



Rhythm for Recovery

Evaluation Report prepared by Earthen Lamp
for Beat it Percussion CIC

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Introduction

The programme

Rhythm for Recovery was delivered by *Beat It Percussion CIC* between November 2022 and April 2023 and was funded by the National Lottery Awards For All England. *Beat It Percussion CIC* aims to promote good mental health and support well-being through the medium of rhythm and sound.

The programme built on their successful previous work as part of *Rhythm for the Brain* in 2021/2022, which offered workshops targeted at carers and individuals with mental health conditions such as dementia and offered opportunities for independent engagement with music making activities.

Rhythm for Recovery was split into two strands:

- (1) A programme that included multi-sensory, hands-on music making activities designed to promote well-being for people with mild to moderate dementia and other neurological impairments attend day care at a hospice and their carers. The sessions took place at the hospice setting where individuals with dementia and other neurological impairments and their carers attended weekly 1.5 to 2 hours session over the course of four months.
- (2) Two six-week-runs of sound relaxation sessions (also referred to as Sound Baths) were offered to carers at two different carer hubs. The session gave participant the opportunity to experience 1-hour long Sound Baths on a weekly basis: “Imagine being in a peaceful, safe space, leaving all your worries and responsibilities behind and being bathed in beautiful, mesmerising sounds. You enter a dream-like state, floating on the sounds and experiencing pure relaxation. That is a Sound Bath.” (<https://www.beatitpercussion.co.uk>)

Desired outcomes of the programme were as follows:

- Healthier lifestyles are promoted through cognitive stimulation, physical engagement, and social stimulation/interaction.
- Carers feel more supported because the intervention provides an opportunity for peer support and inclusion in community activities.
- Access to a relevant and diverse community offer is provided through fostering a culture which focuses on and supports the strengths, assets and positive outcomes for citizens.
- Beat It Percussion CIC develops new partnerships with workshop venues.

Earthen Lamp was appointed as external evaluator for the project and the findings from the evaluation activities have been compiled in this report.

Overview of venues, sessions and participants

In total 31 sessions were delivered by *Beat it Percussions CIC*. The sessions were delivered in Dudley and Halesowen at two community centres and one hospice.



Area	Venue	No of session	Details
Dudley	Mary Stevens Hospice	19	Participants for all but one of the sessions were day hospice patients who are living with neurological disorders and their family carers. The remaining session was dedicated to a carers group linked to the Hospice.
Halesowen	Brett Young Centre	6	Participants were family carers living in the local area. The Brett Young Centre forms part of the support provision for unpaid carers put in place by Dudley Council.
Dudley	Dudley Queen's Cross Carers' Hub	6	Participants were family carers living in the local area. The Queen's Cross Carers' Hub centre forms part of the support provision for unpaid carers put in place by Dudley Council.

Methodology

Participation in the sessions delivered was monitored through sign in sheets for each workshop maintained by the *Beat It Percussion* practitioner. In addition, various other mechanisms were employed to gather evaluative data about how the sessions were received by participants, their impact on participants and how far they met the objectives. The methods of data collection for evaluation of the project were as follows:

- Reflection forms filled in by workshop leader after each session to document the activities and learning
- Feedback surveys completed by the participants at all venues
- Quotes gathered from participants of the sessions
- Observational and participatory research using an observation guide was carried out by the external evaluation team at two sessions at Queens Cross Carers Hub (one in February towards the start of the programme and one in March towards the end)
- Two interviews with staff at Mary Stevens Hospice and Queens Cross Carers Hub

All quantitative and qualitative information gathered through the sessions has been independently analysed by *Earthen Lamp* and compiled in this report. *Earthen Lamp* used a multi-method approach when analysing the data.

- The quantitative monitoring data is presented in the table above
- The qualitative data collected via the reflection forms, feedback surveys and interviews was thematically analysed and interpreted
- The observational research followed an ethnographic approach and the findings are presented per session
- The final section of the report summarises key findings and draws conclusions based on data collected via all methods listed above.

Evaluative findings

Session feedback: Mary Stevens Hospice

Description of the sessions

A *Beat It Percussion* practitioner delivered a taster session as part of a monthly get-together of day hospice patients who are living with neurological disorders. The session consisted of a brief introduction to the practitioner and the purpose of the workshops, followed by a simple warm-up, rhythm games based on call and response, and a final relaxation section with breathing exercises and sensory instruments.

On the day, 11 participants attended the taster session, after which they then had the option to join the weekly workshops. This session attracted a core group of four participants for the first set of sessions between October and December 2022. These sessions included rhythm games employing percussive instruments; these exercises gently increased in difficulty over the course of the sessions, building participants' skills by introducing two and three-part rhythms and encouraging participants to take the lead in certain sections. Participants were also introduced to Hand Bells, which proved very popular and they learned some Christmas tunes and performed one of them as part of an open session with visitors from different departments at the Hospice.

After Christmas, two more participants joined the group. Rhythm and Hand Bell exercises continued, further developing participants' skills and confidence and taking into account their preferences in terms of exercises, tunes and instruments. The *Beat It Percussion* practitioner also concluded several of the sessions with a relaxation exercise, although she excluded this when participants expressed the desire to spend more time on the other activities.

The practitioner also delivered a one-off session to a carers group linked to the Hospice. The session attracted 16 participants and was focused on a sound bath experience including an introduction, demonstration, visualisation, sound relaxation, safe wake up and a final Q&A. The practitioner noted that several of the participants were unsure or sceptical about the activity at first but reported afterwards that it had helped them feel more relaxed and take a break from their daily worries for a while. The practitioner signposted participants to a number of digital resources and would be happy to work with the carers group again in the future.

What worked well

The practitioner observed that engagement levels were high throughout the sessions: participants made a genuine effort not only to execute the exercises and tunes well, but also to grasp the concepts that were explained. The practitioner aimed to keep the sessions fun and flexible, but also to gradually stretch the participants' skills, to which they responded by seriously concentrating on the assigned tasks, which in turn led to noticeable improvements.

The Hand Bells proved especially popular, with participants expressing a particular interest in learning tunes on this instrument. This could be achieved because Hand Bells are very accessible, and participants could take satisfaction in seeing quick improvements. The idea of performing a song at the Christmas party came



from the participants themselves and was an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in front of an appreciative audience, which made for a positive confidence boost and also attracted a further participant to the remainder of the sessions.

During the last session, the practitioner facilitated an exercise which encouraged each participant to share how they were feeling through the medium of percussion. She noted that the exercise represented a new way for participants to express themselves and also to communicate with each other, as they could respond sympathetically to the others' drumming patterns without needing to speak.

The practitioner also noted that the Hospice staff supported the sessions, especially the first taster session, with "an open mind and a sense of humour", which was helpful particularly to create a connection with participants and secure buy-in. Some of the supporting staff encountered their own challenges while participating in the sessions. Seeing the staff gain confidence and develop their skills was an important aspect of the inclusion experienced by the hospice attendees.

Learning and outcomes

The sessions were offered weekly over a period of four months. This was noted by the practitioner as more impactful than a one-off session or a shorter series of workshops, as it allowed participants to become noticeably more comfortable and confident with the activities over time, as well as take ownership of certain aspects of the sessions. Accounting for more time for the individual sessions (around two hours) was also beneficial to allow for more flexibility for breaks and any late arrivals or early departures due to participants' individual needs and commitments.

One of the most significant challenges noted by the practitioner was to keep the sessions engaging and to gradually increase the complexity of the exercises, while also ensuring that the material was not too complex, and participants did not feel too tired or frustrated. The practitioner had to take the participants' neurological conditions into account and at times adapt her approach slightly to accommodate difficulties around concentration and coordination. She noted that it was useful to have different ways of explaining new concepts and alternative exercises to suggest in case a session did not go as planned.

Talking to the participants about the ethos behind the exercises that required more concentration was a successful approach, as the group understood and agreed with the aims of the sessions – achieving better results in the tunes and exercises and improving concentration skills, which are also useful for daily life. The practitioner being responsive to individual participants' needs was also essential; for example, one of the participants expressed mixed feelings about the sessions as they reminded him of a skill, guitar playing, which he no longer possesses. He and the practitioner discussed how he could take more of a leading role in the sessions, which encouraged him to stretch his skills and draw on his musical expertise, and have a more positive experience overall.

As mentioned in the previous 'What worked well' section, the Hand Bells were a success and one of the participants even purchased his own set, which he played with his family over Christmas. This demonstrates the impact of the workshops not only on the individual participants, but also on their connections to and relationships with those close to them.

The Hospice noted the positive impact of the sessions and have contacted the practitioner to express interest in organising further sessions. Participants have also requested more hands-on music making activities, and as a result a ukulele group led by a member of the Hospice support team has been set up.

Feedback from participants

Five of the participants filled out a survey which asked about their experience of the sessions. Overall, they agreed that they had benefitted from attending the sessions, as it had helped them relax and improve their mood, deal with physical or emotional pain, and decrease stress levels. They found the sessions struck a good balance between a relaxed atmosphere and stimulating activities, which helped in particular with their coordination skills, dexterity, confidence, and connection with other participants.

The practitioner also noted comments made by participants over the course of the sessions. Again, individuals expressed positive feelings about the activities, stating that they were “fun”, “very good”, and that they had “thoroughly enjoyed [them]”.

Some participants reported that they felt slightly hesitant about taking part in the sessions in the beginning, as they were worried the activities would be too difficult for them to successfully complete. However, within the first few sessions they realised that the pace of the activities was manageable and expressed greater confidence. Even when the exercises and tunes increased in complexity, the participants did not express discouragement, but were determined to try again and improve.

“When I lose the rhythm, I have to re-calibrate. More than happy to give it another go.”

(Mary Stevens Hospice participant)

As the sessions progressed, participants noticed an improvement in their musical abilities, as well as their overall coordination. One participant remarked that concentrating on two things at the same time – listening and playing a rhythm - reminded them of learning how to drive.

“The rhythm is good for me to feel more coordinated, even if it’s difficult.”

(Mary Stevens Hospice participant)

Teamwork and connection with other group members was another aspect that participants commented on. Making music together fostered feelings of trust and togetherness, as people had to rely and support each other when performing a tune, and in general got to know each other better as they were meeting regularly. One participant sang during one of the sessions, which they had not done in years; another participant reported that this was their favourite aspect of that session.

“By the end of the session you feel comfortable with whoever is there. You've all been thrown in together.”

(Mary Stevens Hospice participant)

As the series of workshops came to an end, one of the participants expressed regret at not having joined the programme earlier, thinking that the sessions would be too difficult. In any future iterations of the project,



more information on the flexibility and accessibility of the workshops could perhaps be included in the taster sessions.

Overall, the participants were glad to have taken part in the project, and some expressed a desire to continue with this kind of activity in some form.

“You [the practitioner] bring things for people to do that they would have never thought of trying.”

(Mary Stevens Hospice participant)

Session feedback: Brett Young Centre and Queen’s Cross Carers’ Hub

Description of the sessions

Sessions at the Brett Young Centre and the Queen’s Cross Carers’ Hub followed the same basic structure which included a Q&A, breathing exercises, a guided visualisation, a sound sequence, wake-up, and a group conversation. Overall, the sessions aimed to encourage relaxation and mindfulness among participants. At the request of both groups, the practitioner also shared links to an online recording of one of her relaxation sessions.

Sessions at the Brett Young Centre attracted between four and nine participants each, while those at the Queen’s Cross Carers’ Hub attracted between three and seven people each. Participants were able to switch from one group to another if it was more convenient for them, as the sessions took place roughly over the same period of time and both spaces are part of Dudley Council’s provision for unpaid carers.

What worked well

Some of the participants in both groups had existing experience of workshops offered by the practitioner; these included a recent taster session at a Dudley Carers networking event and drumming workshops which had taken place several years before. However, the practitioner noted that they were still impressed by the relaxing effects of the sessions, and several noted that such an activity was very much needed.

The practitioner was struck by the atmosphere of mutual support and community that characterised both groups. Participants came from different walks of life but demonstrated solidarity to each other and engaged in warm exchanges during and after the sessions. The sessions aimed to encourage this sense of community, and in particular some of the participants in the Queen’s Cross group, who didn’t know each other very well at the start, developed friendships as a result of taking part in the relaxation activities together and sharing their stories with each other. One participant remarked that even though they experienced the sound relaxation activities as an individual, they felt they were among friends and therefore ‘part of something bigger’.

Learning and outcomes

The practitioner remarked that, although both groups were small (group sizes are strictly limited by the regulations that apply to the venue) the relaxation sessions and more broadly the support available through the Brett Young Centre and the Queen’s Cross Carers’ Hub were providing a much-needed space for carers

to meet, support each other, and access support and respite from the stress of their daily life. This, in turn, had a positive impact on their overall wellbeing; as a practical example, during one particular session at the Queen's Cross Carers' Hub several participants were initially stressed and anxious due to difficult issues they were facing. However, by the end of the session, they appeared more relaxed, and one person expressed that they felt 'ready to face whatever the day throws at [them]'.

As mentioned above, participants in both groups requested links to the recording of a sound relaxation session so they could access it in their own time; some of them also shared the links with family members. While holding the sessions in person was no doubt important to foster a sense of community among participants and to create a safely facilitated space away from everyday worries, online resources can also be a helpful tool for people to access to regulate their stress levels independently.

The knowledge and skills of the practitioner were appreciated by the group and sometimes offered positive examples for the participants' own lives. For example, a Queen's Cross participant admired the practitioner's facilitation skills, through which she allowed people to relax, have fun, and communicate with each other, but also bring them back to focused activity when needed. She noted that this approach made her feel like she was in safe hands, and that she would like to be able to come across as equally respectful but assertive in her day-to-day life. As another example, during one of the sessions at the Brett Young Centre, the practitioner explained some of the principles behind sound relaxation and its effects. She remarked that it is useful to be able to provide such an explanation in simple terms to satisfy people's curiosity without getting lost in complex details.

At the end of the programme, both groups expressed a wish for the sessions to continue, as they found them helpful for their wellbeing and creating bonds with other participants who face similar issues due to the demands of their caring responsibilities. One participant who attended the Queen's Cross sessions asked whether the practitioner ran other workshops locally, and all the others asked to be included in communications about any future iterations of the project. They also pointed out that relaxation sessions could be helpful for other groups of people, for example those living with memory loss. The Carers' Network Officer at Dudley Council has inquired about the possibility of organising more sessions to maintain the offer to local carer networks. At time of writing *Beat It Percussion CIC* are preparing an application to a new funding body to develop their provision for Dudley Carers.

Feedback from participants

Five participants from the Brett Young Centre group and six participants from the Queen's Cross group completed surveys asking them about their experience of the sessions. All fully agreed that they had benefitted from attending, reporting improved mood and relaxation, decreased stress levels, and better coping mechanisms for physical or emotional pain. These findings were reflected in the open comments, which highlighted how the activities had helped participants relax and feel more peaceful. Some of the respondents also mentioned that the sessions had contributed to improved sleep quality and patterns, and to their mood and feelings of positivity in general. They also praised the practitioner for her competence and approach, which put them at ease during each session.



These themes were also broadly reflected and expanded in the participant comments collected by the practitioner over the course of the sessions at Brett Young Centre. The participants praised the relaxation techniques, expressing appreciation of, and often even surprise at, their effectiveness. A few of the participants pointed out that the techniques explored in the sessions worked better for them than other approaches they had tried.

“I'm surprised [by] how powerful it is. I do meditate and some days that works better than others. This works consistently.”

(Brett Young Centre participant)

Several participants also reported that the relaxation exercises had had a positive impact on their sleep quality, especially on the nights immediately following each session.

“I have anxiety and don't sleep well. After the session I had a restful sleep and woke up relaxed.”

(Brett Young Centre participant)

A few of the participants also expressed appreciation for the musical quality of the sound element of the sessions, as they found it transporting and pleasant to listen to.

“I absolutely loved it. I liked the musical notes, it felt like my brain was searching for these sounds.”

(Brett Young Centre participant)

Some of the participants expressed that they sometimes felt lonely in their experience as carers, but that taking part in the programme had allowed them to bond with others and to feel safe and listened to.

“You are so on your own as a carer, this brings people together so you can feel not so isolated.”

(Brett Young Centre participant)

Overall, feedback highlights the positive impact of the sessions on participants' wellbeing – made all the more important by the difficulties and stress that often come with being a family carer.

“It's just for me. It's just one hour in the week I can just sit here and empty everything out of my mind.”

(Brett Young Centre participant)

Observational analysis: Queen's Cross Carers Hub

Earthen Lamp observed two of the six 1-hour-long sessions that *Beat It Percussion* delivered at Queen's Cross Carers Hub in Dudley. Queens Cross has a carers hub but it is primarily a centre providing support for adults with physical disabilities. The six sound bath sessions were aimed at helping carers to relax away from their



caring responsibilities. *Earthen Lamp* observed the second and fifth which allowed an insight into how the early sessions differed from those towards the end.

Both sessions were attended by the same five people (four women and a man) with a range of ages but all of whom were attending because they had unpaid caring responsibilities. While one person arrived late to both sessions due to prior appointments, they all stayed until the end of both.

Both sessions broadly followed the same structure which had five main sections:

- Introduction
- Breathing exercises
- Visualisation
- Sound Bath
- Warm-down

The practitioner began the first session with an introduction, greeting each participant by name before outlining the structure. She asked people what they were expecting before describing each element of the session. She made sure that everyone was happy with all the instruments that she would be using and were comfortable with how they were sat. Because the participants were the same across both sessions, the introduction for the second session was more communal. Instead of the practitioner describing the session, the participants talked about challenges they encountered during the previous week and shared advice with each other. The participants were obviously comfortable with each other and with the practitioner.

The session then moved to breathing exercises and to the practitioner describing the importance of making time to focus on breathing and the benefits this could have. The first session started with a visualisation which encouraged people to imagine a garden and to 'place responsibilities and problems on the ground' of this garden. In the second session the practitioner asked whether anyone had any preferred visualisations (giving examples including garden, beach, forest) and at the suggestion of one participant the session began with a forest visualisation.

The Sound Bath element of each session lasted for around 30 minutes during which the practitioner used a variety of instruments to help people relax. These included singing bowls, a large gong, tank drums, an ocean drum, and rain sticks. At the end of the first observation session one participant had said how much they enjoyed the gong element of it, and in the second this was utilised for a longer amount of time.

The session ended with a warm-down. The practitioner gradually brought people back to the room, encouraging them to move their limbs and slowly open their eyes before turning the lights back on. Each warm-down took around ten minutes including time for participants to reflect on the session and to discuss how it had made them feel and which elements they liked or didn't like.

Key findings from observations

Venue: According to people who attended both sessions the room at Queen's Cross was less comfortable and suitable than the room at Brett Young Carers Hub. It was fairly quiet with little external or traffic noise but it was possible to hear people in the corridor. A few participants commented that it was not ideal to have to walk through the centre to get to the carers hub and that this might be confusing or intimidating for people



who were not familiar with the centre. The main problem was the temperature of the room. Perhaps because the sessions were 11am on a Monday morning the room was cold each time. The practitioner discussed with participants how the nature of Sound Relaxation meant that people would relax and then get colder and so it was important to have a warm space. One person brought a yoga mat to the first observation session but did not use it because they thought it would be too cold on the floor. Some came to the later observation session wearing warmer clothing. In the future it might be better if a staff member could turn the heating on earlier, so the room would be warmer when participants arrived. This suggestion has already been raised by the creative practitioner but was not always acted upon by staff.



Figure 1 Sound tools used in Dudley 27th February 2023

Support for carers: Participants clearly felt comfortable and supported. This was demonstrated by the fact that people returned to multiple sessions and by how people interacted with the practitioner and each other. The practitioner started each session by making sure people felt welcome and supported, learning everyone's names and remembering those who had attended previous programmes. At the end of the first observation session, one of the women (who had also been at Brett Young) thanked the practitioner for allowing people to go at their own pace. She said that it was good that they were not being forced to do the activities (such as breathing exercises or stretches) but instead gave suggestions which encouraged people to go at their own pace and do what they felt comfortable for them.

Sound Bath: All the participants seemed to feel that the Sound Bath was beneficial to them. At the start of the first observation one of the participants said that she was too busy at work to come but had decided to make time because she thought it was important. After the second session people seemed happy to stay and share their experiences. One participant said that although she was still thinking during the Sound Bath (which she had not in some previous sessions), she was just allowing the thoughts to pass through rather than focusing on them. She said it was "like a carriage train, always going to come and go but you don't have to couple it". The Sound Baths seemed to have given her a way to process her thoughts and she said it was definitely the sound pulse that facilitated that. Another participant said that they found that the sessions, "take away the head pain and anxiety".

“Lovely to have an experience where I could be happy having a thought.”

(Queen’s Cross Carers’ Hub participant)

Limitations: Before the first observation the creative practitioner noted that one of the main aims was to give participants relaxation techniques that they could utilise outside of the sessions. While in the first observation the practitioner did demonstrate some basic breathing techniques for relaxation this was only a very small element of the session. It was clear that the main thing that the carers felt was beneficial in terms of relaxation was the sound bath. One person said that the instruments used in the sessions facilitated relaxation and that the gong was “like a dimmer switch” which allowed her to just completely switch off. Someone also said that she wanted to get a gong because she felt like she needed one in her life after attending sessions at both centres.

Conclusion from the observations

From speaking to participants and staff at the centre, these sessions were very valuable to people who attended. There was a clear desire to work with creative practitioner in the future. While most of the participants seemed to think the room could have been more appropriate to the type of session, they continue attending. This indicates that they would value these types of session no matter the venue. While many elements of the Sound Bath relied on the practitioners’ expertise and range of instruments, it would be interesting to see if there were elements of the Sound Bath or of the relaxation which could be utilised by carers when they need to relax in their own life away from the centres.

Interviews with venue staff

Interviews were conducted with Matrix - Social Work Assistant from Queens Cross Carers’ Hub and Brett Young Carers Hub and the Day Services Unit Sister from Mary Stevens Hospice. Because the types of sessions run in the carers’ centres were different from those in Mary Stevens Hospice the interview findings have been kept separate with shared conclusions for both.

Queens Cross Carers’ Hub & Brett Young Carers’ Hub

The Social Work Assistant first heard about the work that *Beat It Percussion CIC* do when she was on a zoom conference call. She was looking for additional activities to support carers and so looked up the creative practitioner’s work online before speaking to her about working together. Her main motivation for bringing creative practitioner to run sessions at the centres was because she thought it would be something that would allow carers to relax and to reduce the stresses of their caring responsibilities. The practitioner had previously done some one-off session but based on feedback from carers the Social Work Assistant thought it was a good idea to plan a block of sessions to create a more sustained impact.

“Putting them in a zone to shut off their caring role. The brain continually flicks between things and doesn’t shut off, so it was about getting them to switch off.”

(Matrix – Social Work Assistant)

Because of this focus they imagined that if sessions were successful then carers would come out of them with some calm or some distance from their caring responsibilities. The Social Work Assistant used the phrase



“control of the mind” to sum up what she was hoping that the practitioner would be able to give to the carers and said that she was hoping for a “critical and sustained impact” in terms of the lives of carers.

“It’s all about carers, whatever they feel, we feel. We imagined that they would feel calm, relaxed, they would go into a different world.”

(Matrix – Social Work Assistant)

The Social Work Assistant felt like the sessions were incredibly successful. People had communicated to her how much they had enjoyed and appreciated the sessions and the fact that people wanted to come to multiple sessions across both venues was also significant. She also felt that the fact that it was a block of six-week sessions was beneficial rather than some of the one-off sessions they had done in the past so if they were running sessions in the future, they would want them to be in blocks.

“Enables them to move their mind away from the caring role, reduces the impact of the caring role. She [the practitioner] enables them to move their mind away from the caring role to wherever she takes them, that could be the sea or the woods, or a garden.”

(Matrix – Social Work Assistant)

From speaking to the Social Work Assistant it seemed clear that carers who had attended the sessions had benefited from the sessions and that the strain or impact of their caring responsibilities outside of the sessions had been alleviated. This relaxation is important to the work that the hubs do because their aim is to look after the mental and physical wellbeing of carers, as she said, they “don’t want caring to have detrimental impact on the health of carers”. She commented on the practitioner’s calming demeanour and the fact that “she engages very well” with participants.

The Social Work Assistant was very keen to work with *Beat It Percussion CIC* again and said that on a less busy day she wanted to sit down with them to talk about developing another programme. She spoke about the importance of evaluation in obtaining future funding or support noting, “we need afterwards to take it to managers to demonstrate impact”. However, she did note that her Head of Service “saw it at an event and she was amazed at how it takes you away, she could see the benefit”.

The main thing that the Social Work Assistant would want to change (if possible) for future sessions was the venue at Queen’s Cross. While she felt that Brett Young was the “perfect space” she acknowledged that the room in Queen’s Cross was less ideal because it was smaller and less comfortable. She also suggested that if sessions were to be ongoing, she would be interested to know how possible it would be to have more variety across sessions. She said, “We can’t tell a carer they can’t come because they’ve been before so it would be good to see what other instruments she has...there could potentially be the same people attending multiple sessions especially as Brett Young is bigger so could fit more people in the larger space.” These were not criticisms of the sessions which were delivered but rather were given as suggestions for how to create slightly different future sessions.

“It just fits well...with everything we do for carers.”

(Matrix – Social Work Assistant)

Mary Stevens Hospice - Day Unit

The Day Services Unit Sister learned about the programme when *Beat It Percussion CIC* came to the Day Unit to talk to them, however, she believes that the initial contact with the Unit was made via the carers' network. She was initially very interested to hear about the kind of work that *Beat It Percussion CIC* do because the hospice had offered different types of activities such as dance, drama, and movement therapy in the past and had seen how these were beneficial. She felt that *Rhythm for Recovery* would complement their other activities well.

Their main motivation for being part of the programme was the fact that it was an activity that allowed for a combination of social and wellbeing outcomes. Their main measure of success was that it would not only help with wellbeing, but that people would want to come back after the first session, that it would be interesting and engaging.

"We've got a lot of neurological patients...We thought it was something that would really help, cognitively, but also if they could come with the relatives. It's nice to work together, isn't it? So, it was like a connection for them."

(Day Services Unit Sister)

When talking to Day Services Unit Sister about whether the sessions were successful, she stated that people had wanted to come back after the first session and that staff "couldn't stop them coming!". Because staff from the centre also attended the sessions she said it was clear to them that there was an improvement not only in terms of wellbeing but in terms of cognitive skills and motor functions. She said that attendees "physical functions improved because it was like a physical exercise as well. So their finer movements became easier." The Day Services Unit Sister commented that the workshops were enjoyed by both staff and volunteers, in part because they could see the benefits in real time.

"We could see the effect, it was tangible."

(Day Services Unit Sister)

Something that came out of the conversation with the Day Services Unit Sister was the importance of the sessions developing self-esteem, and of it being a shared activity between patients and carers. She said that patients became more animated, it increased their self-worth and they seemed to enjoy being able to do something with carers. It was important that the activity did not place the carers in a purely caring role but allowed them to be active participants. This had a positive impact on staff too. She described this saying, "it was really nice to see them, they weren't in the carer roll, they were just doing something together as a couple. That was enjoyable."

"It's much more therapeutic than just a fun. We've got instruments here that we've played, but that's just for fun. This was on a deeper level. There was theory behind it."

(Day Services Unit Sister)



The creative practitioner had visited the unit and tailored sessions to meet the needs of participants and this was important in making sure the sessions were meaningful and useful. The sessions were designed specifically for people with neurological impairments, and this was something that was very important for Mary Stevens Hospice. The Day Services Unit Sister commented that these groups had had the biggest decline functionally and cognitively during lockdown and so it was good that these sessions aimed to address these challenges.

There was nothing about the sessions that staff at Mary Stevens Hospice would have changed. Originally there were going to be two groups, but they decided to change it before the start of the sessions and the Day Services Unit Sister felt that worked well. The Hospice has a room set up for this kind of activity, there was always a staff member to support, and because the practitioner brings all their own equipment, the Day Services Unit Sister felt like the sessions ran easily. They also appreciated how the practitioner ran the sessions and commented on her manner and professionalism saying, “she had got a structure and she told people what to expect and what was going to happen. She was very professional.” As with the carers’ centres, the six-week blocks fit well into the structure of other activities that they run.

“We do lots, each day is different...So we're doing much more shorter groups, so it fitted because it was more therapeutic, it was focused, it had got an aim.”

(Day Services Unit Sister)

Day Services Unit Sister talked about the joy that *Rhythm for Recovery* had brought to her and her colleagues. At one point during the interview, one of her colleagues came into the room where the video call was taking place and also wanted to share her positive experiences. The Hospice would like to work with *Beat It Percussion* again in the future. The Day Services Unit Sister and her team are already thinking about how that might work in terms of frequency of sessions and the difference types of sessions. She said “I would like it to be a part of what we do” as it clearly fitted with their activities and their ethos. She said that she has already arranged a meeting with their fundraiser and with *Beat It Percussion* to think about future iterations of Rhythm for Recovery.

“We all loved it. Anybody who passed through could see it... It was just amazing. We thought it was going to be good, but I didn't realize how good. “

(Day Services Unit Sister)

Conclusion from the interviews

Both interviews were brief and were interrupted by the day-to-day activities of working in a busy environment, but it was clear that both staff members thought it was important to make time to share their experiences of, and enthusiasm about, Rhythm for Recovery. They both described the benefits for carers, patients, and even staff and both commented on how participants were keen to keep coming back.

“I think it helps them find a sense of self, because when a lot of our patients come to us it's all about being ill, appointments are just related to medical stuff. The carers are just



a carer, and they've lost a whole sense of self and what we try and do here is to find that joy...Finding a little bit of quality of life."

(Day Services Unit Sister)

Key findings and conclusions

The programme offered mental, physical and social benefits for people with neurological impairments, as well as a varied group of carers. Details about the positive impact of the programme on participants and carers has been highlighted throughout the report, however, the following features stand out in particular:

The sessions provided a safe space

The workshops created a welcoming and attentive environment for people with neurological impairments to train their abilities and connect with each other and their carers. Additionally, Sound Bath sessions provided carers with safe space to relax and recharge while processing the stresses that come with caring responsibilities among a group of likeminded people.

The programme and sessions are adaptable

Rhythm for Recovery built on the learning derived from the previous programme *Rhythm for the Brain*. On the meta-level the iteration of the programme showed how it can be adapted for different settings (e.g. hospice, carer hub), as well as participants (e.g. people living with neurological impairments, carers), on a micro level the sessions can be customised to a degree that everyone feels welcome and activities can be adjusted to enable participation for a group of people with varied needs.

The sessions offer opportunities for physical, social and mental development

The workshop sessions at the hospice provided participants with an opportunity to meaningfully connect with other participants, well as their carers while they enjoyed the various activities together. Some of the participants reported that the musical activities also had a positive effect on their motoric skills that have been impacted by their neurological impairment. Carers who participated in the Sound Baths felt they benefited from attending the sessions and reported an improved sense of wellbeing.

Participants are eager to continue

Throughout the programme participants have voiced their strong interest in continuing the sessions. This fact has also become clear from the commitment to continuously attend sessions, in particular at the hospice.

Host venue see the benefits and want more sessions

Both the hospice and the carer hubs saw the positive impact the programme had on the participants and would like to continue hosting sessions in the future. They have already started conversations about ways to resume the sessions as a regular as part of their holistic offer.



A skilful and compassionate practitioner is key

The evaluation has clearly identified the crucial role the practitioner plays in delivering the programme. Venue staff and participants alike highlighted the kind and competent way the creative practitioner conducted the sessions and created a welcoming atmosphere for everyone.


The learning derived throughout the programme has also been highlighted in this report and we hope that this evaluation is a useful resource for other projects working in a similar area in the future.

Earthen Lamp exists to bring bright thinking to cultural and heritage organisations and creative businesses. What sets us apart is our straight talking approach, our experience, and attitude to tackle any challenge with gusto. We believe that simple ideas and solutions can light up the darkest corners and solve complex issues.

If you would like to discuss the dark corners in your organisation or business, or just fancy a chat to see how we can help, drop us a line.



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