke survivor at risk of social exclusion, due to aphasia, was able to participate in the group via singing, and the Workshop Leader reported an improvement in his mood. A musical quiz was devised for the group and this aided connection and improved the group dynamics by encouraging participation and moving to different seating arrangements.
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User satisfaction

- Language, speech and motor skills improved for stroke survivors who participated. Many found tangible improvements with their ability to communicate through the regular use of song and rhythm. As a person attending the day centre told the centre's manager: "It's helped me relax and get the words out."
 - New connections and relationships were developed across the project. Music provided an excellent medium to enable participants of different ages, interests and cultures to come together.
 - Young people would visit on their days off and have continued to visit beyond the pilot finishing. "It has really helped me break down barriers. I really know now that I like working with people who have learning and physical disability."
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Other improvements

- The 10 Care Cadets that took part in the music sessions have all secured either full time employment or further education placements. The Care Cadets is a scheme which offers 16–17 year olds work placements in the social and health care sector.
- The objective is to provide them experience in these roles and the possibility, at the end of the placement, to apply for an apprenticeship place, further training or to enter care work as a full-time carer.

Development

Design

In 2003, Hertfordshire Music Service informal music team devised a reminiscence-based intergenerational song-writing model in partnership with Community Psychiatric Nurses from the NHS Foundation Partnership Trust who had identified that elderly people often had untapped, rich life experience that would be of interest and benefit to young people.

In a pilot-funded by the Arts Council Roots Programme, primary school children from St Andrews primary school in Hitchin wrote raps based on the reminiscences of a 1st generation immigrant from the West Indies, and performed them at the Rhythms of the World Festival. Hertfordshire County Council ran the model for six primary and two secondary schools in 2008 concluding with a performance at the Castle Hall.

Testing

- The learning from the model described above informed the development of the M4AG project. A key element of the M4AG project was not to have a set programme or agenda for the individual groups.
 - The aim was to allow each group to evolve through engagement of those involved, allowing them to set the shape and the tone of the project, so that it was relevant to them.
 - It was agreed therefore that Hertfordshire Music Service Workshop Leaders would be introduced informally at each centre and encouraged to explore meaningful ways of enjoying music together and finding practical musical activities that would be fun for all involved.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- Once the centres has been identified and selected, Workshop Leaders attended and ran short introductory sessions at each centre in December as part of the festive celebrations.
- The Workshop Leaders joined in the existing operations of the centres, helping serve lunch for example and starting informal conversations.
- Once the sessions began formally the Workshop Leaders led short musical activities to discover the members' favourite songs and then used this to inform the material and activity for the groups.
- The project ran in four day centres across Hertfordshire, including older people aged 60-95 from Borehamwood Seniors in Borehamwood, with two students from Hertswood Academy; stroke survivors from the Daylight Club in Harpenden, with ten young Care Cadets; people with physical disabilities, mental issues or mild learning disabilities from Douglas Drive in Stevenage, with and four students from Barclay School; and at Parsonage Lane in Bishop Stortford young people with physical or learning disabilities aged between 18-25, with their parent carers.
- Altogether, 115 individuals took part in the project, including volunteers and staff from the day centres. The willingness of the staff of the day centres to engage in the music proved a vital component to breaking down barriers and connecting the members of the groups and the Workshop Leaders.
- Hertfordshire Adult & Family Learning Service continue to fund the work in the four day centres. The funding will allow for a further 30 hours in each club, which has been very well received by the centre managers.

Resources used:

- The project was funded initially by Hertfordshire Community Wellbeing Board and How to Thrive.
 - Hertfordshire Adult & Family Learning Service identified the project, not long after it had began, as something that they could fund and at that point became a joint funder.
 - Officer time from the services referred to above, for developing and leading the project are not included in the costs as they were given 'in kind'.
 - This can be broken down to an average of GBP 267 per session. On average, 27 individuals participated in the project per session suggesting a cost of GBP 9.80 per person. This seems like a really affordable and sustainable expenditure given the impact outcomes evidenced as part of this pilot.
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Challenges and solutions

- The project was not without challenges. Finding a suitable weekly time to host the project because many of the centres had a planned programme of events in place.
- Identifying young people to bring into the centres during the day conflicted with the school day.
- Bringing together people from different generations and with different interests and levels of need.
- Engaging individuals in the musical activities. HMS workshop leaders and centre managers were required to work with the open programme and be flexible, resourceful and responsive to need.
- This undoubtedly took time as relationships and understanding was developed.

Lessons Learned

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- Identify appropriate groups at the planning stage. Do not delay in recruiting appropriate young people to take part as their involvement is crucial and probably the hardest to establish. Identify appropriate activities that are suited to those involved. This project demonstrated that individuals benefit most when they are fully engaged and able to shape the activities, whether it is informal learning, leisure or music therapy.
 - Careful planning to form clear outcomes. Specifically to ensure good understanding of the groups and activities before mixing with a different age group, this will maximise participation and support delivery of health and wellbeing outcomes.
 - Use qualitative and quantitative research to evaluate success. The Flourishing Scale (quantitative) was found to not be appropriate for all participants.
 - Work in partnership to maximise the use of available expertise and skills, not just of the service users and volunteers but of the staff involved at the various centres, many of whom turned out to be imaginative at building the project into the everyday life of the centre, in a full spirit of co-production.
 - Form partnerships to apply for funding through joint bids. Joint bids particularly from the range of partners involved in this project are viewed more favourably in many cases.
 - There is a plethora of funding opportunities that would be suitable for intergenerational work that can demonstrate positive health and wellbeing outcomes, such as The Big Lottery or the European Social Fund for example. These funds often view partnership bids very favourably particularly those with low cost and high impact as was the case here.
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Other information

*The program described in this innovation case study has been discontinued and is no longer in operation.

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